

Positive Approaches

Taking a proactive and positive approach to parenting can help reduce the risk of involvement in crime and conflict:

- **Active Listening:** Take time to listen to your child's concerns and experiences without judgement.
- **Encouraging Positive Activities:** Support your child in engaging in hobbies, sports, or youth groups that build self-esteem and positive social connections.
- **Modelling Positive Behaviour:** Demonstrate respect, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation in your own actions.
- **Creating a Safe Home Environment:** Ensure your child feels valued and supported at home.
- **Fostering Open Communication:** Let your child know they can talk to you about anything, without fear of punishment.

What NOT to Do

- **Avoid Confrontation:** If you suspect your child is carrying a weapon, don't react with anger or threats. Stay calm and seek support.
- **Don't Ignore Concerns:** If you notice warning signs, act early rather than hoping it will pass.
- **Avoid Isolating Your Child:** Restricting freedom too harshly may push them further toward risky behaviours. Instead, focus on guidance and open communication.



People who can help:

- Parents or guardians — keep talking, stay calm, and offer support
- Teachers, school counsellors, or sports coaches — trusted adults who can intervene early
- Youth support services — offer confidential advice and mentoring
- Community centres, local Gardaí, and Juvenile Liaison Officers — provide safety advice and workshops
- Helplines and online services — many are anonymous and judgment-free

Support Services & Useful Websites

There are many organisations that offer support for parents, guardians and young people:

Tusla – Child and Family Agency - www.tusla.ie
Support for child welfare, child protection and family support services.

Youth Work Ireland - www.youthworkireland.ie
Youth projects, mentoring and support services for young people.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects
Support for young people who may be at risk of offending or becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

Barnardos Ireland - www.barnardos.ie
Parenting support, child and family resources, and guidance for families.

ISPCC Childline - www.childline.ie
Confidential support for children and young people.

Parentline Ireland - www.parentline.ie
Advice and support for parents and guardians.

SpunOut - www.spunout.ie
Youth information, advice and mental health resources.

CYPSC – Children and Young People's Services Committees
www.cypsc.ie
Local youth, family and parenting supports across Ireland.

Safe Ireland - www.safeireland.ie
Resources and support information for families experiencing domestic violence.

EDGE-AWAY

SMART CHOICES, YOUNG VOICES

PREVENTING WEAPON AND KNIFE CRIME



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Keeping Young People Safe in Our Communities

Speaking with your child about serious issues – like violence, weapons, drugs and relationships can sometimes be very difficult. However, these conversations are vital to help children make safe choices that protect their future.

As a parent, keeping your child safe is a top priority. With concerns about knife and weapon-related crime, it's helpful to know the warning signs, how to talk to your child, and what actions you can take to prevent harm. This guide offers practical advice to help you support your child and contribute to community safety.

Understanding the Risks & Consequences

Helping young people understand risk and consequences is important. Carrying a weapon increases the risk of injuring someone, of being injured themselves, and of causing lasting harm to their own lives and to the lives of the people who care for them.

Physical Risks

- Serious injury or loss of life
- Accidental harm to themselves or others
- Increased likelihood of being attacked or targeted

Legal Consequences

- Police involvement and criminal charges
- Permanent criminal record affecting employment and travel
- School suspensions or expulsions

Emotional & Social Risks

- Loss of trust from family and friends
- Guilt, fear, and trauma after violent incidents
- Isolation from positive peer groups

Warning Signs to Watch For

Be aware of changes in your child's behaviour that may indicate involvement in, or exposure to, weapons or anti-social behaviour, such as:

- Unexplained money, new clothes, or possessions
- Withdrawing from family and old friends
- Sudden aggression, anxiety, or paranoia
- Reluctance to go to certain areas or taking new travel routes
- Carrying items that could be used as weapons (e.g., heavy tools, screwdriver, kitchen knives outside the home)
- Mentions of threats, violence, or gangs in conversation or online activity

Starting the Conversation

1. Choose the Right Moment

Find a calm, safe space when neither of you is angry or distracted. This could be at home, during car rides, or on walks — anywhere you think creates a safe, relaxed environment.

2. Listen First

Don't expect or demand that they talk. If they choose to speak, try not to react straight away. Be patient — give them a voice.

Ask open-ended questions such as:

- "How do you feel about safety in your school or community?"
- "What would you do if someone offered you a weapon?"
- "What are your thoughts on people who carry or use weapons?"

3. Be Honest & Real

Young people value people who are real, honest and genuine. If you choose to start the conversation, be prepared to hear answers that you might not like, or that may make you uncomfortable.

Explain clearly that carrying or using a weapon does not make someone strong — it increases the danger for everyone involved. Walking away from a fight and finding help is the braver thing to do, and shows real strength and courage.

Use examples from your own childhood, or times when you had to make difficult choices, to help you relate to them. However, don't allow your examples to take away from their experience or from what they may want to share. You can also use examples of incidents that have happened locally or appeared in the news.

4. Encourage Them

- Try to focus on their fears at first — not yours as their parent. Ask them if they have any fears or worries they would like to share or discuss with you. Later, you can share your own fears and worries about their safety and future.
- Connect with teachers, youth workers, or community leaders for additional support.
- Seek mentoring opportunities for your child, if needed.

5. Keep the Dialogue Open

Make sure your child knows they can come to you anytime about worries, peer pressure, or anything they need to discuss — no matter what.

