



# **SOUTH YORKSHIRE KNIFE CRIME APPROACH**

**2024-2027**



City of Doncaster Council



South Yorkshire FIRE & RESCUE



South Yorkshire POLICE



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# 1.0 The Need for Knife Crime Approach

## 1.1 Knife Crime Offending

'Knife crime' currently dominates the headlines in social media and news. It is an international issue and reports of stabbings in the news increases fear and worry in communities. But there is nothing new about knife crime: sharp objects, blades and knives have been used as weapons for thousands of years. Knife crime is a persistent problem in the United Kingdom. It has become synonymous with the issue of youth violence and its devastating consequences for young people, families and communities <sup>1</sup>.

The rate of knife enabled most serious violence has been slowly decreasing between Q1 2019/2020 to Q2 2023/2024, although there is great variability between quarters. This suggests the actions of South Yorkshire's Violence Reduction Unit, partners in violence reduction, and our communities are contributing to reducing knife enabled most serious violence <sup>2</sup>.

Despite some large variations, Doncaster has seen an overall decrease in the 60 months covered. Sheffield, on the other hand, has seen a slight increase. Rotherham and Barnsley are consistently lower in their rate of knife enabled most serious violence than the other two districts.

## 1.2 Crime Data

South Yorkshire had the 4th highest rate of offences involving knives or sharp instruments nationally, at 119.0 per 100,000. For all age groups, South Yorkshire (SY) had the 4th highest rate of admission in hospitals due to injury from knives or sharp objects in the year ending March 2023, at 91 admissions per million population, and the 8th highest for those aged under 25 at 86 per million (SVD 2024) <sup>3</sup>.

The following table shows the latest on total number of offences in SY involving knife year ending 2023 <sup>4</sup>:

Total of selected serious offences	Total of selected serious offences (%)	Attempted murder offences	Threats to kill offences	Assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm offences	Robbery offences	Rape and sexual assault offences	Homicide offences
1,532	7	18	163	734	593	17	7

## NHS Statistics of knife crime

Current NHS data for hospital admissions in South Yorkshire region by sharp object or knife as of May 2022 was the following<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/knife-crime/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://southyorkshireviolencereductionunit.com/app/uploads/2024/02/Strategic-Needs-Assessment-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://southyorkshireviolencereductionunit.com/app/uploads/2024/02/South-Yorkshire-Serious-Violence-Reduction-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>

<sup>5</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/supplementary-information/2022/monthly-hospital-admissions-for-assault-by-sharp-object-may-2022>

- In year 2021/2022 there was 120 admissions in total with stab injuries for the age 25 and over, which is 20 higher than in 2020/2021.
- In year 2021/2022 there were 50 admissions in total with stab injuries for the age 0-24, the same rate was recorded in 2020/2021.

The latest data of year 2023/2024 has been provided by Adult A&E Hospital Navigators in South Yorkshire which showed that 1% of patients in A&E were admitted with stab wounds from knife and sharp objects.

### 1.3 The Need for evidence base evaluations

Maintaining a strong evidence base is vital to make the right decisions. Evaluations are an important part of this approach. Evidence-based practice will help us and our partners to make better, more effective decisions by choosing reliable, trustworthy solutions and being less reliant on outdated received wisdom, fads, or superficial quick fixes.

At this moment there is no single, evidence-based approach for reducing knife crime, but there are evidence-based themes.

According to Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) <sup>6</sup> “we just don’t know enough about the best ways to protect children from becoming involved in violence in the long term”.

Evidence in the United Kingdom (UK) is limited and hard to find. On top of this, far too little is known and understood about the difficulties faced by many young people or how to build on their strengths and talents. This needs to change. That’s why we’re as Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) with support from our partners focused on building knowledge of what works and getting this insight into the hands of decision makers.

## 2.0 Considerations for developing new projects

We will capture in this section a 5 why principles: **why** knife crime is happening, **who** are the perpetrators, **when** is the best time to prevent crime and **where** is crime happening and **what** are we doing about it?

### 2.1 WHY

According to College of Policing, evidence suggests there are at least 2 broad explanations as to why people carry knives <sup>7</sup>. These are:

- Motivation for self-protection (‘defensive weapon carrying’) – particularly for individuals who have previously been a victim of crime.

<sup>6</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-evidence-briefing/understanding-causes-knife-crime#:~:text=Evidence%20suggests%20there%20are%20three,of%20crime%20\(Lemos%2C%202004\)](https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-evidence-briefing/understanding-causes-knife-crime#:~:text=Evidence%20suggests%20there%20are%20three,of%20crime%20(Lemos%2C%202004))

- Masculinity trend or self-presentation – particularly for individuals who want ‘street credibility’ and ‘respect’.

### 2.1.1 Motivation

A person may carry a knife for offensive or defensive reasons, and/or to present themselves in a certain way. Many people report carrying a weapon for self-defence. This may be because they expect to be involved in violence or because they are fearful in their local neighbourhood as a protection from attack <sup>8</sup>. However, some researchers argue that often it is a fear of gangs and crime that leads to young people carrying a knife because they believe it will help to keep them safe <sup>9</sup>.

It is commonly agreed that a decision to carry weapons demonstrates proximity to, or connectivity to, violent environments <sup>10</sup>. For Lauger (2016), in the cultural setting of ‘street life’ and gang environments, weapons retain practical and symbolic significance for accumulating respect, whilst simultaneously acting as generators for myth-making. Carrying knives as a way to generate respect within the street world <sup>11</sup> has been recently explored but remains under-developed as an explanatory narrative.

Evidence suggests that gang-related knife crime, although more likely to result in injury or fatality, makes up only a small proportion of total knife crime with injury (only 5% in 2016) <sup>12</sup>. However, gang-related knife crimes are usually of a more violent nature to other knife related offending <sup>13</sup>.

Other factors are also known potentially to affect the knife crime, such as:

- County lines; Starting from the early part of the 2010s there was a sharp increase in the purity of cocaine and crack cocaine in the UK. That seems likely to have been a factor in the increase in violence around 2017 and 2018. A rise in the knife crime is thought to be evidence that county lines ‘drug-selling gangs’ are responsible to some extent <sup>14</sup>.
- Alcohol consumption; One of the major risk factors for violent offending and increases the level of both violence or vandalism. It is likely that the link between alcohol and violence is complex, as although large proportions of offenders report drinking prior to offending <sup>15</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2021-11/Knife-crime-a-problem-solving-guide.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/knife-crime/#:~:text=Evidence%20shows%20that%20those%20who,help%20to%20keep%20them%20safe.>

<sup>10</sup> [https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/6764/3/Harding\\_YJ\\_2020\\_Getting\\_to\\_the\\_point\\_Reframing\\_narratives\\_on\\_knife\\_crime.pdf](https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/6764/3/Harding_YJ_2020_Getting_to_the_point_Reframing_narratives_on_knife_crime.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Palasinski 2013; Palasinski and Riggs 2012

