

(October 2019)



One Minute Guide



What is Operation Divan?

Operation Divan is a Police-led partnership initiative to challenge and discourage the carrying of knives by young people in North Yorkshire. Youth knife crime is still very low in North Yorkshire, but we are still seeing a rising trend consistent with the national picture. Agencies, schools, communities and families must work together to protect our children from this grave harm.

When North Yorkshire Police receive reports or intelligence about young people carrying knives, these will initially be investigated to establish if a crime has been committed and if there is sufficient evidence to progress as a criminal matter. Further information on crime recording can be found [here](#). Operation Divan arises when the circumstances do not establish that a provable crime has been committed, but there are general concerns that the young person may be putting themselves or others at risk through association with knives or weapons. Operation Divan is a prevention and safeguarding intervention, offering positive support to those young people who may be carrying knives.

How does a child receive Operation Divan intervention?

If North Yorkshire Police feel that there is a general concern about a young person with knives, they may arrange to carry out joint intervention with a worker from North Yorkshire Children and Families Service. This may be the young person's allocated worker if they are already open to the Children & Families Service. If they are not an open case and have not had recent involvement with the service, then the work will be conducted by either the Early Help Service or if they have had previous involvement with the Youth Justice service or are still open to them this work will be undertaken by Youth Justice workers.

Initially a focussed discussion will be carried out with the young person and their parents/carers, to share the concerns and offer positive support. This will usually take place by appointment in the family home, or if this isn't suitable, a private room in a school or other venue. It is however a voluntary intervention and can be declined by families.

The main objective of the discussion is to educate the young person and their family/carers of the risk of knives including the risk of being criminalised as well as the risk of serious and/or fatal injury. There will also be an opportunity to explore the young person's perspective and experiences and the context of the situation. For example, are knives becoming more common in their school or community and why might this be? There will also be a focus on any issues that emerge such as bullying, exploitation, drugs, peer pressure or fear of being attacked with a knife.

Wider Context

There is a need to understand the wider context behind young people carrying knives and this will also be explored within the intervention discussion. For example:

- Concerns around shops selling knives to children in the community?
- How are knives being brought into schools?
- Are there concerns around links to organised drugs distribution?

- Do young people feel threatened which causes them or their friends to feel unsafe and risks them being involved in crime?

During the visit, those professionals attending and speaking with the young person will go through information on a 'notice' which outlines the key points, risks and potential consequences of being involved with knives and weapons. A copy of the notice will then be provided.

What happens next?

At the end of the visit, the Police Officer will wish to leave a leaflet or notice which summarises key points of the anti-knife message. They may ask the young person or parents/carers to sign an acknowledgement that they have received this. This is not legally binding, however acknowledges the discussion.

The aim of Operation Divan is to promote safer choices by offering info and advice to young people and their families and can signpost to further support if required. It is possible however that during this discussion new information may come to light. Police officers cannot ignore information which suggests a young person may have committed serious crime, albeit we do not expect this situation to arise often.

If new information causes the Police Officer to suspect a crime, they cannot continue with the discussion. The young person would now become a criminal suspect and would need to be interviewed under a formal police process. The attending police officer would explain this to the young person and their family and would let them know that nothing previously discussed would be admissible in criminal proceedings and would invite them to take legal advice prior to a formal police interview held under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act \(PACE\) 1984](#). At this point the Op Divan visit would terminate.

Furthermore, a young person may also mention circumstances involving others. They may not wish to identify the other people and should not be pressured to do so. However, they may wish to disclose that a friend is being bullied, or a drug dealer is threatening their peers etc. If there is deemed to be a risk of further harm to themselves or someone else, then this would be shared with police and relevant agencies. There are a range of good intervention materials that have been assembled to support Op Divan and they are often very suitable for work with young people who have admitted or been convicted of knife-related offences. It is important to remember however that Op Divan is an inform, pre-criminal safeguarding intervention.

What to do if you are concerned about a young person in your school?

- If there is an immediate/imminent risk of harm to contact the Police on 999
- If the immediate incident has been dealt with in school e.g. knife has been confiscated/secured and everyone is safe, the incident can be reported to the police via calling 101
- For any wider context concerns such as shops selling knives, concerns within the community that are not child specific these should be submitted to the Police through the [Police Partnership Intel Sharing Form](#).
- Further information can be found at www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk