

Junior detectives programme

A five-day immersive workshop to educate students about knife crime.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Knife and gun crime Community engagement
Organisation	West Yorkshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2025–27 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of West Yorkshire Police
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Key details

Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Education Health services Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The junior detectives workshop aims to discourage children from committing knife crime by creating a ripple prevention effect.

The longer-term aim is for students to share their learning and experience with peers.

Intended outcome

The workshop aims to:

- increase students' understanding of knife crime and the police procedures
- increase students' understanding of the consequences of knife crime
- increase officers' understanding of what children believe causes knife crime
- increase officers' understanding of what children would like from the police to address knife crime
- decrease the number of knife crimes among young people

Description

Junior detectives was developed in response to the high levels of serious youth knife related violence in the force area.

The workshop is hosted over five days on the University of Bradford campus, by three officers present all week to support the logistics and stakeholder planning involved.

West Yorkshire Police ask the schools to nominate five 12 to 13 year old students that they think are influential in their year group, in the hope that they will share and discuss what they have learnt when they return to school.

The workshop costs £450 and includes food for the children and the celebration event at the end of the week.

Agenda

The workshop has the following agenda.

Day one

The students arrive on campus and are introduced to the immersive experience scenario. A phone call comes in reporting that there has been a knife-related incident on campus. The children are informed West Yorkshire police are unable to investigate, so they have taken the unorthodox approach of making the attendees detectives for the week. The children are sworn in and given warrant cards.

The children then receive an input from four A&E consultants regarding the fallacy of safe places to be stabbed. Following this, two children are chosen to interview the victim and his mum (played by actors) over a video link. A detective assists, teaching them about achieving best evidence.

Day two

The children are dressed in crime scene investigator (CSI) suits to attend the crime scene in attempts to locate the weapon. A demonstration is given with a police dog to illustrate how they assist in crime scene investigations. The children are then taken to a forensic lab where they are shown the forensic recovery process.

During the second part of the day, the children are provided with the breaking news that the suspect has handed themselves in. All children are given a light-touch introduction to the PEACE interviewing model before two children are chosen to interview the suspect. The interview is streamed back to the rest of the pupils so they can observe.

Day three

A presentation and mental health input is delivered to the children to increase their understanding of knife crime. During the presentation they are shown what they should do if they see something they are unhappy with. The presentation is trauma informed and contains videos to facilitate in-depth discussion on what the police can do around knife crime and what the pupils believe cause knife crime.

Day four

The children visit Bradford Crown Court where they are given a tour and witness the suspect getting sentenced. The suspect is sentenced to six years for wounding. This is followed by a one-hour discussion with the judge and two Kings Counsels. During the second part of the day, the children hear from a guest speaker from St Giles Trust, who shares their lived experience of knife crime.

Day five

The day is spent at Bradford City Association Football Club (AFC), where a career talk is delivered by the university and the children deliver a presentation detailing what they have learnt. Parents and school senior leadership teams are invited to attend as a celebration buffet is held and certificates are presented to all the children.

A pre-event contract is agreed with each school around what is expected from them post intervention to continue the legacy of this work.

An agreement may include:

- a presentation to peers
- school governor meetings addressing this topic
- posters around knife crime

- advertisements of anti-knife crime initiatives

This seeks to create a ripple effect in schools, by using a peer-to-peer model for passing on learning. West Yorkshire Police conduct follow-up visits with the school one month and three months after the workshop to discuss the legacy of the intervention.

Additionally, two Bradford City AFC staff have agreed to conduct focus groups in school regarding what they have learnt from the immersive experience.

Evaluation

No evaluation has been completed but a short survey was administered pre and post-intervention. This provided some anecdotal evidence of students' general feedback related to the event as well as what schools intended to do to maintain the work and continue to raise awareness of knife crime. West Yorkshire Police is working with the University of Leeds to process this data.

Overall impact

To date two cohorts have completed the workshop. All feedback from students and staff has been very positive and two more cohorts are already confirmed to run in coming months.

The force intends to run four cohorts a year moving forward.

Learning

The force recognises the importance of early stakeholder engagement. Various parties, including actors, health care consultants, university staff and crown court colleagues all need to be spoken to about their willingness to participate, and plans made accordingly.

It is also important that the students selected are those who are felt to make good ambassadors. They should be individuals felt to have influence amongst their peers and who will do an excellent job of producing and sharing content following the event.

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