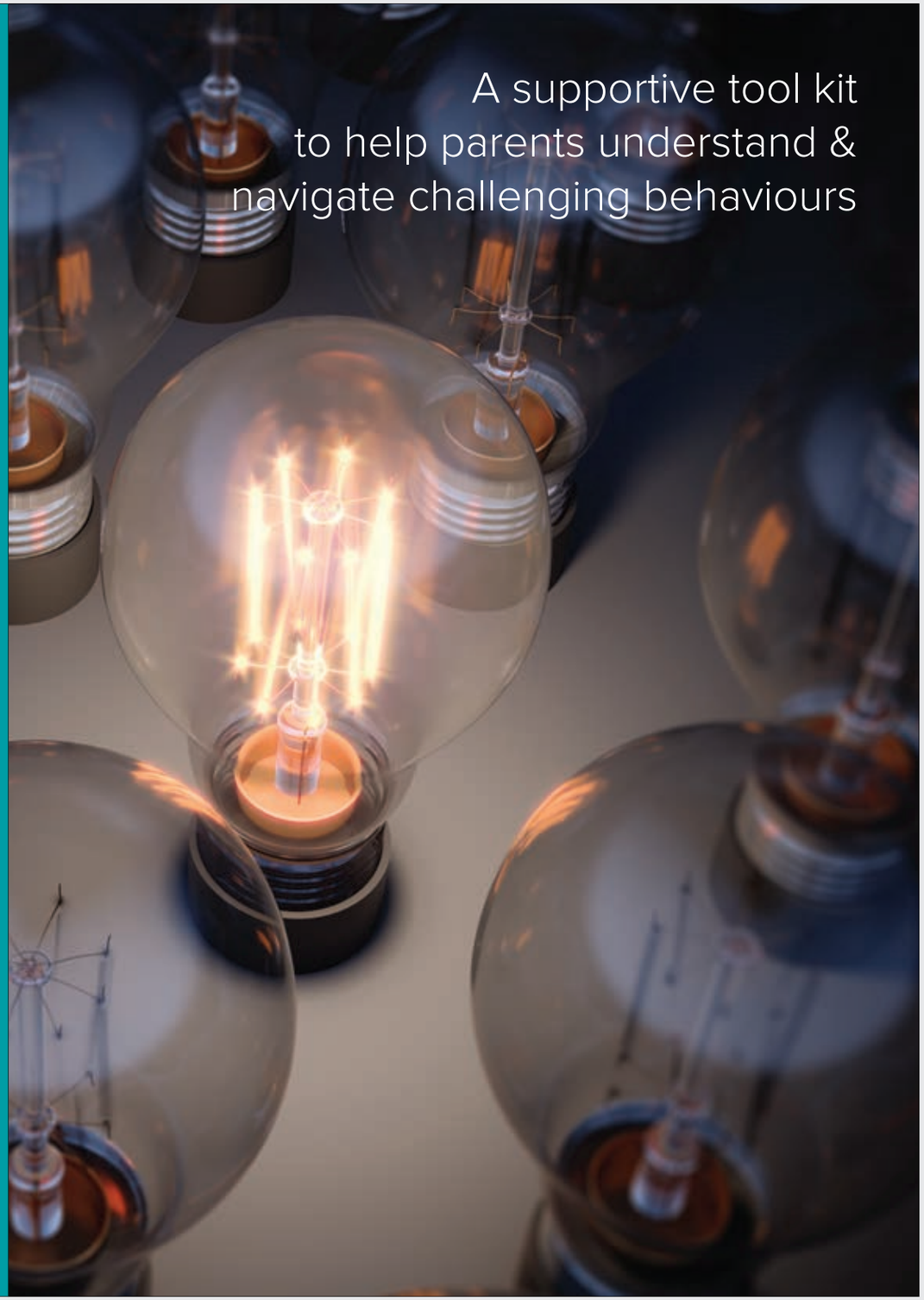
finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership

PCC Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Devon and Cornwall

Designed & Printed by QuickPrint (SW) Ltd · www.quickprint.co.uk



A supportive tool kit to help parents understand & navigate challenging behaviours

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Contents

Introduction 3
Challenges Our Young People Face 4
Sexuality 5
Bullying 6
Drugs and Alcohol 7
Body Image 8
Mental Health 10
Consent 12
Unhealthy Relationships 13
Unhealthy Relationships & Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 14
The Power and Control Wheel 16
Social Media 17
Making Social Media a Happy Space 18
Social Media Guidelines 19
Role Modelling 21
What is a Gang? 24
The History of Gangs 26
Young people in England who are members of gangs or have connections with them 27
County Lines 28
Warning Signs 30
Language 32
Family Strengthening 36
Let's talk 37
Trust in Technology 39
Let's Feel Better on Social Media... 40
Safety Plan 41
Self-Care 42
Useful Contacts 43

QuickPrint

Introduction

Hello

Thank you for picking up this Tool Kit and deciding to give it a read, we really hope that you find it useful and that it will enable you to have honest and helpful conversations with your young person.

We wrote the Tool Kit as a response to a lot of the difficulties that agencies and the police were seeing, particularly in South Devon. Our young people were being exploited by gangs - in a way not recognized before in the South West and we found that parents were struggling to understand and know how best to help keep their families safe. Parent support groups were established and this booklet is as a result of asking those parents what they would have found useful at the start of the difficulties.

There is never a magic wand when looking after our children but we hope this Tool Kit will give you some insight into the issues affecting young people and the pressures that they face. Never being scared to ask a question means not being scared that you may be poorly equipped for the response.

Being a parent or carer is hard but little things can make a huge difference. You and they are worth the effort!

Best wishes,

Emma Chloe

Emma Stephens and Chloe Hosegrove

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Challenges Our Young People Face

It is important to acknowledge the day to day difficulties that our young people face such as school pressures, body image and bullying and the risks posed if these are not recognised and our young people supported.

Sexuality

Young people face significant pressure to understand and categorise their sexuality and gender identity.

They may also feel pressure to 'label' their sexuality or they may feel pressure to conform and feel unable to disclose their true sexuality or gender identity. Slowly society is starting to improve and have more awareness and show more support of the LGBT community, however we still have a lot of work to do.

According to gov.uk and the NHS:

- A **third of LGBT+ young people** age 14-19 have a diagnosable mental health disorder
- At least **2 in 5** LGBT people have experienced an incident because they are LGBT, such as verbal abuse or physical assault

Remind your young person that their sexuality and gender identity makes them, them! Remind them that you are here to **listen to them and to support them** regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. There are support groups and services specifically designed for LGBT young people, if your young person is struggling try and find out what further support is available to them. **Remain open and non-judgemental** when your young person discusses sexuality or gender identity, don't just use phrases like 'it's just a phase'. Phrases like this will undermine your child's experience and leave them potentially feeling confused and hurt.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Bullying

Bullying may be hidden by young people as a result of shame, embarrassment or feeling there is nowhere or nobody to turn to. Bullying can have an impact on school work, relationships, self-esteem, mental health and ultimately young people's futures.

