

# Education key to reducing violent knife crime

February 3 2014, by Cara Macdowall

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Education based interventions are more effective than any other initiative in tackling the scourge of knife crime. That's the key finding of a new Scottish Government commissioned report from the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research.

The [report](#), which involved an extensive review of approaches and interventions that are used to prevent and reduce knife crime throughout the world, found that the most effective way of tackling the problem was by educating those who are at risk of carrying a knife at an early age.

Author of the report, Rebecca Gillian Foster, who was based at the University of Edinburgh at the time of the research, and is now based at the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) at the University of Glasgow said "This report reviews the current literature available and suggests that education based interventions hold the most promise for effectively tackling knife crime. These interventions should be delivered both at school and within communities, in order to reach all young people.

"While custodial sentences are useful in sending out a message to young people who carry knives to acquire status, their function should not be overstated since they may not have a meaningful deterrent effect on those who carry a knife out of fear."

The report concludes that fear could be addressed by reassuring young people that the police and other services are working to protect them, and that trust in these agencies is essential.

According to Rebecca Gillian Foster, criminal justice measures such as stop and searches, knife amnesties and tougher custodial sentences have an important place in any anti-blade initiative, for their deterrent effect. However, these should be properly measured and evaluated. "In a multi-agency approach to address knife crime, as is the case in Scotland, it is important that the strengths of criminal justice measures, as well as the strengths of educational and voluntary sector interventions, complement, rather than conflict with, one another. By carefully balancing each, it is hoped that knife crime can be tackled effectively."

No Knives Better Lives (NKBL) is a Government funded initiative which aims to raise awareness amongst young people of the dangers of carrying a knife. Jane Dailly, National Co-ordinator at the NKBL National Delivery Team at Youthlink Scotland, said:

"The findings of the report support the key principles of No knives, better lives - that education and prevention is key to reducing knife crime. No knives aims to reduce the incidence of knife carrying amongst young people in Scotland by raising awareness of the related risks and consequences, changing attitudes and perceptions, and promoting positive life choices. The report also highlights the fact that many [young people](#) carry a knife out of fear, this is something that increasingly informs the content of our educational resources."

Provided by University of Glasgow

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