

## **Anti-Weapon/Knife Use Guidance for Educational Establishments** **An outline of requirements of schools with regard to anti-weapon/knife** **crime practices**

### **CONTEXT**

Following the tragic event at Cults Academy on the 28th October 2015, an independent Multi-Agency Review<sup>1</sup> was commissioned, supported by the Scottish Government. The overall aim of the review was to provide independent assurance to partners and the public that all circumstances, in relation to the event, were reviewed and appropriate recommendations made for future practice. Key recommendations for practice were made in 2016 and this Guidance has been created to give direction to schools and their communities in order to meet agreed recommendations.

### **OVERVIEW**

This guidance is primarily for school staff and local agencies working within educational establishments to ensure that the whole school community maintains a positive, safe, and secure learning and teaching environment.

Whilst statistically the number of pupils found to be in possession of an offensive weapon is low, the potential for violent incidents is nonetheless very real.

Heads of Establishment should ensure that guidelines are in place, and well understood by the school community, to enable incidents of weapon/knife use to be managed effectively, and ensure that the safety and welfare of everyone within the educational establishment continues to be of paramount importance.

Heads of Establishment should ensure that pupil and parental expectations with regard to anti-weapon/knife use are understood and that there is access to relevant information to highlight the key messages of anti-weapon/knife use and crime.

*For the purpose of this guidance a "weapon" is any firearm (of any description including starting pistols, air guns and any type of replica or toy gun), knife (including all variations of bladed object including pocket knives, craft knives, scissors, etc.) explosive (including firework), aerosol spray, lighter, matches, laser pen or other object, even if manufactured for a non-violent purpose, that has a potentially violent use, if, in the circumstances, the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.*

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci\\_cns/pr\\_cultsacademyreview\\_070316.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CouncilNews/ci_cns/pr_cultsacademyreview_070316.asp)

## **AIMS**

The key aims align with the Recommendations of the Multi-Agency Review 2016.

- To effectively support children and young people who carry/use weapons/knives to minimise harm and provide early and effective help and guidance
- To provide educational settings with a framework from which to develop their own school policy and offer a model of good practice for developing procedures to manage any weapon/knife related incident
- To clarify legal responsibilities, entitlements and obligations of all those involved
- To work in partnership with those agencies across Forth Valley who are best able to support schools in the development of this advice and raise awareness of the partners/agencies who are best placed to support
- To continue to develop a whole school approach to anti-weapon/knife crime education in the context of the school curriculum

**Appendix 1 provides a suggested School Policy template to support the above aims.**

## **STATUTORY DUTIES**

Schools have a statutory duty to promote all children and young people's wellbeing and hence have a clear role in preventing weapon/knife use as part of the principles and practice of **GIRFEC**<sup>2</sup> and in accordance with the General Teaching Council (Scotland) **Code of Professionalism and Conduct**<sup>3</sup> and pastoral care.

**The Children and Young Person's(Scotland) Act 2014**<sup>4</sup>, outlines the rights of children and young people, which must be taken into account when dealing with any incidents of weapon/knife use and places a duty on authorities to promote , raise awareness and understanding of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**<sup>5</sup>

**It is advisable that all educational establishments have a clear procedure for managing any incidents to protect all pupils, staff and parents/carers and ensure compliance with the above duties.**

There should be no doubt as to the seriousness of incidents of weapon/knife use. It is important that such incidents are dealt with in a forthright manner and those children and young people are offered appropriate, proportionate and timely support and help.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/FormUploads/code-of-professionalism-and-conduct.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/legislation/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/UN-Convention/> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to article 6 – the right to life.

## **LEGISLATION**

This Guidance fully endorses the following National legislation.

*Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995.*

Any person who without lawful authority, or reasonable excuse, has with him/her in a public place, any offensive weapon commits an offence.

**Children's Rights**

Our responsibilities are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*"Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them." (Article 19)*

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES -SCHOOL**

### **• CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Positive behaviour is a vital component of a well-developed health and wellbeing education programme. Such education provision should provide each child or young person with a coherent, progressive educational experience, developing prior learning in ways appropriate to each age and stage.

As part of the *No Knives, Better Lives*<sup>1</sup> programme, Clackmannanshire educational establishments have access to a comprehensive educational resource, peer education and training facility which provides a comprehensive framework of learning experiences, activities and quality assured resources supporting positive choices, behaviours and risk taking.