What can we do about bullying?

- If your young person discloses that they have been or are currently being bullied, with their involvement it is important that you speak to school. By law all schools must have policies and measures in place to prevent bullying. Schools therefore ultimately have the responsibility to safeguard their young people from bullying and have responsibility to act on it
- If your young person discloses that they are being bullied try and find out who by and what the bullying looks like. This is important as bullying can be anything from name calling, physical attacks, to stalking and harassment to death threats, for example. Determining what is going on for them determines how you can respond and try and make things better
- If your young person is being cyber-bullied (bullied via social media/texts/calls) have a discussion with them about blocking the individuals involved if this would be safe to do so
- Talk to your young person about how to manage bullying such a telling teaching staff at School and other ways to keep themselves safe. This can include making sure that they have their phone on them should they need to call for help (see page 41 for safety plan)
- Most importantly remind your young person that experiencing bullying is **absolutely not their fault** and **should not be happening to them**. Remind them that you are there to support them and help to keep them safe.

Drugs and Alcohol

Peer pressure to experiment with drugs and alcohol is incredibly common in young people. Young people also may be experiencing pressure to deal drugs or pressure to engage in unwanted sexual activities for drugs or alcohol (see the child sexual exploitation chapter).

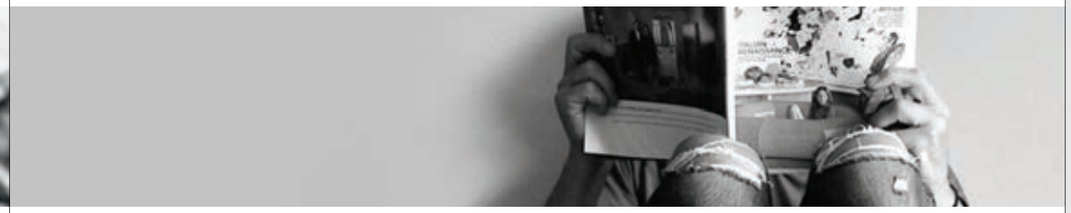
What can you do?

- Have open and honest conversations with your young person about drugs and alcohol. It is important to recognise that your young person may experiment with alcohol and potentially drugs at some point. **Simply telling young people not to take drugs or drink alcohol isn't enough. Inform them of the risks of taking drugs and alcohol**
- Remind young people of the law and that it is a criminal offence to drink alcohol under the age of 18 or take illegal drugs at any age. Remind your young person that if they were caught doing so they could get themselves in trouble with the police
- Remind them of how to be safe at parties if drugs and alcohol are present such as being with a safe group of friends and calling **999** in an emergency. Remind them that they can contact you if they have any worries whilst around drugs and alcohol
- Drugs and alcohol put young people's health at risk as well as their finances and their risk of being in trouble with the police. There is plenty of information online to help you explain these risks to your young person **www.talktofrank.com** is a good place to start
- If you find drugs in your young person's room talk to them about it. They could be involved in dealing drugs and may be extremely scared and unsure where to turn. Alternatively, if they are using these drugs recreationally this would be a good time to remind them of the risks

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Body Image

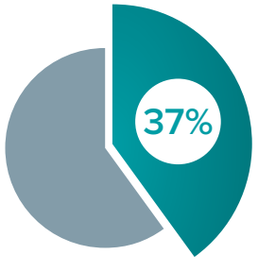


Struggles with body image are more prevalent than ever in both young women and young men. Young people are regularly exposed to the 'perfect' body image via social media, namely Instagram.

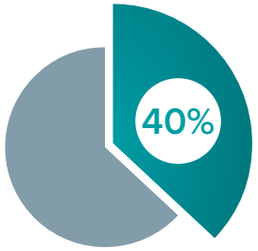
These images have often been edited, the bodies have been reshaped, skin tones have been altered, acne has been removed and teeth have been whitened. Even more worryingly influencers and models who upload these images will sometimes be trying to sell the latest diet tea or protein shake and crediting these products for the way that they look. These images provide unhealthy and unrealistic expectations to young people and can have a significant impact on their self-esteem and even the development into disordered eating.

There are always ever changing 'trends' in the ideal body type. Young men may strive for a muscular appearance for example whereas young women may strive to be unhealthily slim or have larger hips.

Research shows that...



- **37%** of young people felt upset about their body image



- **40%** of young people said images on social media caused them to feel worried about their body image
- It is estimated that **1.25 million** people in the UK currently have an eating disorder

Top Tips

- Try and avoid discussing dieting for weight loss in front of your young person
- Model positive self-talk about your own body
- Have open discussions about body image and how we view ourselves. This could include discussing who they follow on social media
- Have discussions around how our bodies are amazing and what they can do *(dance, keep us alive, run, make babies, hug the ones we love, eat amazing food)*
- Try and remind your young person that the images they see have often been edited or the person may have had plastic surgery or fillers
- It might be a good idea to remove the scales from the house if you find your young person using these at an alarming rate
- Remind your young person that we are all different. Even if we all ate the exact same food and did the exact same amount of exercise, we would still not all look the same

QuickPrint

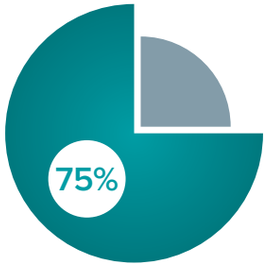
finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Mental Health

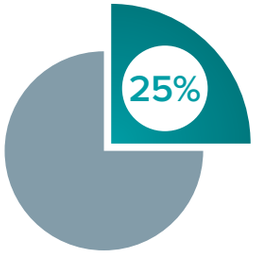
According to the NHS and the children's society...

- **1 in 8** young people have at least one mental health disorder

- **1 in 4** people will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their life



- **75%** of all mental health problems are established before the age of 18



- Only **25%** of young people with a mental health difficulty have had contact with a mental health service

Mental health difficulties can affect young women and young men in differing ways. For example 75% of people with an eating disorder identify as female. Another example would be that sadly men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women.

How can I help?

