

~~No knives~~
Better lives

Better Lives



TOOLKIT



Understanding Violence Prevention and Knife Carrying

A toolkit for practitioners working
with young people aged 10-16

Better Lives.



TOOLKIT

Understanding Violence Prevention and Knife Carrying

A toolkit for practitioners working with young people aged 10-16

Outcomes:

- Practitioners have **confidence to deliver activities themselves**
- Practitioners have **plenty of choice of relevant activities and discussion topics** (30 activities)
- Practitioners **understand the nature and purpose of the activities**
- Practitioners **choose reassurance over fear**

#BetterLives

YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work and the collective voice for the sector in Scotland. We champion and advocate for the youth work sector so that all young people can access high-quality youth work. Our membership of voluntary and statutory youth work organisations and intermediaries, including every local authority, spans all of Scotland, and changes lives for the better every day.



~~No knives~~
Better lives



YouthLink Scotland runs the **No Knives, Better Lives** programme, which works in partnership with young people and practitioners to understand and address the drivers of youth violence.

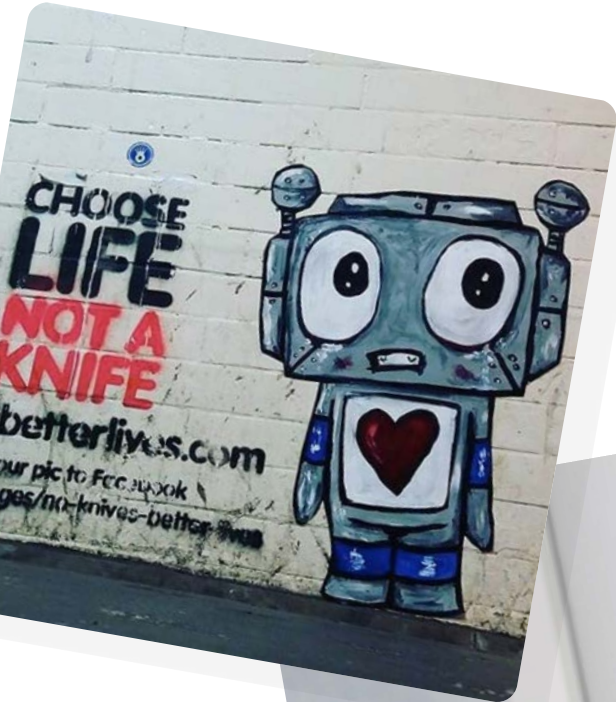
This toolkit was researched and developed as part of the **No Knives Better Lives** programme funded by the **Community Safety Unit** within the **Scottish Government's Justice Directorate**.

Contents

0.1	YouthLink Scotland	4
0.2	Contents	5
0.3	Foreword	8
0.4	Introduction	9
1.	The Context	11
1.1	Using the Better Lives Toolkit	12
1.2	Why Deliver Violence Prevention Work With Young People?	14
1.3	Why a Specific Focus on Knives and Knife Carrying?	15
1.4	Using a Youth Work Approach	16
1.5	Using a Universal or Targeted Approach	19
1.6	Understanding the Drivers of YouthViolence (Social Harms)	20
1.7	Being Trauma Informed	22
	Ground rules	23
1.8	Reinforcing the Cultural and Social Norms of Non-violence	24
2.	Preperation	25
2.1	Programme Ideas	26
	An Example of a 90 Minute Session Plan	27
	Session Plan Template	28
2.2	Icebreakers	29
	The Name Game	
2.3	Energisers	30



3. Delivery		31
3.0 Introducing the Ten 'R's	32	3.6 Risks and Consequences 62
3.1 Research 36		Who's the Sharpest? 63
What's the Story? 37		Risky Business 66
Dodgy Space/Safe Space 38		Body Bits 68
People Bingo 39	3.7 Resilience 76	
3.2 Relationships 41		It's Okay/Not Okay 77
The Clenched Fist 42		What's My Armour? 79
Common Links 43		A Problem Shared 80
Dynamite and Shields 44	3.8 Regulation 81	
3.3 Rights 45		BOOM! 82
Right to Safety 46		Surf The Urge 83
Do I have the Right? 48		Act Not React! 85
The Right Priority 49	3.9 Restorative Approaches 87	
3.4 Reassurance 50		Restorative Circle 88
Is it Normal? 51		Restorative Role Play 89
The Usual Suspect? 53		What Did I Need? 91
Design a Poster 54	3.10 Reflection 92	
3.5 Responsibility/Reporting 55		The Brave Tent 93
Step Up 56		Moral Choices 94
Bystander Corner 59		Imagine a Scotland 96
Nae Danger 61		
4. Evaluation		97
4.1 Evaluation 98		Outcome Evaluation 102
Off the Mark? 100	4.2 Certificates 104	
Outcome Evaluation		
5. Further Information		106
5.1 Online Training 107		
5.2 Additional Resources 108		



Foreword

Revised Knife Carrying Prevention Strategy: Reassurance Over Fear

YouthLink Scotland is pleased to endorse the third edition of the **No Knives Better Lives practitioners' toolkit**. The toolkit builds on what we have learned over the last 15 years of running the No Knives Better Lives programme. We hope that it proves to be as valuable a resource to the youth work sector and to other partner agencies and practitioners working with young people as the previous two editions.



Reassurance is essential in violence prevention as it helps change social and cultural norms that perpetuate fear and the perceived need for self-defence through knife-carrying. By focusing on positive, fact-based messaging and creating an environment where non-violence is the norm, initiatives like No Knives Better Lives can more effectively reduce youth violence and promote safer communities.

The toolkit supports practitioners from multiple disciplines to work with young people on the topic of knife carrying, conflict and violence and represents a holistic approach to knife carrying and violence prevention that places the young person at the centre of the approach. The activities explore 10 essential R's of prevention.

This edition sets out the changing context of this kind of prevention work in Scotland with our most detailed updates to date.

Since the publication of the first edition of No Knives Better Lives' practitioner toolkit Sharp Solutions, we have seen a significant reduction in the recorded incidence of knife crime and possession of offensive weapons in Scotland, particularly amongst young people. While this is good news, it is important not to see our work as complete regarding the issues of knife carrying, conflict and violence. The cyclical nature of the problem, the impact of poverty and the long tail of COVID lockdowns, coupled with an increase in knife crime prevalence since 2018 means that it is important we do not rest on our laurels. A worrying resurgence of knife crime in other parts of the UK, indicates that we need to keep working hard to keep our young people safe from the harmful practice of knife carrying.

Prevention work must continue. Crucial partnerships between the youth work sector, schools, Police Scotland and other agencies that contribute to local NKBL initiatives need to be sustained and supported to deliver a safer Scotland for our young people.

Tim Frew

Chief Executive, YouthLink Scotland

Introduction

Knife Carrying and Violence Prevention in Scotland: A Renewed Pledge

Since the No Knives, Better Lives campaign launched in 2009, knife crime in Scotland has fallen significantly.

This is a welcome sign of the great work that is happening across Scotland to change the culture around violence in Scotland, but it does not mean we can be complacent. One life lost is still one too many and we are committed to supporting No Knives, Better Lives to make sure this work is continued, and that knife crime and preventable violence is eradicated from Scottish society.

Over the last few years and especially since Covid, we have seen small but significant increases in violence. We **renew our pledge** to the right for all children and young people to live in a Scotland free from violence.

The resources from **No Knives Better Lives** have proved to be invaluable to local partners as they work with young people and raise awareness of the risks and consequences of carrying a knife. This new comprehensive toolkit, **Better Lives** emphasises the need to see young people as partners in prevention. If young people feel motivated and equipped to act (safely) if they know that someone is carrying a knife and to challenge, among their peers, the misconception that knife carrying is commonplace or acceptable, then real and sustainable cultural change can happen.

We hope this revised edition will further support this important work and our vision of a Scotland where young people are informed, involved and safe from harm.

NKBL Team



How do we make...

Early on...

Positive message...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we make...
as someone more
friendly & appealing
to young people?

How do we...
with leaders to
reach young
people?

Recruiting
members
Support

How do we
reach the
"hard to reach"
best groups how
can we reach them?

To discuss
how will
what to
do

What
feel
del
gro
s

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

How do we...

SECTION 1

The Context



1.1	Using the Better Lives Toolkit	12
1.2	Why Deliver Violence Prevention Work With Young People?	14
1.3	Why a Specific Focus on Knives and Knife Carrying?	15
1.4	Using a Youth Work Approach	16
1.5	Using a Universal or Targeted Approach	19
1.6	Understanding the Drivers of Youth Violence (Social Harms)	20
1.7	Being Trauma Informed	22
1.8	Reinforcing the Cultural and Social Norms of Non-violence	24

Using the Better Lives Toolkit



The activities in this toolkit enable practitioners to develop activity sessions that engage and educate young people on the issues of knife carrying, conflict and violence.

We suggest that you use the activities to develop sessions with young people aged 10-16.

.....

In some cases, where relevant and appropriate, you could adapt the activities to work with younger children (we have had some practitioners tell us that our activities can work well with as young as 8-year-olds with some tweaking).

<p>You can adapt or invent activities (i.e. for younger age groups)</p>	<p>You can deliver activities in any order</p>	<p>The Key Message Violence is <u>NOT NORMAL</u></p>
<p>Pick the activities that are most relevant to your group needs</p>	<p>Young people choose to take part and its best if they lead</p>	<p>Encourage a ripple effect Get young people talking outside sessions</p>
	<p>Respectful conversations and time for reflection are key</p>	

Before you develop your session, you should...

Get clued up

Educate yourself about knife crime, violence and violence prevention. Find out the facts so that you can give correct information, free of judgement. Stick to the facts and do not preach.

Get some decent input

See what helpful resources are available. No Knives Better Lives has an array of materials, online film clips and interactive games to show at your sessions. Watch out for inappropriate or poor-quality materials from the internet.

Get local/recent knowledge

Refer to local and recent stories or news events to make the conversation with young people relevant. Find out about any local services you can refer them to such as a local youth or sports club. Invite your local youth club to take part.

Your Clued-Up Knife-Related Facts

- Young men are at the highest risk of being involved in knife crime.
- It is a criminal offence to have in a public place any item that has a blade, including scissors and craft knives or anything that disguises a concealed knife.
- It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy a knife of any sort.
- It is not legal to carry a knife for self-defence.
- If you are caught by police carrying a knife, even if it was for your protection or you were carrying it for someone else, you will be arrested and prosecuted.
- If you use a knife, even in self-defence, you could be charged with assault with intent.
- You can go to prison even if you didn't use the knife.
- Police can stop and search anyone they believe is carrying a knife.
- If you carry a knife there is the possibility that you will use it in a fight.
- If someone is injured or killed by a knife in your presence, you could be prosecuted even if you didn't touch the knife. You could even go to prison for murder in what is called 'joint enterprise'.
- There is no 'safe place' to stab someone. A wound in the bum, arm or leg can still kill someone, and if a knife punctures an artery, you can bleed to death within five minutes.
- A criminal record for knife use or possession can stop you from being accepted into college or university and make it harder to get a job. Many countries will not let you in, such as the USA and Australia.

Why Deliver Violence Prevention Work With Young People?



Why will there always be a need for prevention work?

Recent statistics shows that there is a reversal of a prolonged downward trend in violence. We need to act fast to make sure that we do not lose any ground gained in the last 15 years.

Prevention work is often initiated in response to a "crisis" but, by its very nature should be something we do to prevent that crisis from occurring in the first place and, importantly, to prevent it from reoccurring in the future.

Working with young people to ensure that they are fully informed and aware of the potentially devastating risks and consequences of risk-taking behaviours (of any kind, including carrying a knife) is important regardless of background statistics. We wouldn't, for example, stop working with young people to ensure that they understand and are fully informed of the risks and consequences of taking drugs (or how to look after themselves if they do make that choice) because the number of recorded incidences of drug possession amongst young people falls.

Research tells us that many young people choose to carry a knife because they are fearful of attack rather than with the intention of using it against someone.

Empowering educational work with vulnerable young people is critical to prevention. It should stand alongside measures like "stop and search" and increased sentencing. If we do more of the prevention work early on, then it might not be necessary to have expensive youth justice or custodial interventions.

Statistics on conviction rates tells us that very few incidences of knife carrying are brought to the attention of the police and might not necessarily accurately reflect the prevalence of knife carrying. Many **NKBL** partners report that knife carrying is still (or has become) a significant issue in their area.

One incident is one too many and has a devastating impact not just on the lives of those directly involved but on whole families and communities.

There is not any way to control knives – they are widely available as household items up and down the country (think about your own house – breadknives, steak knives, carving knives, corkscrews, etc.). If it is impossible to control access to knives, then we have a massive duty of care to educate young people to be responsible around knives.

Why a Specific Focus on Knives and Knife Carrying?

In 2016, violent crime in Scotland was at its lowest level for 41 years and recorded crimes of handling an offensive weapon were the lowest they have been for 31 years. The number of young people under the age of 19 convicted of handling an offensive weapon has fallen by 82% - since 2006/7 (from 811 in 2006/07 to 146 in 2014/15). The general pattern was that knife crime in Scotland was reducing year-on-year. **No Knives Better Lives** attracted a lot of positive publicity for playing its part in helping to make Scotland a safer place for young people.

Since 2016 however, two thirds (21) of local authorities have showed a small increase in the handling of offensive weapons. There have also been some prominent cases where young people have used knives.

Socio-economic factors that aggravate existing 'drivers' of youth violence have not gone away. In the last five years there has been a lot of instability facing young lives, from the impacts of Covid-19 and lockdowns to economic recession and opportunities for young people.

No Knives Better Lives acknowledges this very different social context to the ongoing relevance of knife carrying and violence prevention work with young people. Although the overall picture in Scotland is of a steep decline in knife carrying, conflict and violence, we would add the following caveat - recent statistics indicate a reversal of the trend.

This revised toolkit brings together our evolved approach developed through action learning and rigorous evaluation.

Knife carrying is a symptom of underlying insecurity about the 'risk' of violence. A lot of our assumptions about knife carrying are exacerbated by press and politics.

Who is *most likely* to be caught with a knife?

Men aged 30 are most likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of knife carrying and yet most people when asked, assume it's teenagers.

Why do you think that is? What role does the *media* play?

Using a Youth Work Approach

Many of the professionals tasked with delivering No Knives Better Lives have limited experience of working with young people using a youth work approach. Since 2009, NKBL has trained; police, social workers, youth justice teams, teachers, and careers advisers (to name a few). The NKBL programme is firmly underpinned by the principles of youth work. The activities in this toolkit support multidisciplinary teams and practitioners to work with young people in ways that are both participatory and empowering.

What is youth work?

Youth work is an educational practice that encourages a young person's personal and social development. The purpose of youth work is to support young people to achieve their full potential. Critical to this is that young people understand risk-taking behaviours and develop the capacity to make reasoned decisions that reduce risk to themselves and others.

In youth work there is no set curriculum and no prescribed methods. Therefore, it can be very responsive and flexible to the needs of the young person or group of young people. If you try something out from this toolkit and it is not going well – ditch it and try a different activity!

Youth work has three essential and definitive features:

1. Young people choose to participate

The young person takes part voluntarily. They choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends and have fun. The young person decides whether to engage or to walk away.

2. Youth work must build from where young people are

Youth work meets young people where they are at. The young person's life experience is respected and forms the basis for shaping any agenda and development plan in partnership with peers and youth workers.

3. Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

Youth work is an equal partnership. The young person is recognised as an active partner who can, and should, have opportunities and resources to shape their lives. The relationship and dialogue between the young person and youth worker is central to the learning process.



Why is youth work important to prevention work?

Prevention and early intervention are based on the idea that intervening to stop a problem from occurring or acting early to prevent an issue from getting worse, offers better and more cost-effective outcomes for our community.