<sup>12</sup> MOPAC, 2017

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac\\_knife\\_crime\\_strategy\\_june\\_2017.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac_knife_crime_strategy_june_2017.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Knife%20crime.%20November.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/2015-02-12/chapter5violentcrimeandsexualoffencesalcoholrelatedviolence#:~:text=There%20have%20been%20long%20drinking,offences%20compared%20with%20acquisitive%20offences.>

- Peer pressure; Young people are far more likely than adults to commit crimes in groups, rather than by themselves <sup>16</sup>.
- Contagion; This refers to the introduction of a new style of weapon into a community, making it sought after amongst some members of the community and potentially rival gangs <sup>17</sup>.
- Impact of Social Media: It adds petrol to the fire because people can easily access all the ways of street crimes on social media. According to YEF, the research reveals that 60 per cent of children have witnessed real-world acts of violence on social media in year 2022. Four in ten teenage children describe social media as a major factor driving violence. Social media is not just sharing violence with the children, it appears to be driving violence on the streets <sup>18</sup>.
- Mental health problems: British Sociological society dated March 2024 suggested that knife crime is associated with mental health problems <sup>19</sup>. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health conditions are increasing worldwide. In recent times the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the increased use of social media had a major impact on people mental health <sup>20</sup>.

### 2.1.2 Issues of masculinity

Worldwide statistics show that men are responsible for most of the violence globally. In 2012, according to WHO, over half a million individuals worldwide died as a result of injuries from interpersonal violence. Of these deaths, males were disproportionately impacted: 81% of interpersonal violence deaths were men <sup>21</sup>. In 2012, 95% of persons convicted of homicide were males <sup>22</sup>.

Given the fact that men are much more likely to be perpetrators and victims of knife crime and more likely to have risk factors for violence, this suggests that there may be underlying factors, or root causes, that may be contributing to greater violence in the lives of males <sup>23</sup>.

Those factors are:

- Social rejection by peers. Research shows that men may suffer from low self-esteem and other psychological consequences and may use violence perpetration as a way to attain or reclaim masculine status <sup>24</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/112/11207.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-problem-solving-guide/analysis-problem-solving-tackle-knife-crime>

<sup>18</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/violence-on-social-media-the-online-fight-for-our-childrens-attention/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/knife-crime-insights-challenges-and-call-action>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Are-Mental-Health-Issues-Increasing.aspx#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health,health%20problems%20are%20a%20myth.>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/mortality\\_data/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/mortality_data/en/index.html).

<sup>22</sup> UNODC, 2011

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4643362/>

<sup>24</sup> Bosson et al., 2009; Vandello & Bosson, 2013

- Exposure to social norms that encourage violence and male dominance. Research on gender roles suggests that men who strongly adhere to traditional masculine gender norms are at increased risk for the perpetration of violent and abusive acts toward their female intimate partners <sup>25</sup>.
- The lack of a stable family environment and adverse family circumstances and conditions have been found to increase the likelihood of involvement in offending contributes to a culture of crime and violence <sup>26</sup>.
- The lack of access to mental health services. Men are more likely than women to deal with stress and trauma through externalising behaviours such as substance use and antisocial behaviour <sup>27</sup>. The evidence suggest there is a strong link between depression/stress and physical violence perpetration <sup>28</sup>.
- Men tend to hold their emotions inside rather than express them, which leads to internalised discomfort. Long-term melancholy is likely to result in depression and inappropriate emotional expression <sup>29</sup>. When dysfunctional masculinity is not treated, this may manifest as violence and hostility <sup>30</sup>.
- Exposure to violence at home, in relationships, and in the community <sup>31 32 33</sup>. Men tend to be more likely to respond to such events with anger, frustration, violence, and aggression and to resort to violence as a coping strategy for dealing with strain <sup>34</sup>. In contrast, females are more likely to experience depression and other internalising problems <sup>35</sup>.

Ample <sup>36</sup> evidence has shown that socially constructed gender norms that socialise men to value hierarchy, aggression, power, respect, and emotional suppression may be a primary root cause of violence-related disparities <sup>37</sup>.

## Breaking the barrier of masculinity

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5868426/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-youth-offending-services/specific-areas-of-delivery/family-relationships/>

<sup>27</sup> Grant et al., 2004; Rosenfield & Mouzon, 2013

<sup>28</sup> DuRant et al., 2000; Latzman & Swisher, 2005

<sup>29</sup> Coates D, Wortman CB. Depression maintenance and interpersonal control. In: *Advances in Environmental Psychology*. Maryland, USA: Psychology Press; 2013. pp. 149-182

<sup>30</sup> Messerschmidt JW. *Masculinities in the Making: From the Local to the Global*. Rowman & Littlefield; 2015

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/domestic-violence/effects-domestic-violence-children#:~:text=Children%20who%20witness%20violence%20between,how%20to%20protect%20your%20child.>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4729333/>

<sup>33</sup> Richters, J. E., and Martinez, P. E. (1993). The NIMH community violence project: I. Children as victims of and witnesses to violence. *Psychiatry*, 56, 7-21.

<sup>34</sup> Broidy & Agnew, 1997

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3707115/>

<sup>36</sup> or piece of evidence which shows that something is definitely true or definitely exists.

<sup>37</sup> Fleming et al., 2015; Fulu et al., 2013

To reduce violence, it should be clearly established and redefined what makes man powerful and worthy of respect. Protective factors should be established such as connections to a caring adult, developing interpersonal skills to solve problems non-violently, access to mental health, access to community and schools. Other risk factors such as witnessing trauma, mental health problems and substance abuse must be carefully addressed.

There are number of programmes which might help to reduce violence – such programmes seek to change gender norms at the individual and interpersonal level by providing a safe space, challenge norms of masculinity and relationships with women and children.

Most of the intervention research that has been conducted points out that when men discuss gender norms in groups of other men, this helps to break down some of the harmful norms related to masculinity and can reduce violence perpetration <sup>38</sup>.

## 2.2 WHO

There is not a clear distinction between those who carry knife, and those who do not. Research in Scotland suggests that 30% of children aged between 12 and 17 might carry a knife at some point, but often it is infrequent, and they quickly stop <sup>39</sup>. Other studies suggest a much lower carrying rate of just 3.5% <sup>40</sup>.

Ages 10 to 14 is also the time when the impact of peer pressure is the highest <sup>41</sup>. Evidence also suggests that knife carrying peaks at 14 years old <sup>42</sup>. After this, knife carrying either stops, or escalates, i.e young people may either be entrenched in knife carrying and require more individualised interventions are likely to have stopped.

Evidence from South Yorkshire's Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) indicates that most serious violence tends to be between victims and suspects of a similar age.