- Mental health is incredibly complex and can present at varying levels. Should you have concerns that your young person may be struggling with their mental health encourage them speak to their GP with you. If your young person really doesn't want to speak to a doctor you could instead speak to other professionals such as school or third sector organisations that support young people's mental health
- There is still a huge amount of stigma around mental health. Try and have open and honest conversations about mental health as a family to reduce this stigma
- Particularly with teenage boys discuss '**toxic masculinity**'. Toxic masculinity is the idea that men and boys must adhere to the 'traditional male gender role' meaning that they do not express emotions readily and the idea that 'boys don't cry'. Toxic masculinity could contribute towards male mental health, promoting expressing their emotions via aggression or struggles with sexuality. Discuss with your young person that this is an outdated idea and that it is important that boys talk about their feelings
- Turn to page 42 for ideas about how to engage your young person in self-care to help with their emotional well-being
- If your young person discloses that they are thinking about or have a plan to take their own life always take this seriously. **NEVER** downplay it by saying things like 'you wouldn't do that would you?' or 'don't be silly'. Phrases like this will make it less likely for your young person to speak to you about this again and could heighten their risk. Speak to them about it and call **999** in an emergency
- You could create a mental health safety plan with your young person. Some ideas of what you could include:
  - How they know they are struggling with their mental health
    an anxious tummy, shaky hands, not wanting to get out of bed
  - How they can make themselves feel better
    spending time with friends, watching a comedy, having a bath, writing down how they feel
  - Who they can talk to about it
    you, their friends, school staff, a counsellor
  - What they can do in an emergency
    call you, not be alone, call 999

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Consent

What is it? A person agreeing to something by choice, with freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Consent and sex - consent must be given by all of the individuals engaging in the sexual activity. This means all individuals must agree to the sexual activity by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make this choice. Consent can be withdrawn at any point throughout the sexual activity.

- To make this clearer type into YouTube 'consent and a cup to tea (clean)' and watch the short video clip

Young people and sexual consent - a young person under the age of 16 cannot **legally consent** to having sex. Despite this, health professionals can give contraception and contraception advice to young people from the age of 13-16 if they believe that the young person is mature enough to make these decisions. A young person under the age of 13 does not have the **legal capacity** to consent to sex meaning that if this were to happen it would be dealt with under rape laws.

Talking about consent with young people is incredibly important as at this age your young person may start forming relationships and exploring their sexuality. Talking about consent may feel like a big topic and so here are some tips to try and make it easier...

- Use a TV show or movie clip to introduce the topic of consent or you could show them the cup of tea consent video
- Bring it up at a relaxed time such as out for a walk, on the drive home from school, during dinner time
- You don't have to start by talking about them having sex, you could talk about their friend's relationships or talk about consent in regards to things like kissing or being touched
- Show interest in what they're learning about at school and ask if they have spoken about consent in sex education and what they learnt about it

Unhealthy Relationships

What is domestic abuse? Domestic abuse is 'an incident or pattern of incidents of abusive behaviour usually perpetrated by a current or former partner.'

This can include:

- **Physical violence** such as hitting, kicking, biting, etc.
- **Coercive controlling behaviour** such as isolation from family and friends, telling the victim what they can and cannot do and where they can go
- **Psychological abuse** (also known as emotional abuse) such as calling the victim degrading names or making the victim think that they are going 'crazy'
- **Sexual abuse** such as unwanted sexual contact, rape or forcing the victim to send nude images of themselves or sharing these nude images *(also known as 'revenge porn')*
- **Financial abuse** such as taking the victim's money or deciding how their money can be spent
- **Harassment or stalking** for example stalking the victim's location on apps such as Snapchat, turning up unannounced to where the victim is or making unwanted contact with the victim

These examples are not a comprehensive list

Domestic abuse can affect anyone of any age, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background.

Domestic abuse & young people

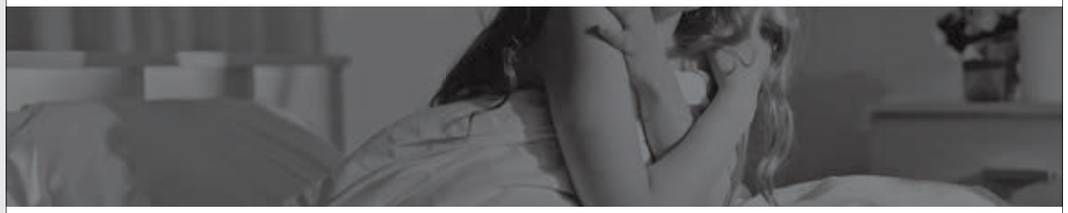
According to the national domestic abuse charity SafeLives:

- **25% of girls** and **18% of boys** aged 13-17 have reported to have experienced some form of physical violence from an intimate partner
- **31% of girls** have reported to have experienced some form of sexual abuse within their relationship

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Unhealthy Relationships & Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)



Signs that your young person may be in an unhealthy relationship...

- They might be over defensive of their partner
- They may seem pre-occupied, distant or 'on edge'
- They may check their phone more regularly than usual
- They could have unexplained bruises or marks
- They might seem unhappy down hearted or tearful, especially just after seeing their partner
- You might notice an obvious and sudden reduction in their self-esteem
- They may not see their friends as usual as often or not at all, or appear to have very little interest in seeing them
- Their partner may turn up to their location unexpectedly, without an invite

What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)?

CSE is a form of sexual abuse. It involves a child or young person being manipulated and exploited into sexual activity in exchange for gifts, money, alcohol, drugs, etc.

- CSE is often used by gang members to exert power and control over children and young people. However, gangs are not the only individuals exploiting young people, sexual exploitation can be perpetrated by anyone with the ability to groom a child.
- The true extent of CSE is not known due to the hidden nature of the crime, however it is estimated that around **600 young people per month** in the UK are safeguarded against the crime.

Warning signs of CSE:

- A sudden increase of unexplained gifts or money, including new clothes, shoes, make up, electronic devices, etc.
- Staying out late, overnight or going missing for a period of time
- Being unusually secretive and/or defensive
- Having a new group of friends (who may be significantly older than them)
- Becoming involved in criminal activity such as shoplifting
- Being in possession of drugs and/or alcohol
- Physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- Having a new partner who is older than them, who they don't want you to meet or who they are overly secretive and defensive about

What if your young person makes a disclosure that relates to not giving their consent, being a victim of CSE or being in an unhealthy relationship?

- Stay calm and non-judgemental so that your young person feels able to speak to you open and honestly
- Speak to them then and there about what has happened and don't put it off - the opportunity may not arise again
- Try and gather information from them about what has happened or is happening in a gentle way
- Remind them that you are here to listen to and support them
- Create a plan with them for what happens next - depending on what has happened this may be speaking to School, reporting to the police, helping them to end the relationship or reminding them that you're here for them to speak to.
- Create a safety plan together (see page 41)
- There are specialist services to help your young person such as the local domestic abuse services or CSE services