The goal of prevention is to address the reasons why somebody might be vulnerable to taking a risk, such as carrying a knife or resorting to violence. There are many things, we as a community can do to build young people's protective factors to prevent them from taking unnecessary risks.

Youth work has a strong focus on building coping strategies and resilience in young people, while also connecting them to the help and support services in the community and building their skills to access these services.

**Risk factor – violent behaviour and carrying a knife****Protective factors that youth work can contribute to:**

- A safe space
- A friendly pro-social adult to talk to
- A good circle of positive and supportive friends
- Alternative (and affordable) activities such as sports, outdoor activities, residentials, games etc.
- Relevant support services and signposting for any young person experiencing difficulties (Universal youth work offers a door to targeted services)
- Factual and up to date information

If you know a young person or a group of young people who at risk from violent behaviour or carrying a knife, ***why don't you refer them to their nearest youth club?***

Using a Universal or Targeted Approach



Universal Approach

Universal violence prevention with young people refers to programmes and strategies designed to reduce or prevent violent behaviour in broad populations (a whole school for example), typically targeting all young people, regardless of their risk factors for engaging in or experiencing violence. These initiatives focus on promoting healthy behaviours, attitudes, and environments to prevent violence before it starts, as opposed to focusing only on high-risk individuals or groups.

Examples include:

- Assemblies in schools
- Whole classroom-based discussions (such as in PSE or Modern Studies)
- Generic inputs at Youth Clubs or Youth Organisations
- Public health campaigns

Universal violence prevention offers a low-level protection against getting involved in violence that is effective for most people.

When there are more risk factors that might drive increased levels of violence you might want to consider using a targeted approach.



Targeted Approach

A **targeted approach** to violence prevention with young people focuses on identifying and addressing individuals or groups who are at a higher risk of engaging in or experiencing violence. Unlike universal programmes, which are applied to all young people regardless of risk, targeted approaches specifically intervene with those who exhibit certain risk factors or are already exposed to conditions that increase their likelihood of violent behaviour or victimisation.

Examples include:

- Early identification (sometimes through child protection routes) of young people at risk
- One to one support
- Small group work
- Therapeutic interventions

1.6 Understanding the Drivers of Youth Violence (Social Harms)

No single factor causes youth violence on its own; instead, it's often the interplay between multiple drivers. For example, a young person living in an area where violence is more common (community factor) with poor parental supervision (family factor) and exposure to traumatic events (individual factor) may be at a significantly higher risk of engaging in violence.

Effective prevention strategies need to address these factors holistically, tackling not only the individual behaviours but also the broader social, economic, and environmental conditions that contribute to violence.

Using a public health approach

Treating violence as a disease with a cure. To cure violence, you need to address the drivers.



An ecological model of public health recognises stacked 'sets' of drivers:

Individual Level

Focuses on personal factors that increase the likelihood of a young person becoming involved in violence, either as a perpetrator or a victim. Interventions here aim to change personal attitudes, behaviours, and skills.

Drivers

- Aggressive behaviour, impulsivity, or mental health problems
- History of substance abuse or early exposure to violence
- Lack of emotional regulation, conflict resolution skills, or positive coping mechanisms

Interpersonal Level

Targets close relationships, including family, friends, and peer groups, where individuals may be influenced by violence or where violent behaviours may develop.

Drivers:

- Exposure to domestic violence, neglect, or harsh discipline
- Peer pressure or involvement with violent peer groups or gangs
- Lack of positive role models or mentors

Community Level

Addresses the environments where young people live, learn, and socialise, recognising that certain community contexts can increase the risk of violence.

Drivers:

- High levels of crime and gang activity
- Lack of community infrastructure, such as lack of 'safe spaces', run down
- Social norms that tolerate or promote violence, including gender-based violence or bullying

Societal Level

Focuses on the larger societal and cultural norms, laws, and economic structures that influence rates of violence in communities and populations.

Drivers:

- Cultural acceptance or glorification of violence (e.g. in media, among peer groups, or in subcultures such as drill music)
- Systemic inequalities, such as poverty, racism, or access to resources like education, healthcare, and employment
- Weak legal frameworks or inadequate enforcement of laws related to violence prevention (e.g. the resources to implement prevention and/or enforcement don't exist)

Being Trauma Informed



Being trauma-informed in violence prevention means recognising the widespread impact of trauma on individuals, understanding how trauma can influence behaviour (including violent behaviour), and applying this knowledge to develop practices and policies that promote healing and avoid re-traumatisation.

Trauma-informed approaches are designed to be sensitive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma, including both victims and perpetrators of violence, and focus on creating safe, supportive environments that help individuals recover and reduce the likelihood of further violence.

How to be trauma-informed in a groupwork context:

Be careful of the materials you show, especially violent images or knives.

Be aware (particularly when delivering targeted work but in universal approaches as well) that people may get upset talking about incidents that have impacted them or being reminded of things that they would rather not think about.

- **'Trigger Warnings'** may be appropriate to issue when discussing violence.
- Also **be prepared for people to need to take 'time out'** when discussing difficult scenarios or experiences.
- At all times **promote respectful dialogue.**
- **Check in with people afterwards** if you think they might be upset.

'Lived experience' and trauma

There are pros and cons of using people who have experienced violence (victims and perpetrators) to tell their stories. It's been a popular approach with schools, but too often little thought has been given to the retraumatising element of telling a personal story repeatedly. If you are inviting people to tell their stories in this context you may want to check how the speaker is supported. Are they defined by their story? Are they in control of the narrative? Are they supported to develop outwards from their story? Can they move on? Will you be able to develop on from the story to talk to other elements of violence prevention?

Ground rules

You may want to consider developing a set of ground rules depending on the nature of group you are working with. It would be advisable in circumstances such as the following:

- A "difficult" group where discussions are not easy
- A 'targeted' group in a place where knife crime was prevalent
- A group in a community that had just suffered a knife-related incident

The normal approach is to quickly ask the group what they think the ground rules should be and mark these up on a whiteboard or flipchart. If you have limited space and time you can set these yourself as facilitator. You will probably come up with a list that will be similar to this:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- No side conversations.
- Confidential issues will remain in the room (unless life threatening or child protection related).
- Respect others' points of view.
- Ask the group if they would like to add any ground rules once the basic ground rules are established.
- Avoid making new ground rules during a session if issues arise.



Reinforcing the Cultural and Social Norms of Non-violence

By promoting empathy, addressing systemic issues, and fostering environments where peaceful behaviour is the norm, society can gradually shift towards a more non-violent culture.

That means it's important to emphasise that violence is not normal.

.....

It is crucial to our work for practitioners to challenge assumptions such as:

You can never get rid of violence

Yes, we can if we are consistent about peaceful behaviour being the cultural and social norm.

In some circumstances its okay to carry a knife for protection

It is never okay to carry a knife for protection and it is not normal to carry a knife.

Only strong aggressive men can be bouncers, security guards or police officers

Some of the best people to deal with difficult or aggressive situations use soft skills such as negotiation/communication skills.

Glasgow is the murder capital of Europe

Not anymore, but it was when **No Knives Better Lives** began in 2009. By challenging assumptions, Scotland has begun to significantly change its relationship to violence. This proves that change can happen. Don't give up.

SECTION 2

Preparation

1.1	Programme Ideas	26
1.2	Icebreakers	29
1.3	Energisers	30



2.1

Programme Ideas



It's a good idea to develop a plan before you facilitate a No Knives Better Lives session. You don't necessarily have to stick to the plan if young people want to do something different, but ultimately it helps you to feel familiar with and pace your session accordingly. It also allows you to plan for timing and for what resources you will need.

A typical groupwork session will usually follow this design:

1. Introduction

Why are we here and why are we doing this topic

2. Ground rules

How are we expected to behave

3. Icebreaker

Who we are (facilitators and participants)

4. Energiser

What are the energy levels of the group like

5a. Session Activity

Getting down to business

5b. Session Activity

Getting into the nitty gritty

6. Reflection

What have we learned

7. Evaluation

What could we do differently next time



An Example of a 90 Minute Session Plan

(Equivalent to 2 Classes)

SESSION ACTIVITIES:

- **Ground Rules**
Write down a group agreement
- **The Clenched Fist**
- **The Name Game**
Icebreaker to find out names
- **Dynamite and Shields**
An energiser to warm the group up
- **Brainstorm 'What are the reasons why someone would carry a knife?'**
To find out where the group are at/their own views
- **Agree/Disagree**
Increase confidence to speak/have own opinion
- **Show the film 'One Knife, Many Victims (Mark's Story)'**
Then ask the discussion points you want to discuss from the lesson plan
- **Body Bits**
Looking at the physical effects of the body and what potentially might happen if a person were to be stabbed. What could you do as a bystander to reduce harm?
- **Evaluation**
To find out how useful the session was for participants

OBJECTIVES

- To reassure young people
- To encourage Reporting
- To examine Risks
- To increase Resilience

RESOURCES

- Flipchart paper/whiteboard pens
- The film and means of showing
- Paper/pens

NOTES TO FACILITATOR

- The session should take approximately ninety minutes (may need a midpoint break)
- The session has enough variety to be interesting
- Remember not to lose sight of the 'objectives' of the session
- Give young people a role in the session
- Try another activity from the toolkit if the one you are using isn't working!

Session Plan Template

SESSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Introduction

2. Ground rules

3. Icebreaker

4. Energiser

5. Session Activit(y/ies)

6. Reflection

7. Evaluation

OBJECTIVES

RESOURCES

NOTES TO FACILITATOR

- The session should have enough variety to be interesting
- Remember not to lose sight of the 'objectives' of the session
- Give young people a role in the session
- Try another activity from the toolkit if the one you are using isn't working!

2.2

Icebreakers

Icebreakers play a significant role in events in which communication and participant comfort level are important factors. They help you ensure that all attendees are equal participants. They break down the barriers that exist inherently and by design in groups of young people.

Icebreakers can be an effective way of starting a group-work session. As interactive and often fun sessions run before the main proceedings, they help people get to know each other and buy into the purpose of the session.

Icebreakers can really help you to get to know your group. This develops your empathy and enhances your ability to get alongside the individual members who make up your group.

There are loads of icebreakers out there and they can be looked up online.

Below is an example:



The Name Game

ACTIVITY

Time required

5 Minutes

Objectives

To find out everyone's name/settle the group

Description

Icebreaker

Resources required

None

What to do

Ask group members to say their first names and something to do with violence that begins with the same letter.

For example: Violent Vicki, Evil Emily, Offensive Orielle

If you have the time and if a group doesn't know each other well, then you could ask group members to try and remember the names of everyone else.

2.3

Energisers

An energiser is a brief activity that is intended to increase energy in a group by engaging them in physical activity, laughter, or in ways that engage the members cognitively (problem-solving). They can be used with any group, including during a session when the energy levels are dropping (after lunch for example!).

As with icebreakers there are loads of energisers (often with strange names!) that young people will instantly know and relate well to such as:

- Dodge Ball
- Fruit Salad
- Kick the Can
- Ladders
- Zip Zap Boing

(You can look up these as well as a large selection of energisers online! Basically, an energiser is an active game.)

Which energiser you choose could well be determined by what space you must deliver your session in.





SECTION 3

Delivery

Essential elements of effective prevention

The Ten 'R's: A person-centred approach (that puts the young person at the centre of this work)

3.0	Introducing the Ten 'R's	32		
3.1	Research	36	3.6	Risks and Consequences 62
3.2	Relationships	41	3.7	Resilience 76
3.3	Rights	45	3.8	Regulation 81
3.4	Reassurance	50	3.9	Restorative Approaches 87
3.5	Responsibility/Reporting	55	3.10	Reflection 92



3.0

Introducing the Ten 'R's

Effective and Empowering Prevention

The 10 'R's is No Knives Better Lives shorthand for what is important for young people to know to keep themselves safe.

These are the key areas that having a better understanding of will improve young people's chances of staying safe.



Research

Where does violence occur and where are the safe spaces?

Relationships

Peers and pro-social adults can make the difference.

Rights

Children and young people have a right to be safe and reach their full potential.

Reassurance

Hardly anyone carries a knife, it's not normal.

Responsibility/ Reporting

It's okay to report knife carrying or be an active bystander.

Risks and consequences

Carry a knife and you are more likely to use it which could lead to fatal consequences.

Resilience

Have the confidence to resist knife carrying in the first place.

Regulation

The ability to understand and manage your reaction to strong emotions.

Restorative approaches

Strengthen relationships and build conflict resolution skills.

Reflection

Why does violence occur and what can I do to help make Scotland a safe place for everyone?

A Person-centred Approach

That Puts the Young Person at the Centre of This Work

Giving young people the tools that they need to avoid and address violence

Research

An awareness of dangerous places and situations as well as an awareness of safe spaces to go to such as leisure and youth services.

Relationships

Strong connections and relationships with peers and at least one pro-social adult to talk to.



Rights

Lives in a safe community free from the negative impacts of violence. Feels listened to and respected.

Reassurance

Believes it is not normal to carry a knife – hardly anyone else does.

Responsibility

Would intervene in a situation when they thought a friend was carrying a knife or at risk from violence. Acts as a good friend, making positive decisions for self and peers.

Risks

Understands the risks associated with carrying a knife, especially the legal and personal consequences.

Resilience

Can resist negative peer pressure but also can bounce back again after any personal setback.

Regulation

Can control impulses such as anger and has tactics for dealing with provocation.

Restorative approaches

Is willing to acknowledge when actions have been harmful or harmed others, apologise and make reparations.

Reflection

Can reflect and learn from both positive and negative experiences.

3.1

Research

Where Does Violence Occur and Where Are the Safe Spaces?

Understanding violence prevention and the community you work in

Practitioners working in violence prevention benefit significantly from researching their communities to identify both safe and high-risk areas for young people. Understanding the local landscape can greatly enhance the effectiveness of their interventions and strategies, so it pays dividends to do your homework first.

Knowing which areas are unsafe allows practitioners to target their efforts more precisely. This targeted approach ensures that resources, such as outreach programmes, counselling, and support services, are directed where they are most needed, thereby maximising their impact. It also helps in designing tailored interventions that address the specific issues prevalent in these high-risk areas, such as gang activity, substance abuse, or domestic violence.

Identifying safe spaces provides valuable information for creating positive environments where young people can engage in constructive activities. These safe spaces can host after-school programmes, sports activities, and community events that foster a sense of belonging and support. Encouraging young people to spend time in these environments can help them avoid negative influences and reduce their exposure to violence.

Researching the community helps practitioners build trust and relationships with residents and stakeholders. By understanding the community's dynamics, needs, and concerns, practitioners can develop culturally sensitive and relevant programmes that resonate with the people they aim to help. This trust is crucial for gaining community support and participation, which are vital for the success of any violence prevention initiative.

An understanding of the community enables practitioners to identify and collaborate with other local organisations and resources. Partnering with schools, youth work services, and local businesses can create a comprehensive support network for young people. These partnerships can offer additional resources, such as mentorship programmes, job training, and educational opportunities, further enhancing the protective factors against violence.

Practitioner Considerations

- Where in the community is high risk for young people?
- Where in the community is safe for young people?
- Who already works with the young people in the community? Are these relationships positive?
- Can you share or pool resources?

What's the Story?

Anonymous Information Gathering (Individuals)

Time Required

30 minutes

Objectives

Generate insight and discussion on issues that affect the young people in the group

Description

Group activity and needs assessment

Resources required

Paper, pens, a hat, flip chart paper and coloured marker pens, post-its

What to do

1. Each person in the group writes a direct question on a piece of paper (or post-it). A direct question is one that you can answer yes or no to.

Example questions...

