



**City College
Peterborough**

Working together, learning together

Child Exploitation and County Lines

What is criminal exploitation? What is child sexual exploitation?

Criminal exploitation

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

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

- is a type of sexual abuse. When a child or young person is exploited. They're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection in exchange for performing sexual activities. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called grooming. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused.

Types of child sexual exploitation

- CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them. This can happen in a short period of time.
- When a child is sexually exploited online they might be persuaded or forced to:
 - send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
 - film or stream sexual activities
 - have sexual conversations.
- Once an abuser has images, video or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

Signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be difficult to spot and sometimes mistaken for "normal" teenage behaviour. Knowing the signs can help protect children and help them when they've no one else to turn to.

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Being frightened of some people, places or situations.
- Being secretive.
- Sharp changes in mood or character.
- Having money or things they can't or won't explain.
- Physical signs of abuse, like bruises or bleeding in their genital or anal area.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy

Effects of child sexual exploitation

Both sexual exploitation in person and online can have long-term effects on a child or young person. They may:

- struggle with trust and be fearful of forming new relationships
- become isolated from family and friends
- fail exams or drop out of education
- become pregnant at a young age
- experience unemployment
- have mental health problems
- make suicide attempts
- abuse alcohol and drugs
- take part in criminal behaviour
- experience homelessness.

Signs of criminal exploitation

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.

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school or college.
- 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 OR Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online.
- Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog.

What is County Lines?

- County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people or adults at risk 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. This can include:
 - Airbnb and short term private rental properties
 - budget hotels
 - the home of a drug user, or other vulnerable person, that is taken over by a criminal gang- this may be referred to as cuckooing.

Who is vulnerable to county lines exploitation?

Any child or adult at risk could potentially be at risk of criminal exploitation by a county lines gang. Factors that make a county lines gang more likely to target, groom and exploit a person include:

- the person having experienced neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse in the past
- social isolation or social difficulties
- poverty
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having a learning disability
- having mental health problems
- having substance misuse issues
- being in care or having a history of being in care
- being excluded from mainstream education

Related Videos

[Barnardo's | Child Sexual Exploitation \(CSE\) | Greg's Story - YouTube](#)

[NCLCC - County Lines Awareness Video - YouTube](#)

Support If you are worried:

Police on 999 or 101

Childline 08001111

Barnardo's 01733 893322

Childrens Social Care 01733 747474