



Child Exploitation

and how it might affect you



A Guide for Young People

What is Criminal Exploitation?

County lines is a term that is used when gangs in big cities like London, Birmingham and Liverpool use mobile phone “lines” to sell drugs outside of their cities. They use young people and vulnerable adults to move their drugs around for them.

When a gang does this to an adult the police call it Criminal Exploitation. When they groom or threaten young people to become involved, it is called “Child Criminal Exploitation”. (CCE) The gangs running County lines are dangerous and cruel and once a person is involved, it is really hard to get away.

Child Criminal Exploitation usually starts with someone promising something if a person moves their drugs for them. This might be money, drugs or nice clothes. They often pretend to be a young person’s friend and say they will treat them better than family. Even if a young person is being given something for running they are still being used by gangs. Many young people find that after a while they get robbed and this might be by their own gang. They are then in debt and have to run for the gangs for free. Sometimes gangs threaten young people’s families or friends to get them to do what they want.

How does it affect young people and vulnerable adults?

Criminal exploitation:

- Can put young people in vulnerable situations hundreds of miles from home and help.
- Can make vulnerable adults unsafe in their own homes.
- Can includes threats to make people do things
- Can cause depression and other mental health issues.

How Does it happen?

- Gang members will ask young people to carry drugs for them and offer them money to do it.
- Young people might have friends doing it and they can be made to find other young people and introduce them to the gang.
- YouTube and other social media are used to make gangs look “cool” and make young people want to join them.
- Young people who use drugs can be picked out by gangs as easy targets to be used as runners.
- Gang members may give you a phone so they can contact you without anyone knowing

What to look out for?

There are signs to be aware of and young people involved will usually experience some or all of the following:

- People encouraging you to run away from home even if it is “only for a couple of days”.
- When someone wants to give you something and doesn't want you to let friends or family know about it.
- Older people or groups of people offering to drop you off or pick you up from school/ college.
- People being friendly but threatening at the same time.
- Some gangs ask young people to hold weapons for them and deliver them to other gang members. This can then lead to making people run drugs for them.
- People who tell you not to go to school or college or to stay out all night.
- Gangs tell young people they don't need their old friends because they now have new better friends. They can try to isolate young people from people who might be worried about them.

What can I do if I am worried about myself or a friend?

- Speak up. Talk to someone you trust, either a parent, a teacher, youth worker, social worker or a trusted adult.
- If you are being threatened or someone you know is being threatened, call the police. It will be taken seriously and you/ your friend will be seen as a victim.
- Look after yourself and be aware of you/your friend's safety.
- Don't stay out late at night or be tempted to stay in strangers homes.
- Always try to let someone know where you are going to be.
- Do not accept money/gifts/phones from strangers. Remember nobody gives you things without expecting something back.
- If you or a friend are already involved in some of the things in this leaflet you may feel trapped. It can be scary but you don't have to face it alone. There are people who can help. Please talk to an adult who you trust or make contact with an agency on this leaflet.

Going country, giving presents, grooming,

Asking you to leave home. Asking you to keep secrets from friends and family?

Asking you to change friends. Asking to pick you up. Asking you to stay out of school.

Nervous about what is happening? Not feeling safe? Not in control of what is happening to you?

Getting anxious or worried? Getting threatened? Getting asked to do more and more?

Speak up. Go to people you trust. Tell someone what is happening to you. See that there is a safe way out.

Useful Contacts

Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

Children Social Care

Peterborough 01733 864180

Cambridgeshire 0345 045 5203

Out of Hours (Emergency Duty Team) 01733 234724

Cambridgeshire Constabulary 101

If a child / young person is in immediate danger call 999

Missing People Safecall (Call or text) 116000



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