- Have you ever been in trouble with the police?
- Do you know someone who carries a knife/weapon?
- Have you ever stolen anything?
- Have you ever taken an illegal drug?
- Have you ever sent an explicit pic?

2. Copy the questions out on a whiteboard or flipchart paper and put numbers up the left-hand side, according to the numbers in the group. You now have an outline of a bar chart that can be filled out during the session. **It helps to have an assistant with this activity!**

3. Hand out small pre-cut pieces of paper or small post-its to each person in the group. They will vote anonymously using these.
4. Ask the group members to put a tick or a cross on the paper. Ask them to fold up the paper and put in a hat. Shake the hat and count the ticks and crosses and mark up the results on the bar chart.
5. When you have asked all the questions and have collated the responses, you can reveal the answers to the group.

Facilitator Questions:

- Are there any surprises?
- What do the results tell you about us/the community?

Dodgy Space/Safe Space

Community Mapping Exercise (Group)

Time Required

45 minutes

Objectives

- Generate insight and discussion on issues that affect the young people in the group in their own community
- Find out about the area in general, especially things young people like and dislike about their community
- Gather useful knowledge about 'hotspots' for knife crime
- Develop knowledge about the assets in the community (schools, libraries, youth clubs, police etc.)

What to do

1. Split the group into small groups on no more than 4 (if space and numbers allow). Explain that everyone is to contribute. It doesn't matter if they don't all agree – everyone's experience is unique and valuable. They can be as artistic as they want, using images and drawing.
2. The challenge is to draw a map of their community. **This map MUST contain the following information:**
 - Places that they feel safe in (this could be their home, their school, their local youth club, a sports club etc.)
 - Places that they don't feel safe in (this could also include some of the above, or include places like a dark underpass, the park at night, outside a dodgy pub, a bully's house etc.)

Description

Group activity and needs assessment. This exercise is also very useful for the purpose of community planning

Resources required

Paper, pens, magazines, newspapers, images printed off from the internet, Sellotape, scissors, flip chart paper and coloured marker pens

Facilitator Questions:

- **What would make your community safer?** (You could feed some of this back to the local council! Young people have the best ideas for improving their community. See activity on page 46)
- **What strategies could you employ if you are in an unsafe place?** (travel in pairs, avoid these places, let someone know where you are etc.)
- **Where are the safe spaces?** Why are these spaces safe?

- Places where they know or believe knife crime is most likely to happen
- Places where they could report a knife crime or knife carrying

People Bingo

Icebreaker (Group)

Time Required

10 minutes

Objectives

To find out about the group and their experiences

Description

Classic icebreaker

Resources required

Sheets, pens and a prize.

What to do

Explain these rules to the young people:

- Go round the room
- Find out who can answer yes to the statements on the sheet.
- You can only use someone's name once.
- The person who finishes first shouts "HOUSE" and puts their hand in the air
- They win a prize!

Facilitator Questions:

- Are there any surprises?
- Did you find out something new about anyone?
- Did you have anything in common with anyone else in the group?
- Who has been to the USA – did you know that if you have a criminal conviction, you will not be allowed in the USA?
- How many of you attend the local youth club? Where is it?
- It is interesting that so many of you...



People Bingo Handout

PEOPLE BINGO! Find a person who...

Has been drunk before	Has an unusual pet	Has had detention
Has carried a knife	Is good at sport	Has never tried alcohol
Can play a musical instrument	Attends the local youth club	Can do a wheelie on a bike
Can speak another language	Enjoys art	Has been in a fight at school
Had chips for tea last night	Has been to the USA	Whose favourite colour is red
Likes school	Wants to join the police	Can name a class A drug
Can't swim	Knows a slang word for a knife	Has never had stitches

Alternatively: You can make up your own statements!

You can tailor the statements to your group needs.

3.2

Relationships

Peers and Pro-social Adults Can Make 'the' Difference

Nurturing prosocial relationships with peers and adults

Relationships between peers and with a pro-social adult, like a youth worker, offer strong protective factors against youth involvement in violence.

Positive peer relationships and friendships provide a sense of belonging, support, and positive role models, which can steer young people away from negative influences and risky behaviours.

A pro-social adult such as a youth worker or a teacher offers guidance, stability, and mentorship, helping young people develop healthy coping mechanisms, build self-esteem, and make constructive life choices.

These supportive relationships create a network of accountability and encouragement, reducing the likelihood of young people engaging in violent activities.

Case Study

In Dundee an Education Support Officer for Dundee Council and a Health Promotion Officer for NHS Tayside partnered with a Police Officer to support the young people to work on a 'positive masculinity' programme. They believed that the young men working with a Police Officer provided a good experience and broke down some barriers. In most of the sessions he didn't wear a police uniform, so not to create any barriers and he used a mutual interest in football to build a rapport with the young men.

Practitioner Considerations

Does the young person or group you work with have a strong relationship with a pro-social adult, as this can offer **strong protective factors**?

Do you have a strong relationship with a young person, and could you be that adult for them? If this is not possible, could you reach out to another practitioner? Is it more difficult for you to develop trust with a young person or group of young people due to your role – a teacher or police officer for example. Are there ways you can reduce any formal barriers?

Is there a local youth club or sports club that could help develop prosocial relations with a group of **positive peers**?

The Clenched Fist

Icebreaker (pairs)

Time required

5 minutes

Objectives

Introducing the issue of violence

Description

Group activity

Resources required

None

What to do

1. Ask everyone to find a partner. Have one person in each pair hold up their hand and make a clenched fist. Their partner's task is to find ways of opening the fist. Give them one minute to do this.
2. Ask for some examples of what the second person did to try and open the fist. (You will probably find that most people tried to open the fist using physical force, when they could have just asked their partner to open it.)

Facilitator Questions:

- How easy was it to open the other person's fist?
- What strategies did you use?
- What does this activity tell you about violence?
- Why do so many of us try physical way of solving the problem first? Why didn't anyone just ask?
- Why are communication skills important?

Extend this activity:

You can build on this activity by asking the group to look at their local newspapers (physically or online) and identify how many of these are related to violence.

Why do people want to know about violence in their community?

Does this give us a warped perspective of knife crime incidences?

Common Links

Energiser (group) (variation of fruit salad)

Time required

10 minutes

Objectives

To move about/have fun. This exercise also helps to dispel tension, get the group settled into revealing things about themselves (in a fun way). Good for relationship building!

Description

Energiser

Resources required

Chairs (without wheels!)

What to Do

Nominate one person to stand in the middle.

The person in the middle must try and get a seat!

The person in the middle asks the group to

"SWAP SEATS IF..."

Then can ask anything, such as:

IF YOU ARE WEARING BLACK BOOTS (EXAMPLE)

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT (EXAMPLE)

IF YOU ENJOY CHEESE (EXAMPLE)

IF YOU HAVE BEEN ON HOLIDAY THIS YEAR (EXAMPLE)

IF YOU HAVE EVER CARRIED A KNIFE (EXAMPLE)

The person in the middle must try and grab a seat! The new person in the middle gets to ask folk to swap seats.

NB: The person in the middle can ask you to swap seats using any statement they like!



Dynamite and Shields

Energiser (group)

Time required

10 minutes

Objectives

Group warm up and energiser that introduces the concept of the importance of a pro-social adult (our SHIELD)

Description

A group game and 'on the move' discussion that works best with a large group (10 plus).

Resources required

Space to move about in.

What to do

1. Ask group members to pick another group member without giving it away to anyone. That person will be their 'dynamite'.
2. Ask the group to keep as far away from their bomb as possible without leaving the group space. Do this for one minute.
3. Then ask the group members to pick another group member, different to their first and again without giving it away to anyone. This second person will be their 'shield'.
4. Explain to the group that they will start moving around again and the game involves making sure that the person they picked as their shield must be between them and their dynamite.
5. Explain that you are going to count down and when you get to zero, everyone must freeze. Let the group start moving again, give them adequate time and then start the countdown.
6. Shout STOP and ask the group to remain still. Once this has happened ask the participants using their left hand to point to their shield and with their right hand to point to their dynamite. Anyone whose shield is between them and their dynamite is still alive!

Facilitator Questions:

- What did it feel like trying to avoid your dynamite?
- Who was in control of the situation?
- Who represents the dynamite in your life? i.e. could go off at any minute?
- Who are the shields in your life? i.e. those that give you 'sound' advice?
- What was it like trying to stay behind your shield?
- Who was in control of the situation?

3.3

Rights

Children and Young People Have a Right to Be Safe and Live in a Violence Free Environment and reach their full potential

Young people need to know about their rights so they can recognise when they are not being met.

Children's rights aren't new. The UK signed up to the international human rights treaty, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, nearly 35 years ago. Under the Convention, or the UNCRC as it is commonly known, all children under the age of 18 have a specific set of rights that is additional to the human rights enjoyed by all adults.

In 2024, children's rights were made more real for children in Scotland. The UNCRC Incorporation Act ensures that duty bearers both protect and strengthen children's rights.

The ABCDE of children's rights is a simple way to remember the nature of rights:

- Rights are for **ALL** children.
- Rights are there at **BIRTH**.
- Rights **CANNOT** be taken away.
- Rights **DO NOT** have to be earned.
- All rights are **EQUALLY** important.

As part of the UK's recent progress check on children's rights, the UN Committee included specific actions around violence and knife crime:

- Addressing the root causes of violence among adolescents
- Establishing child-sensitive early warning systems for children who seek protection against violence of gangs
- Provide support for children to leave gangs and be reintegrated into society
- End recruitment of children as informants for law enforcement

Practitioner Considerations

- Do you consider yourself to be a 'duty bearer' of children's rights?
- Are young people involved in planning the prevention activities?
- Are their voices heard and respected?
- Are they aware of their rights?

NEW ACTIVITY

Right to Safety

Children's Rights Budgeting (Group)

Time Required

20 minutes

Objective

Involve young people in community improvement ideas and support young people to learn about and claim their rights

What to do

This activity builds on **Dodgy Space/Safe Space** activity on **page 38**.

This activity focuses on the **right to be protected from violence** (Article 19 of the UNCRC) with a focus on children's rights budgeting and accountability. **Governments are required to use public resources effectively to advance children's rights** (Article 4).

Complete **Dodgy Space/Safe Space** activity (**page 38**) and ensure you have a list of safe and unsafe places within the community.

1. Assign each small group an amount of money divisible by £100 (e.g. £200, £800, £2000). Groups should have different amounts of money. Handout the 'how would you improve your community' sheets. Each item on the list costs £100. Groups must decide how they will spend their money to increase the safety of children and young people in their area. Allow 10 minutes.
2. Once each group has decided how they will spend their money, ask each group to share how they spent their money. Facilitate a discussion around the activity.

Description

Groupwork activity

Resources Required

Right to Safety handout, pens (optional)



Facilitator Questions:

- How did you decide which aspects to choose?
- Who did your aspects impact? (e.g. babies, young children, children, teenagers, adults)
- Did it affect lots of people or just a small group?
- Take this activity further by writing to your local elected representative (local councillor, MSP or MP) about your proposed changes and ideas.

Accountability is a key aspect of children's rights being upheld by duty bearers. For children and young people to be able to claim their rights from duty bearers, they must first know and understand them.

Right to Safety Handout

How would you improve your community?

<p>£100</p> <p>INCREASED POLICE PRESENCE</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>IMPROVE PLAYGROUNDS/MUGA (MULTI-USE GAMES AREAS)</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>CREATE MORE GREEN SPACES</p> <p>£100</p>
<p>£100</p> <p>MORE STREETLIGHTS</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>INSTALL PUBLIC WI-FI ZONES</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>BUILD MORE YOUTH CLUBS</p> <p>£100</p>
<p>£100</p> <p>SET UP MORE CLUBS (SPORTS CLUBS/INTEREST AND HOBBY CLUBS)</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>MAKE SPORTS FACILITIES AFFORDABLE</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS AND COST</p> <p>£100</p>
<p>£100</p> <p>CLEANER COMMUNITY</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT</p> <p>£100</p>

Make your own!

<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>
<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>	<p>£100</p> <p>£100</p>

NEW ACTIVITY

Do I have the Right?

Children's Rights – True or False Activity

Time Required

20-30 minutes

Objectives

Encourage a deeper understanding about children's rights.

Description

Groupwork activity

What to do

Label one side of the room **TRUE** and the other side **FALSE**. Read out the statements below and ask young people to move to the side they believe is true. Once everyone has decided where to place themselves, you can reveal the answer and the reason why.

Facilitator Statements:

I have the right to say anything I like, even if it hurts others.

FALSE. Although children have the right to express their opinions, that does not extend to saying something that violates someone else's rights. For example, you do not have a right to say racist or homophobic things.

The right to play is only for young children.

FALSE. Every child and young person up to the age of 18 has the right to play. Of course, play looks different for babies and young children than for young people, but it is just as important.

Children in Scotland can't be put in prison .

TRUE. In August 2024 the law was changed to ensure that no child goes to prison. All under 18s who have their liberty deprived due to being in conflict with the law will be housed in secure care accommodation. This change has been made in light of children's rights to safety, protection and recovery from harm.

I have the right to have my views heard and respected in decisions that affect me.

TRUE. All children have the right to have their views heard and respected in all decisions that affect them, including decisions about your local area, who you live with, about your education. This doesn't necessarily mean that your view is the one that is enacted because decision makers need to consider the impact on everyone involved.

Young people might have further questions about their rights. If you aren't sure of the answer, you can find out together using the following resources:

- [Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#)
- [UNICEF UK – How we protect children's rights](#)
- [Just the Right Space](#) –

Resource developed by CYCJ and young people who have justice experience. It supports adults and young people understand how the justice system works in Scotland.

My parents/carers don't have the right to tell me what I can do.

FALSE. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure that the best interests of their child and young person are a top priority.

NEW ACTIVITY

The Right Priority

Children's Rights Prioritising Activity

Time Required

20-30 minutes

Objectives

Engage young people in claiming their rights.

Description

Groupwork activity

This activity is based on the **Concluding Observations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child about the UK in 2023**. **Concluding Observations** are the recommendations given to each country at the end of each reporting session every 6-8 years. The **Concluding Observations from 2023** detail over 200 recommendations for the UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments. **Together Scotland** call this Scotland's 'to do list' to better uphold children's rights.

Facilitator Notes:

- **Take this activity further by writing to your local elected representative (local councillor, MSP or MP) about your priorities.**

[A child-friendly version of the Concluding Observations](#)

Start by explaining the **Concluding Observations** to the group. If you have access to digital devices, you can explore the child-friendly version of the **Concluding Observations** with the group.

Ask the group to think about which rights are most important to them and which rights aren't currently being met for them. For example, the right to play might be most important but there aren't any play areas for young people in the local area. Write each idea down on a sticky note.

Once there is a big list of ideas, try and arrange the sticky notes in order of what the group thinks is most important.

Facilitator Questions:

- How did you choose these priorities?
- How do they affect young people?
- Would the changes affect many children and young people, or a small group of children and young people deeply?
- How could the group take action to make the change happen?

3.4

Reassurance

Hardly Anyone Carries a Knife, It's Not Normal

Reduce the fear that drives some young people to carry knives.

Young people have told us that they carry knives because they are afraid. In other words, they carry knives for their own protection.

"I started carrying because everyone else was."

"I carry a knife because I worry about going into certain parts of town."

We now believe that you only increase the fear factor for young people and may inadvertently increase the risk of them carrying a knife by showing scary images. Rather than show these first in the hope of frightening young people out of carrying knives, we suggest that you begin sessions by reassuring young people that knife crime is less of a problem these days and that they are unlikely to encounter anyone carrying a knife.

