

Effective Preventative Knife Crime Education

Lesson and Session Plans - Introduction and Guidance

This guidance accompanies the Knife Crime prevention Lesson and Session Plans produced as part of the Effective Preventative Knife Crime Project commissioned by the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit in August 2024. More information about the project can be found on the project overview page.

The project plan consists of two lessons in each of Upper KS2, KS3 and KS4 in England. In addition, for each of the key stages there are two session plans designed to “over teach” the content to children and young people who require additional input in this area due to their individual needs.

The lessons and additional sessions are aimed at those young people who will most likely never be involved in knife crime. They are based on research regarding preventative education by the Youth Endowment Fund, student voice activities across South Yorkshire, and input from Youth Justice Colleagues and Designated Safeguarding leads across the county.

The lessons and sessions aim to empower young people to feel safe in their communities by understanding that the majority of people do not carry a knife and by examining the futility of carrying a knife for protection. They concentrate on identifying healthy relationships and practicing conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques. They also help students to understand the law around knife crime and their legal and moral responsibilities regarding social media interactions. The lessons and sessions also encourage young people to report concerns around knives either to a trusted adult or through the [Fearless](#) campaign.

Why the content is so important.

As part of the planning for this project we visited schools across South Yorkshire and they offered the following opinions on their experience in their education so far, and what they would like to see in future education.

- They did not want to be made more afraid than they are currently.
- They did not want to be scared or traumatised by pictures of knives or harrowing presentations.
- They did not feel assemblies were an effective medium for messages around knife crime.
- They wanted a chance to discuss their concerns with a confident teacher that they know and who knows them.
- They wanted to know and understand the law regarding knife crime.
- They felt that violence can often arise because young people do not understand how to resolve conflict or to de-escalate situations.
- They felt that the “snitches get stiches” concept should be challenged.
- They felt that social media plays a leading role in incidents, and this should be reflected in sessions.
- They were concerned that the young people who need this input the most were often absent from lessons, on partial timetables, not fully engaging with lessons or not understanding the content.

- They felt that the lessons should begin in Upper KS2, to give young people some education before they start secondary school.

Youth Justice colleagues all expressed the viewpoint that young people with speech and language difficulties are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Young people with SEND and other vulnerabilities would have PSHE as their third subject if they were in a specialist provision. It is essential that all our young people are exposed to the learning in these lessons hence the provision of over teaching sessions for each Key Stage through this commission.

Creating A Safe Learning Environment

A safe learning environment is essential in all PSHE lessons but especially in lessons around knife crime. It will allow your students to share their ideas confidently and will allow you to concentrate on managing discussions sensitively and confidently.

Establishing ground rules

Work with the class to remind them of, or indeed to establish ground rules about how they will behave in class but particularly in discussions such as:

- Everyone has the right to be heard and respected, so listen to what others say and show respect by not talking over people.
- Use language that will not offend or upset anyone and avoid stereotypes
- When you give an opinion, try to explain your reasons.
- If you disagree, do so with what is said not with the person who said it.
- We will not judge people or make assumptions about them.
- Do not share personal information or stories about other people. Always make that person anonymous. This may also be wise if the story is about you.
- We won't put people on the spot. Everyone has the right not to comment.
- If you're worried about something that has happened to you or a friend, talk to a member of staff or an adult you trust, after the lesson.
- If a member of staff becomes aware of a risk to a young person's safety, this information may need to be shared.

Additional good practice for teachers:

- Offer opportunities for learners to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class.
- Make an 'Ask-it basket'/question box available for learners to put questions or concerns in (anonymously if they wish), to avoid having to voice them in front of the class.
- Be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – some learners may have direct experience of the issues covered.
- Use and model distancing strategies to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom, to allow learners to explore topics objectively, and to keep the learning environment safe.

- Make sure you ask Safeguarding and Behaviour staff if there is information you need to know about your class in relation to this topic before you start teaching.
- These lessons explore very sensitive topics so it is important that you assume that some children will be affected by the language or scenarios presented and that there is a possibility that this may not be known by anyone in school. Be aware of using language that may elicit feeling of blame or responsibility in innocent victims.
- Always work within the school's policies on safeguarding and child protection, and confidentiality.
- Make learners aware of sources of support, both in and outside the school at the end of every lesson or session.
- Be aware of methods of support for learners in the school.

Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the [PSHE Association](#). We strongly recommend member only documents on [Handling Complex Issues Safely in the PSHE education classroom](#) and [Safe Classroom and Effective Teaching interactive posters](#)

Values underpinning these resources

Learn Sheffield and the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit have the following values underpinning Effective Preventative Knife Crime Education. Those using this resource are expected to commit to these values, and ensure they are reflected in their own practice:

- Safeguarding first: the safety and wellbeing of each child always comes first.
- These resources are designed to empower young people to live safely within their communities. Children have the right to be protected from harm, and to be supported to build knowledge, skills and confidence which will help them identify risk and access support when they need it.
- We oppose the belief that carrying knives gives protection or enhances a young person's credibility.
- We promote the idea that a good friend would always want to prevent their friend from being either a victim or perpetrator of knife crime and so seeking help or reporting could be lifesaving and is not "snitching".
- We aim to promote dialogue in these lessons so that children feel listened to and understood.
- We always signpost children to trusted adults and services where they can get help and support.
- We operate a trauma informed model – no pictures of knives or violent incidents. Alarmist education does not work. Avoid shocking or scaring children and young people and their families. You must not add any such materials to these lessons.
- Challenge victim blaming attitudes: we all have a responsibility to challenge victim blaming whenever it arises.

Before using this resource, it is your responsibility to ensure that:

- You have read and considered all the advice in this document.
- You are following your organisation's policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection, and teaching PSHE.
- The designated person responsible for safeguarding and child protection in your setting is aware that you are teaching these lessons.

Further questions you should consider include:

- To your knowledge, does the content relate in any way to specific incidents involving young people, your organisation, community, or stories currently in the public eye, of which young people may be aware?
- If so, how will you take appropriate account of this and of the likelihood that young people have had experiences related to the issues explored in these lessons, both in the delivery of the lessons and any additional support available to young people?
- If, as a result of the delivery of these lessons, a young person shows signs of distress or wishes to talk to you about a historical or current concern, you should support the individual by following the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures of your organisation. Ask your DSL if you are not sure of these.

As a minimum, these should direct you to:

- Guide the individual to a private space or at least quiet space and ensure a colleague knows where you are and is close by.
- Advise the young person that whilst you will respect their privacy, you cannot guarantee confidentiality. If you feel that they or somebody is in danger, you will need to pass on the information to the appropriate authority. Check that the young person has understood this message.
- Do not give them false promises E.g. "everything will be alright".
- Listen to them, be professionally curious and be conscious that it is a privilege that they have chosen to talk to you.
- Allow them to describe their concerns. Do not ask probing questions or make judgements on what they are telling you. Believe what the child says to you - it is the job of the DSL to decide if it is true or not.
- Do not directly or indirectly shut a young person down (for example through disinterest, body language, rushing them, talking about confidentiality limits without equal or more emphasis on your intention to listen and be sensitive to their needs). Young people who have or are experiencing abuse or harassment often want to disclose this and get help but often do not feel they are given the opportunities to do so.
- Paraphrase what the young person has said to ensure you've fully understood what they're telling you.
- Write down what they have told you using their words as much as possible but do not ask them to do the writing.
- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding and child protection in your organisation the same day if possible.

- For more information, see the statutory safeguarding guidance: [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Challenging victim-blaming attitudes

Be really careful not to do this. If a young person has experience of violent crime or knife crime, then that will be traumatising for them. Do not imply it is in anyway their fault. E.g. “you shouldn’t have been out at that time of night” or “you are too young for that app or game”.

Assessment

Assessment is as central to effective teaching and learning in PSHE education as it is in any other subject. Assessment refers to gauging what has been learned and what still needs to be learned. To support you to assess young people’s learning, these lessons contain:

Baseline activities

This resource covers issues and areas of life which young people may be affected by in different ways and at different times. As such, we cannot make any assumptions based on learners’ age or year group about their knowledge and attitudes. To assess learning and progress effectively, it is important to carry out a baseline assessment before teaching anything new. These activities will help you establish young people’s knowledge and attitudes before new teaching takes place.

Endpoint activities

At the end of each lesson, young people have opportunities to demonstrate the progress they have made from their starting point assessed in the baseline activity. Many of these activities demonstrate progress by asking young people to revisit the original baseline activity and add their new learning.

Signposting support and support for learners

Ensure that young people know where they can seek help and advice, both now and in the future, if they are worried or concerned about knife crime or any other issues brought up in the lessons and small group activities. This should include support available in school such as teachers, form tutors, heads of year, or safeguarding leads and child protection team members as well as trusted adults outside of school.

Support from the following external organisations is shared within the lesson plans:

- [Fearless](#)
- [South Yorkshire Police](#)
- [Childline](#)