

GANG ACTIVITY, YOUTH VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION AFFECTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Definition

It is important to understand the definitions of:

- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Gangs
- Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)
- County Lines
- Cuckooing

This will enable you to be aware of the safeguarding complexities surrounding criminal exploitation, gang affiliation and organised criminality affecting children (0 to 18 year olds), young people (18 to 25 year olds) and vulnerable adults (over 25 year olds).

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation has been defined within the Home Office Serious Violence Crime Strategy (2018) where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

There is no criminal offence of Criminal Exploitation and no statutory definition.

Police will rely on existing criminal legislation under Misuse of Drugs Act, Offences against the Person Act and Modern Day Slavery Act when investigating possible Criminal Exploitation offending.

It is important to note that grooming offences under the Sexual Offences Act relate to grooming for a sexual purpose. Coercive Control applies to offences committed within family environments and intimate relationships. There is no offence of grooming or coercion linked to criminal exploitation.

Modern Day Slavery Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities, including services that are commissioned to give due regard to support people who are drawn into modern slavery in which people are exploited for criminal gain.

Practitioners need to be mindful that children who are criminally exploited should be seen as victims and not treated as criminals. They should also be treated through the lens of modern slavery and child safeguarding legislation and practice.

It is important to remember that children, young people or adults being criminally exploited may be trafficked, especially if they are having their travel arranged or facilitated for the purpose of them being exploited.

It is helpful to draw on the definition of human trafficking in the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to understand this:

- A person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another person ("V") with a view to V being exploited.
- It is irrelevant whether V consents to the travel (whether V is an adult or a child).
- A person may in particular arrange or facilitate V's travel by recruiting V, transporting or transferring V, harbouring or receiving V, or transferring or exchanging control over V.
- A person arranges or facilitates V's travel with a view to V being exploited only if the person intends to exploit V (in any part of the world) during or after the travel, or the person knows or ought to know that another person is likely to exploit V (in any part of the world) during or after the travel.
- "Travel" means- arriving in, or entering, any country, departing from any country, **travelling within any country.**

In cases of criminal exploitation and gang affiliation we know that powerful, adult gang members recruit and arrange or facilitate the travel of children, young people (and vulnerable adults) for the purpose of them selling drugs, firearms or sex on their behalf. This is exploitation and can fall under the Modern Slavery Act's definitions of exploitation as:

- Sexual exploitation
- Securing services etc. by force, threats or deception
- Securing services etc. from children and vulnerable persons

It is important to note that perpetrators of criminal exploitation may themselves be children, young people or vulnerable adults who are criminally exploited and the victims of criminal exploitation may also be at risk of becoming perpetrators.

When examining the definitions of gangs in this context it can be shown children, young people and adults can be coerced, controlled, manipulated or deceived into any criminal activity.

There are various definitions of gangs in various literature reviews but the purposes of this document it will use three types of groups: peer groups, street gangs and organised crime groups.

Peer Groups

It is common for groups of children and young people to gather together in public places to socialise. Crime and violence is not intrinsic to the identity or practice of peer groups. Although some peer group gatherings can lead to increased anti-social behaviour, drug misuse and youth offending, these activities should not be confused with the serious violence or criminal activity (such as drug dealing) of a street gang, or criminal activities of an organised crime group.

Street Gangs

A street gang can be described as a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of children who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity. A street gang will engage in criminal activity and violence and may lay claim over territory (not necessarily geographical but it can include an illegal economy territory), where they are in conflict with other similar gangs. These gangs have some form of identifying structure featuring a hierarchy usually based on age, physical strength, propensity to violence or older sibling rank. Street gangs are loosely organised, and may be affiliated to older criminals who are members of organised crime groups. Criminal exploitation and gang affiliation is likely to occur in street gangs. To become a gang member there may be certain rites a person will have to complete in order to become accepted as part of the gang. This may involve anti-social or criminal behaviour, substance misuse, sexual abuse/exploitation and/or violence.