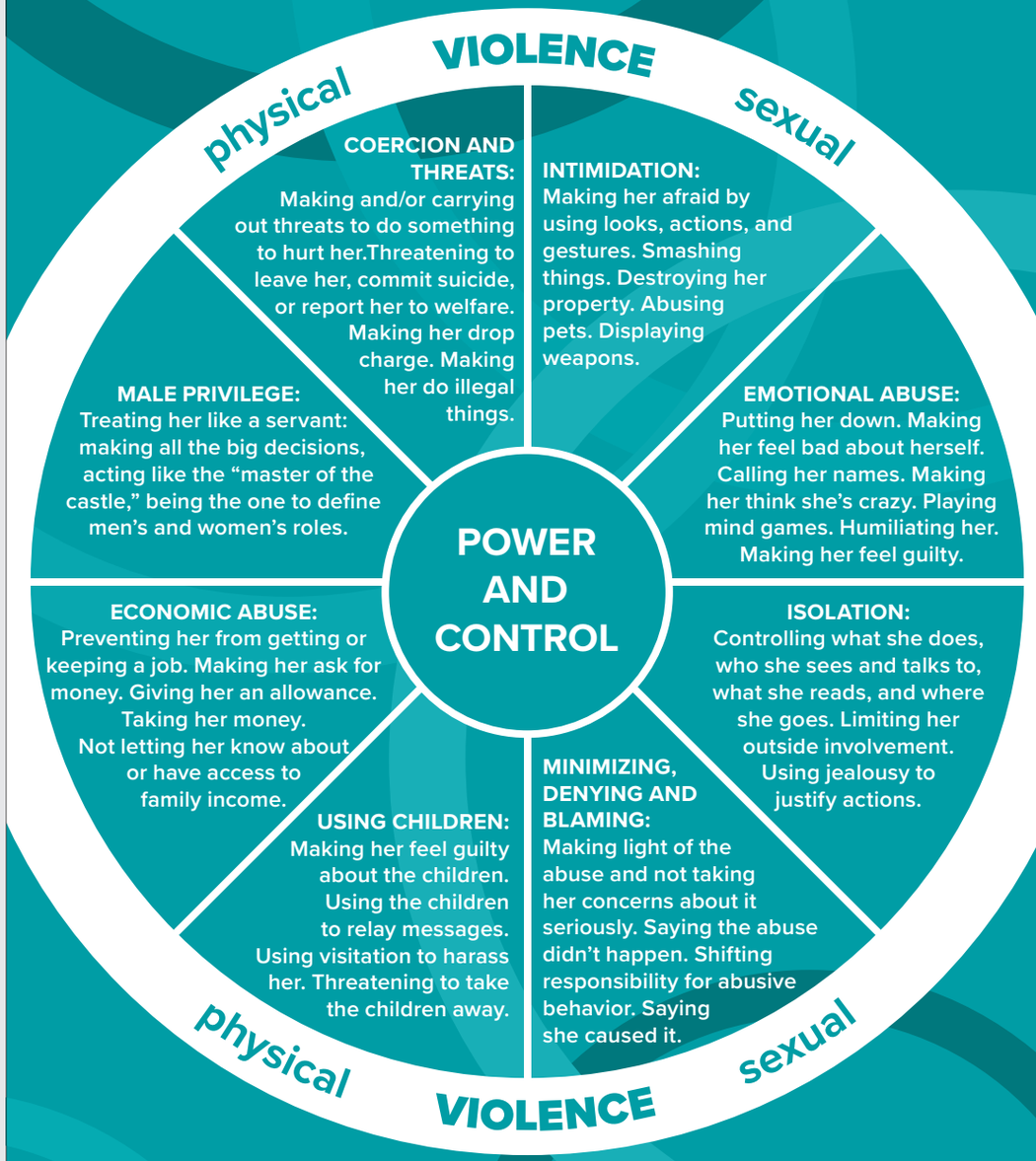
The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) investigate cases of grooming on the Internet and sex abuse and incidents can be reported by clicking the red button on the top right hand corner of their website **https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/**

It is illegal in the UK for any young person under the age of 18 to take or send an indecent photograph of themselves. Similarly it is also illegal for anyone to receive an indecent image of an under 18 year old.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

The Power and Control Wheel



Social Media...

The good, the bad and the ugly...

Social media is always changing, there are new sites being added every day, however they all carry similar risks. Try and use these positives and negatives below as a starting point for a conversation with your young person.

It has its positives:

- Connecting with other people
- Sharing positive moments
- Engaging with support
- Finding out news and what's going on in the world
- It is now a career! (Influencers, social media co-ordinators, etc.)
- An escape from a rubbish day
- Inspiration (outfits, make up, career path, how to style your bedroom... you name it!)

However it also has its negatives:

- Making other people's lives seem 'perfect', leaving us to question our own
- Bullying, harassment, stalking, grooming, child sexual exploitation
- Fake news
- Not always a productive use of time
- Hackers
- It can lead us to question our own body image and focus on what we perceive to 'not have'
- Easy and accessible access to harmful content
- Pressure to send nude images or videos
- Lack of privacy

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Making Social Media a Happy Space

- **Have open and honest conversations** about social media as a family, focusing on both the negatives and the positives. Young people may not always be honest with you with what they are doing, but if you can get some important messages through to them about safety then that's better than not discussing it at all
- **Role modelling** - young people learn from what they see. Create a healthy relationship yourself with social media (see guidance below). Try having a social media free day or plan a movie night together fortnightly with a 'no phones rule'
- **Speak to your young person about their privacy settings**. Make sure that your young person's social media is as private as possible and they have to 'accept' friend request or follows and cannot be followed by anyone
- There are **parent controls and separate apps** that you can use to ensure your young person is safe on social media
- **Be inquisitive** and ask your young person what social media sites they use and how they work
- **Stalking and harassment is illegal.** If your young person is experiencing any stalking or harassment via social media you can report this to the police by calling 101. You can also report to the social media site itself, there will always be an option on someone's profile to 'report'
- **Talk to your young person** about blocking anyone who is harassing them or sending nasty messages
- **Complete the plan** below with your young person to help them feel better on social media

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) investigate cases of grooming on the Internet and sex abuse and incidents can be reported by clicking the red button on the top right hand corner of their website https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

Social Media Guidelines

All social media sites have a responsibility to keep their users safe and to ensure that all reports of cyber-bullying and abuse are dealt with effectively, however we and our young people as users of such sites, also have a responsibility to make sure they are using them in a safe, respectful and appropriate manner.

Although the law and guidelines are there it is important to acknowledge the immense pressure our young people are under to use social media, share their location, send explicit images, upload the best photographs, be ready and available to chat to friends 24/7, be on group chats ... the list goes on.

Did you know that most social media sites have age restrictions?

