



# ONE KNIFE: MANY VICTIMS.

How research and insight helped the  
Scottish Government's Marketing team reduce  
the number of victims of knife crime in Scotland.

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## ONE TEENAGER KILLED THROUGH KNIFE CRIME IN SCOTLAND IS ONE TOO MANY. WHILE NATIONAL CRIME FIGURES ARE DOWN DRAMATICALLY FROM 2006-7, IN THE WORST AFFECTED AREAS, THE NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS FOR POSSESSION OR USE OF AN OFFENSIVE WEAPON HAS REMAINED STATIC OR SLIGHTLY INCREASED<sup>1</sup>.

Scottish Government Marketing briefed The Leith Agency to develop communications activity to deter teenagers living in the specific areas where knife crime was still a threat, from picking up a knife. Specifically, teenage boys aged 15 to 17.

Against a backdrop of fewer recorded crimes overall, we needed to explore how this 'safer' environment had influenced the way teenagers thought about knife carrying to allow us to shape our strategy.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

Teenagers expect to live forever so talking to them about mortality is a massive challenge. We had to consider all opportunities to influence these young minds. In an extensive research exercise, we spoke to:

- teenage boys 'on the cusp' of (who might be tempted by) knife carrying<sup>2</sup>
- younger boys / teenage girls to understand the context and potential influencers
- parents of teenage boys living in the worst affected areas
- youth and social workers.

It became clear that knife carrying is still seen as less of a choice and more a perceived necessity by these teenage boys.

One 11 year old spoke about not going out after dark for fear of his safety. Other respondents spoke about knowing the trouble-makers but lacking evidence to enable Police action.

For most 'on the cusp' teenagers, knife carrying is seen as 'preventative'. Anticipating trouble, they don't want to be the one who isn't armed. Crucially, they don't envisage using the knife. But if backed into a corner, they'd rather have it as a supposed deterrent than not.

*"If you were worried about yourself, I mean you wouldn't want to. But if you were going to get jumped. If you were getting jumped all the time, you'd carry a knife."*<sup>3</sup>

Understanding the moment of decision making itself proved illuminating. Under ordinary circumstances, these boys knew they shouldn't carry a knife. But they conceded that in the heat of the moment, they could be tempted to go against their better judgement and make a rash choice.

This understanding helped to define our strategy: to convince teenage boys that carrying a knife isn't worth the risk. But how?

These teenagers are well aware of the judicial consequences of knife carrying. But a criminal record isn't a great deterrent if you come from several generations of unemployment. And if your home life is difficult, a prison sentence gives you somewhere to live.

The teenage brain isn't wired to process risk as an adult would. Invincible in their eyes, they don't question their own safety. The guilt associated with killing someone sharply recedes when confronted with the prospect of it being "them or you". So appealing to rational thought was out.

The only thing that stopped them in their tracks was the idea of ruining their relationship with their mum (or dad / younger siblings). Many of them talked about their mum having "got their back". The idea of destroying her trust was far worse than damaging their own life chances.

*"I think what it would be like for my mum. I wouldn't want my mum to be in pain like that."*<sup>4</sup>

*"What's my mum gonna think? It's the first thing you think about."*

*"You don't want to lose her respect."*<sup>5</sup>

We had our campaign proposition:

### CARRYING A KNIFE RUINS YOUR AND YOUR FAMILY'S LIFE.

The proposition provided part of the solution. We then faced a twofold challenge:

- How to reach an audience who don't watch TV, listen to the radio, read newspapers and probably don't have a home computer; and
- How to capture their attention with a familiar message: they know they shouldn't carry a knife but persuading them there's a better option is problematic.

We turned to research again to find some answers.