Organised Crime Group (OCG)

An OCG is a group of individuals normally led by adults. Many of these groups are often loose networks of criminals that come together for a specific criminal activity, acting in different roles depending on their skills and expertise. This involves serious and organised criminality, where organised crime can be defined as serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain. OCG structures vary. Successful OCGs often consist of a durable core of key individuals. Around them is a cluster of subordinates, specialists, and other more transient members, plus an extended network of associates. Many groups are often loose networks of criminals. Collaboration is often reinforced by shared experiences (such as prison), or recommendation

from trusted individuals. Others are bonded by family or cultural ties – some ‘crime families’ are precisely that.

Street gangs and OCGs are a socially and intentionally constructed group of individuals with attitudes, thinking and behaviours geared towards criminality. They will use violence and intimidation, social media and weapons as ‘tools of power’ to violate, challenge and disrespect other gangs. They will also use this level of violence and intimidation against a child that refuses to do particular criminal activities. This may result in threats being made against a child’s family, including threats towards siblings and wider family members, to coerce someone into criminal activity.

County Lines

Both street gangs and OCGs criminally exploit children, young people and vulnerable adults to carry out illegal activity on their behalf. Gangs dealing drugs is not a new issue but the extent to which criminal exploitation (often organised) of children and vulnerable adults, as well as the increasing use of violence, has become an inherent part of ‘County Lines’.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. County Lines activity usually features the supply of class A drugs predominantly heroin and crack cocaine.

Blurred Lines is a newer phenomenon where drugs are dealt and trafficked across local boundaries rather than over larger distances. The supply of drugs in this way is often linked to social media such as Snapchat and Instagram.

Police Forces across England and Wales have reported a significant increase in violent crime connected to County Lines. The violence includes; murder, rape, stabbings and kidnapping. It is likely that violence is underreported.

Violence and the threat of violence, is a way for gang members to gain recognition and respect by asserting their power and authority. Knives, baseball bats, ammonia / corrosives and other weapons are used to enforce threats. There is also notable evidence of firearms being seen or used to threaten in connection to county lines activity. Social media is also increasingly being used as a tool to encourage and threaten violence.

Children, young people and vulnerable adults can be exploited to be both consumer and runner. They may begin to consume the drugs they are asked to run, or begin running in order to maintain their drug usage or those of their peers. This places them ‘in debt’ to the gang and so

they are expected to either pay back by 'working' or else accumulate debt. There are occasions where gangs stage a robbery on one of their 'runners', where they lose the drugs and become indebted to the gang. The more debt the more control the gang has. This is referred to as debt bondage. If the child/young person/vulnerable adult appears to be 'going ops' (going oppositional to the gang) then they are made to evidence that they will correct their behaviour quickly e.g. spend more time with the gang or not attend school, college or work. If the gang become concerned that child/young person/vulnerable adult appears to be 'going ops' then there is an explicit threat of being 'banged'. This can vary from threats to be beaten or in more extreme cases stabbed. There can also be indirect threats to harm family members too.

Knife wounds to the buttocks and 'accidental' puncture wounds with screw-drivers 'DIY Injuries' are becoming recognisable signs of drug debt enforcer retribution. These incidents are more likely to be reported to A&E but not to police due to intimidation and fear.

Any report by a young person of drug debt or being in debt bondage should be addressed as a Safeguarding concern.

Cuckooing

Gangs will establish a base when they are involved in County Lines in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as "cuckooing". The vulnerable adults tend to be those with physical or mental health difficulties, drug or alcohol addictions or lack support networks. Some of the cuckooing signs to look out for include but are not limited to the following:

- It usually takes place in a multi-occupancy or social housing property
- There may be an increase in the number of comings and goings, including people you haven't seen before, throughout the day and night, often visiting for only short periods of time
- There might be new vehicles outside the property, including taxis or hire cars
- There may be bags of clothing or bedding around the property
- There may be a possible increase in crime and anti-social behaviour in and around the property reported to services, including the accumulation and storage of stolen pedal cycles
- There may be evidence of drug use such as deal bags, discarded syringes, weighing scales, foil and cling film, in and around the property.

