



Safeguarding Newsletter

ADVICE FOR PARENTS & CARERS

Welcome to the latest edition of our Parent Safeguarding Newsletter from the William Edwards Safeguarding Team. Where we aim to bring you all the latest, relevant help and advice on issues we feel may be of importance to you and your child. We recently held our first parents information evening around Gangs and Youth Exploitation, hosted by our local Youth Offending Officer and wanted to share with you some of the useful information she highlighted. Parents who attended the evening said it was *"Very useful as the information is important for our children and the more informed I am as a parent the better"* and *"I found it very interesting, I have a 13 and 10 year old, so need to be aware of the risks"*.

Gangs and Exploitation

What is criminal exploitation?

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

Gangs

It's not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of 'gang' and not every 'gang' is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised criminal gangs involved in trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime

County Lines

County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets - suburban areas and market and coastal towns - using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation and selling and manufacturing drugs.

Spotting the signs

The following are key signs and indicators that a child could be involved in a gang or is being exploited;

- Missing episodes
- New unexplained items
- Calls/messages that can't go un-answered
- Decline in behaviour at school
- Significant change in demeanour

If you have concerns around your child, it's important that you look out for these signs and report any concerns that you have.

You can speak to us at school or report this using the links on the following page.



What to do if you're worried

There are things you can do to help stop a child from getting involved in a gang, or to help them once they've joined. Speak to them honestly, and listen. Be aware of the dangers and signs. Know your child's friends, and where they are going with them. Ask for support and advice, from the school, from NSPCC or the local children's services.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Further Information for Parents can be found at - [Thurrock Local Safeguarding Hub](https://www.thurrocklsc.org.uk) - Telephone support, further information and webinars

Reach out to the school- they can explore how best they can help you and your child and refer you to other areas of support

Childline - 0800 11 11
www.childline.org.uk

Thurrock MultiAgency Safeguarding Hub on 01375 652802 or 01375 372468 if out of hours

Report to the police or Crimestoppers anonymously
0800 555 111

KnifeCrimes.org – an online knife crime resource offering advice and support. Founded by Ann Oakes-Odger the site is also a forum to share and read about parents and expert views on knife crime in the UK. Go to www.knifecrimes.org/

Upcoming Information Evenings

An Awareness Raising Session for Parents and Carers to Increase Knowledge of Gangs and Child Criminal Exploitation

Thursday 23rd February 2023
Wednesday 17th May 2023
Thursday 14th September 2023
Thursday 7th December 2023

18.00 till 19.00
Via MS Teams

This session will identify the harms associated with gangs and county lines and will look on practical advice on how to support a young person who you may be concerned about in relation to Exploitation

To book your place visit www.thurrocklsc.org.uk

What can I do?

TALK/LISTEN - encourage open conversation, tell them your concerns, be prepared to listen, don't judge, encourage them to reach out for help and tell them how

MONITOR - impose curfews, monitor their social media/bank accounts/phone where possible. Report any concerns immediately. If they do not return home report them as 'missing' to police on 101

STAY 'IN THE KNOW' - listen to what they're listening to, research about gangs/exploitation, be aware of what is going on locally and nationally (incidents in other areas can impact young people here), use www.urbandictionary.com for slang word definitions

SHARE CONCERNS - reach out for help, share concerns with professionals, make notes of names/dates/concerns

Know the signs

	Persistently missing from school/home, being found out of area
	Unexplained money, clothes or mobile phones
	Excessive receipt of phone calls and texts
	Relationships with controlling/older individuals, gang association
	Leaving home or care without explanation
	Suspicion of self-harm, physical assaults or unexplained injuries
	Significant changes in emotional wellbeing
	Significant decline in school performance

Information for parents/carers

Gangs operate across Thurrock - it is important for parents and carers to be aware of the signs of gang activity, recruitment and grooming as well as criminal exploitation. Thurrock differs from London and other parts of Essex and so spotting the signs early will help your child stay safe.

If you have any issues or concerns please contact
Gangs & Criminal Exploitation Lead

Ceryl Marsh
07565 620637
ceryl.marsh@thurrock.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can reach out to any of the support contacts below:

MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)
01375 652802
thurrockmash@thurrock.gov.uk

PASS (Prevention & Support Service)
pass@thurrock.gov.uk

YOS (Youth Offending Service)
01375 652990

Police
Emergency 999
Non Emergency 101

Crimestoppers
0800 555 111
www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Childline
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk

Modern Slavery
0800 0121 700
www.modernslavery.gov.uk

Gangs and Exploitation

Support and information for
parents across Thurrock



What is criminal exploitation?

Children and young people can be exploited by criminal gangs. They may be pressured into committing offences such as drug dealing, stealing or carrying weapons/ drugs. They might be at risk of, or in fear of violence, be forced to travel away from their home, and 'work' for the gang. They might not realise that they are victims and, at times, it might seem that they are choosing that lifestyle. This is exploitation!

County Lines

County lines is the process of transporting drugs from one area to another—crossing police and local authority borders. Children and young people are the primary targets to work for 'lines'. This is also known as 'going country', 'cunch', 'OT' (out there), 'trapping' or 'running'.

The line relates to the main phone number that sends/ receives orders for drugs. Drug lines will have their own identifiable name. The line will send orders to 'runners' who will be in the local area of where the drugs are sold. The 'line' will not be in the local area usually and will be operated by an 'elder/owner' elsewhere.

Vulnerable adults are targeted for their accommodation - a process known as 'cuckooing'

where the dealers/runners will take over their property and use it as a base to supply drugs from. This can be known as a 'trap house'.

Young people can be targeted by their own associates or by others gangs and are at risk of serious violence, robbery, sexual violence, intimidation and debt-bondage (where they are robbed for cash/ drugs and have to work for free to repay the debt. This can be substantial sums of money. Their families may also be threatened.

What attracts young people?

There are many reasons why children and young people become involved with gangs. This can include any of the following:

- Protection from others (gangs/groups/peers)
- To be accepted
- Feel part of a 'family'
- Respect/sense of identity
- Siblings/family members/friends are involved
- Status
- Gangs are common in the area
- Fear, intimidation and threats
- Peer pressure
- Lack of family/emotional support
- Cultural identity
- Limited positive role models
- Boredom
- Financial gain and rewards

What should I consider?

FRIENDS - do you know them? Where do they live? Are you worried about them? Where do they hang out?

SOCIAL MEDIA/MUSIC - do you know what their usernames are? How many phones do they have? Can you 'follow' them? Do you monitor what they are posting? Who are they listening to? What apps are on their phone?

CURFEW - do they come home on time? Are they staying out overnight? Where/who with?

LANGUAGE - are they talking about gangs/gang culture? Are they talking in slang a lot? Do you know what they are saying?

BANK ACCOUNTS - have you got access to their account? Can you monitor what is coming in/ going out?

TRAVEL - how are they getting around?

WEAPONS - do you know how many knives are in the kitchen? Would you notice if one was missing?

Spotting the signs

Behaviour of young people involved with/being exploited by gangs can include some of the following:

- Withdrawing from family
- Secretive behaviour
- Unexplained injuries
- Unaccounted for money/new clothing/new phone
- Absconding from home, going 'missing'
- Breaking family rules/pushing boundaries
- New friends
- Poor attendance/engagement at school/college
- Loss of interest in hobbies/normal routines
- Aggression
- Being picked up in unknown cars/taxis
- Increase in incoming telephone calls
- Knives going missing from the kitchen
- Unaccounted for money coming in/going out of bank account
- Carrying/concealing weapons
- Carrying/concealing drugs
- Concerns raised by professionals