<sup>1</sup> Specifically, based on 2012/13 to 2013/14 statistics, numbers of offenses in Aberdeen City, Angus, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Edinburgh / Midlothian, Falkirk, Fife, Moray and North Ayrshire show a slight increase. Scottish Government statistics for handling of offensive weapons, 2001 - 2015

<sup>2</sup> As finding exactly the right teenagers was so critical, we recruited these respondents with the help of specialist Police officers who work within schools who have problems with anti-social behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> No Knives Better Lives Creative Testing Research, Corr Research, February 2014

<sup>4</sup> Leith Insight Gathering Research, December 2013

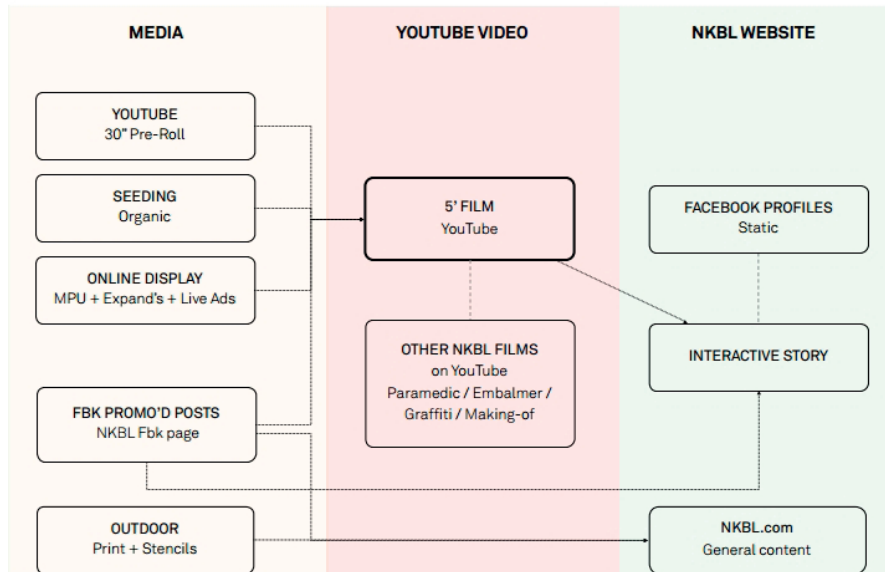
<sup>5</sup> No Knives Better Lives Creative Testing Research, Corr Research, February 2014

# REACHING TEENS

When asked about media consumption, there was a consistent answer across the sample. These kids all had smart phones and spent lots of time watching content through YouTube and Facebook. Putting our content in a location and a form they were comfortable with felt like an obvious solution.

Carat's media strategy was built on a piece of film housed in YouTube, signposted by teaser content in favourite digital and social channels. An unprecedented hyper-targeted media strategy reached 15 to 17 year old C2DE males living in crime hotspot postcode areas across the eleven local authority areas in which knives were still causing problems.

## CONTENT DISCOVERY ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY



# CAPTURING THEIR ATTENTION

To ensure that our film held these teens' attention, we used co-creation research to develop the creative work. This highlighted two opportunities:

- Presenting the outcome of knife crime in a compelling, emotional and impactful way was critical for an audience unused to envisaging consequences.
- Reflecting life as these kids knew it would overcome automatic deflection.

We refined the creative brief to be much more directional: the film needed to present the consequences of knife crime in a way that was surprising, real and emotionally truthful.

The evolved creative ideas were tested with 'on the cusp' teenagers. The winning route ticked all the boxes.

*"It shows the consequences, its quite graphic but it needs to be."*

*"It shows what it does to your family."*

*"Once he's done it there's no turning back, oh my God I've just stabbed someone."*

*"It ruined their lives, could happen to anybody, his family would have been put through a lot, crying all over the place, wouldn't know what to do."*