It is important to be aware that victims of cuckooing may disengage with support services, and be unwilling to discuss what is happening at their property when the subject is raised with them.

There is also the risk that babies and very young children may be living in properties that are being used by gangs which presents significant safeguarding risks.

There has been evidence of gangs cuckooing single mothers who are groomed to believe they are in a relationship with a gang member.

Where a professional suspects a vulnerable adult has been cuckooed or is being criminally exploited a referral should be made to adult social care to consider whether the adult has needs for care and support and is at risk of abuse or neglect.

Young people leaving care between the ages of 18-25 are recognised as being at increased risk of this form of exploitation.

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Risks

The most effective method to prevent children, young people and vulnerable adults becoming involved in gangs and criminal exploitation is early intervention and identification. This will enable preventative services to be implemented at an early stage to support those affected including relevant family members to make positive life choices and distance themselves from gang related activity.

All front line practitioners should be aware of particular risks in relation to all forms of criminal exploitation and gang affiliation.

Any child, young person or vulnerable adult is vulnerable to criminal exploitation and gang affiliation. This can be demonstrated by the number of “clean skins”, where they are not known to services. These children, young people and adults do not have an existing criminal record or have not attracted the attention of law enforcement agencies or security forces. Gangs exploit many of these people at a time when they are most vulnerable due to recent bereavement, family separation / divorce, domestic discord or some other traumatic event in their life.

Gangs actively recruit “clean skins” since they are more likely to evade detection or draw attention to themselves from law enforcement agencies.

- To transport and sell drugs
- To launder money through personal bank accounts
- To be trafficked for sexual exploitation
- To store weapons and money

Children, young people and adults may often be at the periphery of involvement for some time before they become active gang members. Children may also follow older siblings into gang

involvement. This may provide opportunities for preventative work to be undertaken with children.

The criminal exploitation includes a combination of:

Pull factors: performing tasks for others resulting in them gaining accommodation, food, gifts, status or a sense of safety and belonging, money or drugs; often the hook is through the perpetrator supplying Class B drugs such as cannabis to the child or young person.

Push factors: children escaping from situations where their needs are neglected and there is exposure to unsafe individuals, where there is high family conflict or the absence of a primary attachment figure.

Control: Brain washing, violence and threats of violence by those exploiting the child particularly when the child is identified by the police, they are expected to take full responsibility for the offences for which they are charged – i.e. possession and supply of Class A Drugs, particularly the possession and supply of Heroin and Crack Cocaine. Crack cocaine markets have strong links to serious violence and evidence suggests crack use is rising in England and Wales due to a mix of supply and demand factors.

Criminal exploitation interlinks with a number of multiple vulnerabilities and offences including the child or young person being exposed to and/or victim of physical and emotional violence, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, modern day slavery and human trafficking, domestic abuse and missing episodes.

According to the Children's Society^[1], the risk to a child or young person, and their family and friends, as a result of experiencing criminal exploitation can include but is not limited to:

- Physical injuries: risk of serious violence and death
- Emotional and psychological trauma
- Sexual violence: sexual assault, rape, indecent images being taken and shared as part of initiation/revenge/punishment, internally inserting drugs – where they can be shown how or made to internally insert and carry drugs in their rectum or vagina
- Debt bondage: the child/ren and families being “in debt” to the exploiters; which is used to control the child/ren, with them believing they have to work for free to pay off the “debt”. This can also apply if the child is actually robbed, or if they are arrested and have drugs, money or the phone confiscated by police.
- Neglect and basic needs not being met
- Living in unclean, dangerous and/or unhygienic environments,
- Tiredness and sleep deprivation: child is expected to carry out criminal activities over long periods and through the night

- Poor attendance and/or attainment at school/college
- No access to family or friends

There is strong evidence that supportive adult–child relationships are essential for child wellbeing[2]. Children or young people who have no access to friends and family are at increased risk of being exploited for criminal or sexual gain. Children or young people who have been placed in local authority care out of their area are particularly vulnerable, especially if there are multiple placements and/or no trusted relationships. For example, relationships between practitioners and vulnerable children are often changing and short-term, which compounds vulnerable children’s difficulty in trusting adults[3].