It was found by Bailey, Harinam and Ariel in 2020 that victims and offenders had similar demographic characteristics, as well as similar offending and victimisation histories. Three-quarters of offenders and 4 in 10 victims had a prior criminal record, while around 1 in 5 offenders and 1 in 10 victims were affiliated with a gang or Organised Crime Group (OCG). Around 9% of knife crime victims are knife crime offenders, and around 8% of offenders had a history of knife-related victimisation. Using a technique called social network analysis, it was concluded that the people involved in knife crime are not closely connected but instead, the network is better described as a collection of one-off violent incidents. While there were examples of violence affiliated with gangs and Organised Crime Groups, acts of retaliatory violence in their dataset were relatively rare <sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4643362/#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%20intervention%20research,et%20al.%2C%202010>

<sup>39</sup> <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4151263.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> <https://southyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/app/uploads/2023/03/Guidelines-for-Evidence-Based-Knife-Education-1st-Edition.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> [https://cbcd.bbk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cbcd/files/people/scientificstaff/teodora/knifecrimereport\\_0.pdf](https://cbcd.bbk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cbcd/files/people/scientificstaff/teodora/knifecrimereport_0.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4151263.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-problem-solving-guide/analysis-problem-solving-tackle-knife-crime>

According to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) almost a quarter of children who said they carried a knife in the previous years has been expelled or suspended from school. Four times as many knife offenders and seven times as many excluded children have a special needs statement as the rest of the pupils. Young knife offenders are about four times as likely to claim free school meals.

Knife offenders who are affiliated with gangs differ from those who are not. Gang-related knife crime involves 'instrumental aggression' as a means to an end to protect 'territory' for illegal drug sales. By contrast, non-gang-related knife crime involves young people with previous adverse child experiences (ACEs) acting alone and showing 'hostile/expressive aggression' <sup>44</sup>.

## 2.3 WHEN

Knife enabled most serious violence can occur at any time of the day but is most common in the evening (SNA) <sup>45</sup>. In the most recent SNA, the early evening (the hours of 6pm to 8pm) was as common a time for knife enabled most serious violence to occur as the late evening (the hours of 9pm to 11pm). Evidence shows knife enabled most serious violence can occur on any day of the week, but is more likely to occur on Saturdays.

According to Trauma Science at Queen Mary University of London and Ofstead, the period after school accounts for a large proportion of stabbing incidents in children and these predominantly occurs close to home or school, between 4pm to 6pm when they have left school for a day. Almost half of the under 16's were stabbed on the way home from school, such as at cafes, transport hubs or other places where pupils congregate <sup>46</sup>.

## 2.4 WHERE

Overall, urban forces tend to record higher levels of crime involving knives than more rural ones <sup>47</sup>.

According to the South Yorkshire Police GRIP team analysis, a knife crime can be found in hotspot areas. Well-lit and available amenities such as bars, fast food outlets can act as a 'lure' for youths. The absence of capable guardianship in an area can give rise to the feeling that crime could be committed with less likelihood of consequences and youths with a 'beef' can use such areas to settle scores. It is not necessarily the locations themselves where crime is committed but such hot spots, like fast food venues can be used as a landmark for the point of contact or pick up etc.

Additionally, such hotspots attract a street cohort that often shop lift and commit aggressive begging. Disagreements can see individuals 'pull a knife' on each other but an additional factor would be the drink and drugs habits behind the street cohort that leads to this lifestyle.

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/knife-crime-insights-challenges-and-call-action>

<sup>45</sup> <https://southyorkshireviolencereductionunit.com/app/uploads/2024/02/Strategic-Needs-Assessment-2023.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knife-crime-safeguarding-children-and-young-people-in-education>

<sup>47</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04304/SN04304.pdf>

Drug suppliers predate upon this group and often fight for dealer dominance. This can lead to aggressive knife fights between dealers as they push for control.

Late opening of bars and fast food venues can be a factor as can poorly lit and observed meeting locations or places to stash and conceal drugs and knives if the Police are spotted in the area.

Conversely a well policed and patrolled area with good CCTV and design out crime methodology will reduce the rewards of knife crime and increase the risk of getting caught so the location factors can be important but other SCP (Situational Crime Prevention) tactics are of equal importance.

The research by the British Sociological Society shows that knife offenders exhibit a considerable degree of diversity in where they offend, indicating that there may be subtypes within this population. For instance, female perpetrators tend to commit offences in domestic settings, whereas males are more likely to do so in community settings <sup>48</sup>.

## 2.5 WHAT are we doing about it?

VRU in cooperation with our partners developed this Approach to help police forces, local authorities, youth charities, school leaders and others who work with young people, use evidence when making decisions about how best to keep children safe from violence.

In South Yorkshire, the VRU and all partners are adopting a Public Health Approach, which holds significant potential for responding to knife crime. This approach combines prevention, secondary intervention and tertiary intervention to target all people in a community.

We are working with variety of approaches and frameworks to tackle serious violence and knife crime in South Yorkshire. From the policing side our colleagues are involved with proactive policing, patrolling hot spot areas, stop and search, Operation Sceptre, amnesty bins, knife test purchases and challenging retailers on knife sales, effective use of data sharing and intelligence, Habitual Knife Carriers Index and more.

As a VRU we hold a grant round every year and work with organisations who support and hold early interventions, prevention and diversionary programmes. We train professionals in trauma informed practice, work closely with A&E Navigator programmes (adult and children), Custody Navigators. We are working with Learn Sheffield to create materials on knife crime for education in schools.

Our Community Safety Partners (CSP) work closely with communities supporting various programmes and interventions around districts, town centres and around South Yorkshire.

Most importantly, we will use this approach as a guideline on projects and programmes which shows an evidence base that works against the crime and serious violence.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/knife-crime-insights-challenges-and-call-action>

## 3.0 What works

### 3.1 Public Health Approach

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of a Public Health Approach to address violence according to Bellis, 2012 <sup>49</sup>.

In terms of knife crime, a Public Health Approach showed the most promising results based on evidence and data:

- Centre for Crime and Justice studies highlight benefits for a Public Health Approach to tackle serious violence and knife crime <sup>50</sup>.
- The Public Health Approach is well evidenced in Scotland. There are very different communities, very different dynamics and very different issues around violence and youth violence but, nevertheless, there have been reductions in violent crime due to a Public Health based Approach <sup>51</sup>.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that the evidence for Public Health interventions for the reduction of violence was 'much stronger'. The case for preventive interventions continues to be strongly sustained <sup>52</sup>.

A Public Health Approach underpins some of the most promising youth violence prevention strategies. It is characterised by a multi-agency approach and early identification of problems. It aims to address multiple risk factors and to introduce protective factors.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.2 YEF summary

The YEF Toolkit summarises the best available research about what works to prevent youth violence. Below are the approaches which have a strong focus on preventing knife crime <sup>54</sup>.

- Current research suggests that education-based interventions hold the most promise for effectively addressing knife crime. It should be delivered both in schools and within the communities. Studies from the United Kingdom show positive perceptions of education interventions by participants as well as a change in attitudes against knife carrying <sup>55</sup>.
- The YEF supports trauma-focused therapy.<sup>56</sup> According to YEF on average, trauma-specific therapies are likely to have a high impact on preventing crime and violence for children and

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-evidence-briefing/interventions-reduce-knife-crime>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Knife%20crime.%20November.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Knife%20crime.%20November.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> O'Connor and Waddell, 2015; Farrington et al., 2017

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/YP%20knives%20and%20guns.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/>

<sup>55</sup> [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Knife-Crime-Education-programmes-Technical-Report\\_June-2023-1.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Knife-Crime-Education-programmes-Technical-Report_June-2023-1.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/05/RAB-2022-03-Promising-approaches-to-knife-crime-v1.1.pdf>

young people at-risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. The estimate is based on only four studies which suggest on average trauma-specific therapies reduced crime and violence for children and young people at-risk of involvement by 45%<sup>57</sup>.

- A&E navigator programmes place case workers in Accident and Emergency departments to support children and young people who are admitted with knife and violence-related injuries. A&E navigator interventions could have a high impact on preventing youth violence, though more high-quality studies are needed.
- There is strong evidence that early intervention programmes significantly reduce knife crime. This includes a form of intervention/prevention in schools (primary and secondary) and colleges, in the community and whilst in custody. Programmes aimed at changing norms and values towards violence at a young age have shown some promising effects according to Ross, 2011. However, there are calls for programmes to work with children as young as 8 (Kinsella, 2010) due to the increasing number of children carrying knives (Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice, 2018)<sup>58</sup>. These programmes are typically aimed at children aged 13 and over. Early intervention can be split in 2 activities: diversion and prevention<sup>59</sup>.

Diversion activities include sport<sup>60</sup> and art<sup>61</sup>. They could support positive development, improve physical and mental health, provide desirable impacts on reducing aggression.

Prevention activities are:

- child skills training – teaching social and emotional skills, problem solving and anger management (reduce crime by 32%)<sup>62</sup>.
- Mentoring programmes match a child with a mentor and encourage them to meet regularly. Mentors are often adults but can also be older peers of mentees or volunteers. These programs aim to help the child form a good relationship with a positive role model to develop social skills, form constructive relationships with others, or develop positive behaviours and aspirations. Mentoring can often take place alongside other activities, for example as part of a sports programme or music group<sup>63</sup>. Mentoring is effective in both reducing crime and the behaviours associated with crime and violence. The research suggests that, on average, mentoring reduces violence by 21%, all offending by 14%, and reoffending by 19%<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/trauma-specific-therapies/>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-evidence-briefing/interventions-reduce-knife-crime#:~:text=Early%20intervention%20programmes%20that%20have,problem%20solving%20and%20anger%20management>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-intervention-for-lifelong-benefits#:~:text=What%20is%20early%20intervention%20in,two%20activities%3A%20prevention%20and%20diversion.>

<sup>60</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/sports-programmes/>

<sup>61</sup> [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/YEF-Technical-Report\\_Arts-Programmes-March-2024.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/YEF-Technical-Report_Arts-Programmes-March-2024.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Social-Skills-technical-report.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/mentoring-2/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/mentoring-2/>

- behavioural parent training – supporting parents to reinforce good behaviour <sup>65</sup>.
- after school recreational activities – teaching skills in a structured and supervised environment <sup>66</sup>.
- 'Pulling levers', or focused deterrence framework is also found beneficial for tackling violence and knife crime. Focused deterrence is a crime reduction strategy in which carefully selected high-risk offenders receive concentrated law enforcement attention and, simultaneously, offers of concentrated social services through direct, persuasive communication and rigorous follow-up of these commitments. The research indicates that the average impact of focused deterrence on violent crime is likely to be high. A YEF estimate is based on a review of 24 studies which suggests that, on average, focused deterrence strategies reduced crime by 33%. A number of US projects have been categorised as forms of 'focused deterrence' <sup>67</sup>.
- A promising way to tackle knife crime and reduction in violence is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), i.e to address a range of psychological difficulties. According to YEF research and evidence the impact of CBT on violent crime is likely to be high. CBT is effective in both reducing crime overall and behaviours associated with crime and violence. The research suggests that, on average, CBT can reduce crime by 27% and reduce the prevalence of behavioural difficulties. It has tended to have greater impacts when working with children who had previously had more contact with the criminal justice system <sup>68</sup>.
- Hotspots – a policing strategy that targets resources and activities to places where crime is most concentrated. There are two main approaches to policing hot spots which is problem-oriented policing (POP), which aims to understand the root causes of crime in hot spot locations and involves designing and implementing tailored interventions to reduce crime, and increased police presence (IPP), which aims to deter offenders from committing crimes in hot spot areas by increasing either the number of visits or the amount of time police officers spend in the hot spots.

Hot spots policing is likely to have a moderate impact on violent crime according to YEF research. A review of international studies estimates that, on average, hot spots policing has reduced violent crime by 14% and overall offending by 17%. The review also estimated that hot spots policing reduced drug offences by 30% and property crime by 16% <sup>69</sup>.

- Media campaigns aim to raise awareness about the consequences of knife crime and involvement in violence. The mass media can be used positively to raise awareness of the issue. According to YEF, there are very few evaluations of the impact of media

<sup>65</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/parenting-programmes/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/after-school-programmes/#:~:text=After%2Dschoo%20programmes%20are%20typically,activities%20including%20sport%20or%20art>

<sup>67</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1046>

<sup>68</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/#:~:text=Is%20it%20effective%3F,the%20prevalence%20of%20behavioural%20difficulties.>

<sup>69</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/hot-spots-policing/>

campaigns on violent crime, there is an insufficient evidence to calculate an overall impact <sup>70</sup>.

### 3.3 Other sources

There are a number of other evidence-based activities not covered by YEF, which according to research helps to tackle a knife crime. It also identifies the features of successful programmes for young people; summarise evidence of good practice and examine the outcomes of successful programmes and approaches.

- Collaborative and effective use of data makes a real impression on combatting knife crime, known as whole system multi agency approach. A comprehensive strategy is required involving cohesive collaboration among authorities, community groups, charities, industry and most importantly youth <sup>71</sup>.
- Challenge social norms and beliefs to promote positive health-related behaviour <sup>72</sup>:

#### -Role models

Role models can provide real-life examples of how to navigate challenges and contribute positively to society. By showcasing positive behaviours and attitudes, role models can guide the youth towards making ethical choices and developing a strong moral compass. The role models take on responsibility and keep motivating others and those are qualities that inspire people to follow and contribute to positive change <sup>73 74</sup>.

