



Monday 19 February 2024

Dear parents and carers,

We're writing to you following the tragic events of last Wednesday in which 16-year-old Darrian Williams died.

We are sure you'll be as shocked as we are at the death of another child in our city and that you will unite with us in sending all our thoughts to Darrian's family at this terrible time.

We fully appreciate you may have significant concerns about the safety of your child, and this is something which we do not underestimate.

Last night there was a significant update in the police investigation with two teenage boys being charged in connection with Darrian's death. They appeared at Bristol Youth Court this morning.

We are fully committed to bringing those responsible to justice and significant resources are in place to make sure that happens.

Enhanced stop and search powers were in place across much of the city on Friday and Saturday and a new police operation has been launched as we continue to work with all our partners to tackle knife crime.

While these temporary increased powers have now ended, officers can still stop and search people where there are reasonable suspicions that someone may be carrying something illegal or something which may be used in a crime.

Avon and Somerset Police is working closely with Bristol City Council and together we are supporting schools across the city to manage the aftermath of this horrific incident.

The welfare of our children is a priority for all of us and it's important your child continues to attend school. We are meeting regularly with head teachers to make sure appropriate support and any necessary safeguarding arrangements are in place.

There will also be extra police patrols in the area of schools over the coming days. If you have any concerns or questions then do feel free to approach an officer and they will be happy to help.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Runacres'.

Superintendent Mark Runacres

Bristol Commander

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marvin Rees'.

Marvin Rees

Mayor of Bristol

Advice for starting conversation with your child about the incidents

We understand that yourself and your children will be concerned about what's happened. Some children's behaviour may not have changed, while others may have lots of questions, or may be avoiding discussion. No matter how your child is reacting, talking about knife crime or knife carrying is part of the solution and can help save lives.

We encourage you to all have age-appropriate conversations with your children at home, to help them understand what's happened and what they can do if they're feeling worried. Actively talking about the incidents and knife crime at home will also mean that if they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you.

There are lots of different organisations that can help you with age-appropriate conversations. You can find [general advice for talking about difficult topics on the NSPCC website](#), there are also places to go for age-specific advice:

For under-11s

- Resources like [Talk PANTS will help](#).
- Make sure you're using language they can understand.
- If you suspect [grooming](#) or [exploitation](#), you can [report this directly to CEOP](#).

For older children and teenagers

Their needs and behaviour will be changing and they may find talking to you about difficult topics embarrassing. They will still look to you for support, so it's worth continuing to check in with them regularly, even if there's nothing they want to talk about. There are some tips in the [NSPCC's Positive Parenting guide](#) and on its page on [talking about difficult topics](#).

Advice on where to go for help if you think your child may be at risk from knife crime

In the first instance, if you have information that you think the police need to know to keep people safe from drug dealing, serious violence or exploitation you can tell them about it:

- If the child is at immediate risk call the police on 999
- By using the Avon and Somerset Police [suspected crime form](#)
- Calling 101
- In person at a [police station](#)
- Anonymously through [Crimestoppers](#) via **0800 555 111** or its Fearless service.

If you're concerned about the well-being of a child, please contact the council's First Response Team on **0117 903 6444**.

Barnardo's ROUTES service supports young people at the highest risk of exploitation or violence including young people who have been hurt before or risk hurting others. They work with young people up to 21. You can self-refer by contacting them directly on **0117 9349726**.

What you can do to help keep your child safe

We know this can be a worrying time for everyone involved and that you will be keen to keep your child safe.

For more information on knife crime and what to do if you are worried by it, visit the [Avon and Somerset Police website](#).

The [NSPCC have advice for parents and carers](#) on how to spot the signs of potential exploitation and how to talk to a young person you're worried about. Some of the signs you can look out for include:

- going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons
- in a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them
- being angry, aggressive or violent
- being isolated or withdrawn
- having unexplained money and buying new things
- wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos
- using new slang words
- spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online
- making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones

[The Ben Kinsella Trust](#) has a free guide to knife harm for parents and carers on talking to your child about knife harm and provides practical help and guidance on what to do.

Help and support

There is help available for people who have been impacted by these events and are experiencing a reaction associated with trauma.

Common signs of the impacts of trauma include:

- feeling unable or not having anyone to talk to about what happened
- poor sleep due to intrusive thoughts or disturbing dreams
- experiencing overwhelming emotions or feeling numb
- feeling as if your relationships are suffering since the incident.

In the first instance, it's important that if someone's wellbeing or mental health is suffering they call 101 or contact their GP.

Mental health support in Bristol can be accessed through Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership. Adults can call **0800 953 1919** and children can call **0800 953 9599**.

Information is also available online at:

- [Off the Record \(CAMHS\)](#)
- [Samaritans](#)
- [Bristol MIND](#)

Reporting information

If you have any information which could help our investigation, please report it as soon as possible.

You can submit information and footage via the [Major Incident Public Portal](#). Or, if you prefer to speak to someone by phone, call 101 and give the call handler the reference number **5224039827**.

Information can also be given 100 per cent anonymously via Crimestoppers.