There are some other factors that can increase the vulnerability that a child or young person will be criminally exploited by others. This can include

- **Child/ Individual:** Looked after, learning disabilities, substance misuse, mental health problem.
- **Home/family:** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can include: sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect/abuse, exposed to violence, alcohol/drug addiction, family member in prison, mental health, and parental separation/divorce. Other factors include poverty, children going missing from home or care, lack of positive relationship with a protective, nurturing adult, homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- **Peers:** Exposed to other young people known to be exploited, exposed to or experienced peer on peer abuse,
- **Schools:** Exclusion from school and not in education/training or employment, exposed of experience violent crime
- **Neighbourhoods:** Exposed to violent crime, gangs and deprivation

These vulnerabilities do not mean that a child or young person will be criminally exploited but are factors that could increase the vulnerability.

Vulnerable locations that gangs target to groom children or young people for criminal exploitation include pupil referral units, alternative education provisions, special education needs provisions and care homes/placements and, homeless hostels. Social media is also used to make initial contact with children and young people.

It is important to remember that a child or young person might not relate to their experience as being abusive or exploitative. The child or young person may feel a sense of “loyalty” and “brotherhood” to the exploiters, they may feel emotionally fulfilled in a way they haven’t experienced from parents, carers or professionals before. The child or young person may feel they have gained “friends” or “family” and that these people care for him or her. The child or

young person may be receiving money or rewards that they have not had access to previously or the money may be supporting their family to cover basic needs. The child or young person may feel a sense of “status” and “power” that they haven’t had before. The child or young person may see themselves as an autonomous drug dealer rather than a victim of exploitation at the bottom of a large organised crime structure.

Violence is a way for gang members to gain recognition and respect by asserting their power and authority in the street and within neighbourhoods, with a large proportion of street crime perpetrated against members of other gangs or the relatives of gang members.

The specific risks for males and females may be quite different. There is a higher risk of sexual abuse for females. Males are more likely to be criminally exploited to carry out illegal activities and acts of violence. However, sometimes the boys are groomed to rape girls and are then criminalised for this so there is peer exploitation associated with gangs which need to be recognised.

There is evidence of a high incidence of rape of girls and young women who are involved with gangs. Some senior gang members pass their girlfriends around to lower ranking members and sometimes to the whole group at the same time. Very few rapes by gang members are reported.

Gang members often groom girls at school using drugs and alcohol, which act as disinhibitors, create dependency, and encourage/coerce girls to recruit other girls through school and other social networks.

[1] The Children’s Society (December 2017) Toolkit for Working with Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in Relation to ‘County Lines’, pp 2-3

[2] Lewing, B., Doubell, L., Beevers, T., and Acquah, D. (2018) Building Trusted Relationships for Vulnerable Children and Young People with Public Services, Early Intervention Foundation, p.13

[3] Lewing, B., Doubell, L., Beevers, T., and Acquah, D. (2018) Building Trusted Relationships for Vulnerable Children and Young People with Public Services, Early Intervention Foundation, p.14

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Warning indicators

There are a number of indicators that could alert someone that a child is being criminally exploited:

- Frequent missing episodes and being found out of area
- Found with large quantities of drugs or weapons
- Found with drugs inside their mouth, rectum or vagina

