

Anti-Weapon/Knife Crime Strategy

Questions/comments from Head Teachers to Police Scotland

Responses from Police Scotland

- What should schools do if there is a verbal threat without an actual weapon?

Report the incident to Police Scotland by telephoning 101, as verbal threats can lead to physical altercations. It will provide the school, Police and any other stakeholders the opportunity to establish if there is concern for any of the parties involved.

- If a knife is found in the playground/school grounds by an adult should schools contact Police Scotland?

Yes. Police can attend to take possession of the article and ascertain the circumstances of finding. Whilst infrequent, it may be that the article is of interest to Police in connection with a matter unrelated to the school.

- Can schools dispose of knives/weapons themselves?

No. Further to the answer for the previous question, if the article is to be disposed of, Police have the means to do this safely.

- Schools asked for some advice on dealing with threat of harm via social media.

As with the answer to the first question, please report to Police Scotland.

- If a child needs to bring a specialized table knife to school to eat packed lunch (special shape/design to aid eating for the child) is this alright?

Ideally such an article would be permanently left with school staff for safekeeping until the times of actual use by the child. If it has to go home with the child every day then ideally it would be handed to school staff on the child's arrival each day and returned to them on their departure.

- Schools would like to know the course of action taken after an incident is reported – (what happens, charged, Youth Justice, support for the child)

The Youth Justice Management Unit have responsibility for dealing with all detected youth crime. When they are informed that a young person aged between 8 and 17 years has committed an offence they carry out a number of background checks to ascertain any wellbeing concerns for the young person. This will include making contact with schools, SCRA and Social Work. When the required information is gathered a number of crime disposal options are available. However, if the young person is aged 12 or over and there is sufficient evidence available, a report will always be sent jointly to SCRA and COPFS if the young person is found to be in possession of a knife on school premises.

- What if a child is self harming and taking some form of improvised blade/weapon for this? If they are not threatening any other pupil does Police Scotland need to be notified?

Yes, as there may still be an offence with regard to the child's possession of the article, but more importantly, the Police's involvement will ensure that a submission is made to our Concern Hub, through which the wider support of multi-agency partners can be considered/secured.

- Scottish Government has published a bill to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 8 to 12 years old – will this change anything?

No, we would ask that regardless of the age of the child(ren) involved, schools should continue to report each incident to Police Scotland so that the individual circumstances can be established and thereafter wider support for each child can be considered.