



# **Tackling knife crime through after-school activities**

**A policy paper by Parliament Street**

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## **Background – the policy problem**

There were 43,516 knife crime offences in England and Wales the 12 months ending March 2019 (Home Office cited by BBC, 2019). This is an 80% increase since the year ending March 2014 when knife crime was at its lowest point. The vast majority of these crimes where knives were used were assault and robbery.

## Regional variation in knife crime offence

Knife crime offences per 100,000 people by region, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Source: Home Office

BBC

Knife crime is more common in big cities, especially London. About 1 in 5 of those cautioned, reprimanded or convicted for carrying a knife in England and Wales was under the age of 18 years old. Young BAME teenage boys and men are disproportionately affected, as both victims and perpetrators (*ibid*, 2019).

## A possible policy solution – after-school activities

The problem of knife crime has no silver bullet – it will require changes of policy in terms of policing resources, practices, sentencing through the courts, and work within prisons to reduce re-offending.

Another important strategy is diverting young people off the streets, and towards positive and productive after-school activities. An after-school activity is defined as “an extra-curricular, paid-for programme for school-aged children which is not organised by a child’s school and is externally funded (primarily by a child’s parent or guardian)” (Maths Doctor, 2014). To quote Hamlet, “there lies the rub”. In 2014 the costs of after-school activities across London was as follows.

### Average hourly cost of after-school activities in London areas

London area	Average hourly cost/session
S&SW	£24.18
E&SE	£20.38
N&NE	£19.35
W&NW	£18.40

Source: Money Doctor, 2014

Across London and the UK this led to some parents spending as much as £1,095 per month on after-school activities:

### Monthly spend on after-school activities in London and the UK

Age	Number of activities attended		Average monthly spend		Top monthly spend	
	Average	Range	London	UK	London	UK
Primary	3.2	1 – 7	£278.91	£205.82	£1,095.36	£914.76
Secondary	1.7	1 – 5	£148.17	£109.34	£782.40	£653.40

Source: Money Doctor, 2014

Such high costs put after-school activities out of many parent’s reach. The question is, therefore, how to make such activities more affordable. A range of possible solutions is set out below:

## Possible solutions:

- Make fees and subscriptions tax deductible

**Pros:** could make after-school activities marginally cheaper for some parents.

**Cons:** delivering policy through the tax system is complex and prone to mistakes (by taxpayers and HMRC alike); may not work for working parents who do not earn enough to pay tax; would not work for unemployed parents.

- Director provision by schools, local authorities, youth services (local government)

**Pros:** schools and local authorities already have suitable buildings, equipment and trained personnel;

**Cons:** potentially the most expensive; could place additional strain on school and LA budgets.

- Financial sponsorship by businesses

**Pros:** already done by many local businesses who sponsor sports kit and equipment.

**Cons:** costly for business; unlikely to raise significant sums but possibly enough to make a significant difference in some cases.

- Provision by charities and third sector organisations (with some level of government support)

**Pros:** charities and other third sector organisations are well-placed within communities; high-levels of engagement by parents and children.

**Cons:** funding would need to be consistent and sufficient to make a difference; sudden or dramatic changes in funding could end provision.

The most viable solution would be a combination of these solutions, for example, direct provision in local schools and churches sponsored by local businesses/employers and additional funding from local and central government.

## Conclusion

Tackling knife crime and diverting young people towards productive lives as citizens and members of the local community will require investment – by parents and families, schools, communities, charities, and local and national government. By working together across traditional boundaries, as is already being done in other areas, after-school activities present a positive way to change the lives of many children and young people.

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## Reference list:

BBC, 2019. *Ten charts on the rise of knife crime in England and Wales*. URL = <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42749089> [31/08/19]

Maths Doctor, 2014. *The cost of after-school activities in the UK: how much do parents spend?* <https://mathsdoctor.co.uk/downloads/after-school-activities-report.pdf> [31/08/19]