Site	Age	Safety
WhatsApp	16	Once you install the app, it checks your address book and connects you automatically to anyone else you know who is using the App. You can block and delete a contact who may be bullying you through WhatsApp: Click on their name then using the drop-down menu, choose to 'block' the person. You can find out more by emailing WhatsApp at support@whatsapp.com
Instagram	13	Instagram's advice is to block and unfollow the person who is being abusive. If it continues, you can report it here https://help.instagram.com/165828726894770 To block someone on Instagram, tap their username to open their profile, tap the three dots and press the option to 'block user'.
TikTok	13	1. To block someone; Go to the user's profile that you want to block Hit '...' in the upper right hand corner of their profile. Select 'Block' 2. The user will not be notified when you block them; however, if a user is blocked, they will not be able to follow you or view your videos. Blocked users cannot see your TikTok videos or comments. When they try, they will see a message that says 'You cannot view this user's videos due to their privacy settings'.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

YouTube	13*	You can report users, inappropriate background images, or inappropriate profile avatars using the reporting flow located on the bottom of every channel. 1. Sign in to **YouTube**. 2. Go to the channel page you want to **report**. 3. Click **About**. 4. Click **Report**. 5. Select the option that best suits your issue. To block someone ; Click '**About**' on their profile, then hit the flag button. In the drop down menu, you'll see an option '**Block User**'. Once you confirm your decision to block this commenter, they won't be able to send you direct messages, or be able to comment on your videos or your channel.
Snapchat	13	To block a '**friend**'. Tap the Menu icon, Select '**My Friends**', Locate their name in the list and swipe right across their name: press **Delete**. To block someone who added you on Snapchat: Tap '**added me**' on the Profile Screen, Tap their name and tap the 'Wheel Icon' next to their name. Press '**block**'. This will prevent them from sending you Snaps or Chats or from viewing your content. If a person is bullying or harassing you or you receive an inappropriate image, report it by completing their online form **https://support.Snapchat.com/en-US/i-need-help**
Twitter	13	If a person sends you a tweet or replies to a tweet with a comment that you don't like, you can unfollow that person. To stop them from further contacting you, you can block them. If you receive unwanted replies or abuse or threats from someone on Twitter, you can report them direct to Twitter **https://support.twitter.com/forms/abusiveuser** You can protect your tweets so that people can only follow you if you approve them first. Do this by going into the '**settings**' menu, then '**security and privacy**' and ticking the '**protect my tweets**' box. To remove or block someone on Twitter, click on the button with a head icon on it next to the '**Follow**' button on a user's profile. When you click on this you will see a menu with the options to '**block**' the user to prevent them from seeing your profile and you can also '**report for spam**', which will alert Twitter to any users who are abusing the service.

* 13 with parent's permission, 18 without parent's permission

Role Modelling

Learning how social media works, and engaging with it in a positive way, is a great way to show your young person what is and isn't okay to do online. Here are examples of positive online behaviour that you can model for your young person.

- Keep your own privacy settings up-to-date and show your young person how to stay on top of theirs
- Think before you post. Ask yourself if your comment is constructive before you post
- Don't hide behind your profile picture. Social media is not anonymous. Explain to your young person that their online reputation will stay with them for a long time. If you wouldn't say something to someone's face, don't say it to them online
- Give yourself a 'rule' about who you connect with on social media, and who you do not. For example, if you would stop and say hi to them on the street, you will add them as a Facebook friend. This helps to demonstrate boundaries in the online world
- Find topics your family are interested in and talk about it. Take the conversation online by commenting on a group or page about the topic, and show your young person how to connect with others safely and respectfully on issues that they care about
- Demonstrate respectful conversations online. Show your young person that some people may have different opinions to you. Treat people with the same respect you would give them face-to-face and report troll-like or bullying behaviour instead of engaging with it

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Being friends with your young person on social media can be a very positive thing but there are some guidelines to try and follow:

- This is a personal social space. Just like when they hang out with their friends offline. Try to give them space and privacy by not liking or commenting on every single thing they post online
- Talk offline about their online behaviour. If something happens on your young person's social media page and you feel like you need to step-in, do it offline. Commenting on social media about personal issues is not really appropriate, and won't encourage trust and respect in your relationship. Instead talk in person about what happened online and how they could react or respond in a more positive way
- Your young person might not be showing you the whole picture. That's okay. Young people are pretty savvy with technology, and they may have worked out how to block you from seeing some posts. It's important that you respect their privacy, and have a chat with them if you feel that they are not being open or transparent enough

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

What is a Gang?

Knife crime. County lines. Gangs.

These are all words used to describe a situation where young people have their lives put at risk through criminal exploitation.

But what exactly is a gang?

Is it a group of friends who gather together but who also wear similar clothes simply because they happen to like that fashion?

Is it a gathering of more than ten young people, or a group of young people who like the same music?

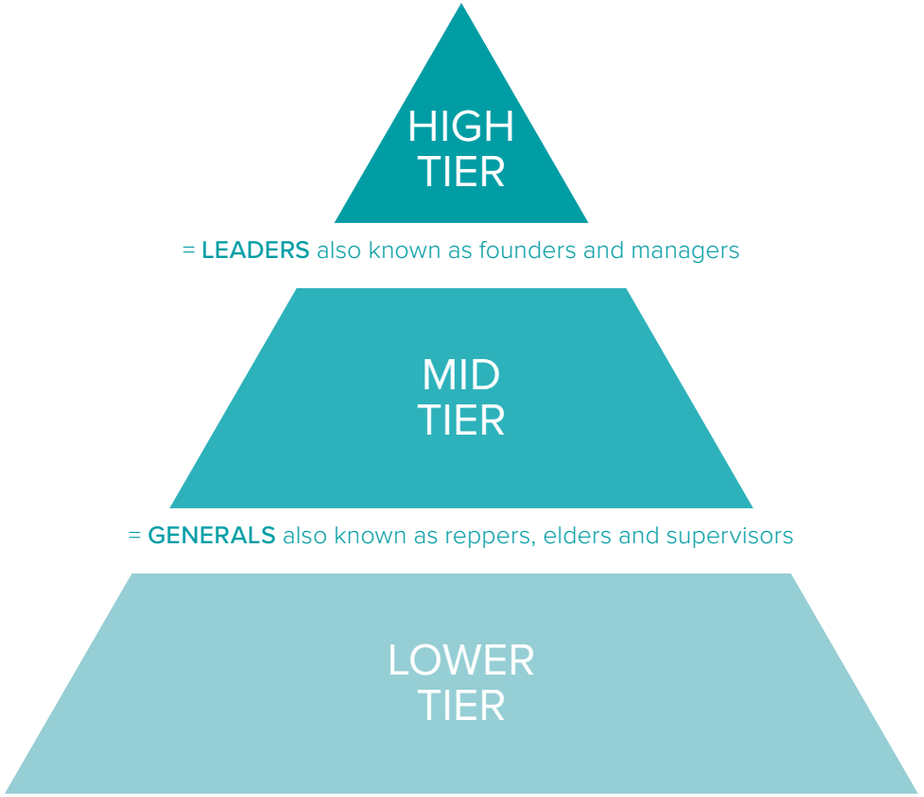
There are multiple described definitions of 'a gang'. In this tool kit the following definition is used, which has been taken from the Centre for Social Justice in 2009. According to this definition, a gang is:

gang /gaŋ/
verb: A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:

1. See themselves as a discernible group
2. Engage in a range of criminal activity
3. Identify or lay claim over territory
4. Have some form of identifying structural feature
5. Are in conflict with other, similar gangs

Young people involved in gangs cannot be viewed as a mutually exclusive vulnerable group of young people: young people in gangs typically have multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability.