CASE STUDY

Reassurance Over Fear

The Evolving Approach of No Knives Better Lives – Reframing the Narrative

In the early stages, the No Knives Better Lives campaign used intense imagery and messages to highlight the dangers of knife crime. This approach, intended to deter knife-carrying through fear, inadvertently reinforced the idea that knife crime was pervasive and immediate, increasing anxiety and possibly encouraging self-protective behaviour among young people. There is no empirical evidence that scare tactics work.

Practitioner Considerations

- Reassure young people of the following:
- Knife crime is uncommon
- Don't use scare tactics – these could potentially backfire!



FAVOURITE

CLASSIC ACTIVITY

Is it Normal?

Agree/Disagree Discussion (group)

Time required

20 Minutes

Objectives

To hold a moving debate that explores attitudes in relation to knife carrying

Description

An 'on the move' groupwork discussion

Resources required

Space to move about in

What to do

1. At one end of the room have the statement agree and at the other have the statement disagree.
2. Get everyone to stand in the middle of the room. The middle of the room stands for 'don't know'.
3. Read out the statements and ask the group to 'move' to where they feel they want to stand in relation to whether they agree or disagree.
4. If they choose, they can stand in the middle, or along a continuum.
5. People with strong views must try and persuade the undecided to back their point of view.
6. Facilitate a debate amongst the group members. You can add factual information or correct any 'myths' the group use in their arguments with each other.
7. Once the debate has concluded you can ask if anyone wants to move – no one should be allowed to remain in the middle.
8. Read another statement and have another debate!

Facilitator Notes:

- The point of this exercise is to be provocative and thought provoking – you may have to play devil's advocate to get the debate flowing.
- This exercise can be tough with a quiet group. You will have to work hard to get individuals to voice different views from everyone else.
- Encourage debate between the group members – try and get them to do your job for you.
- Remind group members to justify their views and explain to everyone that they have the right to change their mind. In fact you could ask at the end of each discussion if anyone would like to swap sides!

Is it Normal? Agree/Disagree Statements

<p>I would never use a knife</p>	<p>If you're under 16 you can't be prosecuted for carrying a knife</p>	<p>The media makes out like all young people carry knives</p>
<p>People who carry knives are stupid</p>	<p>Carrying a knife makes you feel safer</p>	<p>There is a safe place to stab someone (i.e. the bum)</p>
<p>I might carry a weapon if I knew someone was 'after' me</p>	<p>If I knew my friend was carrying a knife I wouldn't 'grass' on them</p>	<p>If I knew my friend was carrying a knife I would try and persuade them not to</p>
<p>You are less likely to be bullied if you carry a knife</p>	<p>It's hard to get hold of a knife if you are under 16</p>	<p>(Your own statement)</p>

NEW ACTIVITY

The Usual Suspect?

Drawing Activity to Challenge Media Stereotypes (small groups)

Time required

20 Minutes

Objectives

By visually representing their ideas and discussing them as a group, they will confront stereotypes and begin a more nuanced conversation around knife crime.

Description

This is an artistic, discussion-based group activity where participants work in small groups to reflect on their assumptions about individuals who carry knives.

Resources required

Paper, pens, magazines, scissors, glue

What to do

Divide into groups: Participants are split into small groups (ideally 3-5 people per group).

Draw the 'Usual Suspect': Each group is tasked with drawing a picture of the person they believe is the most likely to carry a knife. Encourage creativity—participants can draw, use cut-outs from magazines, or mix both to create their figure. Each group must give their 'usual suspect' a name and brief background story if they wish.

Discussion during drawing: As they work on their drawing, groups should discuss why they are making certain choices, considering factors such as age, gender, clothing, behaviour, and any other features they associate with knife carriers.

Group feedback and myth-busting: After the allotted time, each group presents their drawing and explains why they chose to depict their 'usual suspect' as they did.

Facilitator Questions:

- Why did you make certain choices?
- Did you know that the average age of a person caught with a weapon in Scotland is 30? They are usually male and involved in criminal activity in urban areas of deprivation. They are also most likely to be the victims of knife crime.
- Have your views shifted after hearing feedback from other groups and learning more about the realities of knife crime?
- Did any of the groups more accurately portray their 'usual suspect'?
- What influences our choices?

Design a Poster

Reassurance over Fear

A Meaningful Violence Prevention Campaign with Effective Messaging (small groups)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

By visually representing their ideas and discussing them as a group, they will begin to understand what drives knife carrying.

Description

This is an artistic, discussion-based group activity where participants work in small groups to develop effective campaign messages that will impact on their peers.

Resources required

Paper, pens, magazines, scissors, glue, stickers, glitter, material

What to do

Emphasise that the goal of the activity is to create posters that reassure people and promote safety, rather than fear and violence.

Discuss the importance of spreading positive and impactful messages to peers, focusing on building community, reducing fear, and encouraging people to make safer choices.

Think positive messages rather than showing death, blood and weapons!

Facilitator Questions:

- What message do you think is the most powerful part of your poster?
- How does this message help reduce fear and promote safety?
- If you saw this poster, how would it make you feel?
- Would it change your perception of carrying a knife or feeling unsafe?
- How can these posters help spread positive messages in your community?
- Do you think your peers would relate to this message, and why?
- What was the most challenging part of creating a positive, reassuring message?
- How did you overcome that challenge?
- How do you think focusing on reassurance, rather than fear, can make a difference in reducing knife crime?
- What can you do to help spread this type of positive message beyond this activity?

3.5

Responsibility/Reporting

It's Okay to Report Knife Carrying or Be an Active Bystander

Empowering young people to be active bystanders

Engaging young people in discussions about being active bystanders in knife-carrying prevention is crucial for empowering them to take responsible actions, fostering community safety, supporting at-risk peers, raising awareness, and promoting long-term behavioural change. Active bystanders are vital in creating safe environments and preventing violence before it starts.

Empowering young people to be active bystanders instills a sense of agency and confidence, showing them, they can make a difference in preventing knife-related violence. It teaches them that reporting and discussing concerns with trusted adults, despite the cultural stigma of 'grassing,' is a positive step. This empowerment helps young people intervene in potentially dangerous situations early on, acting as good friends.

Young people may worry that telling on someone for carrying a knife would make them a grass. Part of your session should be about reducing anxiety around this – there are ways of reporting that are confidential. You do not have to keep anyone else's dangerous secrets.

Grassing – Scotland's Shame

In Scotland, "grassing" refers to informing authorities about someone else's wrongdoing and carries a stigma for many. This code of silence prioritises community loyalty over cooperating with law enforcement. Seen as a betrayal, those who report crimes are often ostracised or face retribution. This distrust of authorities has become a social norm, complicating efforts to maintain public safety as people hesitate to report crimes. Breaking this code of silence requires promoting the importance of community safety, emphasising that reporting crime protects the entire community. Building trust between communities and authorities, fostering open dialogue, and highlighting the long-term benefits of reporting can help dismantle this harmful mentality in tight-knit Scottish communities.

NEW ACTIVITY

Step Up

Bystander Scenarios – What Would You Do? (group)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

To introduce the concept of being an active bystander and to explore what it looks like in real-life situations.

Description

A scenario activity looking at STEPS young people can take to become active bystanders.

Resources required

Scenario cards

Instructions:

1. Ask the young people what an active bystander is. Use the whiteboard/flipchart paper to note key characteristics (e.g. recognising harmful situations, deciding when it is safe to intervene, asking for help).
2. Introduce and display the STEPS acronym to help the young people think about the different strategies they can use. Link this to the key characteristics they came up with.
3. Divide your young people into small groups and give each group a printed scenario. Using the acronym STEPS, have them discuss and identify:
 - The harmful behaviour in the scenario
 - Where they could step up as an active bystander (What 'STEPS' letter could they use?)
 - Potential risk to themselves and others and how to tackle these safely
 - Summarise the key points and encourage the young people to reflect on how they can apply these skills in their daily lives.

STEPS:

1. **Step Up** – Recognise the problem and intervene directly.
2. **Tell an Adult** – Get help from a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher.
3. **Evidence** – Take a note of what has happened, including what you saw, heard, or know about the situation.
4. **Pull Attention Away** – Take the focus off the problem and shift their attention to something safer.
5. **Support Later** – Follow up and check in with the person after the situation.

Facilitator Notes:

- **Extension Activity: get the young people to act out the scenarios and the strategies they have come up with.**
- **Explore what might be the outcome if no one steps up to being an active bystander.**

STEPS to Being an Active Bystander

S

1. Step Up

Recognise the problem and intervene directly.

T

2. Tell an Adult

Get help from a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher.

E

3. Evidence

Take a note of what has happened, including what you saw, heard, or know about the situation.

P

4. Pull Attention Away

Take the focus off the problem and shift their attention to something safer.

S

5. Support Later

Follow up and check in with the person after the situation.

Step Up Scenarios

Scenario 1:

You're walking down the school corridor when you see your friend, Jamie, being cornered by a group of older pupils. They're shoving him against the wall and threatening him. You notice a few other people watching from a distance, but no one is stepping in to help.

Scenario 2:

At an empty with your friend Alex, you see your two other friends, Sam and Jordan, get into an argument. Things quickly get worse, and Jordan suddenly pulls out a knife in anger. Everyone in the room goes silent, and you can see the fear in Sam's eyes, but nobody is stepping up to help.

Scenario 3:

While waiting at the bus stop with some school pals, you see your younger neighbour Taylor being picked on by a group of boys. They start making fun of her clothes and throwing small objects at her. She looks upset, but the bullying continues as the others at the bus stop pretend not to notice.

Scenario 4:

You're walking home from school when you see two boys you know, Luke and Ryan, start fighting on the street. A group of people gather around to watch, and some begin recording the fight on their phones. The fight becomes more intense, and you can see that neither of them is willing to back down.

Scenario 5:

You're in a group chat with some friends when a couple of them start making fun of another school friend, Morgan. They're sharing embarrassing photos and posting cruel comments. Morgan is still in the chat but isn't responding. You notice that some people are joining in while others, including you, are staying silent.

Scenario 6:

You're in a local shop with a few friends when you notice one of them, Chris, slipping items into their bag without paying. Chris laughs it off and dares the rest of you to do the same. The shop owner is busy helping another customer and hasn't noticed what's happening.

NEW ACTIVITY

Bystander Corner

An Agree/Disagree 'Moving Debate' (group)

Time required

30 minutes

Objective

To encourage young people to think about being an active bystander in real-life situations

Description: Four corners game to explore the young people's thoughts and opinions on when and how they would become an active bystander.

Resources required

Corner signs: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Statements

What to do

1. Place the four signs in different corners of the room.
2. Read each statement aloud and ask the young people to move to the corner that best represents their opinion.
3. In each corner, young people discuss why they chose their answer.
4. Invite young people from selected corners to share their thoughts with the whole group.
5. Highlight examples of where the young people would have been active bystanders and emphasize the positive influence that peers can have on each other.



Bystander Corner Statements

<p>If I see a friend carrying a knife, I should report it to someone I trust.</p> <p>Discuss the responsibility of reporting and the potential consequences for relationships and safety. Is it grassing if you are stopping your friend from making a life changing mistake?</p>	<p>Stepping in to stop an argument before it gets worse can help prevent violence.</p> <p>Consider the risks and benefits of intervening early in a disagreement. Remind them of the importance of keeping themselves safe.</p>
<p>Calling the police when you see someone with a weapon is the best way to protect everyone involved.</p> <p>Discuss the role of police in these situations and any concerns about calling. Highlight anonymous reporting for young people (you can report anonymously through Fearless, the young person's version of CrimeStoppers).</p>	<p>It's safer for you to walk away from a situation where a weapon is involved, even if someone could get hurt.</p> <p>Reflect on the decision between keeping yourself safe and helping others.</p>
<p>Talking to someone you know is involved in knife crime could help them make better choices.</p> <p>Discuss the impact conversations can have on influencing friend's behaviours and the potential risks.</p>	<p>Schools and communities should do more to educate young people about the dangers of knife crime.</p> <p>Consider the role of education and youthwork in prevention and how effective it can be.</p>
<p>Social media can be used effectively to discourage violence and knife crime among young people.</p> <p>Explore the power and limitations of social media campaigns in shaping behaviour.</p>	<p>I would feel comfortable intervening if I saw someone being threatened with a knife.</p> <p>Reflect on the feelings of fear, courage and the possible outcomes of intervening. Emphasis on the importance of keeping themselves safe and the alternatives.</p>
<p>It's more effective to speak to someone privately if I'm worried, they might get involved in knife crime.</p> <p>Discuss the effectiveness of private conversations versus public interventions.</p>	<p>Young people can have a significant impact in preventing knife crime in their communities by supporting each other.</p> <p>Consider the collective power of youth and peer influence in reducing violence.</p>

NEW ACTIVITY

Nae Danger

Grassing Vs Being an Active Bystander

Time required

40 minutes

Objective

To explore the differences between "grassing" and being an "active bystander".

Description

Debate aimed at getting young people to consider where the moral line is between grassing and being an active bystander.

Resources required

None

What to do

1. Ask the young people what "grassing" means to them. Take note of any key characteristics. Do the same for "active bystanders". What do they notice?
2. Explain that there is a moral line where you need to decide at what point stepping up and helping someone is more important.
3. Split the group into two smaller groups giving them a stance:
4. They find out a friend is carrying a knife:
5. **Group A (Grassing):** Will argue that they wouldn't "grass" on their pal.
Group B (Active Bystander): Will argue that reporting is essential for protecting others and preventing harm.
6. Facilitate a discussion reflecting on the arguments made by both sides. Encourage young people to share their views and how the debate may have influenced their thinking about reporting harmful behaviour.

Facilitator Questions:

- What might happen if no one steps up?
- What's the difference between grassing and being an active bystander?



3.6

Risks and Consequences

Carry a Knife and It Might Get Used Which Could Lead to Fatal Consequences

Building trust through honest communication

Most prevention work is based on the principle of information giving – that armed with the correct information, young people are likely to make better-informed choices. Information must be given free of judgement, so that young people can make up their own minds. If they make a choice based on facts, it is much more likely to have a lasting impact on future behaviours.

The principle of 'informed choice' was pioneered in the field of drug and alcohol awareness and revolved around an informational need to dispel myths and disinformation about substance use. 'Just Say No' approaches were found to have a short-lived usefulness but offered less lasting impact on young people's health behaviours.

Often the commonest myths originate from what young people are informally telling each other. By giving young people access to the correct information, particularly around risks and consequences, young people are not only able to make better-informed choices for themselves but are also able to inform and educate their peers.

The biggest myth and therefore the biggest challenge for practitioners is to convince young people that carrying a knife will not make them safer. In fact, the reverse is true

Why scare tactics don't work

Building trust through honest communication is crucial. Providing information without embellishment builds trust between educators, law enforcement, and young people. When information is perceived as honest and straightforward, it is more likely to be believed and internalised. Overly dramatic or exaggerated scenarios might be dismissed as unrealistic, leading young people to ignore the underlying message.

Practitioner Considerations

- Give young people factual information.
- Do not judge, try to persuade them to your viewpoint or sensationalise! Be as straightforward as possible. Young people will decide for themselves.



Who's the Sharpest?

'Knife Knowledge' Quiz – What do you think?

See who knows the most about knife crime!

True or False?	TRUE	FALSE
Knife crime is on the increase		
Scotland has a worse problem than England with knife crime		
Men are more likely to carry knives than women		
Most people who carry knives are under 25		
It's legal to carry a knife		
It's more likely that you will be stabbed by a stranger		
Police can stop and search you if they think you are carrying a knife		
You are less likely to be attacked if you carry a knife		
If you have a criminal record, you will not be allowed into the USA		
It is legal to sell a knife to someone over 16		
You can still go to prison even if you don't use a knife		
If you tell the police that you were carrying a knife because you were afraid, then you can be let off with just a warning		
You can get away with carrying a weapon if it is not a knife, say a sharpened metal comb		

Who scored the most?