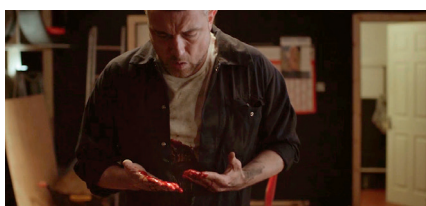
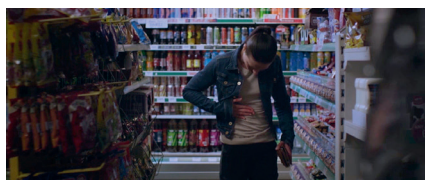
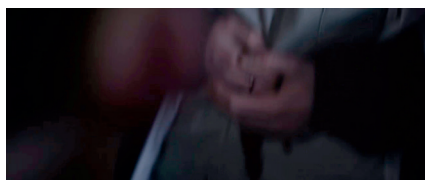
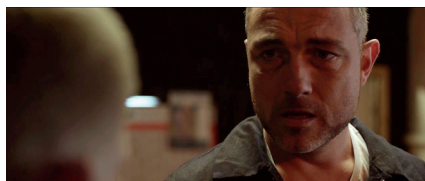
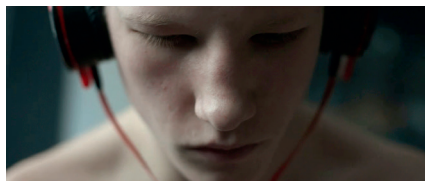
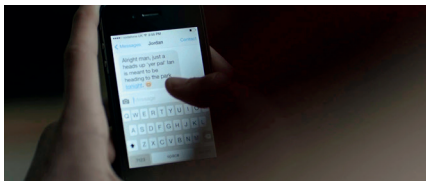
*"He's done something he shouldn't have done, they are all going to suffer, he's ruined their lives."*

*"He looks really shocked, like he didn't really mean it."*

*"Its not just him but your mum and dad, your aunty, everybody."*<sup>6</sup>



## THE STORY OF THE FILM



We also presented the film to youth and social workers and police officers on the front line of knife crime prevention work. They were similarly positive.

*"I am not easily shocked, I've known boys cut another boy's head off with a sword, but the baby scene did shock me. That made me think, you have to get through to them."*<sup>7</sup>

For added authenticity, the creative team chose a director who had a track record of street casting young people with no prior acting experience. Lead actor Connor Newall was spotted on a Glasgow street and invited to the casting session.

# GOING LIVE



The film launched on 16 March 2015, supported by online display, YouTube pre rolls, social promoted posts, pavement stencils, phone box posters in crime hot spots and extensive PR activity. Digital activity signposted the film on YouTube which in turn, directed teens to the website. The film was also shared with youth and social workers as a training resource.

**No Knives, Better Lives**  
Sponsored · Edited · 

See what happened the one night Mark decided to pick up a knife.  
<http://bit.ly/1Fpy1yG>

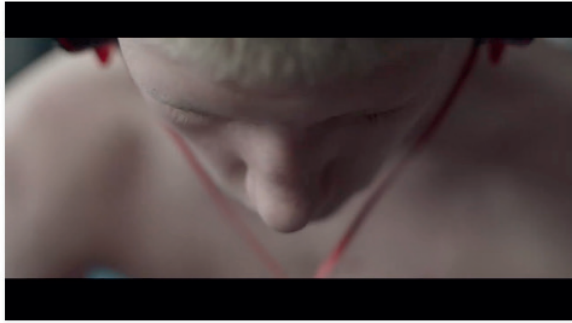





26,292 Views  
Like · Comment · Share ·  356  33  73


**No Knives, Better Lives**  
Sponsored · 

Mark thought it was all going to kick off down the park. His pals were winding him up. He only took the knife for protection...


Here's the full story - <http://bit.ly/1Fpy1yG>




9,038 Views  
Like · Comment · Share ·  89  5  2



**A bit of protection?**  
[youtube.com](http://youtube.com)  
That's maybe what you think. But, see what could happen if you pick up a knife.



**Tempted?**  
[youtube.com](http://youtube.com)  
Would you take a knife if there was going to be bother? See what could happen.



**Would you take one?**  
[youtube.com](http://youtube.com)  
If it was going to kick off, would you be tempted to take a knife? See what could happen.

As teens struggle with consequential thinking, Whitespace developed a collection of tools about the risks of knife crime to hold their attention and amplify the core message. One animated interactive tool invited users to make a 'Life changing decision' about whether or not they would pick up a knife if faced with the same situation as the film's protagonist.

# MEASURING CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS

## A) REACHING OUR HARD TO REACH AUDIENCE

We wanted to talk to 21,000 teenage boys<sup>8</sup>. To date, the film has received nearly 30,000 views<sup>9</sup>. We know from YouTube that 59% of viewers were male. One third were aged between 13 and 24. So we can deduce that at least half of our core hard to reach target audience watched our film.