- Health awareness interventions, which provide awareness of selfcare, implications in case of stabbing, bleeding out and bodies going into shock. Programmes such as Street Doctors or St John's Ambulance, showed positive results, however more systematic review with metanalysis is needed <sup>75</sup>.
- The habitual knife carrier index <sup>76</sup> (HKCI) is currently used in South Yorkshire as part of response to preventing knife crime. The HKCI has not been subject to an external review or testing, although an evaluation is planned. Early analysis and data from October 2022 show that over a 12-month period, there was a 57% reduction in the number of weapon possession offences involving the STAR project cohort following their engagement. They received funding from the Home Office Science, Technology

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<sup>70</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/media-campaigns/>

<sup>71</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e38133d40f0b609169cb532/multi-agency\\_approach\\_to\\_serious\\_violence\\_prevention.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e38133d40f0b609169cb532/multi-agency_approach_to_serious_violence_prevention.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> [https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/44147/9789241598330\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#:~:text=Some%20aim%20to%20reduce%20dating,have%20on%20each%20others'%20behaviour.](https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/44147/9789241598330_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#:~:text=Some%20aim%20to%20reduce%20dating,have%20on%20each%20others'%20behaviour.)

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9421350/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.governmentevents.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Securing-a-brighter-future-the-role-of-youth-services-in-tackling-knife-crime-v.2.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/05/RAB-2022-03-Promising-approaches-to-knife-crime-v1.1.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> [A habitual knife carrier is determined by the police as any individual that has come up at least twice as a suspect on the Crime Record Information System \(CRIS\) for Possession of an Offensive Weapon / Knife / Bladed Article or a Knife Injury excluding Domestic Abuse offence in the last two years](#)

and Research (STAR) fund to support this. Most of those targeted by the STAR project had been identified using the HKC index <sup>77</sup>.

- Information Sharing to Tackle Violence (ISTV) programme <sup>78</sup>. Under this programme, hospital emergency departments share with the police anonymous data pertaining to where, when and what violent crimes have been committed to better inform partnership responses and intervention approaches and assist in building a better picture of the level, nature and how this data is being used. In cities where ISTV data is recorded well, shared, and used, serious violence decreased by 30-40% compared with cities where this information is not shared <sup>79</sup>.
- Operation Sceptre makes a difference, when held with an increased frequency. Evidence suggests that there is a large number of knives removed from the streets during this operation. However, Operation Sceptre week is not just about enforcement activity, it is also about education and wider awareness of knife crime as well as engagement with public, understanding community concerns, patrolling hot spot knife crime area, stop and search <sup>80 81</sup>.
- Inspiring Change – YEF have funded a number of projects to inspire the change and support to help steer young people away from crime (Positive Pathways) <sup>82</sup> and Peer Action Collective (PAC) <sup>83</sup>. The research is currently ongoing to find out about young people's experiences of violence and their views on how they can help make their communities better places to live and work. All of their findings will be recorded and shared.
- The importance of a 'child first, offender second' approach to working with children, reflecting the review of the youth justice system undertaken by Taylor's study of 2016. This involves taking a relational approach, individualising responses, and recognising and responding to trauma <sup>84</sup>. The model and its components have been present in theory, policy, and practice and demonstrably successful internationally for several decades <sup>85</sup>.
- Restorative justice– meetings between victims, offenders and sometimes family or community members can reduce reoffending. Evidence suggests these approaches have a particularly significant effect on violent crimes, and that victims are significantly

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/homicide-prevention/habitual-knife-carrier-index>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/aes-and-police-to-share-information-to-help-tackle-violence>

<sup>79</sup> [https://rcem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ISTV\\_Standard\\_Operating\\_Procedure\\_FAQs\\_v1.pdf](https://rcem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ISTV_Standard_Operating_Procedure_FAQs_v1.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/93654/html/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.southyorkshire.police.uk/news/south-yorkshire/news/may-2024/over-500-dangerous-weapons-recently-taken-off-the-streets/>

<sup>82</sup> [https://ingeus.co.uk/services/youth/positive-](https://ingeus.co.uk/services/youth/positive-pathways#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20Youth%20Endowment,skills%20for%20work%20and%20life.)

[pathways#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20Youth%20Endowment,skills%20for%20work%20and%20life.](https://ingeus.co.uk/services/youth/positive-pathways#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20Youth%20Endowment,skills%20for%20work%20and%20life.)

<sup>83</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/news/youth-endowment-fund-iwill-fund-and-co-op-come-together-to-launch-the-peer-action-collective-pac-giving-10-25-year-olds-a-voice-and-the-chance-to-make-their-communities-safer-fairer-plac/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/05/RAB-2022-03-Promising-approaches-to-knife-crime-v1.1.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/social-policy-studies/research/child-first-justice/>

less likely to seek revenge against the offender <sup>86</sup> <sup>87</sup>. On average, restorative justice has had a moderate impact on preventing crime and violence. The research suggests that restorative justice has reduced reoffending by an average of 13%.

### 3.3.1 Careful use methods

Evidence and research have also showed that some activities don't necessarily work extensively or prevent knife crime from happening or discourage to carry a knife, those are:

- Government's own research suggests that Stop and Search (S&S) is not an effective deterrent in reducing offending and according to Centre for Crime and Justice study, S&S had little effect on violent crime. The organisation analysed 10 years' worth of data to investigate its effects <sup>88</sup>. It has only a very weak and inconsistent association with crime, although there is some correlation, most notably in relation to drug offences.
- Knife amnesties/amnesty bins tend to be ineffective on their own but tend to work and raise an awareness function which can supplement and reinforce the messages contained in educational interventions <sup>89</sup>. There is not enough evidence to calculate the impact on violent crime at this moment in time. Two studies in the UK conducted and suggest that knife surrender schemes may contribute to a small reduction in weapon-related offences <sup>90</sup>.
- The importance of empathy and seeking to engage with gang members on a human level. A lack of empathy is often exhibited by gang members, which reduces their inhibitions and makes them more likely to behave violently <sup>91</sup>. There are several ways to respond to gang violence. There are a number of primary and secondary prevention programmes which helps to teach youths the skills to resist peer pressure to join a gang, intervention by implementing strategies, as well as use suppression efforts which can build trust and increase police legitimacy in at-risk communities <sup>92</sup>. However more research in this area is vital.
- Images of knives may actually encourage the carrying of knives, acting as a reminder of the perceived threat of knife-related violence and a need to protect themselves <sup>93</sup>. An experiment conducted by Ramshaw & Dawson in 2022 have shown that 38% of young people who saw the knife were scared, compared to 33% of young people who saw a similar image with no knife. 61% of those who saw the image of a knife were

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<sup>86</sup> [8 Strang et al., 2012; Livingstone et al., 2013](#)

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-evidence-briefing/interventions-reduce-knife-crime#:~:text=Restorative%20justice,-Restorative%20justice%20conferences&text=Evidence%20suggests%20these%20approaches%20have,Livingstone%20and%20others%2C%202013>.

<sup>88</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn03878/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/knife-surrender-schemes/#:~:text=There%20is%20insufficient%20evidence%20to,are%20not%20sustained%20for%20long.>

<sup>90</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/knife-surrender-schemes/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/69779/2/Mallion%20%26%20Wood%202018%20review%20paper.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> <https://oxfordre.com/criminology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264079-e-79?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefores%2F9780190264079.001.0001%2Facrefores-9780190264079-e-79&p=emailAcqEO%2F5S8q%2Fbq>

<sup>93</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/media-campaigns/>

worried about knife crime in their area, compared to 57% of a similar image of the knife removed. Both these results were significant.

