"Bringing a Knife into School"

SESSION PLAN

Preparation needed

- Projector/PC if needed
- Flipchart/whiteboard and marker pens if needed
- Relevant PowerPoint slides

Reflection

- Consider last session and spend a length short time covering any learning points and observations since the last session.
- If it is relevant **ask** – Has anyone done anything that was influenced by this last session?
- Reference any relevant news / information to update on previous session.
- **Re-do / Remind group** of the GROUP AGREEMENT

Setting the Scene

Learning Intentions:

- To understand the impact of knife carrying in England.
- To recognise the role of bystanders and ways in which bystanders can intervene.
- **Introduce the session** – Inform the group that this session will explore the issue of knife carrying in society.
- Remind the group that for the session they are bystanders to a scenario
- Hands up if you have been aware of this happening in your school? – Have group discuss their thoughts and share any examples if appropriate.

NOTE – For some this discussion will be very personal. Be aware of people becoming upset. These are real issues

The Scene

Have a volunteer read aloud the scenario? Thereafter read the scenario yourself.

Your friend has been getting bullied a bit lately. There has been a lot of name-calling which has also been happening over social media. Other people have been getting involved and joining in. Your friend has confided in you saying things are getting worse and they are sick of putting up with it. Others are talking about a big fight that is going to happen after school. At school, you notice what you think looks like a knife in your friend's bag

After **ask** the group whether this is a realistic and relevant scenario. **Could this happen?**

Ask individuals/groups to discuss and identify any red flags in the scenario. Clarify you are looking for the words/phrases that appear wrong or unhealthy.

After few minutes facilitate the red flags from the group. Write on board/flipchart.

My Challenges

Ask the group to discuss with a partner or within their group what they are thinking when they read this scenario?

Give group few minutes to discuss responses and feedback. Thereafter read aloud or show the following **train of thought.**

What did I see? Was it a knife? It looked like one ... Why would they think of bringing a knife to school? Should I tell someone about this? Will my friend get in trouble? ... What will people think of me if I speak to a teacher? Will I get called a grass? ... If I do nothing and someone gets hurt, how will I feel? ... Will I get in trouble? ... I'm sure they'd never use it, they're probably just protecting themselves. Then again, they are my friend and I don't want them getting hurt or in trouble ... What should I do?

Ask – What reasons might someone give for not getting involved? Fear, it's not my business, don't know what to do, might lose a friend etc.

Discussion Time

Statement 1 – Carrying a knife for protection is sometimes ok

Give a short amount of time for group to make their choice then ask 2-3 people in each group:

Why did you agree/disagree/Why are you unsure?

Ask the group:

1. **Why do you think some people might carry a knife to protect themselves?**

Take some ideas from the group. Reasons might include they might be scared, they see it as the only option, they want to be the one in charge.

2. **What do you think the law around knife carrying says about carrying a knife for protection?**
There is no defence if you carry a knife, even for protection. You would be charged by the police.

3. **What are the likely consequences of carrying knives or other weapons in a situation like this, even for protection?**

As well as being charged by the police the person carrying the knife may hurt/kill another person. They may get hurt themselves.

Carrying of knives is against the law, even if you carry it to protect yourself. The reality is people get hurt. Even the person carrying the knife often gets hurt with their own knife. Remember in the scenario it is a friend that is involved.

4. **What other reasons might someone give for carrying a knife?**

Young people sometimes make the decision to carry a knife because they think that it is the "norm" - that lots of other people are or because their friends do and they want to fit in or have status. Knife carrying is not the norm, most young people would never carry a knife and it's not worth going to prison just to look tough.

CONSIDER – The BOX activity may be a good activity to run prior to discussing this scenario. In many ways boys often carry knives to look tough.

Statement 2 – There is a serious problem of young people carrying knives in English schools.

Give a short amount of time for group to make their choice then ask 2-3 people in each group:

Why did you agree/disagree/Why are you unsure?

NOTE–

Knife carrying is serious and one incident is one too many, but it's important not to exaggerate the extent of the problem so that young people do not feel disproportionately alarmed (and potentially more likely to carry a knife defensively) or have the impression that lots of other young are carrying knives (and potentially contributing to knife carrying because they think it's the norm).

This statement is designed to both reassure young people that these incidents whilst rare present the potential for individuals to be faced with challenging situations Reassurance is not about downplaying the seriousness of knife carrying or telling young people that there is no problem whatsoever.

Consider using any current or past media reports on the subject.

Ask the group:

1. What makes a problem serious?

2. Would several incidents make it serious, or could just one incident make it a serious problem?

3. If it affected a friend, would it become a serious problem?

4. Do you think knife carrying is an issue in schools?

The statement can be used to reflect that the norm isn't to carry weapons. Whilst we can't ignore the fact it happens; we can reassure young people that how they feel is actually how others feel on the issue.