Promoted posts on Facebook delivered a well above industry average click through rate of 3.87% (industry average is 0.07%) which translated into 117,170 post engagements.

The website received just under 5,000 unique users during the six week campaign. The interactive tools proved most popular on the site. 'Sharp Facts' accounted for 25% of site visits with an incredible dwell time of 7 minutes. 'Life changing decision' had a completion rate of 78%. Remarkably rich engagement for a teen audience with a short attention span.



<sup>8</sup> There are 21,000 C2DE 15 to 17 year olds in the eleven target local authority areas.

<sup>9</sup> 22,378 of these views came from the UK (YouTube doesn't isolate Scotland as a viewing universe).



## B) CAMPAIGN AWARENESS AMONGST TEENAGERS

Strong spontaneous and prompted awareness of the film was supported by excellent message recall:

- More than 50% of respondents spontaneously mentioned that knife crime doesn't just affect the perpetrator; it also affects others.
- 82% said that the film made them think more about the effects of carrying a knife.
- 64% of 15 year olds were motivated not to pick up a knife after seeing the campaign.
- 65% said they would want to discuss the film with their friends.

The film's realism contributes significantly to the powerful and lasting impression.

*"Yeh this film was very real and true to life because the build up was very basic via the texts, Facebook posts and then leading to them all drinking at the park."*<sup>10</sup>

Critically, the film prompted them to reappraise their perceptions of the wisdom of carrying a knife.

*"It really does make you think about using a knife and the way it affects people all around you: your family / friends and also the victim's family and friends."*<sup>11</sup>

*"This made me think about how knives impact everyone in your life. It makes you think about ruining people's life's and betraying your family and friends."*

## C) PRACTITIONER EVALUATION

Research with practitioners and peer educators who work with 'on the cusp' teenagers, supported audience perceptions of the film as 'real', thought-provoking and persuasive<sup>12</sup>.

*"It's surprisingly realistic for a film featuring non-actors. The scenes are similar to what goes on in Inverclyde which makes it really relatable."*

*"Aye like and at the end of it, you see the effect on other people, like the mum and stuff. And that is why, because it affects like other people."*<sup>13</sup>

Most importantly, practitioners and peer educators felt that the film would be memorable and would stay with the teenagers at the moment of decision-making in the future.

## D) PRACTIVITY

In a horrible twist of fate, street-cast lead actor, Connor had a cousin who'd been fatally stabbed. His mother kindly consented to this story forming part of the campaign PR. Stripe worked sensitively and respectfully with Connor and his family to help equip them for the associated press interviews.

The resulting campaign coverage reached over 8 million people (8,296,325 specifically) and generated a return on investment of £8 to every £1 spent.



10 15 – 16 year old respondents verbatims from online qualitative research, No Knives Better Lives Campaign Evaluation, TNS, July 2015  
 11 15 – 16 year old respondents verbatims from online qualitative research, No Knives Better Lives Campaign Evaluation, TNS, July 2015  
 12 Feedback gathered from youth and social workers across Scotland using a mix of face-to-face interviews, paper questionnaires and an online survey.  
 13 Leith Agency, Insight Gathering Work, August 2015.

# NO KNIVES BETTER LIVES IN ACTION

Given that knife crime is now, happily, a declining localised problem supported by a multi-agency approach to prevention, it's hard to demonstrate the positive impact of our campaign in concrete terms.

We can measure the number of teenage boys convicted of carrying a knife. 233 people were convicted in 2013-14. In 2014-15, there were 196 convictions.<sup>14</sup>

No Knives Better Lives as a programme of activity is first and foremost about showing boys in the worst affected areas an alternative version of their future. Lead actor Connor has since gone on become an international model. Proof, if it was needed, that all stories don't have the same ending.



Photo of the film director, Martin Smith and Connor Newall at a cast and crew screening at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

<sup>14</sup> Please note that these figures are representative of convictions in the adult courts and do not account for young people who have been dealt with through the children's hearing system or other youth justice interventions.