- Unexplained amounts of money, mobiles, credit, clothing, jewellery, new hair cut or other items/gifts
- Returned from missing episodes with injuries, or dishevelled
- Change in behaviour; more secretive / withdrawn/isolated from peers or not mixing with usual friends
- Unexplained absences from, or not engaged in school/ college/ training/ work
- Increasingly disruptive, hostile or physically aggressive at home or school Including use of sexualised language and language in relation to drug dealing and/or violence
- Expressions around invincibility or not caring about what happens to them
- Increased interest in making money
- Reports being taken to parties, people's houses, unknown areas, hotels, nightclubs, takeaways or out of area by unknown adults
- Increasing use of drugs or alcohol
- Fear of reprisal from "gang" members or violence from young people or adults
- Having multiple mobile phones, sim cards or use of a phone that causes concern - multiple callers or more texts /pings than usual
- Possession of hotel keys/cards or keys to unknown premises
- Disclosure of sexual/ physical assault followed by withdrawal of allegation
- Abduction or forced imprisonment
- Entering or leaving vehicles cars with unknown adults
- Receiving rewards of money or goods for introducing peers
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being
- Agencies unable to engage
- New peer groups and/or relationships
- Relationships with controlling /older individuals or groups
- Parental concerns
- Repeated STI's and/or pregnancy/miscarriages/termination of pregnancy
- Increase referrals to agencies for other known peers
- Multiple referrals for incidents in the same location

An important feature of gang involvement is that, the more heavily a child or young person is involved with a gang, the less likely they are to talk about it.

Missing Episodes

There are links between gang involvement and children going missing from home or care. It has been shown by The All Party Parliamentary Group on Missing and Runaway Children and Adults that there are important gender differences in the way a child is treated when they go missing

which can increase the vulnerabilities of those affected. Girls are more likely to be reported missing than boys. Girls who go missing from home of care are also more likely to get an appropriate response from police forces. According to The Children's Society, boys aged 14 to 17 are mostly targeted for criminal exploitation, where gangs deliberately groom and traffick a child to carry out particular tasks.

The Children's Society has identified differences in patterns of missing episodes can relate to the different forms of exploitation children may experience. For example, they observed that on average, boys went missing for two weeks, whereas girls went missing for two to three days, perhaps corresponding with boys being trafficked around the UK in their potential involvement in County Lines.

Other considerations that should be taken into account is how boys are viewed within the home and wider society, since boys may be viewed as more capable of looking after themselves and are less likely to be exploited than girls. This may account for some parents/guardians not reporting their son missing for a number of days or not at all. Equally, threats of violence from gang members, including from their child (who they are protecting), may also account for some parents / guardians not reporting their son missing for fear of violent reprisals against themselves and family members.

In suspected cases of radicalisation, Social Workers and Local Authorities are under a duty to refer the case to the local PREVENT Channel Panel, which will then decide the correct, if any, intervention and support to be offered to that individual.

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Contextual safeguarding

'Contextual safeguarding' is a theory developed by Dr Carlene Firmin of the University of Bedfordshire, which supports an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It is recognised that the different relationships children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can have little influence over these contexts and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships and parent/carer capacity to keep them safe.

When children are exposed to harm within their families such as domestic abuse or physical abuse or neglected this can impact their behaviour outside of their home. Young people in these situations may spend more time in street or community settings and may experience criminality, violence and exploitation.

Contextual interventions need to enhance 1:1 work with children and work with families, including relational working for young people and strengthening the capacity to safeguard beyond families. Supporting young people to socialise in safe and protective schools and community settings will also help them form safe and protective peer relationships.

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Building trusted relationships

A trusted relationship is fundamental to the successful delivery of a service which depends on the effective engagement of a vulnerable child or young person. It has been described as being key to achieving a successful outcome for a child, and to ensuring that children and young people are confident about discussing their concerns and disclosing issues, or providing a full and accurate account (in the case of the criminal justice system).

The importance of a trusted relationship depends on the level of need and vulnerability of a child or young person. For this reason, the need to build a trusted relationship with children and young people who have been through the care system and previously been let down by adults has been particularly emphasised. In these circumstances, it was said that a trusted relationship can help to reverse the damaging effects of these experiences and to support the emotional development of a child or young person. Without learning how to form a positive relationship there is a danger that a child may reach adulthood unable to trust anybody, which could have a lasting impact on their lives.