All of our young people recruited into gangs start at the lower tier of the structure model below.



QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

The History of Gangs

Child labour was finally regulated for the first time in the UK in 1833, and therefore young children could no longer financially contribute to the family through jobs in factories, etc. Young people were now spending more time on the streets with little or no supervision while the rest of their families went to work all day.

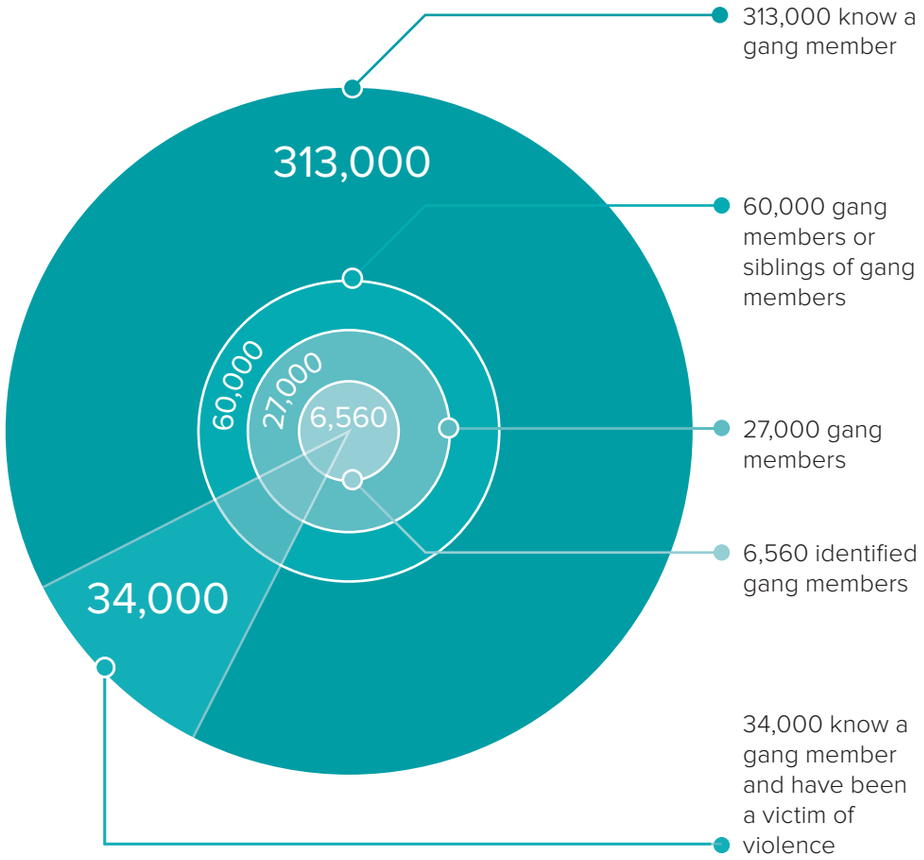
The lack of an extra stable source of income for families which a young child would have brought in led to an increase in petty crimes among working-class young people in the late 19th century. Because older young people were no longer able to earn enough money to support their families, especially in the absence of one parent, which was very common, many resorted to stealing and there was safety and more success within a group.

These early groups were family oriented and were typically composed of brothers, sisters, and neighbours. Early forms of gangs were based upon territory and locality rather than certain ethnic or religious affiliations, which tended to be the defining characteristics of gangs in the early 20th century. However, the early development of petty crime with groups forming an identity for themselves through names and clothes helped create the framework for more organized crime groups that gained great notoriety throughout the early 20th century.

Although most assumptions surrounding gang culture in the UK are male-dominated narratives, females also played a role in gangs in Britain in the late 19th century up to today. Society saw women as conspirators and supporters of gang crime in the late nineteenth century. In 1898, the Manchester Guardian wrote an article that said, "Girls incited conflicts between the gangs and were thus responsible for the majority of scuttling affrays." This article reflects how women were viewed as sexual objects, seemingly causing a lot of the fights and violence that occurred between gangs. When it came to court it seems that magistrates treated women's involvement in gangs differently to that of men. Due to the conventional idea of femininity at the time that saw women as weaker than men, many courts would have believed it impossible to view women as orchestrators of such crime thus women typically received lesser sentences than men. Most women were assumed to have played a supporting role.

Today the Crime survey of England and Wales estimates that there are 28,296 young people aged 10-14 involved in gangs. Police-recorded homicides have increased by over a third in the last five years, and knife offences have risen by over 70%. The number of under-18s admitted to hospital with knife injuries also rose by a third in 2018-19. With the rise in better communications, social media and faster, easier transport links these figures no longer only relate to large inner cities such as London and Manchester.

Young people in England who are members of gangs or have connections with them

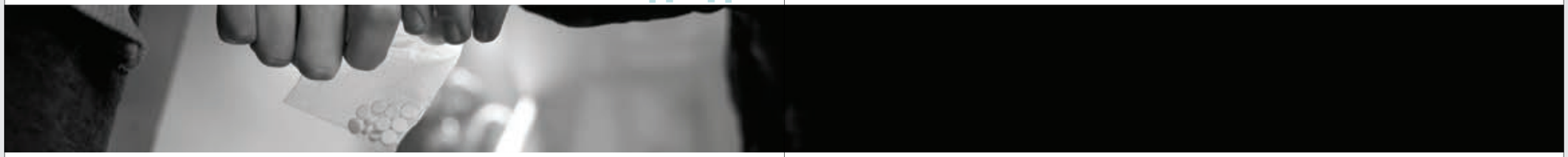


Source: Children's Commissioner for England/British Crime Survey

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

County Lines



'County lines' is the police term used to describe gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas, market and coastal towns across the UK using dedicated mobile phone lines.

The 2019 National Crime Agency report on county lines estimates there are around 2,000 active county lines operating in the UK. These organised crime networks exploit young people to store, move, sell and deliver their drugs, often making them travel across counties.

Drugs gangs operating in these areas are increasingly seeking to exploit local young people, using younger children because they are cheaper, more easily controlled and less likely to be picked up by the police. This is done through deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming.

Sexual exploitation is also used in gangs to exert power and control over members or initiate young people into the gang. Sexual activity can also be used for status or protection, or used as a weapon and inflicted as sexual assault.

Vulnerable young people, for example, those who are homeless or living in care, have special educational needs or mental health problem, are targeted by gangs and are recruited, often via social media.

Gangs also looks for young people with emotional vulnerability, such as those experiencing problems at home, absent or busy parents or bereavement, and then seek and fill that emotional gap and become 'their family', then take advantage of them.

Due to austerity there are fewer youth clubs and there is less provision for our young people, this creates a vacuum. Young people, some children younger than 10 are turning to gangs for friendship and protection. They then find themselves forced into illegal activities, notably selling and trafficking illegal drugs and find it difficult or impossible to leave.