Educational establishments are free to choose materials which are best suited to the needs of their young people and environment, so long as they conform to national and local advice in this area.

### **• POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour (2013) strongly emphasises that investing time and resources into improving relationships and behaviour in establishments leads to positive outcomes around inclusion, engagement and achievement as well as combined with community safety and cohesion. It is essential to value each child and young person as an individual with his or her own strengths and development needs.

Clackmannanshire Education Service recognise that children and young people have different abilities, experiences and family circumstances and it is vitally important that our establishments create safe, secure and nurturing ethos to ensure each child's and young person's wellbeing is "promoted, safeguarded and supported" Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

- **SCHOOL STAFF**

Individual staff members, including teaching, non-teaching and ancillary staff are likely to be the first to encounter a weapon/knife related incident.

**It is not individual staff members' responsibility to determine the circumstances surrounding the incident.**

**However, they should deal with any emergency procedures or First Aid if necessary immediately.**

Staff wellbeing and safety is about taking a sensible and proportionate approach. Staff should not feel obliged to intervene where their personal safety is at risk.

- **THE HEAD TEACHER**

**It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to determine the circumstances of all incidents but it is the responsibility of the member of staff who oversees Child Protection to investigate any suspected offence.**

In any suspected incident, the Head Teacher should make every effort to contact the parents/carers of those pupils involved **immediately**.

The Head Teacher should ensure that in any incident involving a weapon/knife, Police Scotland are notified **immediately**.

Searching pupils' personal belongings.

If there is reason to believe that a pupil is carrying a knife or other offensive weapon the following steps should be followed –

- In accordance with the law of Scotland searches must be made with the pupil's consent.
- The Head Teacher or nominee can undertake searches of the pupil's belongings where consent is given.
- Parents will be informed of any searches
- Where no consent is forthcoming schools will contact Police Scotland
- Any weapon/knife found in a pupil's possession will be confiscated
- Any weapon/knife found will be stored in a locked cabinet awaiting action by Police Scotland

## **SCHOOL RESPONSE**

It would not be appropriate to prescribe specific sanctions which should be applied to weapon/knife related incidents.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A PUPIL BE INITIALLY EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL UNTIL THE INCIDENT HAS BEEN INVESTIGATED FULLY**

However, Head Teacher must retain responsibility for deciding how to respond to particular incidents, taking account of factors such as:

- the age of the pupil concerned
- whether the incident involved one pupil or a group of pupils
- whether there has been evidence of particular peer group pressure
- the level of involvement

A range of factors may be relevant and need exploration to determine the seriousness and needs of those involved and an appropriate response:

It is important to ask;

- What is getting in the way of this child or young person's well-being?
- Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
- What can I do now to help this child or young person?
- What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
- What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?

These questions should be underpinned by the GIRFEC Principles and Practice

An additional range of additional questions should also be taken into account;

- is the young person willing to engage in the discussion?
- does the young person admit or deny the allegations?
- is this a first or subsequent offence?
- what was the young person's motivation?
- is the young person knowledgeable and careful or reckless as to their own or others' safety?
- does the young person know and understand the school policy and school rules?
- where does the incident appear on a scale from 'possession or intent to use'?

**Educational establishments may wish to use the recording template in Appendix 2 to support further planning and interventions for the child/young person and their parent/carer**

### **PUPIL SUPPORT**

A range of services and agencies are available to support a young person including:

No Knives Better Lives

<http://noknivesbetterlives.com>

Ben Kinsella

<http://www.benkinsella.org.uk/what>

Staff can direct pupils to sources of confidential information and advice.

Appropriate counselling and support will be available to those student perceived to be at risk.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Schools should ensure that parents/carers are fully informed of school procedures in the event of suspected and/or related incidents. Information should be available via the School Handbook, web page or usual form of communication and updated annually

When investigating an incident of weapon/knife use, consideration should be given to parents/carers who may be emotionally distressed in response to an incident.

Every effort should be made to contact the parents/guardians immediately following an incident and prior to any Police Scotland involvement .

### **SCHOOLBUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING**

Schools should work with the Authority Emergency Planning Department to discuss the rigour of business continuity plans in the event of a weapon/knife incident. These should be tested using a live scenario based on a fatal incident.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Staff cannot and should not promise total confidentiality.

The boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear to pupils. Members of staff should carefully consider their response if approached by a pupil concerning information regarding weapon/knife use.

If information concerning weapons/knife use is disclosed, the staff member has to pass this on to the designated Senior Management Team member.

### **COMMUNICATION FOLLOWING A SUSPECTED/CONFIRMED WEAPON/KNIFE RELATED INCIDENT**

The school should give careful consideration as to how any information relating to a suspected/confirmed incident is communicated to all staff, pupils and parents/carers.

Information should only be disclosed to those members of staff concerned with the pastoral needs of the individual pupil.

Only the parents/carers of the pupil(s) directly involved should be informed of the incident and subsequent outcomes.

It is important that individual cases are not discussed with other pupils. It may however, be necessary to make a general statement informing the school community after an incident .Advice should always be sought from the Senior Management Team within Education Services and the Authority Communications Team.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Suggested school policy**

#### **Anywhere School ANTI-WEAPON/KNIFE USE POLICY**

Policy approved and adopted: date

Review Date: date

#### **Brief description of your school and its community, which could include the following:**

- Geography
- Age range, sex, number on role, including staff
- Religious, cultural, ethnic mix of pupils
- Special educational needs, disabilities
- Any evidence of health and social needs, number of free school meals

#### **Introduction**

To include key aims

- To provide pupil and parental engagement expectations with regard to anti –weapon/knife crime.
- To provide procedural and operational guidance to name of school and their community with regard to weapon/knife crime.
- To provide guidance on procedures with regard to the searching of pupils' personal belongings.
- To outline links to Clackmannanshire's Positive Behaviour Policy- Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour

State the schools values and ethos in relation to positive behaviour, anti-bullying-GIRFEC, education -health and well-being

- How the policy supports the school vision.
- This policy links with (list other relevant policies e.g. Child protection,

#### **Policy Development**

The Authority Guidance from which this Policy was adapted was created by a Working Party

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Name people with responsibility for:

- Drawing up and/or reviewing the policy
- Planning and co-ordinating the weapon/knife use-PSHE education curriculum
- Managing related incidents
- Dissemination
- Describe how the policy is disseminated and where a copy is kept for reference.

#### **National and Local Guidance**

Specify guidance documents on which the policy has drawn.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the school anti-weapon/knife use policy is to:

- Clarify the legal requirements and responsibilities of the school
- Reinforce and safeguard the health, wellbeing and safety of pupils and others who use the school
- Clarify the school's approach to safeguarding for staff, pupils, Parent Council, parents/carers and the wider community
- Give guidance on developing, implementing and monitoring the positive behaviour PSHE education programme
- Enable staff to manage incidents on school premises, with confidence and consistency, and in the best interests of those involved
- Reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies

### **The Boundaries of the Policy**

Specify the schools boundaries and jurisdiction of the policy's provisions.

**Who?** - Staff, pupils, parents/carers, visitors, partner agencies working in the school

**Where?** - On school site, youth centre, school visits, school transport  
Curriculum Support

Include:

- Aim of weapon/knife use knowledge and understanding and outline key learning objectives
- Specify or refer to the content to be provided with reference to the frameworks for PSHE , Health and Wellbeing Curriculum
- Outline provision for vulnerable pupils and those with ASN and how issues of pupil diversity will be addressed

### **Statements on Specific Issues**

Advice, information and referral (individually and in the classroom).

Honest and unbiased information should be given according to the agreed policy.

### **Confidentiality/disclosure**

Staff should be reminded to follow their school's policy on confidentiality issues. Pupils should also be made aware of the boundaries of confidentiality should they choose to make a disclosure to a member of staff



---

## APPENDIX 2

### School Incident Report Form

**School Name and Person Reporting**

**Date Reported**

**Date and Time of Incident**

**Name of child/children**

**Description of incident**

**Number of Pupils Involved**

**Age/Stage of Pupils Involved**

**Any specific information regarding pupils HQ should be aware of – e.g. ASN/LAC**

**Were any injuries sustained? Provide details and current status.**

**Was ambulance called?**

**Are parents aware?**

**Have police been contacted? (either by school, pupils or parents)**

**Police response?**

**Has/have pupil(s) been excluded?**

**Were photographs/films taken by any bystanders or witnesses?**

**Any other relevant/follow-up information**