**Coventry’s young people speak out about knife crime**

YOUNG people across Coventry have spoken out about the consequences of carrying and using knives amid worrying knife crime increases.

A total of 300 young people have been involved in a series of sessions run by Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) to voice their opinions on knife crime.

The participants came from across the city, ranging from between age 11 to 19 – taking part in interactive workshops in schools, youth clubs and play areas across Coventry.

Last year, there was a 14 per cent rise in crime across the West Midlands of which offences committed using knives and firearms rose significantly.

West Midlands police recently announced a crackdown on gun and knife violence – which police say has strong connections to organised crime, gangs and drugs.

Sarah, 17, is one of the young people who has been involved in the sessions.

She said: “Too many young people are talking about knife crime, and that is why I am getting involved in this work as I feel I can help to support young people from my community to understand the issue better.

“There are so many different views that I hear. This programme helps me to share facts with people, which is really important right now as many young people are being misinformed by social media about what is and isn’t legal when it comes to weapons.

“I have learnt so much already, from first aid techniques if there is an incident to services that young people can access to stay away from crime.”

Plans are in place to continue delivering the session to more young people.

James, 17, added: We need to talk about knife crime and violence. It’s not straight forward, it’s not just about crime. If people don’t feel like they have a place to go and things to do, they can get dragged into things.

“Coming to PYF is like another family. People from all over the city, different cultures, all together doing good things.

“We shared our feelings recently with adults from the council and the police. They listened to our views about crime. It’s a good thing that we get to talk.”