Depending on the context in which a trusted relationship is being built, it has been recently been suggested that resilience and outcomes can be improved through:

- Encouraging a child or young person to persevere when they are struggling with something
- Giving them a safe and non-judgmental space in which to challenge and explore things that they may be concerned about or not agree with
- Exposing them to alternative possibilities and perspectives, which can help to raise their aspirations and broaden their options
- Enabling a child or young person to realise that the issue they are dealing with is 'not okay', and to raise their awareness about the risks associated with a particular situation or behaviour
- Helping children to feel less isolated, as they come to understand that they can share a problem or concern and ask other trusted people to help them overcome it^[1].

Children who are resorting to violence have often themselves suffered trauma early in life. Many have been victims themselves, or witnessed domestic violence and abuse in the home at an early age. They have grown up without the emotional tools that children should develop, like empathy towards others, resilience and self-esteem to believe they can succeed in mainstream society (education, employment).

Children who are at risk of offending need consistent, emotional and practical support from their parents/carers and other professionals. Children in care and care leavers are particularly vulnerable due to their low self-esteem, low resilience, attachment issues and the fact that they are often isolated from family and friends.

[1] Lewing, B., Doubell, L., Beevers, T., and Acquah, D. (2018) Building Trusted Relationships for Vulnerable Children and Young People with Public Services, Early Intervention Foundation, p.16

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Secondary victimisation

Children and young people are at high risk of undergoing secondary victimisation by being considered perpetrators of crime rather than victims of exploitation. Equally, there is the risk of victims reliving traumatic experiences by being asked to repeat significant events to various professionals.

Practitioners need to be mindful that children and young people who are criminally exploited should be seen as victims and not treated as criminals. They should also be treated through the lens of modern slavery and child safeguarding legislation and practice.

There is evidence that children and young people fear the repercussions of reporting being victims of any criminal activity. Research has found that children identify a range of risks associated with reporting crime including reputational damage, implications for their family and fears of significant physical reprisal.

Children and young people may also blame themselves for victimisation, falsely assuming responsibility for their experiences. Where children and young people feel in any way responsible for their victimisation they are unlikely to report these experiences or seek support[1].

This lack of understanding can have a serious impact on children and young people. Not being equipped with this knowledge means that many have to deal with their experience alone and not seeking necessary support available to them. Not reporting also means that they be unable to make the offending behaviour stop, or to seek justice and redress for their suffering.

To support children to address any issues of self-blame, specific counselling, support and assistance services should be available to provide appropriate support and safeguard those who are most vulnerable.

[1] Victim Support (2017) Children and Young People Affected by Crime, Policy Statement, p.3

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Protection and action to be taken

Any agency or practitioner who has concerns that a child may be at risk of harm as a consequence of gang activity should contact their relevant Children's Social Care Service and Police Force. Local safeguarding procedures should be followed when making referrals.

If a child is thought to be at immediate risk police should be contacted via 999.

In any referral where there is evidence a child is at significant risk of gang affiliation and / or criminal exploitation it is important to clearly state:

- **Child's name**
- **Date of birth**
- **Address**
- **Any known gang associations** (name of gang/s)
- **Risk factors** (refer to the indicators outlined in this document)

Subject to the information provided, a multi-agency Strategy Discussion will take place if there is evidence a child is at significant risk of gang affiliation and / or criminal exploitation. This also applies when a child is at risk of trafficking. The purpose of this multi-agency enquiry is to enable the agencies to decide whether any action should be taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

The Stage 1 screening tool for referral into MSET procedures should also be completed.

MSET is an added value Multi- Agency meeting which runs alongside existing Child Protection Procedures. It takes referrals for children who have indicators of Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking. It is chaired by police and contains panel members from a number of services including housing, drug and alcohol, Health, CAHMS/CYPS, CSC, police harm reduction teams, YJS, Youth mentoring services, Charities. The panel devise a multi-agency disruption plan which all partners are accountable for. Further information about MSET can be obtained from your LA Childrens Safeguarding Partnership.