- Anti-knife crime campaigns often aim to provoke fear by highlighting the potentially devastating consequences associated with carrying or using knives, with the aim of deterring young people from engaging in such behaviour. However, there is little evidence on whether these types of fear appeals are effective <sup>94</sup>.
- Provide better support to offenders for reintegrating into society on release from prison. 42% of individuals released from custody in the UK are reconvicted of a crime within one year of release <sup>95</sup>. A Ministry of Justice report on transforming rehabilitation has drawn a range of evidence to support smooth reintegration, such as the importance of the role of supervision and the relationship between offender and offender manager, good quality supervision, programmes that offer social support, employment opportunities, housing, cognitive-behavioural therapy and mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment, along with 'wrap-around' services that aim to serve multiple needs at once <sup>96</sup>.

### 3.4 Lacking evidence

There are some other factors and methods raised by researchers, public and partners which might work for tackling serious violence and knife crime but lacking evidence at this moment:

- Dedicated knife crime teams who target special knife crime areas in the region as well as "after school patrolling". Data from the existing teams operating in Nottinghamshire and Greater Manchester suggest that this approach is working, but it has not been comprehensively evaluated.
- Virtual Reality (VR) with educational programmes to tackle knife crime. YEF has opted not to proceed with further evaluation of VR in education programmes to tackle knife crime. While the feasibility study indicates that the SHARP project has promise, further development would be required to align more strongly with YEF's primary outcomes that support the mission to reduce young people's involvement in violence <sup>97</sup>.
- Lessons from the police or youth workers or/and guest speakers might be more effective, if they can talk about their personal experience of knife crime, as lessons from teachers were said to not be helpful. However, there is no strong evidence to support this.
- Safe spaces may also work to prevent violence. Young people said they want more safe space, which actually was evidenced by the Scotland violence reduction rate. Researchers highlighted that such spaces provide young people at risk of knife crime a

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<sup>94</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9679559/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/article/a-call-for-evidence-based-policies-for-the-reintegration-of-ex-offenders>

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/article/a-call-for-evidence-based-policies-for-the-reintegration-of-ex-offenders#:~:text=These%20include%20programmes%20that%20offer,serve%20multiple%20needs%20at%20once.>

<sup>97</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SHARP.-YEF-Feasibility-Report.-Mar-2023.-1.pdf>

stable environment in which they can develop themselves and interact safely with mentors and others without fear of judgement or personal harm <sup>98</sup>. There is no strong evidence for it.

- Lack of opportunity in terms of employment makes it harder for people to quit the knife crime lifestyle as evidenced by University of Birmingham in their research. Young people should have better access to careers services that would help to show them how education can lead to good employment and training opportunities, which would make the lifestyle surrounding knife crime less attractive. YEF have found that summer job programmes have a trend reducing violence. There have been several evaluations in the US, but the approach has not been tested in the UK. Although the findings are mixed in terms of education and future employment outcomes, they do show a general trend in reduction in crime and violence <sup>99</sup>. Skillmill is one of the organisations supporting summer job programmes <sup>100</sup>.
- There is no strong evidence that using metal detectors work to reduce violence. However, many forces in the country are using knife arches and metal wands which they believe to be a good deterrent tool and discourage individuals to carry a knife <sup>101</sup>.
- Improve relationship between police and public. Law enforcement has acknowledged the need to improve trust and build relationships within communities. Police departments have relied on community-oriented policing (COP) to address this need. Research has shown that while community policing is beneficial for improving public satisfaction, there is still a need for a formal COP model <sup>102</sup>. More work needs in this area, such as officers need training that teaches techniques to build genuine and individual relationships which will allow to work on systemic issues collaboratively.
- Many schools have been receptive to input from external agencies, particularly around violence awareness, and some schools work closely with the Youth Offending Teams (YOT) as part of their multi-agency approach, it appears that there are some schools doing too little to address individual cases and deal with at-risk children <sup>103</sup>.
- Police in schools. School and college leaders are being urged to “cautiously consider unproven” youth violence prevention strategies, including placing police in classrooms and corridors. There is very little research on the impact of this approach, and insufficient evidence to calculate an overall impact estimate according to YEF research <sup>104 105</sup>.
- In recent years, YOTs have sought to implement what is referred to as the ‘Glasgow’ model to tackling violence. The Glasgow model sees violence as a public health issue

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/news/2022/april/safe-spaces-vital-for-knife-crime-prevention/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/can-summer-jobs-reduce-violent-crime-for-young-people/>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.theskillmill.org/>

<sup>101</sup> Murray, 2014

<sup>102</sup> Gill et al., 2014

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.eis.org.uk/pupil-behaviour/surveyresults>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/cautiously-consider-use-of-unproven-violence-prevention-strategies-schools-warned>

<sup>105</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/police-in-schools/>

and states that any response must be underpinned by evidence on the extent of the 'problem' and the aetiology of the violence, which is then responded to via interventions which are, in turn, evaluated and rolled out if deemed effective. However, there is no evidence exactly how this model help to reduce knife crime in Scotland <sup>106</sup>.

- Educating parents and carers / providing an awareness. Parental knowledge, resourcing, and active involvement can be crucial for children's engagement and completion of youth justice sentences according to Brooks-Wilson dated 2020, which links back to the original intent of the pathfinder programme to address serious youth violence <sup>107</sup>.

As an example, the guide was produced in collaboration between the Ben Kinsella Trust and the Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit. The guide is for parents and carers on one of the current issues affecting children and young people - knife crime and gangs <sup>108</sup>.

- Support the ambition for prisoners to serve their sentences closer to home, thereby providing a platform to strengthen family relations and enabling continuity service on release. The Ministry of Justice's own research shows that, for a prisoner who receives visits from a partner or family member, the odds of reoffending are 39% lower than for prisoners who had not received such visits <sup>109 110</sup>.
- Offender rehabilitation scheme released but not tested. The scheme is designed to help people change their attitudes and behaviours to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The scheme include: Offender Behaviour Programmes, Priestley One to One programme, Offender to Rehab scheme, Catch 22. They are most effective when they are properly targeted and provided within a prison or probation culture that supports rehabilitation <sup>111</sup>.
- 4 "P" model <sup>112</sup> used in counter terrorism and police as well as criminal justice and now is planned to be used for tackling knife crime. It is a useful framework that has been developed for national counterterrorist work and has 4 thematic pillars, often referred to as the 4Ps: prosecuting and disrupting people engaged in serious and organised crime (Pursue); preventing people from engaging in this activity (Prevent); increasing protection against serious and organised crime (Protect); and reducing the impact of this criminality where it takes place (Prepare). According to National Audit Office report dated 2019, there is no well-evidenced justification seen that this is the best approach <sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> [https://www.svru.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CIRV\\_2nd\\_year\\_report.pdf](https://www.svru.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CIRV_2nd_year_report.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> [https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/journal\\_contribution/Engaging\\_parents\\_to\\_reduce\\_youth\\_violence\\_evidence\\_from\\_a\\_youth\\_justice\\_board\\_pathfinder\\_programme/23939535](https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/journal_contribution/Engaging_parents_to_reduce_youth_violence_evidence_from_a_youth_justice_board_pathfinder_programme/23939535)

