

Information and guidelines on weapons and knife crime

Here are some basic guidance and advice on weapons. It is unlikely that you will be involved in an incident involving weapons at work but it is important that you understand the law and can take basic preventative measures. This leaflet also explains the Home Office guidance on weapons and knife crime. It outlines the maximum penalties if found guilty of carrying a knife; the police 'Stop & Search' powers; some definitions of offensive weapons and information for searches at schools.

Worst scenario - What should staff do in a situation involving a weapon?

On the very rare occasion that this may happen staff should try to:-

- Stay calm
- Avoid confrontation
- Remove themselves (and others) to a place of safety
- Call the Police as soon as possible (without inflaming the situation)
- Be co-operative; e.g. If the person is demanding money etc let them have it, just try and recall all the necessary detail for the Police.
- Do not try and take a knife by force, unless you have run out of all other options and someone's life is at risk and you believe you can do something without making the situation worse.

Searches

Staff can search any young person they suspect of carrying a weapon.

It is a criminal offence to carry an offensive weapon.

Incident reporting – weapons

If you are involved in an incident at work involving a weapon, even if the weapon is not used, you should report this incident to your manager and record it,

This council takes seriously any incidents of aggression or violence and this is clearly reflected in its policies which are aimed at protecting staff.

Offences

It is an offence to carry an offensive weapon in a public place, if you don't have a reasonable excuse. This means that carrying something that could be viewed as an offensive weapon, and then using it in a threatening way, could mean that you are prosecuted. The penalty is up to four years' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5000.

The police's 'stop and search' powers

Police officers may stop a person, and have the right to search any person or vehicle, if they suspect them of an offence - including carrying an offensive weapon. Weapons regarded as offensive are extensive e.g.

- flick knives
- knuckle-dusters
- samurai swords
- blow-pipes or guns
- telescopic truncheons
(auto-extending)
- disguised knives
(e.g., lipstick knives)

Reasonable excuse: Possession of tools for your trade.

How should you store knives at All Saints Youth Project?

Obviously this is down to risk assessment but you should be following best practice.

- It is sensible for knives (or chisels) used in projects and cooking to be stored securely and counted out and in.
- In communal kitchens are required it is sensible to limit knife selection to small peelers (not pointed end) and bread knives

The Facts about knives

- It is illegal to carry any knife if there is intent to use it, even defensively, as a weapon. Even if the knife belongs to someone else, such as a friend or a boyfriend.
- Police can and will search someone if they believe they are carrying a knife. Police can also go into schools and search young people there.
- Carrying a knife could mean being arrested, going to court and ending up with a criminal record or even a prison sentence. This can affect the rest of someone's life. Having a criminal record can prevent that person getting a job, going to university or college or even travelling to certain countries.

What is and isn't legal - the maximum penalty for carrying a knife is four years in prison and a fine of £5000

- it is illegal for any shop to sell a knife of any kind (including cutlery and kitchen knives) to anyone under the age of 18

Use of a knife as an offensive weapon

If a knife is used in a threatening way (even a legal knife, such as a Swiss Army knife), it is regarded as an 'offensive weapon' by the law. This is also the case with things like screwdrivers – once used in a threatening manner, they are treated as offensive weapons.

There is a complete ban on the sale of certain types of knives categorised as offensive weapons, regardless of their use, these include:

- flick knives - knives where the blade is hidden inside the handle and shoots out when a button is pressed; these are also called 'switchblades' or 'automatic knives'
- disguised knives - where the blade is hidden inside something like a belt buckle or fake mobile phone
- butterfly knives - where the blade is hidden inside a handle that splits in two around it, like wings; the handles swing around the blade to open or close it
- it is generally an offence to carry a knife in public without good reason or lawful authority (for example, a good reason is a chef on the way to work carrying their own knives)
- the maximum penalty for an adult carrying a knife is four years in prison and a fine of £5000
- knives where the blade folds into the handle, like a Swiss Army Knife, aren't illegal as long as the blade is shorter than three inches (7.62 cms)

For more information: -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-knife-crime-together-a-review-of-local-anti-knife-crime-projects>

Related ASYP documents: -

- Behaviour Policy
- Safe guidelines Policy
- Health and Safety Policy