The Answers

Who knew the most about knife crime?

Knife crime is on the increase **TRUE**

Knife crime has dramatically reduced in Scotland and is no longer as common as it was. In 2009 (the year No Knives Better Lives started) you were 64% more likely to risk injury through stabbing. However, over the past 5 years there has been a slight year on year increase, despite this we are not at the same levels of knife carrying as in the mid-2000s.

Scotland has a worse problem than England with knife crime **FALSE**

Whereas Scotland has often had a reputation for violence (Glasgow used to be referred to as the Murder Capital of Europe in the mid-2000s), the reality is different these days. The problem of knife crime is worse in London and seems to be fuelled by violent gangs and organised crime rings. Other cities in the Midlands are experiencing issues like those in London. By comparison, Scotland is relatively peaceful, though this is not a reason to be complacent about tackling knife crime.

Men are more likely to carry knives than women **TRUE**

A lot more likely! 85% of people convicted of carrying knives were men.

Women are more likely to be victims of knife crime **FALSE**

Knife crime is predominantly a male-on-male activity. Men are far more likely to be the victims of knife crime than women.

Most people who carry knives are under 25 **FALSE**

The average age of someone convicted of carrying a knife in Scotland is 29. Most young people do not carry knives. We think that knife carrying is not seen as either cool or safe amongst young people.

It's legal to carry a knife **FALSE**

It is illegal to carry a knife or offensive weapon in a public place without a reasonable excuse. Reasonable excuses include work use, such as knives for carpet fitting and fishing, but this only applies whilst in the workplace. You can get up to 5 years for carrying a knife.

It's more likely that you will be stabbed by a stranger **FALSE**

Most people who are stabbed know the perpetrator. You are unlikely to be stabbed by a stranger.

Police can stop and search you if they think you are carrying a knife **TRUE**

Police can legitimately stop and search you if they suspect you of carrying a knife.

You are less likely to be attacked if you carry a knife **FALSE**

You are more likely to be attacked if you carry a knife, or have that knife used against you.

If you have a criminal record, you will not be allowed into the USA **TRUE**

The USA and other places such as Australia and Canada are very strict about letting people into the country with criminal records. You will be highly unlikely to gain entry to those countries with a criminal record.

It is legal to sell a knife to someone over 16 **FALSE**

It is illegal to sell a knife or any bladed article to anyone under the age of 18 unless it is a domestic knife (cutlery). It is illegal to sell even a domestic knife to anyone under the age of 16.

You can still go to prison even if you don't use a knife **TRUE**

You could be sent to prison for murder or attempted murder even if you didn't have or use the knife. If you are with someone who does use a knife and harms someone you could be found guilty under the 'joint enterprise' rule.

If you tell the police that you were carrying a knife because you were afraid, or were carrying it for someone else then you can be let off with just a warning **FALSE**

If you are caught carrying a knife, it doesn't matter if it was for your own protection, or you were carrying it for someone else – you can be prosecuted, and the police are unlikely to let you off. The police will have heard both excuses many times.

You can get away with carrying a weapon if it is not a knife, say a sharpened metal comb **FALSE**

The legal definition of an offensive weapon includes anything that is intended to harm another person, such as a sharpened comb. It is also illegal to carry a 'disguised knife' – anything with a concealed blade or a sharp point that's made to look like an everyday object (like a pen, a lipstick or a cigarette lighter). You can still get up to 5 years.

Facilitator Notes:

- **The aim of the quiz is to reassure young people about knife crime and knife carrying in a way that is both interactive and fun. Try and make the quiz as fun as possible!**
- **Remember – knife crime is rare.**
- **Give the facts about knife crime without sensationalising. Young people are more likely to be turned off by attempts to scare them.**
- **Don't forget to take a prize for the winning team – they might not forgive you!**

Risky Business

High Risk/Medium Risk/Low Risk Discussion (group)

Time required

30 Minutes

Description

Group discussion

Objectives

To engage with young people around risk and possible strategies for avoiding risk

Resources required

Scenarios and High Risk, Medium Risk, Low Risk written on 3 sheets of flipchart paper

What to do

1. Photocopy the Risky Business scenarios.
2. Hand out the scenarios to individuals, pairs or small groups depending on the size of the group
3. Ask each to consider whether their scenario is high risk, medium risk, or low risk and get them to place their statement on a piece of paper explaining their choice.
4. Ask them to justify their choice and whether the rest of the group agrees or disagrees.
5. Often these scenarios lead onto a discussion about real life scenarios. Be aware of confidentiality – you might have to ask the group members not to share any personal information or share 'real' names.

Facilitator Questions:

- What are the risks? (worst case scenario!)
- How could they be safer?
- Could they do anything differently?
- Could someone have helped them?
- Could they ask for help?



Risky Business Scenarios

Carrying a knife for protection	Starting a fight at a party	Having unprotected sex
Walking home alone	Passing out in a doorway	Mixing drugs with alcohol
Getting a lift from a drunk driver	Sending a naked selfie on Snapchat	Meeting a Tinder date for the first time
Vaping at school	Eating cannabis infused chocolate	Texting someone you hate

You can invent some more scenarios of your own, and even customise them to match local problems in your community.

Body Bits

Drawing Group Discussion (group)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

The implications of being stabbed

To dispel the common myth that there is a 'safe' place to stab someone

Description

Drawing group activity and discussion

Resources required

- Pens and large paper (to draw round someone) either flipchart paper (6 x pieces) placed together or newspaper roll.
- The set of pictures of major organs (included in this toolkit)
- A ruler

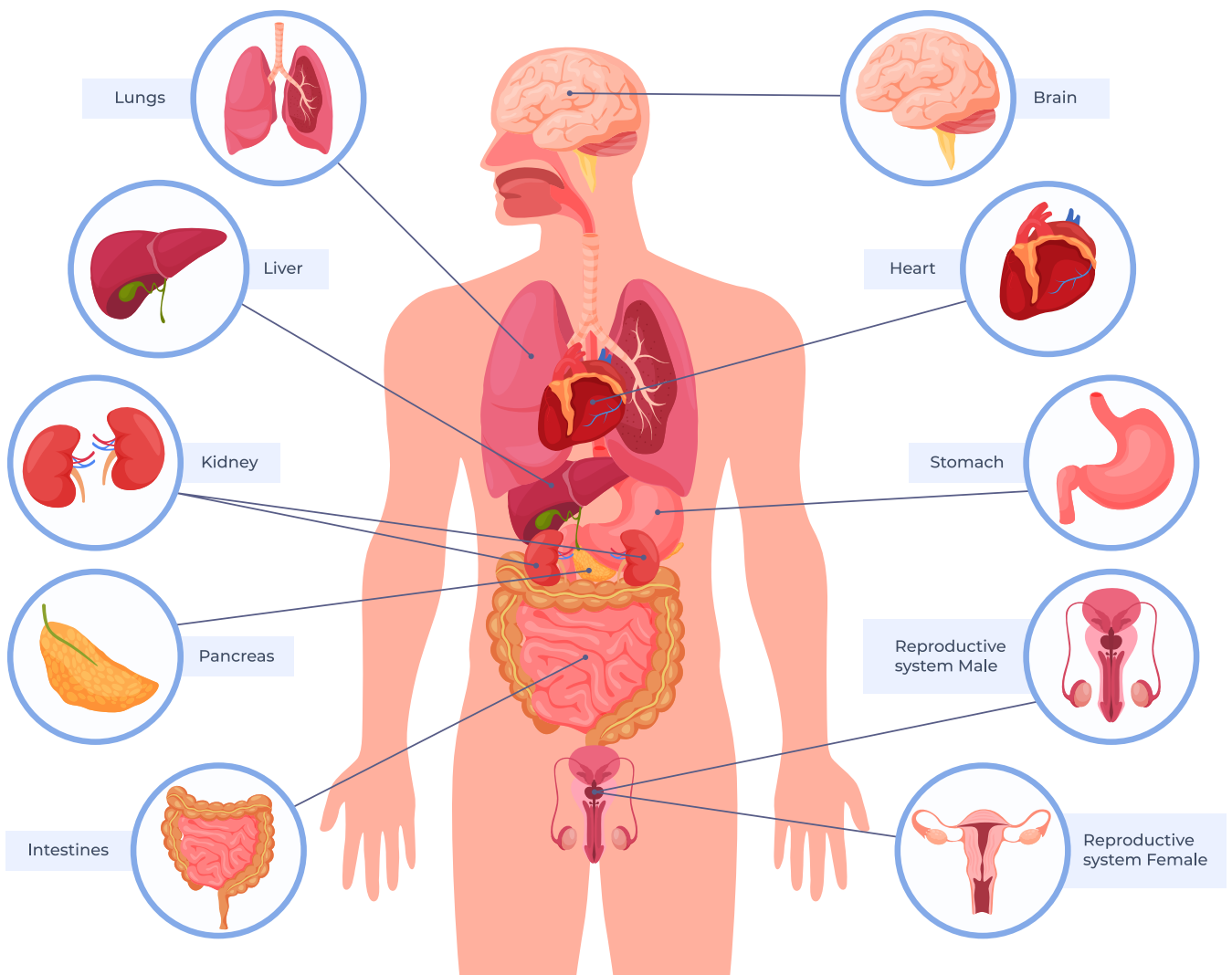
What to do

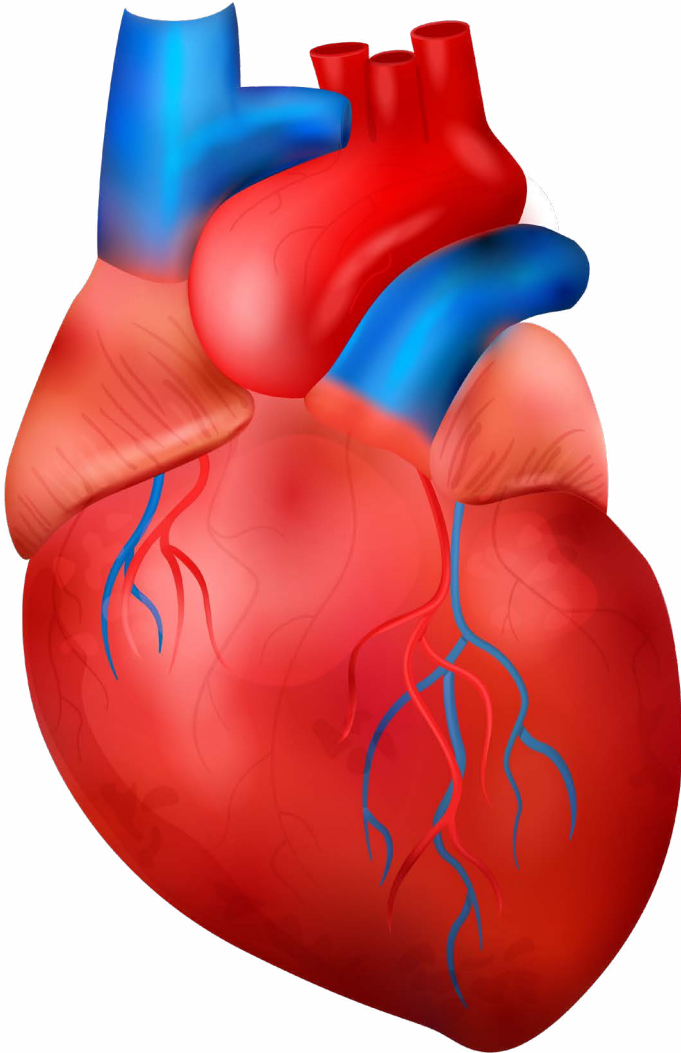
1. This activity can be done in small groups or in one big group
2. Draw round a person in the group to create a life size body outline on the paper (this may look a little like the chalk outline of a crime scene)
3. Ask the group members to place the pictures of the organs where they think they should go on the outline of the body.
4. Use the anatomical picture to the next page to ensure that the organs are in the correct position.
5. Insert adapted image of the body showing additional lungs and heart

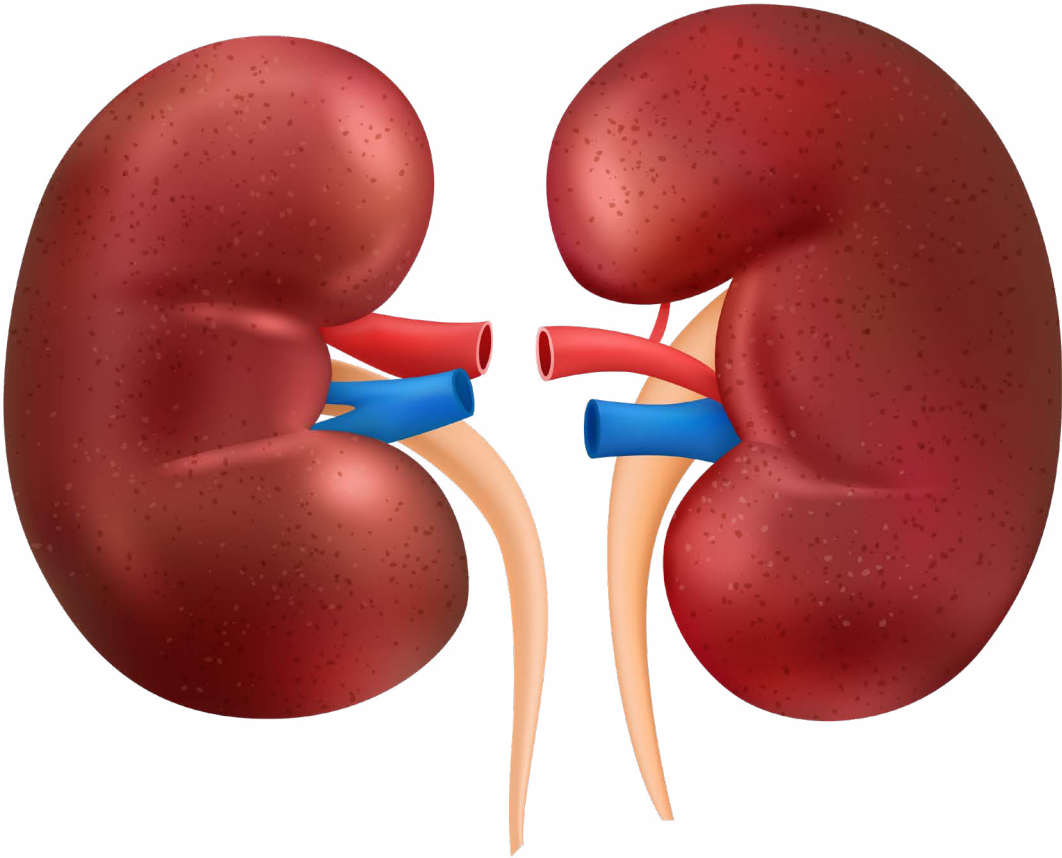
Facilitator Questions:

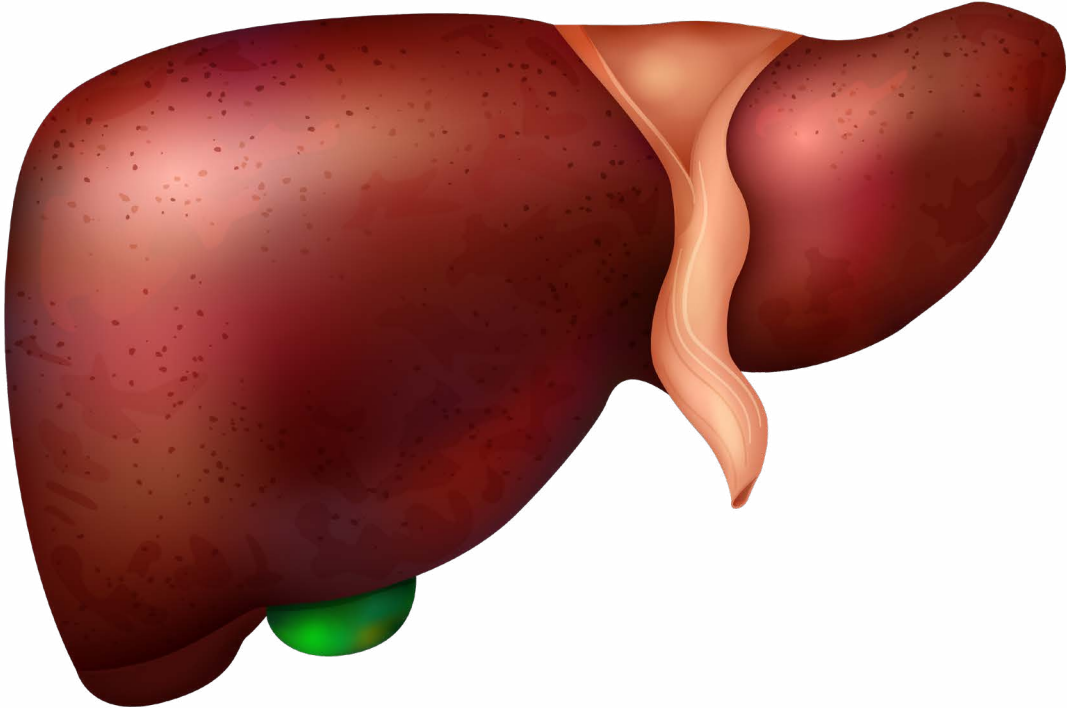
- What would happen if you were stabbed in each of these organs?
- Is there a safe place to stab someone? Show me?
- How long does it take to bleed out if a major artery is cut?
- How long would it take an ambulance to get here?
- What damage would do if you were stabbed by a one inch/three inch/six-inch blade?
- (If you use Mark's Story) Thinking back to the film Mark's Story, where do you think Ian was stabbed?
- Do you think Ian died?