Statistically this is a huge change, and it is important to acknowledge. It is also important to remember that these statistics are used here to illustrate that knife carrying is not the norm. Reassurance is the key point. Statistics will vary year on year and sometimes rise but knife carrying has never been the norm. It has been more problematic, but never the norm.

5. Do you think that the way issues like knife carrying are reported in the media is helpful or unhelpful?
Recent news articles have highlighted reports about knives in schools alongside pictures of machetes and large hunting knives. This does not accurately reflect the nature of any knife/weapon carrying in schools and can cause disproportionate alarm.

Ask the group to raise their hands if they think bringing a knife or other weapon to school is not the right thing to do.

NOTE – likely that all young people will raise their hands. Use this as an opportunity to have group look around the room. The raising of hands breaks down the group norms and helps individuals see that how they feel is how others feel.

Ask group to sit down and again show the scenario.

DISCUSSION STARTERS: Ask the group:

1. **What do friends do for each other?** Look out for one another.

2. **Do you think it could be hard to stop a friend from doing something that may harm someone else or got them in trouble?** Why might this be difficult for some people? Responses may include don't want to lose their friendship, don't want to get them into trouble, don't want to be a 'grass', their friend might be a strong person and the 'leader'.

3. **Why would it be important to do something here?**

Because the consequences of their actions could be very serious.

4. **What could be the consequences if you don't do something?**

That someone get seriously hurt/injured or that your friend end up with a criminal record.

5. **It says in the train of thought that telling a teacher or parent might end up with you being called a snitch/grass. Why would this stop some people from intervening?** Because that's often seen as a bad thing to be and not being a good friend.

6. **If a friend is in trouble would speaking with a teacher or other adult make you a good friend?** YES

My Leadership

- **Ask** the group to discuss with partners/in groups what is their role in this scenario?
- **Ask** them to think who they should be thinking about in this scenario.
- **Group should consider all those involved in the scenario including themselves including themselves.**

My Plan

Provide group with a short time to discuss in their groups their plan around what they could do in this situation.

Say - We have discussed the 'scene' and your 'challenges' lets now think what we can do. Ask group to make sure that they think of any consequences that could occur. Thereafter discuss the range of options available.

Option 1: Do nothing. It's none of your business.

1. **Is this an option that some might consider using?**

2. **What might happen if you do nothing?** Responses may include: your friend hurts or seriously injuries someone. Your friend gets hurt or injured. Your friend gets charged with the police and has a criminal record.

3. **What does do nothing say to your friend?**

That you don't think there's anything wrong with what he's doing.

4. What does do nothing say to others?

That this is okay and that you don't think there's a problem with it.

Option 2: Talk with your friend and tell him what you saw. Tell him you want to help.

Ask the group:

1. **Why might people choose this option?**

It tells your friend you are there for them. It might stop the fight from taking place.

2. **What could you say to your friend?**

Provide class with opportunity to develop a way that they could confidently speak to their friend.

3. **What might happen if you chose this option?**

Your friend might deny it and get angry at you.

4. **What could you do to make this option a bit safer for you?**

You are looking for the class to use other friends for support.

Option 3: Try to distract my friend to get them out of school before the fight takes place. Then speak to him to see what help he needs.

Ask the group

1. **What would this look like? How could you get your friend out of school?**
2. **What could you say to your friend after you get him away from the fight?**

Option 4: Talk with your friends and come up with a way to deal with this together.

Ask the group:

1. **Why might involving friends be a good option? -** It helps make this a safe option. Safety in numbers

Note – Refer group to the occasions in the session where the class have demonstrated a shared understanding that carrying a knife is wrong and could be harmful. Say something like you have friends who agree with you

Option 5 – Talk about this with a parent/carer, a teacher/adult you trust or MVP mentor.

Ask the group

1. **Why might this be a good option?** You can get proper help.
2. **Why might this option be difficult for some people?**

Some might think they might get into trouble. Ask the group if they think they would. Reassure them they wouldn't.

Also telling others may be seen as grassing or snitching. Ask group if this is an issue.

Explore responses. Say to group "surely if your friend is in trouble or about to do something that could get them in trouble you are being a good friend.

Option 6: Call the police/speak to school police officer

Ask the group

1. **Why this might this be a good option?** You get some help.

2. **What might make this a difficult option for some people to choose?** Refer to answers above and repeat the comments.

Speaking up for a friend makes you a good friend.

Final Words

Reinforce key messages

Let the group know that as leaders, they could make their school and community a safe and respectful place.

Ask the group: What have you learnt from today's session? You might want to note responses on flipchart.

Reinforce key messages from discussion to include:

- **Most of us are aware that carrying of knives can be harmful and is against the law.**
- **Carrying a knife because you are scared is not an excuse and is against the law.**
- **We have a responsibility first to ourselves and to our friends.**
- **There are ways that we can be challenging/supportive bystanders when are faced with difficult situations.**
- **Words like grass and snitch stop us from being the friends we want to be.**
- **Don't be a bystander, be a friend.**