



ESSEX

VIOLENCE &  
VULNERABILITY

UNIT

# TACKLING KNIFE CRIME

## LESSON PLAN 2



Produced by the Training Effect for the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit to support their campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of knife harm and carrying a knife.

## Lesson Overview:

To explore knife harm in relation to existing knowledge and decision making. Suitable for Y8 upwards

## Aims and Objectives:

1. To challenge reasons why young people may carry a knife
2. To understand how we make decisions in adolescence

## Lesson Type:

Activity and discussion based.

## Materials Needed:

Paper, pens

## Learning Outcomes:

- Young people understand the dangers of carrying a knife. Young people can describe why young people may feel they need to carry a knife.
- Young people begin to understand and can describe adolescent brain development.



# Introduction

This lesson plan is the second of three focused on knife crime.

The purpose of all of the sessions is to challenge pre-existing knowledge and change attitudes and opinions.

The sessions also aim to educate young people about the complexity of decision making and provide the opportunities for them to develop consequential thinking skills which can be applied in risky situations.

## This session

This session covers key points related to:

- Adolescent Brain Development
- Decision making, what this really means.
- How the realities and challenges of adolescent brain development further impact on our decision making when we are younger.

# Step 1 – Intro

Firstly use the introductory statement below to introduce this session to the group.

*“Today we are going to complete the second of three sessions focused on knife crime and youth violence.*

*In the first session we looked at some of the realities of knife crime and explored whether people knew the risks before they got involved.*

*Today we are going to look at why people may do things anyway, even if they know they are risky and that our developing brains in our teenage years may influence this.*

*We are also going to look at what a decision is actually made up of and how our decision making processes can be more complicated than we sometimes think.*

*Ok, let’s get started.”*

# Step 2 – Adolescent brain development

1. Start this activity using the following statement:

***“We are going to think about adolescent brain development.***

***Put simply this describes the changes that happen in the thinking parts of our brains as we get older. We are looking at this as it can be helpful when we are trying to understand why people get involved in risky things, especially when they already knew the risks.***

***We will start by watching a short video. The video is going to show you some of the science behind decision making. Don't worry if you don't know or understand every word or concept in the video, I will help explain it after we have watched it.”***

Now show the group the video below which has been adapted from a video produced for parents in Essex:

<https://youtu.be/9uIFxhyysWg>

2. After watching the video use the following statement before moving into a discussion with the group.

***“So the video raised a couple of really important points that I want to discuss with you all, the key things to think about are:***

- ***Lots of changes happen in our brains when we are teenagers.***
- ***Most importantly the part of our brain that helps us think about consequences, and many other things, develops last.***
- ***Because of this we may rely more on emotions when we are younger, this can mean we may also be more influenced by other people including our peers.***

***Let's now discuss what this may mean in the context of knife crime and violence.”***

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# Step 2 – Adolescent brain development

**3.** We are now going to discuss adolescent brain development with the group.

Use the discussion points below:

- **In the first session we talked about how people already know what knife crime is and what the consequences are. Do you think our developing adolescent brains may be a factor in this?**
- **Do you think we might be more focused on the immediate benefits (e.g. feelings of safety, acceptance by our peers) than longer term consequences?**
- **What do you think? Do you sometimes act without thinking about the long term consequences of what you do?**
- **How could understanding some of these realities help young people who might be at risk?**

## NOTES:

- Reinforce that understanding how our brains develop can be an important part of making positive decisions and staying safe as it can mean we think deeper about the choices we make.

# Step 3 – So what's a decision anyway?

In this activity we are going to discuss the factors which go into our decisions. The aim of the activity is to demonstrate that knowledge is only one factor in how we make decisions, helping to explain the content we have looked at so far.

## Introductory Statement

To begin the activity provide the following statement to the group:

***“We hear a lot about making good decisions and avoiding risky or dangerous situations, we all get lots of information on what we should and shouldn’t do and why something might be a bad idea.***

***But is a decision just made up of knowledge?***

***Are other factors just as important when it comes to making a decision?***

***And given what we have just looked at in terms of adolescent brain development are there other factors when we are young which can influence what we do?***

***In this activity we are going to explore this in some more detail and think about all the factors which can potentially influence the decisions we make.***

***Let’s get started.”***

# Step 3 – So what's a decision anyway?

1. To begin we are going to get our young people to think about the things other than knowledge which go into making our decision.

Ask young people to consider this, what do they think goes into our decision making?

It can be helpful to ask them to think about a time when they have done something they knew was wrong and/or didn't want to do and did it anyway.

What else influenced them to make this decision?

2. Now gather feedback and discuss as a group.

It is likely that the group will have identified other factors which can influence our decision making.

When gathering feedback use the table below to record the answers, you should draw this on the board or flipchart, it's a good idea to do this before delivery of the session.

We have also provided this as a worksheet if you would rather have young people complete it as part of the activity.

<b>feelings</b> (What I felt, who I had feelings towards etc)	<b>priorities</b> (What I wanted, how I wanted to be seen etc)	<b>others</b> (What others wanted)

These are not an exhaustive list of factors (along with knowledge) that influence our decision making but they do represent key factors which can influence our decisions.



## Step 3 – So what's a decision anyway?

3. Once you have gathered feedback from the group and discussed together provide the following statement to the group:

***“Thanks for completing that activity, it should be pretty clear now that the factors which go into making a decision can be complicated.***

***This helps us explain why people can know the risk and end up doing something anyway.***

***If we think of an issue as serious as knife crime the feelings and priorities we have can sometimes be more important than the knowledge we have and even what we really want.***

***Someone can not want to use a knife, and that’s a priority to them, but they can end up doing it as the priority and feelings they have to their friends can be more powerful.***

***We all need to think about why we are **REALLY** making a decision.”***

4. Now we are going to refer back to the content related to adolescent brain development, specifically the two brain changes we discussed earlier:

- **Most importantly the part of our brain that helps us think about consequences, and many other things, develops last.**
- **Because of this we may rely more on emotions when we are younger, this can mean we may also be more influenced by other people including our peers.**

Ask the group the following questions:

- **So given what we have looked at in terms of decision making can you see how this may be even challenging given the changes happening in our developing brains?**
- **How would you feel if a decision you made wasn't really one you wanted to make? How would living with the consequences feel?**

# Session Close

We are now going to bring the session to a close. Use the following statement to summarise the learning from the session:

***“We are going to bring things to a close now and introduce the next session.***

***Let’s recap on what we have covered today.***

***We looked at the realities of adolescent brain development and how these changes can, and do, affect how we think, act and behave.***

***We looked at decision making and how it can look simple on the surface but in reality is a complex process which is driven by more than just our knowledge of a given situation.***

***We then started to think about these two things together and learnt that positive and safe decision making can be even more challenging when we are younger.***

***In the next session we are going to continue to consider these realities and look at strategies we can use which can help us make positive choices and keep ourselves safe.***

***Thanks for all your hard work today.”***

**feelings**

(What I felt, who I had feelings towards etc)

**priorities**

(What I wanted, how I wanted to be seen etc)

**others**

(What others wanted)

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