

JAHZIAH COKE FUNERAL 25 OCTOBER 2024

On the 25th October 2024, the streets of Oldbury Birmingham fell silent for on this day this saddest of days the family of Jahziah Coke, a young boy of just 13 years and eight months, embarked on the most dreaded of journeys, that of laying such a young boy to rest. I was truly honoured to have been invited to witness this most solemn occasion. I had met the family prior to the funeral and was privileged to speak with Jahziah's mother Marlene during her darkest hour.

It was her wish that I continue with my work in spreading to the masses the perils of knife crime which has grown to epidemic levels in the UK. I was taken by her strength during what must be the most terrible of times. It was her overwhelming hope that something like this would never happen again.

We gathered at the New Testament Church of God in Oldbury with heavy hearts to remember Jahziah, a young life tragically cut short by the senseless act of knife crime.

As we mourn this profound loss; we must also reflect on the devastating impact that knife crime has on our youth and our communities.

Knife crime is a growing epidemic in the UK, particularly affecting young people.

It has also to be noted that the new capital of knife crime is no longer London, but just a few miles away from Jahziah's home in Wolverhampton.

Statistics show that in the past 12 months, there were around 50,500 offences involving a sharp instrument in England and Wales. That's 1 knife crime every 10 minutes!

These numbers are not just figures; they represent lives lost, families shattered, and futures stolen. Just think for a moment, each number has a life attached to it. A family attached to it; a community attached to it.

Young people often carry knives out of fear, believing it will protect them.

However, the reality is starkly different.

Carrying a knife increases the risk of becoming a victim of violence. It creates a cycle of fear and retaliation, where no one truly feels safe.

The presence of a knife can escalate conflicts that might otherwise have been resolved peacefully, leading to irreversible consequences.

The simple message is do not carry a knife ... even if you think it might protect you! Because based on statistical information, it rarely does.

The life of Jahziah was full of potential, dreams, and aspirations. His life was a beacon of hope and promise, now extinguished too soon. This tragedy serves as a painful reminder of the urgent need to address the root causes of knife crime.

We must work together to create environments where young people feel safe, supported, and valued.

Education is crucial. We need to teach our youth about the dangers of carrying knives and provide them with the tools to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence.

Community programs, mentorship, and support networks can offer alternatives and guidance, steering them away from the path of crime and personal destruction.

Law enforcement and legislative measures also play a vital role. Stronger policies and community policing efforts can help deter knife crime and ensure that those who carry weapons face appropriate consequences.

But beyond punishment, we must focus on prevention and rehabilitation, offering hope and second chances to those at risk.

As we remember Jahziah, let us honour his memory by committing to action.

Let us pledge to work tirelessly to prevent such tragedies from happening again.

Together, we can create a safer, more compassionate society where every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

To the youth of today, I want to speak directly to you.

You are the future of our national community, and your lives are precious. Each one of you has the potential to achieve great things, to make a positive impact on the world.

But you must make choices that protect your future.

So, I implore you, choose peace over violence, dialogue over conflict, and compassion over anger.

Lean on your family, your friends, and your community for support.

Know that you are never alone, and there are always people who care about you and want to help you succeed.

Finally, as a community we must all take responsibility for fostering a culture of respect and understanding.

It is essential that the older of us listen to our young people, understand their fears and challenges, and provide them with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

By working together, we can break the cycle of violence and build a community where every young person feels valued and safe.

My message to Jahziah's family and others across this great country of ours is plain and simple: I will work tirelessly to ensure Jahziah and other young victims who have had their lives cut so short because of a knife will be remembered in perpetuity within my campaign to reduce knife crime in this country.

As I write this, I give my word to his family Jahziah's name will not be forgotten amongst the statistics, and as you place him to rest, you can be assured, by me anyway, that I will take his loss as a defining moment in my ultimate aims in the plight of knife crime prevention in the UK.

May Jahziah rest in peace, and may we find strength in each other to carry forward his legacy of hope and change.