Young people are also threatened or tricked into trafficking drugs for gangs who often use intimidation and violence, or threaten the young person's family.

Sexual exploitation is also used in gangs to exert power and control over members or initiate young people into the gang. Sexual activity can also be used for status or protection, or used as a weapon and inflicted as sexual assault.

They might also offer something in return for the young person's cooperation, for example money, food, alcohol, clothes and jewellery, or improved status, but these gifts will usually be manipulated so that the young person feels they are in debt to their exploiter and have no choice but to do what they want.

The Grooming Line

Exploitative relationships are complex and parallel experiences of victims of domestic abuse.

> *Boys are predators, girls are prey, innit?*
> 16 year old young man (Beckett 2013)

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Warning Signs

A 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.

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

If your gut feeling is that something isn't right, don't sit on concerns - share them with others and seek help and support.

What are the signs that a young person could be involved in something?

- **Leaving home suddenly** without an explanation
- **Returning home unusually late** or staying out all night
- Coming home looking **particularly dishevelled**
- **Unexplained injuries** or suspicion of physical assault
- Persistently **going missing** or being found in areas away from home
- **Being secretive** about who they are talking to and where they are going
- **Meeting with unfamiliar people**, lots of new friends who you don't know
- Becoming **isolated from peers** and old friends
- Having a **friendship or relationship** with someone who appears older or controlling
- **Unexplained absences** from school, college, training or work
- **Loss of interest** in school, college or work and decline in performance
- **Sudden changes** in lifestyle, change of clothing style and brand
- **Significant changes** in emotional well-being
- **Increasingly disruptive** or aggressive and violent behaviour
- Using sexual, gang, drug-related or violent **language you wouldn't expect** them to know
- **Listening to new music** linked to gangs/drug use, see page ??
- **Starting or increasing drug use**, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- **Unexplained money**, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- **Having hotel cards** or keys to unknown places
- Using **more than one phone** and being very secretive about it.
- **Receiving an excessive amount of texts** or phone calls and answering/responding immediately
- **Carrying a weapon**

This list is not designed to scare parents and carers, however the indicators for exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours' and ignored. Share this with your young people and open discussions.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Language

It often feels that young people have their own language and with the Gang culture this is definitely true. Words are used so that people outside of the gang are unable to work out what is happening, things are said in code.

But language changes all the time. Remember there are different dialects around the country and just because your young person is using some of this slang doesn't mean they understand it. If you hear these words ask what they mean! Some common slang:

- **All White Bricks/Nose Whiskey/White Chalk:** cocaine
- **Bagging:** used to describe someone packaging drugs for distribution
- **Bottle:** to insert something into your rectum or vagina for later retrieval, e.g. drugs
- **Cunch:** used to denote going to a faraway area in order to sell drugs (county lines)
- **Going Country/Going Long:** going to a faraway area to sell drugs
- **Joey:** a person employed by gang to sell to customers
- **Mule:** a carrier or supplier of drugs
- **Pranging out:** paranoia coming from a drug induced state
- **Woolies:** a marijuana cigarette laced with cocaine
- **Wrap Street:** quantity of heroin or cocaine in folded paper bag or foil packets
- **April:** a weapon
- **Shank/Sword:** a knife or blade weapon
- **Bagging:** Stabbing in the lower body
- **Beef Tings:** to start a conflict or fight
- **Driller:** shooter or gang member
- **Drilling:** attacking, aggressing or invading
- **Ketchup:** blood
- **Canned/Nailed/Bagged:** to be arrested
- **Feds:** Police
- **Turn A Drum Over:** Police search of a house
- **Washed:** a term used to describe someone who isn't held in high regards

Drill Music

Drill is the slang word for the use of automatic weapons. Drill lyrics typically reflect life on the streets, and are usually very violent .

Drill rappers tend to speak about their lives in their music, which can include gang warfare and drug use. The lyrics are often about obtaining money and status and power Drill has grown in popularity massively since 2012, particularly in London, with artists typically use platforms like YouTube to gain popularity.

Young people talk that they can record a song on their phone and within 24 hours could potentially have a million views, which would change their whole life. Young people on Instagram, TikTok and other sites can become famous literally overnight and this is a big influence.

UK drill groups often engage in disputes with each other, sometimes violent, often releasing multiple diss tracks. Some have criticized UK drill and the culture surrounding it, arguing that it has encouraged violent crime.

There are many gestures of violence with hand signals suggesting they are firing weapons and graphic descriptions of what they would do to rival gangs.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Roadman "Wagwan bruv"

A **Roadman** is a term to describe many younger gang members which is familiar to most young people. The slang 'doing road' actually refers to selling drugs on street corners.

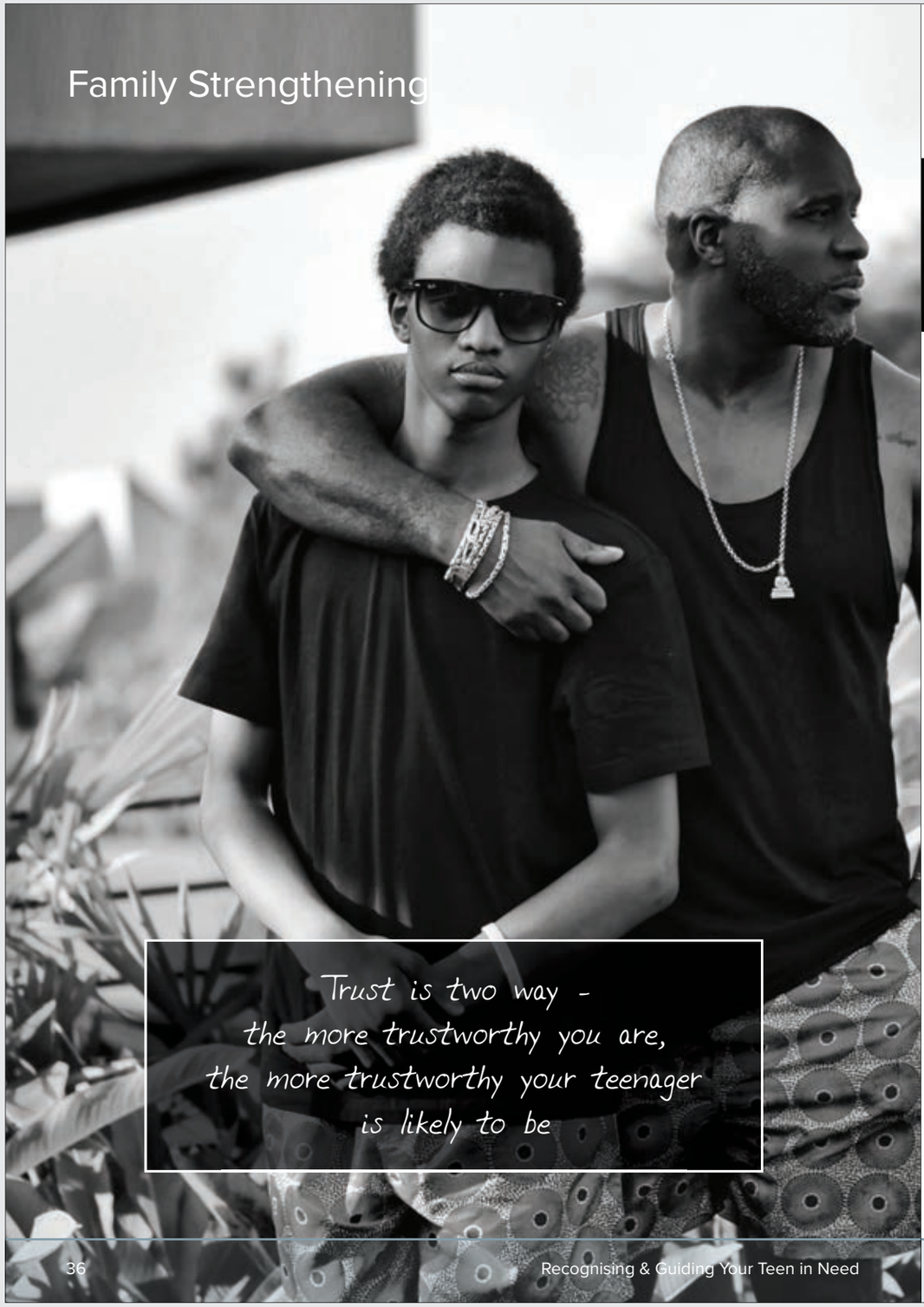
The roadman look can appear high-end, and features key pieces like matching tracksuits, technical jackets (like Nike wind runners, Black Northface) running caps, trainers (like any Nike Air) and shoulder or man bags.