<sup>108</sup> <https://kentandmedwayvru.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Ben-Kinsella-VRU-A-guide-to-knife-harm-for-parents-and-carers.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> May C., Sharma N. and Stewart D. (2008), Factors linked to reoffending: a one-year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003 and 2004, London: Ministry of Justice. Available online: <http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/dev/resources/Factors%20linked%20to%20reoffending%2008.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81d6b2e5274a2e87dbfc00/farmer-review-report.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/crime-and-rehabilitation-an-overview/>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/tackling-serious-and-orga-44a.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Tackling-serious-and-organised-crime-Summary.pdf>

### 3.5 What doesn't work

There are some programmes appear to be ineffective for tackling serious violence and knife crime.

- The “Scared straight” approach is considered to be harmful according to YEF. In 2002, criminal justice and education expert Dr. Anthony Petrosino with a team of researchers conducted a comprehensive analysis of the various "scared straight" studies and found that not only do these appeals fail to deter kids from breaking the law, they sometimes make young people more likely to commit crimes. On average, “scared straight” approach had a harmful effect on kids versus kids who didn't get it. In the studies with crime data, the kids who went through “scared straight” were much more likely to be arrested or brought to juvenile court than kids in the control group. On average, prison awareness programmes do not seem to have a desirable impact on children’s involvement in crime and violence.
- Bootcamps - On average, boot camps are not likely to reduce violence and may cause harm. The research suggests that young people who participate in a boot camp have been 6% more likely to become involved in future violent and non-violent crime.

Researchers have attempted to understand why different types of boot camp have different impacts. This analysis suggests that boot camps were more likely to have a desirable impact if they involved counselling or therapeutic interventions. However, including other activities like aftercare support, education, vocational training or drug treatment did not seem to improve the impact <sup>114</sup> .

- Arrests of juveniles for minor offenses cause them to become more delinquent in the future than if police exercise discretion to merely warn them or use other alternatives to formal charging <sup>115</sup>.
- The study by Ministry of Justice dated 2019 found that sentencing offenders to short term custody with supervision on release was associated with higher proven reoffending than if they had instead received community orders and/or suspended sentence orders <sup>116</sup>.
- Studies have shown that electronic monitoring (EM) can have both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, EM can potentially reduce chances to violate curfews, break criminal connections, and lead to improvements in family life.

On the other hand, wearing a tag can cause discomfort or feelings of shame, and there are risks around increased family tensions, anti-social behaviour, and use of alcohol/drugs. There is also a risk of exacerbating existing inequalities <sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/boot-camps/>

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/33701/413274-Labeling-Effects-of-First-Juvenile-Arrests-Secondary-Deviance-and-Secondary-Sanctioning.PDF>

<sup>116</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d1c732ee5274a08c4be45c4/impact-short-custodial-sentences.pdf>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/research/the-evidence-base-youth-offending-services/specific-types-of-delivery/electronic-monitoring/>

- Residential programs for juvenile offenders in rural settings using “outward bound,” wilderness, challenge, or counselling programs fail to reduce repeat offending <sup>118</sup>.
- The study also found an extensive body of research examining the crime prevention effects of ‘community’ or non-custodial sanctions. Intensive supervised probation or parole (ISP), home confinement (tagging), and urine testing for drugs were not effective in reducing the criminal activities of either adult or juvenile offenders, unless combined with some types of rehabilitation <sup>119</sup>.
- Tougher legislation and sentencing don’t necessarily work. Research shows that long prison sentences have little impact on crime <sup>120 121</sup>. Evidence suggests that more consistent sentencing is required.

## 4.0 Benchmarking with other VRUs

This section is split into two parts. Part 1 contains the benchmarking results of projects and activities conducted in other VRU’s in England in comparison to what is done in the South Yorkshire. Projects, interventions and programmes were compared to London, Greater Manchester, Bedfordshire, Kent as well as Scotland, Merseyside, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, South Wales, Nottinghamshire and Northumbria.

Part 2 encompasses the benchmarking activity of delivery plans in 3 regions for similar or unlike themes.

### Part 1

The following activities and projects are being carried out in other regions in England to tackle knife crime and serious violence which are not currently being conducted in South Yorkshire.

London programmes are:

- The Bambu Project is a new service that provides specialist support to meet the holistic needs of children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.
- The Chrysalis project supports the ambition for prisoners to serve their sentences closer to home, thereby providing a platform to strengthen family relations and enabling continuity and provide better support to offenders for reintegrating into society on release from prison.
- Support the use of Restorative Justice practice.
- Exploring ‘naming and shaming’ those retailers for illegally selling knives to children.
- Working with partners to produce a toolkit with information and advice on what to do in the aftermath of a knife crime, aimed to help front line workers such as teachers and doctors, faith groups and community groups to recognise the signs of trauma in family

<sup>118</sup> [https://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/CivitasRCP\\_Report.pdf](https://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/CivitasRCP_Report.pdf)

<sup>119</sup> [https://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/CivitasRCP\\_Report.pdf](https://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/CivitasRCP_Report.pdf)

<sup>120</sup> Dölling, Entorf, Hermann, & Rupp, 2009; Nagin, 2013

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/247350.pdf>

members and friends affected by a knife crime and to take appropriate steps to support them.

Greater Manchester programmes include:

- Op SYCAMORE (similar to Op Sceptre), encompass partnership work between GMP, youth services and education leads, forming a community-led approach to prevention and early intervention. Partners worked with schools to increase awareness of the consequences of getting involved in violent crime, identifying and working with young people at risk, and developing a community-led approach to prevention and early intervention. Additionally, a significant social media campaign was rolled out to support of changing behaviours amongst young people.
- Op Venture is specially created team to fight knife crime and understand and address the underlying causes.
- Child 1st principle - means putting children at the heart of service provision and seeing the whole child, identifying/tackling the influences on offending and identifying/promoting the influences that help them to move to pro-social, positive behaviour.
- Power2 project based on Focused Deterrence framework.
- Release of Gender based violence strategy which sets out a comprehensive, responsive programme of service delivery to enhance the safety of women and girls, while preventing gender-based violence from occurring in the first place and challenging the attitudes and inequalities that enable it. The aim is to deliver a radical transformation in Greater Manchester's approach to gender-based violence and that women and girls will experience a step change in their experience of abuse and violence in all its forms.
- 'Stop the bleed' training delivered teaching how to identify a life-threatening bleed, how to apply pressure, pack a wound, and use a tourniquet.
- The Social Switch Project is switching the narrative on how social media's relationship to youth violence is understood, tackled and solved.
- Oasis Navigators.
- #openyoureyestoknives campaigns.

