



Friday 24 November 2023

Dear parent/carer,

Support and resources for all parents – Positive choices and personal safety:

Last week, around 300 pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 at five schools in Wokingham attended a “Positive Choices” safety workshop organised by Thames Valley Police and Wokingham Borough Council.

On the Wednesday evening, St Crispin’s School also hosted an evening event for parents, attended by Amanda and Stewart Stephens, the parents of Olly, who lost his life in 2021 to knife crime.

We discussed issues such as the dangers of knife crime, drugs awareness, bullying, safety online, safe use of social media, and how to make positive choices for oneself and to support friends.

The feedback from the students attending was excellent, who enjoyed the opportunity to learn about difficult subjects, sensitively taught by police officers, youth workers and paramedics.

I hope for those parents whose children attended you have been able to continue these conversations with your children, offering them your support should they ever feel they need it.

We feel the subject of personal safety for our young people is so important that we are sharing some of the information and resources with all parents, even if your child did not attend.

In our wider work across the Thames Valley to understand what causes violence, young people have told us that at times they may not want to talk to us as their parents. Acknowledging this, we ask you to encourage your child to always ask for help, from whoever is a trusted adult in their life.

We also hear that at times they don’t feel safe and that a small number may feel they have no other choice but to carry a weapon, for their self-protection. We have to challenge this and we ask for your help in supporting your child, help them to feel safe and know they can report concerns.

For you as a parent, the same applies. If you have worries, speak to someone – a teacher, youth or social worker, of course the police via 101, or there is also the anonymous Crimestoppers Fearless.org service to pass information without having to leave your details.

We hope they are not needed, but there are also knife amnesty bins available in most police station front counter areas, where a weapon can be disposed safely with no contact with the police, no questions asked.

Finally, we want to reassure you as parents that while these are difficult and worrying subjects, Wokingham remains a very safe place. Knife crime in particular has fallen in the Thames Valley over 25% since its peak in 2019, and continues to fall year-on-year.



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We also signpost you toward some useful resources that are available now, provided by the national charity The Ben Kinsella Trust, which works to educate on the danger of knife crime. A comprehensive information booklet is attached with this letter and their website has more too.

Finally, we invite your thoughts and ideas as to anything else we can do.

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit is currently developing new resources for our local area and is interested in hearing from any parent.

- **Do you have ideas on what sort of resources would be helpful to you as a parent – a website? Leaflet? Short videos? Conversation starters?**
- **What sort of themes/topics do you feel you need most advice with?**
- **Have you ideas on how we can help reach young people to help them stay safe?**

Any feedback or ideas can be shared with Tim Wiseman of the Violence Reduction Unit via:
tim.wiseman@thamesvalley.police.uk

We thank you all as parents, helping to support your children and their friends as they grow up, helping them to be confident, resilient and safe and to meet their full potential.

Kind regards,

Jules Bottazzi

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Jules Bottazzi
Head of the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

Narinder Brar
Head of Enforcement & Safety
Wokingham Borough Council