THE HUMAN BODY

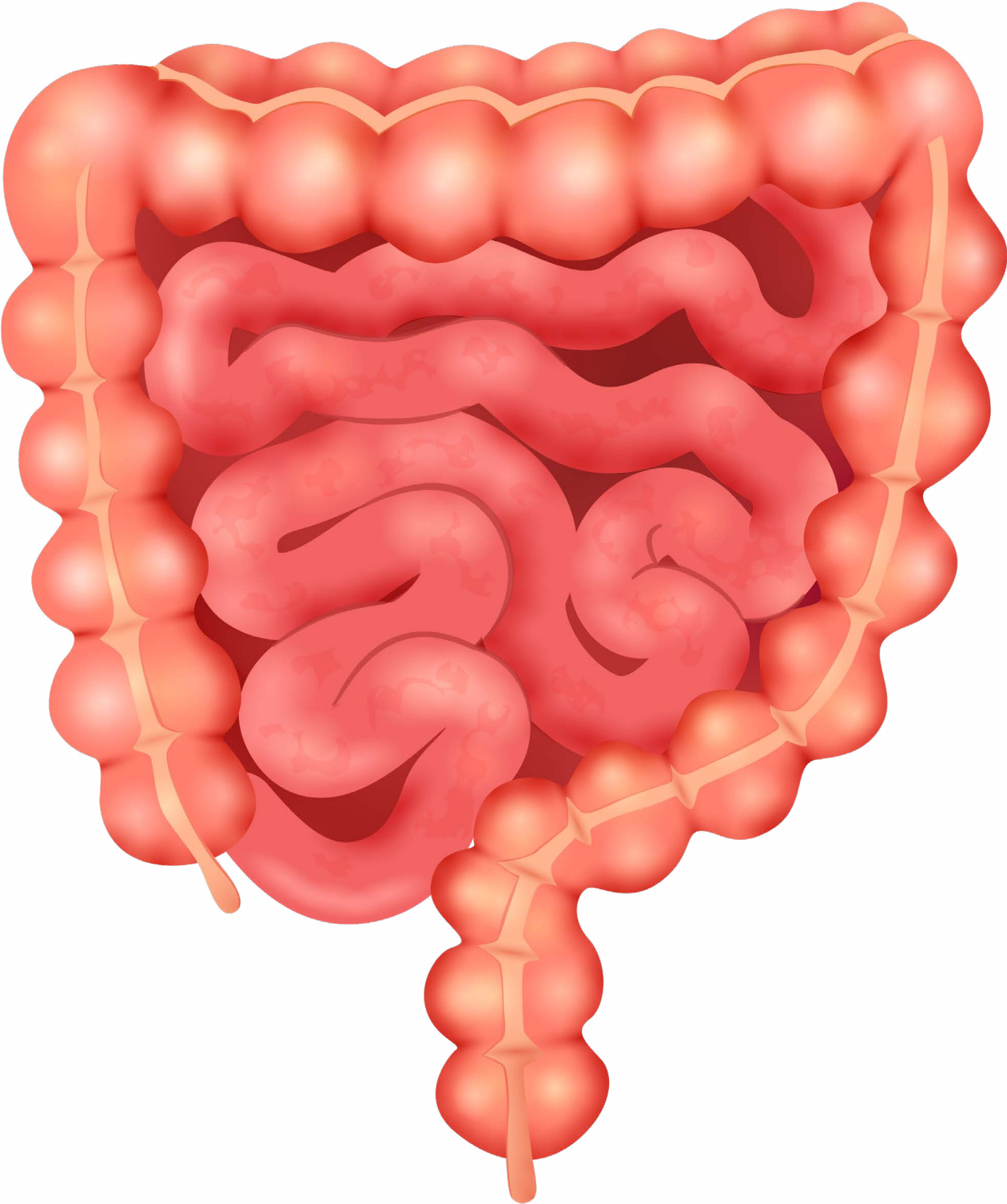


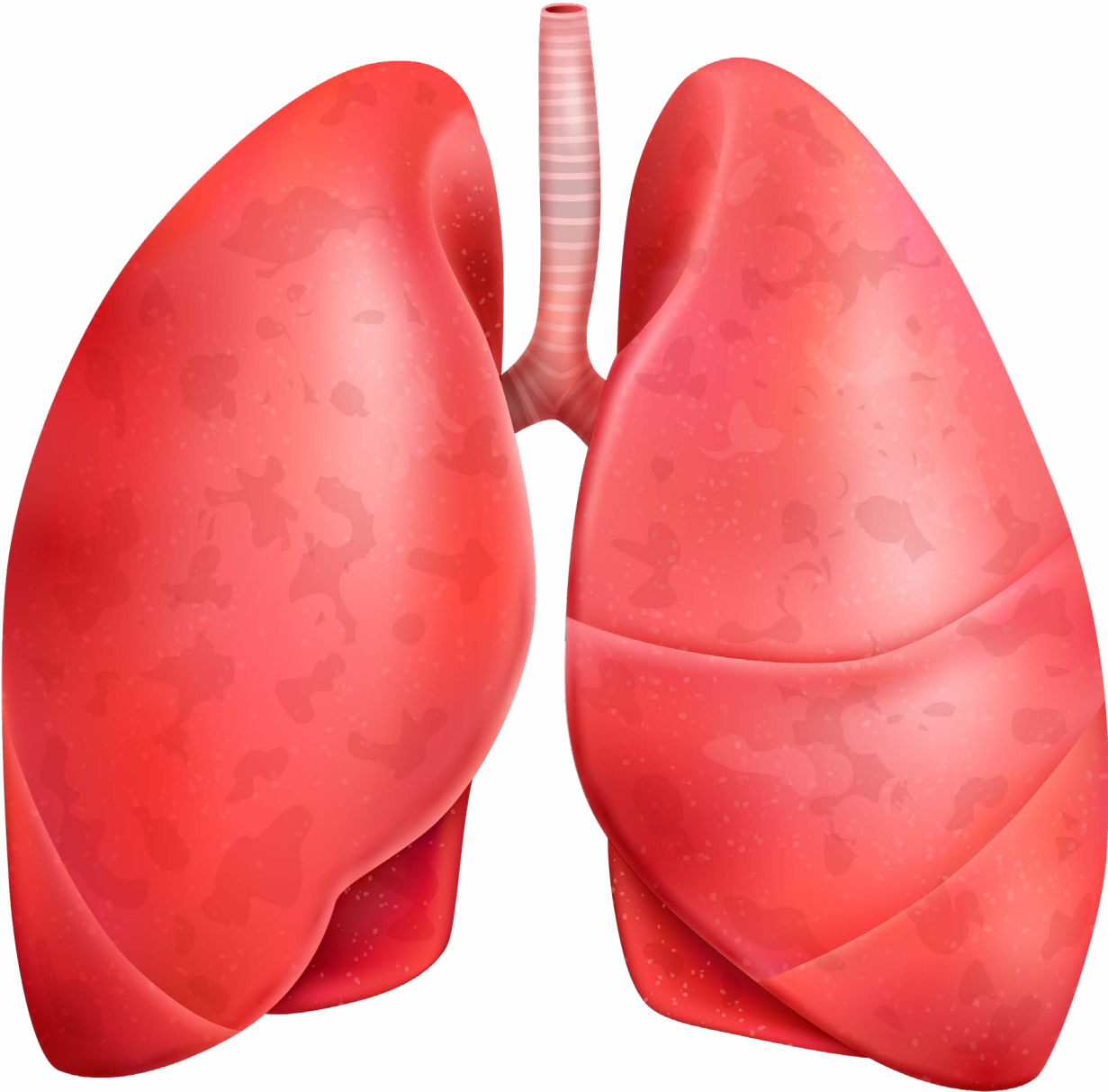












3.7

Resilience

Have the Confidence to Resist Knife Carrying in the First Place

Building resilience and encouraging positive choices in young people

Building resilience and encouraging positive choices in young people regarding youth violence requires a comprehensive approach that includes personal development, strong support systems, and creating safe, nurturing environments. By focusing on these areas, young people can develop the skills and confidence needed to resist negative influences and make decisions that lead to a healthy, productive future. A resilient young person is far less likely to become embroiled in violence or act out with violence.

The role of pro-social adults

The presence of pro-social adults is crucial in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable young people to resist negative peer pressure. Support, advice, and love from caring adults are especially valuable for those who may lack positive adult influences in their lives, providing essential protective connections.

Practitioner Considerations

- Are you encouraging activities that build self-esteem and confidence, such as sports, arts, and hobbies, which help young people resist peer pressure and make healthier choices? Outdoor activities are great for this!
- Can you encourage involvement in groups and activities that promote positive interactions?
- Are you able to offer or signpost to workshops on conflict resolution, anger management, and effective communication which help young people navigate challenging situations?
- Are you engaging with community organisations, schools, and local authorities in creating safe spaces for young people, including after-school programmes, youth centres, and sports leagues?
- Are there underlying issues that need addressing, as many young people involved in violence have underlying issues such as trauma, depression, or anxiety?



No knives, better lives
www.noknivesbetterlives.com

It's Okay/Not Okay

A Scenario Activity About Risk and Having the Resilience to Cope (group)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

To engage with young people around risk and possible strategies for avoiding risk

Description

Group discussion that helps people talk through strategies and have the resilience to avoid risky situations

Resources required

Statements and It's Okay/Not Okay flipchart sheets

What to do

1. Place the 2 (It's okay/not okay) flipchart sheets of paper a distance apart on the floor. The group participants can either be seated in a circle or be standing.
2. Hand out the statements to the group.
3. Ask each person to read out their statement and place it on either the It's Okay or It's Not Okay sheet.
4. Explain that Okay is where they feel comfortable and confident about a situation, and Not Okay is where they find something uncomfortable, unacceptable or worrying.
5. Discuss each statement in turn, asking why the person has placed it where they did.
6. If a person has placed their statement on the Not Okay sheet, ask them why, and what might be the risks associated with the scenario. Next, ask the group members to suggest ways of making the situation safer, ways they could be more assertive and what might a potential solution be to a problematic scenario.
7. Discuss any statements left in the middle, until a consensus can be reached.



It's Okay/Not Okay Statements

<p>A person you fancy asks for a naked photo</p>	<p>You miss the last bus back from town and must walk home on your own</p>
<p>A friend of your Mum's asks for a kiss at a party</p>	<p>A boy/girlfriend from a rival gang starts to flirt with you during a chance meeting at the shops</p>
<p>A mate of yours is very drunk at a party – she is being sick and feels faint</p>	<p>A mate dares you to walk across a ledge on a high railway bridge</p>
<p>Someone keeps sending you abusive text messages threatening you</p>	<p>You are in a public toilet and a drunk stranger approaches you</p>
<p>Your friend asks you to carry a knife for him</p>	<p>A girl from school shouts insults at you in the street and has told her friends that you hit her</p>
<p>A mate of yours offers you a lift home in his car – you know he has been smoking weed</p>	<p>After a football match, you're caught in the wrong part of town wearing the opposing team football shirt</p>
<p>A lad at school has been caught smoking – he tells the teacher that you gave them to him</p>	<p>You hear that a guy from a rival gang wants to arrange a fight with you</p>
<p>Your friends are shoplifting in town and want you to go too</p>	<p>You are going to a party and everyone wants you to go into the off licence to buy vodka as you look the oldest</p>

What's My Armour?

A Drawing Activity Exploring Protective Factors (group icebreaker)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

Explores the protective factors that increase resilience

Description

Group activity/art/discussion

Resources required

Flipchart paper and coloured pens

What to do

1. Explain the following
 - **Protective factors are things that can contribute to resilience and the ability to resist negative peer pressure such as knife carrying.** A young person with a lot of protective factors – such as a good group of pals, parents who are caring, positive relationships with teachers – will be far better equipped to resist knife carrying.
 - **Many protective factors are out of a young person's control.** For example, who your parents are, the neighbourhood you grow up in, cannot be changed. However, plenty of factors can be controlled. They can choose the people in their life, how they cope with problems, and (mostly) how they spend their days.
2. Using a sheet of flipchart paper create an individual suit of armour by folding the paper in half and making a hole in the fold for the head to go through. This is your armour.
3. Decorate the front and back with the people you know from the following areas of your life whose advice, guidance and support would help you stay out of trouble.
4. You can divide up the categories into people you know well on the front (i.e. family and friends) and people from supportive places on the back (i.e. school and community).
 - **FAMILY**
 - **FRIENDS**
 - **SCHOOL**
 - **COMMUNITY**



Facilitator Notes:

- **These people are your armour, protecting you from risks.**
- **Remember that you have these people in your life and can trust them to help you.**
- **You don't need loads of people to be part of your armour – research shows that even one person can make a difference.**

A Problem Shared

A Peer Problem Solving Exercise (group)

Time required

40 Minutes

Objectives

Explores group's own resilience/knowledge/ strengths/peer support

Description

A peer problem solving group discussion or 'conch' discussion

Resources required

A 'conch' which could be anything to hand – a wig, a wand, a puppet, a hat, a scarf etc. You will need pieces of paper or post-it notes for people to write their problem on. A hat or receptacle to post the letters in.

The term 'conch' comes from the book 'Lord of The Flies' by William Golding and represents a powerful symbol of democracy. The person holding the 'conch' can speak uninterrupted.

What to do

1. Explain that only the person with the 'conch' can talk at any one time. This will prevent people from all talking at once and give the discussion a sense of order. This method works well with talkative/lively groups, encouraging less confident group members to speak with the aid of the 'conch.'
2. Allow the group time to write their problems out on the pieces of paper. The problems are anonymous or could be signed using an alias (i.e. Depressed of Dundee, Irritated of Inverness, Glum from Glasgow etc.)
3. A volunteer reads out the first problem and then selects a group member they think might be able to help or empathise with the problem.
4. The Advisor will be whoever has the 'conch.' They give advice on the problem that has been read out and can nominate further contributors by passing the 'conch' to them.
5. People who have opinions can request the 'conch' to express them.
6. Once the reader of the problem is satisfied that they have enough good advice, then whoever is left with the 'conch' reads the next problem out and picks a new person to address them.
7. Repeat this process until all the problems have been resolved.