Kent programmes are:

- Active bystander approach involves working with young people to breakdown and challenge perceived norms and misconceptions which often negatively influence behaviour.
- Parental guide to knife crime.
- 'Fear and Fashion' approach aiming to reduce fear and reduce vulnerability to victimisation.
- A Buddi tag provides young people who are at risk of criminal exploitation to voluntarily wear a tracking device.

Merseyside programmes are:

- Time to Thrive is an early intervention scheme which provides peer support groups and one-to-one mentoring for children, aged 5 to 18 years old impacted by the imprisonment

of a parent or family member, learn new skills, engage in positive physical and mental health activities and wider learning opportunities.

- Work with the Department of Work and Pensions at Merseyside (who were the 1<sup>st</sup> VRU in the country to have a member of DWP staff seconded into the team). This move has reaped significant results and has been beneficial for young people who are long-term unemployed or who may have been in custody. The co-location has also resulted in greater collaboration and the co-commissioning) of projects and programmes.
- Street doctors created by medics offers trauma-informed training to young people in disadvantaged areas, which empowers them to become part of the solution to violence through emergency first aid training and increasing their understanding of the medical and psychological consequences of violence. This national project has recently been enhanced through a new App, launched jointly in Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This e-learning app, 'StreetDrs Save Lives,' is a fully interactive and trauma-informed course that provides innovative digital training for young people affected by violence across the UK.
- Working with Brain Charity who specialise in Neurodiversity. Neurodiversity training for criminal justice system staff and a service for parents/caregivers, how better understanding and support those with neurodiverse needs and help to prevent reoffending.
- Op Inclusion – (is a 'deferred prosecution scheme' which works with children and young people to give them a chance to change their behaviour).

West Yorkshire programmes include:

- Deployment of knife arches into the transport hubs.
- Knife crime specific teams who conduct only knife crime patrolling in hot spots, deterrent cars over weekends engaging with public, as well as visual presence and intelligent information gathering.
- Dedicated street marshals <sup>122</sup>.
- Multi faith events.
- Women and Girls safety unit.
- Educational programmes using VR sets.
- Focused Deterrence Car intervention.

Northumbria programmes include:

- The Pathways offering support and diversion for men and women involved in Criminal Justice and at risk of reoffending.
- A Northumbria Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) strategy has been developed and launched.

## Part 2

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<sup>122</sup> [This project has only been carried out in Doncaster City and funded by CSP pot](#)

We have compared the delivery plans between West Yorkshire, Lancashire and Merseyside regions based on the project themes and we highlighted similar and same interventions run by South Yorkshire, which include:

- All Navigators
- Social skills programmes for early interventions, diversionary and outreach
- Mentoring programmes for families and individuals with mental health problems
- Health and wellbeing projects
- Trauma informed and trauma therapy
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Knife crime awareness
- Sports programmes including football, boxing, cricket
- Relationship violence education

It also has been noted that we don't do any pre-court diversionary projects in South Yorkshire like in Lancashire, parenting programmes and afterschool programmes like in Merseyside.

- According to YEF pre-court diversionary projects on are likely to have a moderate impact on violent crime. Pre-court diversion leads to greater reductions in reoffending than processing through the courts. The research suggests that pre-court diversion reduces reoffending by 13%. Furthermore, if children are diverted but do commit another offence, this offence is likely to be less serious.
- Parenting programmes has strong evidence that they can be effective at reducing behavioural difficulties, which are associated with later involvement in violence. However, there is a lack of research which directly measures the impact of parenting programmes on crime and violence. Based on the current evidence, YEF best estimate is that parenting programmes could lead to a small reduction in violent crime. Most evaluations have shown positive effects which suggests there is a low risk of programmes having a harmful impact. There is also evidence that the impact can be sustained: long-term studies have found an impact on behaviour up to three years after programmes finish.
- The research suggests the impact of after-school programmes on violent crime is likely to be low. On average, after-school programmes can reduce crime overall by 8% and externalising behaviours by 14%. Although the average finding suggests a small positive impact, the underlying studies are mixed. Some programmes have led to increases in crime and others to decreases. Research has explored several possible explanations for the variation in findings.

## 5.0 Evaluation

Evaluating your own intervention is vitally important. If you are basing your intervention on an existing programme, you need to know if it translates to your particular context. If it is a novel intervention, you want to see if it works at all. We provide some guidance here, but there is further guidance available from the Youth Endowment Fund.

## Types of evaluation

There are three main types of evaluation to focus on; process, outcome, and impact.

**Process evaluations** check whether the programme has been implemented as intended. This will vary between interventions, but may ask:

- Did we reach our target population?
- Did we reach as many of our target population as we wanted?
- Were the people delivering the intervention confident in doing so?
- Was the intervention delivered in the manner intended?
- Were there unforeseen difficulties in delivering the intervention?

**Outcome evaluations** measure programme effects in the target population by assessing the progress in the outcomes or outcome objectives that the programme aims to achieve. This may be:

- Investigating whether the target population shows an increase in protective factors against violence or weapon carrying.
- Investigating whether the target population shows an increase in employability skills.
- Investigating whether the target population shows an increase in mental wellbeing, social skills, or other measures of pro-social factors.

Surveys are good ways to collect large amounts of data, although young people may not be honest about their intention to carry a knife or not. Focus groups give better data but are also far more expensive to run and intensive to analyse.

Not all data has to be numbers. So long as you are systematic, you can collect opinions of young people, their carers, school staff or others. You must always be aware of potential biases and understand the limits of your conclusions.

**Impact evaluations** assess programme effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goal; in our case, reducing involvement in violence or knife carrying amongst young people. This is the hardest level to achieve and will be beyond the capacity of most organisations, but if an intervention can show this it will be a strong indicator that the intervention works.

## Randomised Control Trials

The “gold standard” of evidence-based policing is a randomised control trial, or RTC. In an RTC, your potential target population is split evenly, and randomly. One half will receive the intervention (the “trial” group), while the other half receives something else (the “control group”). This may be a different intervention, or nothing at all (although this has serious ethical implications). You then use the same measure, such as a questionnaire, on both groups. If the trial group scores better than the control group, then you can be more confident that the intervention is working.

RTCs are difficult to set up and can come with serious ethical issues. The main concern is that you must withhold the intervention from one half of the target population. If you are using an existing intervention for them, and you just want to prove that yours is better, this lessens the

ethical issues. You can also commit to providing the intervention at another time. Another consideration is that you may have limited resources to implement an intervention, and so random allocation may in fact be a fair way to allocate resources.

### Planning the evaluation

You should begin planning the evaluation as soon as you start planning the intervention. As you design each step, you should also bear in mind how you will know that it is working. A Theory of Change will help you plan the evaluation.

### Who should conduct the evaluation?

The best evaluations are done with academic partners, who have the skills and resources to carry out robust evaluations. However, this can be very expensive. Conducting a smaller scale evaluation that keeps to the best practice possible is still preferable to conducting no evaluation at all.

