

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Safeguarding Fact Sheet:

What is CCE?

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.

CCE is a specific safeguarding issue within Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

How are young people recruited?

A child or young person might be recruited into a gang because of where they live or because of who their family is. They might join because they don't see another option or because they feel like they need protection. Children and young people may become involved in gangs for many reasons, including: -

- Peer pressure and wanting to fit in with their friends
- They feel respected and important
- They want to feel protected from other gangs, or bullies
- They want to make money and are promised rewards
- They want to gain status and feel powerful
- They've been excluded from school and don't feel they have a future
- They've become isolated from friends or family and feel the gang is the only place they belong.

Organised criminal gangs groom children and young people because they attract less suspicion and are given lighter sentences than adults.

Warning signs

There are some signs to look out for if you're worried a child or young person has joined a gang, or is being criminally exploited.

It might be hard to spot at first, but the sooner you're able to talk to the young person, the more you'll be able to help them.

Signs you might notice can include: -

- Frequently absent from and performing less well in school
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them
- Being angry, aggressive or violent
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Having unexplained money and buying new things
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos
- Using new slang words
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online
- Making more calls, sending more texts than normal, possibly on more than one phone
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol
- Committing petty crimes like shoplifting or vandalism
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog

- Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence, or entrap and coerce them into debt.
- They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others.
- As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals (particularly older children) and they are not always treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced.
- They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.
- It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS BEING CRIMINALLY EXPLOITED MAY BE AT HIGHER RISK OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

What to do if you are concerned

If you are worried that a child is being, or at risk of becoming criminally exploited, you can help by: -

TALK TO THEM AND LISTEN

- If a child or young person is being groomed to join a gang, there are many factors to consider to protect them and keep them safe. However, it's crucial that they feel they're able to talk to you, or to another trusted adult outside of the gang.
- Speak to them honestly about the consequences of violent or illegal behaviour – they might not realise how they could be liable or could have been lied to. However, make sure that they still feel comfortable talking to you about what is worrying them.

ASK FOR SUPPORT

- If you're concerned about a child being exploited, the sooner the Police and relevant agencies are made aware the better.
- Contact the NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000) and speak to trained professionals about what is happening, who can take action and to be signposted to the right services in your area.
- Contact the Police immediately if you think a child is in danger.
- Contact Children's Services via your local council.

ENCOURAGE CHANGE

- You can encourage children and young people to get involved in positive activities in school and in the local community such as sports and clubs.
- Talk to children about their aspirations for the future and find school programs or apprenticeships that will help them to get there as it's important they feel like they have other options.
- Talk to children about how to cope with pressure and how to deal with conflict without using violence.
- Lead by example and role model positive, appropriate behaviours so that they see a different way.

Police

Non-emergency: 101

Emergency: 999

Children's Social Care

Tel: 0191 4332653

Out of hours

Tel: 0191 4770844

Useful Websites...

- **NSPCC** definitions, statistics, facts and resources about Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- **National Crime Agency.**
- **Barnardo's** – “What We Do” campaign; protecting children.
- **Parents Against Child Exploitation 'PACE'** is the leading national charity working with parents/carers tackling child exploitation.