3.8

Regulation

The Ability to Understand and Manage Your Reaction to Strong Emotions

Self-regulation, anger management and reducing impulsivity

Self-regulation and anger management are crucial skills for young people to prevent behaviours like carrying knives. These strategies help them manage emotions, make better decisions, and reduce the likelihood of violence. Here are effective methods and their importance:

Recognising triggers is key: young people should identify stressors, such as specific situations, people, or events, and keep a journal to spot patterns. They should also learn early signs of anger, like a racing heart or clenched fists.

Developing healthy coping mechanisms: like deep breathing, muscle relaxation, or meditation can calm the mind and body. Regular physical activity, such as running, swimming, or playing sports, also reduces stress and aggression.

Taking "time out" when feeling angry provides a break to cool down and approach situations more calmly: mindfulness practices, such as meditation, increase emotional awareness and control. Encouraging young people to label their emotions, like saying "I am feeling frustrated," helps them manage their feelings better.

These skills are particularly important for preventing knife carrying. Managing emotions reduces impulsivity, helping young people avoid dangerous snap decisions. Effective anger management and self-regulation de-escalate potentially violent situations, reducing the likelihood of resorting to weapons. When young people feel in control of their emotions, they are less likely to carry a knife for protection or power.

Teaching self-regulation and anger management is critical for preventing violence and promoting overall well-being and positive development in young people.

BOOM!

Understanding What Triggers, And What Soothes Us

Time required

20 Minutes

Objectives

Group warm up and icebreaker that introduces the concept of 'triggers'

Also engenders empathy and facilitates a group getting to know each other

Description

An icebreaker/circle exercise

Resources required

Group work – balloons, flipchart paper or whiteboard and markers

Facilitator Notes:

- It's good to share what triggers us and what strategies can help. This helps build empathy and respect for future discussions and how the group can help to support one another.
- People have different triggers, so be aware of this, but also support each other through the process.
- If the balloon does burst, then you can talk about what this means for a person emotionally.
- How about what happens when we are overwhelmed? What happens when we go BOOM!?

What to do

1. Give everyone a balloon
2. Ask everyone in the group/circle to think of a situation where they have felt triggered (a trigger is something that gives us strong emotions) i.e. my teacher told me I was stupid. Go round the room/circle.
3. Write these on a flipchart
4. If the situation shared would also trigger you, then blow into you balloon (sometimes one goes BOOM!)
5. Go round the room again, but this time ask everyone to give an example of feeling soothed i.e. I was asked to try for the local football team or felt listened to.
6. If the situation described would also soothe you, then let a little air out of your balloon.
7. At the end of the session some people may have very different sizes of balloons.



NEW ACTIVITY

Surf The Urge

An Activity About Resisting Reactive Urges (group)

Time required

25 Minutes

Objectives

Group activity to explore resisting unwanted urges.

Description

A group discussion that follows on from the BOOM activity

Resources required

Handout of wave, flipchart paper or whiteboard and markers

What to do

Explain that: Urge surfing is a technique for managing your unwanted behaviours. Rather than giving in to an urge, you will ride it out, like a surfer riding a wave. After a short time, the urge will pass on its own. This technique can be used to stop emotional reactions such as "blowing up" when angry, gambling, substance misuse and other unwanted behaviours. An urge is temporary and will pass.

How to Practice Urge Surfing

1. Acknowledge you are having an urge because you have been triggered.
2. Notice your thoughts and feelings without trying to change or suppress them. Note: It is normal to feel some discomfort during an urge.
3. Remind yourself... It is okay to have urges. They are natural reactions to triggers and habits. An urge is a feeling, not a "must." I can have this feeling and choose not to act.

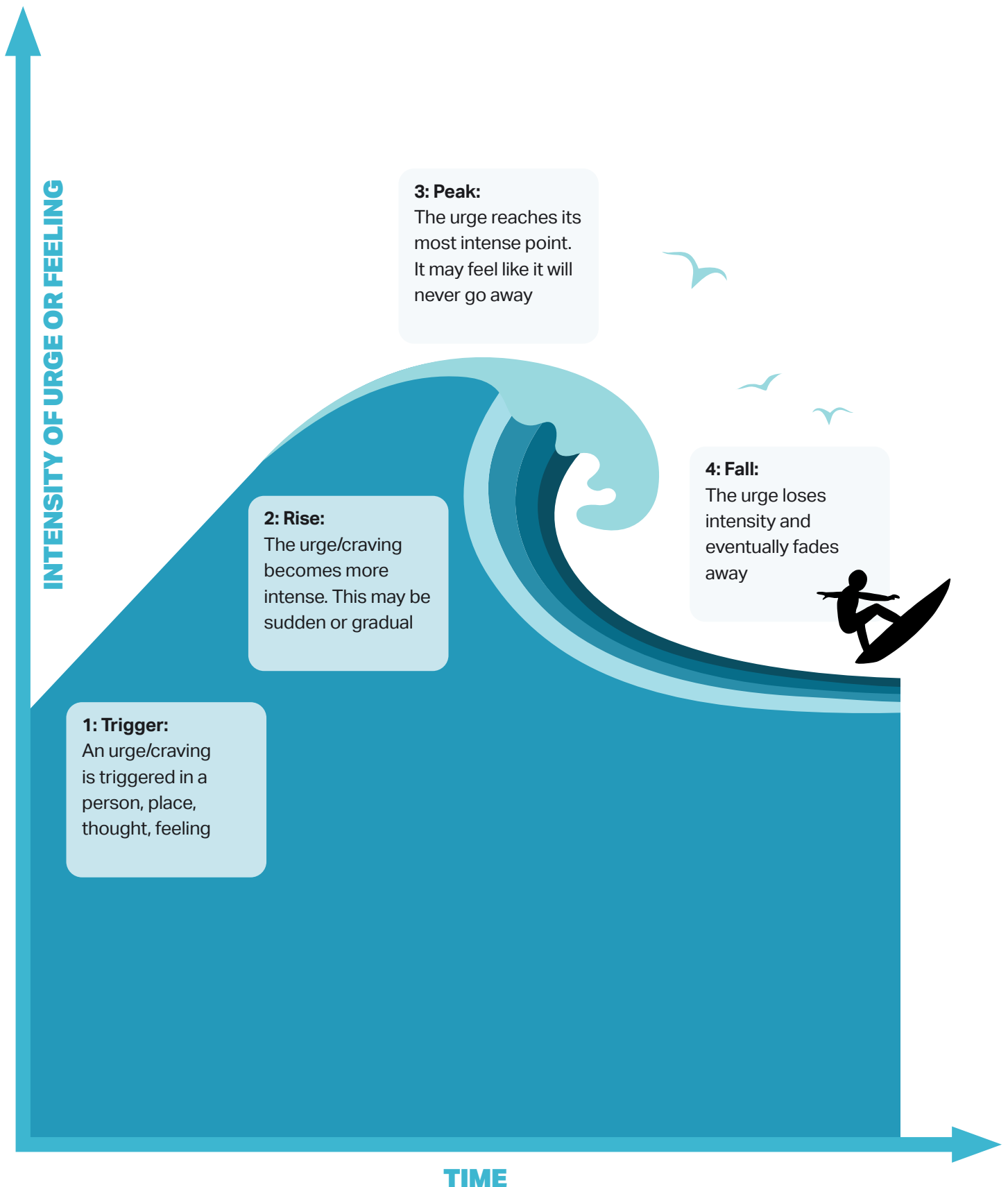
Facilitator Questions:

- What are your triggers?
- Describe a time you were triggered and reacted badly?
- What strategies could you use to 'surf the urge'?
- What delaying tactics could you use? – remember the 'urge' like a wave weakens over time.
- Write these down (you can use the image of the wave)

Remember that you could use the 'surf the urge' technique to calm down a friend who has been triggered, and this way avoid an escalation of a situation or a fight.



Surf The Urge Wave Image



NEW ACTIVITY

Act Not React!

A Roleplay Exercise (in threes)

Time required

25 Minutes

Objectives

A three-person warm up and energiser that introduces the concept of 'acting' and 'reacting' especially

Also, it's fun! Breaks down barriers. Can lead on to a discussion about emotional regulation

Description

An energiser/group work activity

Resources required

Conflict statements

What to do

Explain that everyone is to pick up one of the conflict statements (you could also get the group to write down their own conflict statements).

Assign the following 3 roles:

- The Reader of the statement and observer of the action
- The Person who immediately reacts to the statement
- The Person who takes a pause before responding/acting

The reader reads out a conflict statement. We have responses from both The Person who immediately reacts to the statement and The Person who takes a pause before responding.

Facilitator Questions:

- What was your gut reaction?
- How did you deal with the conflict statement?
- Was it easier to react or respond/act?
- How would or could you manage this better?



Conflict Statements Cards

<p>You hear that a friend has told someone else that you are boring and not really a friend of theirs</p>	<p>Someone you like has defriended you on social media</p>	<p>You are added to a Snapchat group that wants to start a fight between you and another person</p>
<p>Your friend has taken something of yours and is denying it</p>	<p>Someone insults your mum</p>	<p>Your best friend has told someone else something you wanted kept secret</p>
<p>Someone else has stolen your idea for a school project and has won a prize</p>	<p>There is insulting graffiti about you in the toilet, and you think you know who wrote it</p>	<p>Your partner has snogged someone in your class</p>
<p>Someone makes fun of your clothes</p>	<p>An ex has ghosted you</p>	<p>Your friend refuses to come to your birthday party and won't say why</p>
<p>Someone has posted an embarrassing picture of you on social media, and everyone is laughing at you</p>	<p>Everyone has been asked over to your friend's house except for you</p>	<p>You hear that your friend is going to be jumped after school</p>

3.9

Restorative Approaches

Strengthen Relationships and Build Conflict Resolution Skills

Build a better understanding of the impacts of causing harm and ways to repair it

Restorative approaches are part of wider restorative justice efforts. It is helpful to think of restorative justice and approaches on a spectrum. They are on opposite ends with restorative justice being reactionary, occurring once a crime or harm has already taken place. Taking a restorative approach can be used all the time, no matter if a specific harm has taken place.

In the context of prevention, restorative approaches prioritise strong community relations and understanding; provide an opportunity for young people to share their story without judgement; and places young people as part of the solution.

Using a restorative approach within youth work settings will bolster communities' ability and willingness to repair harm, uphold rights, build stronger relationships, and prevent harmful conflict.

This work is relevant both to young people who have been harmed, and young people who have harmed others, though this is often not binary. Young people who have harmed others have likely been harmed themselves.

The focus is on restoring harm, rather than punishing a crime. It avoids stigmatising and shaming.

Restorative approaches are not about excusing behaviour, in fact, it encourages people responsible to take responsibility for their actions.

Practitioner Considerations

- Weave 'restorative terminology' into your practice:
- Instead of using the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator', in a restorative approach we use the terms 'person harmed' and 'person responsible'.
- Facilitate dialogue by being 'respectful'.
- Reach agreement about what harm has been done and how it can be repaired.

NEW ACTIVITY

Restorative Circle

Circle Activity (group)

Time Required

5 – 30 minutes (depending on group size and prompt)

Objectives

- Build stronger relationships amongst the group.
- Allow space to discuss issues or check in.

Description

Circles are a restorative technique used to strengthen relationships, address unmet needs, and resolve conflict. They can be used in a range of different scenarios from a simple check in/out, to a celebration circle (to share and affirm accomplishments), healing circles (to express emotions and cope with trauma after a specific experience), re-entry circles (to re-integrate people back into the group following absence, expulsion or suspension) and peace circles (to address conflict or behaviour issues and to repair harm caused).

What to do

1. Arrange seats in a circle with no tables in between. All participants should be able to see each other clearly. Everyone should have a place in the circle, including the facilitator.
2. If you think it would be helpful for your group, you can use a 'conch' – something that signifies only the person holding it can speak.
3. We suggest these ground rules:
 - We talk one at a time and listen to each other.
 - We do not share the discussions with others without permission.
 - We are respectful and caring.
4. Explain the questions/prompts for this circle (see examples below). The facilitator or co-facilitator could begin by demonstrating an answer. Then go around one by one in the circle and give each participant the opportunity to contribute. Participation is voluntary so participants can 'pass' if they do not want to speak. This is ok.
5. You can do another round for a further question/prompt. Once each participant has been heard, allow space for any follow up thoughts/comments.

Example circle prompts

Check in/out

- **What has been a high point of your week?**
- **How are you feeling today? Is there anything you feel is important for us to know?**
- **How are we going to work together today?**
- **I used to think.... Now I think....**
- **What do you think went well during the day/session/circle today?**
- **What would you like to change for next time?**
- **One word for how you feel at the end of the day/session/circle.**

Restorative Role Play

Role Play (group)

Time Required

45 minutes (depending on group size and prompt)

Objectives

Reflect on the needs of self and others when experiencing conflict

What to do

1. Get into small groups of about 4-6 people. Each group will choose a scenario (see page 90).
2. Each group should then identify the people involved in the conflict:
 - Person harmed
 - Person responsible for the harm
 - Other relevant people/community
3. The groups will give each person in the group a character. They can make up names for them and a bit more context to the scenario.
4. Next, each character will choose a response type card, either restorative or punitive. They have 10 seconds to think of a response in that style from their character. Each character responds in turn, building the story as they go. Each character can draw one more card to finish the story.
5. Now re-do your scenario with only the restorative responses and integrate a type of restorative process (a conversation or a circle) into the conversation.

Description

Understand different people involved in conflict (e.g. person harmed, person responsible, community)

Restorative response types

- Relationships
- Repair
- Restore

Punitive response types

- Rage
- Revenge
- Reject



Restorative Role Play Scenario Cards

You can't find the new headphones you got for your birthday anywhere. You're hanging out with your friend when you see your headphones inside their bag.

A neighbour tells your parents they saw you stealing from the local shop, but you didn't do it.

Things at home are difficult at the moment and you end up being late for school again. Your teacher gives you a detention.

You missed a goal, knocking your team out of a tournament. Everyone on the team is disappointed.

You've tried really hard to get a top volunteering role and you miss out to someone else from your youth group you know hasn't put as much effort in.

You say something hurtful about a friend and the message is shared with them. They are really upset and don't want to talk to you.

NEW ACTIVITY

What Did I Need?

Restoratively Re-thinking Conflict (group)

Time Required

20 minutes (depending on group size and prompt)

Objectives

Reflect on the needs of self and others when experiencing conflict

Description

Small group work

What to do

Divide the group into pairs or four small groups (depending on group size). Each pair/group will be given a situation.

- What did I need when I was harmed?
- What did I need when I caused harm?
- What did I do when someone told me they were harmed?
- What did I do when someone told me they were responsible for harm?

Each pair/group should note down at least three things for their situation.

Now feedback to the whole group.

- What are the similarities?
- Do we often respond in the way people need? Or is it what we need (e.g. we always offer solutions because we don't like to see friends upset)?

Explain that when people have been harmed their needs can fall under one of these categories:

- Justice
- Respect
- Safety
- Control

Facilitator Questions:

- Do you usually tell someone what you need when you've upset or hurt?
- How could we respond better to make sure people feel respected, safe and in control?

3.10

Reflection

Why Does Violence Occur and What Can I Do to Help Make Scotland a Safe Place for Everyone?

Understanding the consequences of actions and recognise patterns that lead to conflict.