Reporting an Incident of Modern Slavery

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child to be a victim of Modern Slavery and trafficking offences:

- This should be reported to the police (phone 101 or in an emergency 999) in order for them to investigate the offences committed (i.e. Modern Slavery and trafficking offences)
- A referral should be made to the MASH as trafficking and exploitation means a child could be at risk of or experienced significant harm and Child Protection processes need to be followed.
- In addition, if trafficking or Modern Day Slavery is known or suspected, a referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) directly to the Police and Children's Services First Responders. Other agencies should contribute to this referral.

For immediate reporting an incident of child criminal exploitation and gang affiliation to Children's Social Care outside normal office hours call the Emergency Duty Team.

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Cross-border issues

The threat of organised criminality is not confined to geographical boundaries. Pathways into criminality are diverse and differ between crime types. Individuals can be coerced, corrupted, debt-bound, groomed and exploited, or even offend unwittingly. Forged identity documents (particularly EEA identity documents) and fraudulently obtained genuine documents remain a key enabler of criminal activities. Many OCGs are highly flexible and display great adaptability in the speed with which they adjust their *modi operandi* or whole business models to changes in the environment.

People involved in gangs and OCGs exploit organisational and geographical vulnerabilities since they know there are weaknesses in the way different organisations operate both internally and externally.

The National Crime Agency^[1] highlights there are a number of factors that help determine why groups might embark on County Lines activity. These include the perception of 'space' in drug markets outside of urban areas and the anticipation of increased profits because of less capable competition. Operating outside of their own areas, where they are 'known' and subject to law enforcement targeting, often gives groups the perception of increased anonymity. It is important

these risks and associated threats are reduced by working effectively to share intelligence in a timely manner.

There may be occasions where a child may want to live with each parent/carer (if they are not living together) during the week, especially if the child feels threatened or intimidated by others where they normally reside. This may increase the child's vulnerabilities since relevant safeguarding parties may not be aware of the family circumstances if child is living in different parts of the North East or in other parts of the UK. Similarly, there may be occasions where a child is educated outside their Local Authority area. This may also increase the child's vulnerabilities since relevant safeguarding parties may not be aware of all of the family circumstances to take appropriate safeguarding actions to reduce the risks associated to gang affiliation or criminal exploitation.

It is vital that information is shared to address any cross border concerns. Relevant front line and back office staff need to keep abreast of any changes in family circumstances and emerging threats to support any intervention, prevention and enforcement work.

Local authorities should be notified whenever a child is placed in a placement within a neighbouring local authority area. Children who are at risk of Criminal Exploitation and Missing should also be notified to the local police harm reduction team

[1] National Crime Agency (2015) Intelligence Assessment – County Lines, Gangs and Safeguarding, p.2

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Key legislation

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - listed Responsible and Co-operating Authorities have a statutory responsibility to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area and share information to protect communities from serious and organised crime. Publically commissioned private and voluntary sector providers must also contribute to prevention efforts through due diligence and information sharing to protect communities from serious and organised crime.

Children's Act 2004 - outlined the statutory requirements each agency working with Children and Families must adhere to, to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding.

Modern Slavery Act 2015 - provides the legislative framework to equip law enforcement agencies and local partners to effectively prosecute and convict the perpetrators of modern slavery. The Act consolidated and simplified previous slavery and human trafficking legislation in England and Wales into a single statute, and introduced provisions to strengthen law enforcement and afford better protection to victims.

Serious Crime Act 2015 - improved the legislative powers available to local partners to tackle serious and organised crime. This Act gave effect to a number of proposals and commitments made in the Government's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy (2013) and updated existing law dealing with the cyber-crime, serious crime prevention orders, gang injunctions, child cruelty, female genital mutilation (FGM) and the commission of certain terrorism offences abroad. When this Act was introduced it included a new offence of participating in the activities of an organised crime group and a strengthened preventative capability through Serious Crime Protection Orders. Councils should work alongside law enforcement agencies, sharing relevant intelligence, to make the best use of these new powers to disrupt and halt such crime.

