

## **Reformed gang member raises knife crime awareness**

A reformed gang member has told young people involved in crime that a trouble-free future is "worth working hard for". Vilson David Duarte-Dong, from Leeds, turned his life around after serving time in custody for grievous bodily harm over an altercation involving a knife when he was 18.

Now 24, he has contributed to Cut Short, an educational film about knife crime in the north of England, which will appear online for schools to use as a free teaching resource on Friday. Duarte-Dong, seen in the documentary revisiting the scene of an incident he was involved in, said he wanted to show young people involved in gang culture that life can be different.

The 28-minute film profiles Duarte-Dong, as well as the separate story of Sarah Lloyd, whose 17-year-old son Kieran was killed in a stabbing incident in Harehills in 2013. Duarte-Dong, who holds talks in schools about how he left his past behind him, said he wanted to "raise awareness" about knife crime.

Asked what he wanted viewers to take from the film, he said: "What you think your life is now, it's not always going to be. "Your friends are not always what you think they are. Assess your life, step out of that bubble and think, 'what do I want?'"

Duarte-Dong, who lives in Horsforth and has ambitions of opening his own restaurant one day, added that a crime-free life was "worth working hard for".

He added: "There's light out there, there's amazing people out there. People out there will support you and genuinely care about you. Just take a chance. Work hard - blood, sweat and tears - and you'll get there. I'm not where I want to be yet, but when I look back at what my life was like when I was 14, life is so much different."

Produced by Tell Studio and directed by Owen Seabrook, the documentary is aimed at 12-18 year-olds and designed as an early intervention tool.