Reflecting on negative experiences, such as instances of aggression, can be particularly enlightening. It enables young people to identify triggers, understand the impact of their actions on others, and develop empathy. This process is essential for breaking the cycle of violence, as it encourages thoughtful responses and non-violent alternatives to conflict.

Practitioners play a pivotal role in encouraging reflection. They can create a safe and supportive environment where young people feel comfortable sharing their experiences without fear of judgment. By guiding reflective discussions, practitioners help young people explore their thoughts and feelings about specific incidents.

Practitioners can model reflective

behaviour, demonstrating how to analyse situations thoughtfully and learn from them. Providing constructive feedback and highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement helps young people develop a balanced perspective on their actions. This guidance is crucial in helping young people internalise the reflective process and apply it to their everyday lives.

Brave Spaces is a new concept which challenges the notion that all youth work is about creating safe spaces – youth workers can encourage difficult conversations around violence, gang membership, grassing and gender-based violence. These conversations aren't meant to be easy, and sometimes young people will have their views challenged. A brave space is where we can encourage some of these more difficult conversations to take place, where participants can reflect and grow.



NEW ACTIVITY

The Brave Tent

Making a Brave Space to Reflect and Learn (ground rules)

Time required

30 Minutes

Description

A group work exercise

Objectives

A 'brave space' is one where young people can challenge and learn from each other – however there are things that need to be in place for challenges to be met with curiosity rather than resistance.

Resources required

Pens and paper

What to do

1. Explain what a Brave Space is - a place where everyone is encouraged to speak openly and listen actively, especially when there are differences in views. You can divide into small groups depending on numbers.

2. Ask participants to consider the following:

Roof of the Tent:

How do we protect this space? What actions or attitudes safeguard its integrity? This might include calling out harmful language, supporting each other in speaking up, and holding each other accountable to respectful dialogue.

Outside the Tent:

What factors might prevent people from entering or engaging fully? This could include fear of judgment, discomfort with differences, or a tendency to stay silent. How can we address these barriers?

Tent Door: What behaviours or practices help people enter the Brave Space? This could involve checking biases, entering with a learning mindset, and respecting diverse perspectives.

**Walls of the Tent:**

What principles or values hold up this space? These might include respect, empathy, open-mindedness, and curiosity. How can we commit to these principles?

Inside the Tent: What does it look like or feel like to be in this space? Consider emotions, behaviours, and attitudes that make it a brave environment. Examples might include listening without interrupting, asking questions for clarity, or being mindful of body language.

Ask each group for feedback and reflect on the answers.

Moral Choices

Complex Reasoning and Ranking Activity (small groups)

Time required

30 minutes

Objectives

To explore our morals and values

Description

Group activity

Resources required

'Moral choices' handout, pens.

What to do

1. Give each participant a 'moral choices' handout and ask them to complete the left-hand column.
2. Alternatively, you can get the group to split into pairs or smaller groups and have a discussion before they fill in the left-hand column.
3. Encourage people to make their choices on what THEY consider to be wrong, not necessarily what is most serious by law.
4. Once they have completed the left-hand column, ask them to come up with suitable punishments (not all are against the law). Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible.
5. Facilitate a discussion around the thinking behind their ideas. Get them to challenge each other. What does the group think about punishment? Why is one action less/more moral than another?

Facilitator Questions:

- How hard/easy was it to decide on your choice ranking?
- Where there any that provoked more debate than others?
- Were there some crimes that were worse than others?
- What do you think of people who commit these crimes?
- Who would get hurt by these behaviours?
- What are the financial implications for victims?
- How do the group's choices compare with the legal seriousness (you could get the group to rank them in terms of the legal consequences)?



Moral choices Handout

Number in order of seriousness (1 most wrong, 10 least wrong)

Throwing stones at a streetlamp and breaking it	
Attempting to have sex with someone who is too drunk to know what is happening	
Stealing a Mars Bar from a shop	
Breaking into a jeweller and stealing £10,000	
Calling a child with a disability a name	
Kicking a dog	
Taking a day off school with friends to drink and hang about the streets	
Breaking into a house while people are asleep in bed	
Vandalising cars	
Carrying a knife	

NEW ACTIVITY

Imagine a Scotland

A Visioning Activity (individual and group)

Time required

30 Minutes

Objectives

- A personal reflection on what a place might look like if violence didn't exist.

Description

A personal exercise

Resources required:

Pens and paper

What to do

1. Begin by asking participants to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax.
2. Then, ask them to **imagine a place where positive and peaceful behaviour is the norm**. Violence does not exist. This could be a real (your own community, county or country) or an imaginary place, and it can be as specific or as general as they like.
3. Encourage them to use their senses to fully immerse themselves in this imagined world. What does it look like? What sounds can they hear? What smells are in the air? What does it feel like to be there?
4. Once they have a clear picture in their minds, ask them to describe this place. What behaviours, attitudes, and traits are considered positive? What values and beliefs underlie this culture of peaceful co-existence? What would happen to anyone displaying harmful or violent behaviour?
5. Next, ask participants to reflect on how they feel in this imagined world. Do they feel safe, respected, and valued? How does this culture of peaceful co-existence impact their own sense of self and their interactions with others?
 - How is this place for young people?
 - How do communities change?
6. Finally, ask participants to consider how they can bring the best elements of this imagined place into being. What changes can they make to promote a more positive, healthy, and inclusive form of masculinity? How can they support and uplift those around them to embrace these values and behaviours?

Facilitator Questions:

- What would this look like for boys and young men?
- What would this look like for girls and young women?
- What would this look like for the community?

SECTION 4

Evaluation

4.1	Evaluation	98
4.2	Certificates	104



4.1

Evaluation

Does What We Do Actually Work?

Question:

How do we know if our session has been successful?

Answer:

Evaluation

We often think of evaluation as a necessary evil - something that the funders want us to do.

However, evaluation can be fun! It can be instructive (to you, the practitioner) without being a jargon overload (for the participants). It will help you to improve your session if you know what young people thought about it.

Your evaluation of the NKBL session will focus mainly on two things:

- **The Process**

And

- **The Outcome**

PROCESS

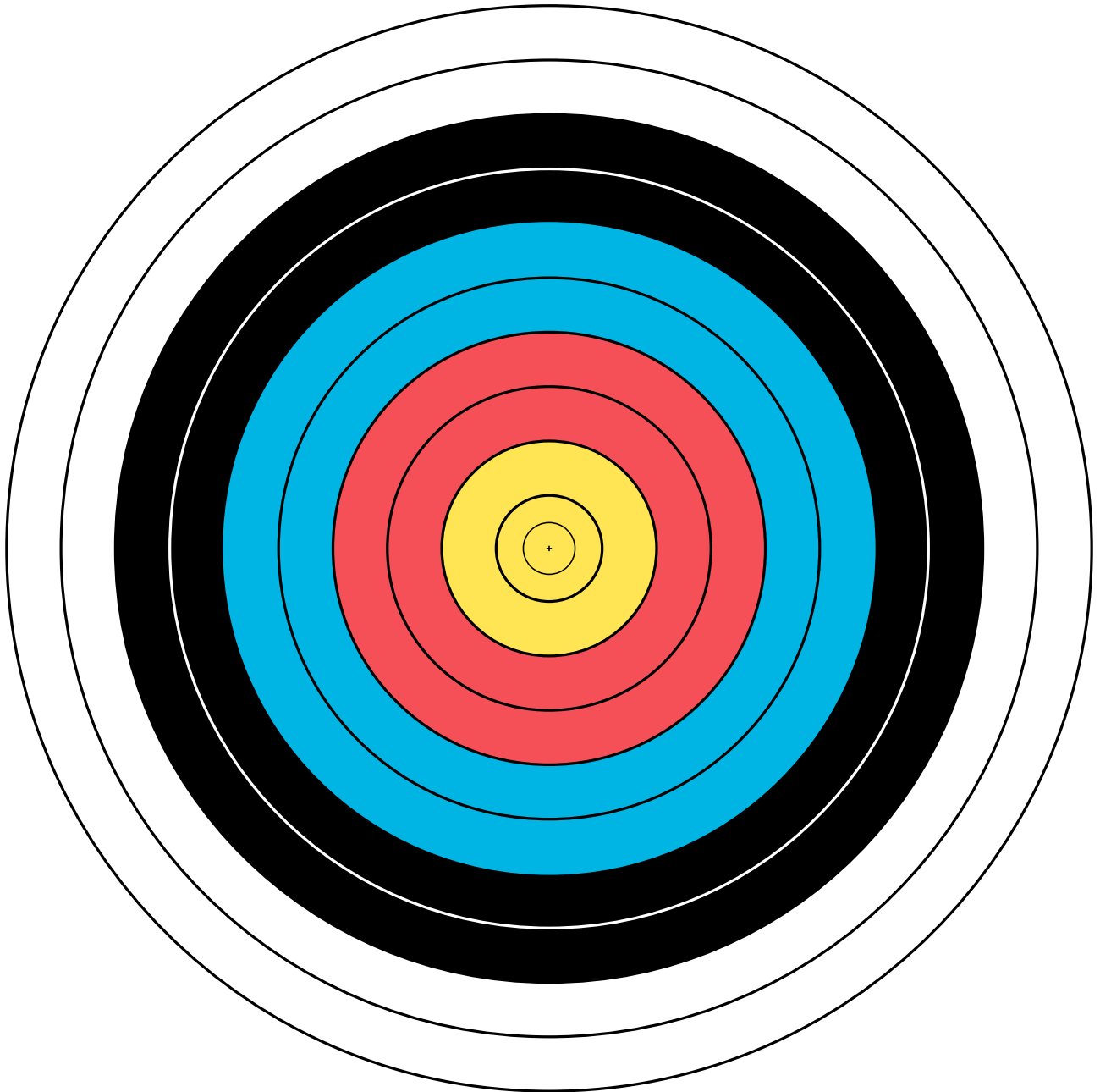
You are asking participants to tell you what methods they preferred, the things they liked about the session, and whether they would have liked more/less interaction. Process evaluation focusses on engagement.

OUTCOME

You are asking participants to tell you what they have learned because of the session and if there is anything that they will do differently. Outcome evaluation focuses on **behaviour change**.

You are likely to want to gather and analyse information from your evaluation quickly. Don't go overboard though, especially if your face-to-face time with participants is limited. Larger impact studies are often commissioned and concluded over longer periods of time. The following tools will tell you if young people enjoyed the session and give you additional data on how they might use the information you have given them.

Off the Mark? Handout



Off the Mark?

A very quick process evaluation

Time required

5 Minutes

Objectives

To quickly find out what young people thought of the session

Description

Group evaluation tool

Resources required

Flipchart paper pens, blue tack

What to do

1. Draw a target on a piece of paper and pin this to the door on the way out of the session.
2. What did you think of the activities in today's session? Place a cross where you think it should go on the target. If it was a BULLSEYE, then let us know! ☺
3. You can use different coloured pens to represent different things if you require more information. For example, a red pen could represent activities, and a blue pen could represent information. You could also ask them to leave post-it notes stating their favourite bit of the session.

Outcome Evaluation

Tracking **behaviour** change

Time required

5 Minutes

Objectives

To quickly find out what changes have occurred in young people's behaviour because of the session

Description

Individual evaluation tool

Resources required

Handout and pens

Or alternatively, you could tailor statements. You may want to ask questions that are most relevant to your community's needs or reflect specific issues that have affected local young people.

Outcome Evaluation - Behaviour Change Handout

Tick one per row

As a result of the NKBL session...	LESS LIKELY	THE SAME	MORE LIKELY
I would carry a knife if I was worried about being hurt			
I would tell someone if my best friend was carrying a knife			
I would know what to do if I saw someone getting stabbed			
I would tell someone I knew that carrying a knife was a bad idea			

Outcome Evaluation

Tracking **knowledge** change

Time required

5 Minutes

Objectives

To quickly find out what changes have occurred in young people's knowledge because of the session

Description

Individual evaluation tool

Resources required

Handout and pens

Or alternatively, you could tailor questions. You may want to ask questions that are most relevant to your community's needs or reflect specific issues that have affected local young people.



Outcome Evaluation - Knowledge Change Handout

Tick one per row

After the NKBL session, I think...	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
It's safe to stab someone in the bum			
You are more likely to be stabbed if you carry a knife			
You won't be arrested if you say you are carrying a knife for someone else			
You can easily get hold of a knife			
The police can't stop and search you if they think you are carrying a knife			

4.2

Certificates

It can be helpful to reward a group with certificates – this will also keep the training in mind and hopefully prolong the memory of the group work activities and discussions for many months afterwards.

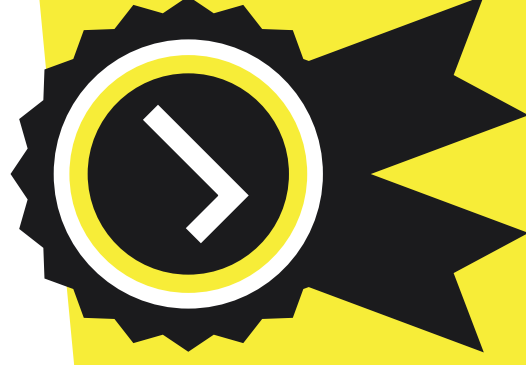
Better Lives Certificate of Completion
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

**TOOK PART IN NO KNIVES BETTER LIVES
TRAINING AND GROUPWORK**

DATE



SIGNED BY



SECTION 5

Further Information

5.1	Online Training	107
5.2	Additional Resources	108



Online Training

If you would like to develop your knowledge and skills further, we have two online micro-modules that can be found on the Learning Hub on the No Knives Better Lives website.

Online E-Learning

Understanding Violence Prevention and Knife Carrying – Theory and Context



This online E-Learning course accompanies the resource, Better Lives and is all about the concepts around violence prevention.

The course is all about developing confidence and knowledge around some of the key principles in delivering violence prevention work. It will familiarise you with terms such as the bystander approach, being trauma informed, using reassurance messaging over fear and using restorative approaches. You can go through the sections online and at your own pace. You can also revisit them, even if you have completed the course. Some of the concepts may be quite challenging if you are new to them or come from an enforcement background.

Online E-Toolbox

Understanding Violence Prevention and Knife Carrying – Toolbox



The toolbox is for anyone wishing to quickly find relevant activities that help young people explore violence prevention and knife carrying.

The online toolbox comprises activities, games and discussion topics from the Better Lives toolkit.

Additional Resources

The No Knives Better Lives website contains several other resources that can help you address specific drivers of violence:



[Quit Fighting for Likes](#)

Explore the campaign and practitioner resources aimed at supporting young people to navigate social media safely and prevent violence.



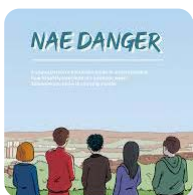
[Your Choice - alcohol & violence prevention toolkit](#)

Information, discussion topics and group activities that can be adapted for facilitating in person or online.



[Imagine A Man - Toolkit](#)

Building positive masculinity with young people.



[Nae Danger: a young person's bystander guide](#)

A young person's bystander guide to understanding how to safely intervene in a situation when someone they know is carrying a knife.



[Insights to Wellbeing](#)

A curriculum designed to reduce risk factors, uncover resiliency, and promote wellbeing.



[Online High](#)

Support young people to tackle online drug-related harm.



[Brief Interventions](#)

Cards to use when you're out and about. Ideal for detached youth workers and street-workers.



[Playing it Safe](#)

Primary school classroom resource.



YouthLink Scotland
Caledonian Exchange
19A Canning Street
Edinburgh, EH3 8EG

T: 0131 313 2488
E: info@youthlink.scot
W: www.youthlink.scot

~~No knives~~
Better lives

 **Scottish Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

YouthLink Scotland is a Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No: 164547. Charity Ref: SC003923



Achieved.
Valid Until
January 2024

SMALL CHARITIES