Criminal Finances Act 2017 - introduced new powers to help law enforcement agencies tackle money laundering, corruption, terrorist finance and recover the proceeds of crime.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 – identified safeguarding partners- CSC, police and health are required to make arrangements to work together and with relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

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Useful tools and powers

There are a range of disruption tools available, in addition to the Modern Day Slavery National Referral Mechanism (NRM), including:

Criminal Behaviour Orders: A criminal behavioural order (CBO) can prohibit an individual from doing anything described in the order, such as travelling to certain places. The Metropolitan Police have used these to stop young people leaving the M25, making them less 'attractive' to potential exploiters.

Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNS): can be issued against individuals who are suspected of grooming children and young people – they state that they have no permission to associate with the named child under the age of 16 and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act 1989. They have largely been used when CSE is suspected, however, their use is not limited to CSE cases and they can be used to disrupt grooming for criminality. Currently CAWNS can only be applied to 16 & 17 year olds in looked after care.

Drug Dealing Telecommunications Restrictions Orders: The Digital Economy Act 2017 enabled the Home Secretary to make regulations which will allow the police to disable telephones or telephone lines they suspect are being used in relation to drug dealing

Gang injunctions: This is a Civil Order introduced by the Policing and Crime Act 2009, aimed at preventing gang-related violence and criminal activity. Terms imposed can (for example) prevent

or restrict association with other gang members, prohibit travel to certain areas, prevent the congregation of people in groups of three or more restrict individuals from possessing more than one mobile telephone. It can also prevent the promotion of gang related activity on social networking sites. This can be considered at any time during an investigation. In order to make a gang injunction the court must be satisfied that the respondent has engaged in, encouraged or assisted gang-related violence or drug-dealing activity. In addition, the court must then be satisfied that:

- the gang injunction is necessary to prevent the respondent from engaging in, encouraging or assisting gang-related violence or drug dealing activity, and/or
- the gang injunction is necessary to protect the respondent from gang-related violence or drug taking activity.

Gang injunctions offer a way to intervene and engage a young person aged 14-17 with positive activities, with the aim of preventing further involvement in gangs, violence and/or gang-related drug dealing activity

Further information about other disruption tools and powers can be found in the '[Disrupting Serious and Organised Criminals - Menu of Tactics](#)'. This document has been produced by The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, which is part of the College of Policing. The document is a tool designed to assist anyone involved in tackling organised crime by identifying a range of tactical options to disrupt those criminals. The Menu is a collation of a range of existing tactics and powers which are available to law enforcement and partner agencies. It is aimed at prompting a creative, problem-solving approach to disrupting criminal activity.

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Further information

- Home Office (April 2018) Serious Violence Strategy, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>
- Youth Justice Legal Centre (2018) Child criminal exploitation and gang affiliation: County Lines Gangs, Child Trafficking & Modern Slavery Defences for Children
- The Children's Society (December 2017) Toolkit for Working with Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in Relation to 'County Lines'
- All Party Parliamentary Group (March 2017) APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults: Briefing report on the roundtable on children who go missing and are criminally exploited by gangs
- Home Office (2017) Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines

- National Crime Agency (2017) Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply, National Briefing Report
- National Crime Agency (2017) National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime
- Home Office (2016) Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation
- Home Office (2016) Lessons Learned: Troubled Families at Risk of Involvement in Serious and Organised Crime
- National Crime Agency (2016) County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply, National Briefing Report
- Disley, E. and Liddle, M. (2016) Local Perspectives in Ending Gang and Youth Violence, Home Office
- National Crime Agency (2016) National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime
- Home Office (2015) Individuals at Risk of Being Drawn into Serious and Organised Crime – A Prevent Guide
- Early Intervention Foundation (2015) What Works to Prevent Gang Involvement, Youth Violence and Crime: A Rapid Review of Interventions delivered in the UK and Aboard
- Early Intervention Foundation (2015) Preventing Gang and Youth Violence: A Review of Risk and Protective Factors
- National Crime Agency (2015) NCA National Intelligence Assessment, County Lines, Gangs and Safeguarding
- EUROPOL (2014) Child Trafficking for Exploitation in Forced Criminal Activities
- Home Office (2013) Serious and Organised Crime Strategy