Roadmen don't mix brands (you won't see them with adidas track pants and Nike Air Max on together), and they don't usually mix colours, preferring to stay with black. They are rarely on their own, usually in groups and often on bikes.

> They just get passed around the guys, that is mainly their role, yeah... and then from once they've been around the circle or like the gang or whatever, then they're no longer of use and you probably won't see them girls again, coz obviously their use has been, all that they've got to offer has been given... Yeah then they'll just, they'll see the next girl or whatever, or the next group of girls and the same thing will happen over and over and over again
>
> 16 year old young man (Beckett 2013)

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327



Trust is two way - the more trustworthy you are, the more trustworthy your teenager is likely to be

Let's talk

Young people want to feel they're being listened to, not being told, so going in hard and laying down the law is unlikely to ever lead to an honest response. You're much more likely to get through to them if you try to start a dialogue. Throughout this booklet are suggestions for difficult conversations and ways of starting the conversation.

It may feel like there is never a good time, but try and start the conversation when you aren't feeling too emotional so you can calmly explain your concerns. Conversations when you are busy doing something else (but nothing important!) can be helpful so they don't feel so embarrassed or pressured.

Tell your young person they shouldn't ever feel pressured into doing anything if they don't want to, and that they should never do it just because other people are. Above all, let them know that you are there to talk to them if they have any questions, worries or concerns. Explain that although initially you may be angry or scared by what they tell you, you will look at a plan together and you won't just leap ahead into action without their input. When trust is broken, or repeatedly broken, then closer monitoring or restriction of freedom is the only way you have as a parent to show that you care enough to hang on in there until some learning has taken place. Try to gradually give your teens opportunities for them to show you that they can be trusted and make encouraging remarks when all goes well. If you set a boundary or make a promise you must stick to it. Trust is two way - the more trustworthy you are, the more trustworthy your young person is likely to be.

There's every chance they'll find this conversation awkward or unpleasant, (as will you)

But knowing you're there to help if they need it can be a big comfort decide they need it. Besides, any information or advice you're able to give can make all the difference when it comes to them making good decisions in the future. Try not to take things too personally; it may not be you they are angry with at all.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Don't bully, blackmail or guilt trip your young person into doing what you want

If they do want to talk about things, make sure you listen to them. Even if what your young person has to say makes you feel uncomfortable or even disappointed, it's important that they know they can say it to you. Reacting negatively is likely to make them cautious about being honest, so **take them seriously** and help them feel they can disclose things if they need to. If they don't want to talk, you might like to suggest looking at one of the services later in the booklet so that they can talk to a professional. Create trust by learning to listen, be ready to discuss without judging and sometimes make allowance for them getting it wrong. This means not saying "I told you so" but listening to what they have learned from their experiences. Be prepared to listen carefully to what your young person has to say. Try to start from a position where you understand and can show that you have understood. **You may not agree but listening shows respect for their point of view.**

Try to encourage and invite discussion, without it sounding as though you are laying down yet more rules. Try to use sentences that begin with

- I wonder if ...
- Have you thought about ...
- I find that ...
- Would it be a good idea if we ...
- I worry about ...

Showing your young person how to negotiate, present their point of view respectfully and come to an agreement is a vital life skill. Don't miss the opportunity to teach them how to do this at home. Look at compromises so that you both come away from the conversation feeling listened to and respected. **Be aware** of the language you use, try and find appropriate words to describe how you are feeling. Are you frustrated, annoyed, stressed, unhappy, irritated, wound up or let down? It can be much easier to explain how you feel if you can use the right words.

It's a myth that you just need to have one 'big talk' with your young person when it comes to difficult conversations

Helping them to feel that their thoughts and actions are not a taboo subject - that they can bring them up without it being a big deal - can be a great comfort, and help them to feel they have someone to turn to if they do get stuck. This doesn't mean awkwardly shoehorning the topic into your conversations, but simply **checking in from time to time** and letting them know they don't need to be embarrassed if they do want to talk.

Trust in Technology

Many parents worry their young person's preoccupation with mobile phone is something similar to an addiction, whereas equally lots of young people get frustrated with their parents' unwillingness to understand how important their phone is to their social lives.

It can be useful to try to see things from your young person's perspective. Like it or not, mobile technology has become a big part of many young persons' daily lives. Instead of going in hard and imposing a whole lot of rules on phone use from the outset, it can be much better to try to open a dialogue. Talk to them about what they're using their phone for and let them know any worries you might have. You may encounter a little resistance, but speaking openly and honestly is much more likely to allow you to have a proper conversation instead of a shouting match.

If you feel like their phone use is getting seriously out of hand and that it's causing real problems, you may want to talk to them about some reasonable compromises when it comes to how much time they spend on it. For example, you might agree with them that they can go on it in their own time, but when it comes to spending time quality together at a family - say, during meals it's rude to start texting other people. Establishing a set of rules in your own home will help create a sense of consistency and reinforce a healthy understanding of boundaries when it comes to mobiles. (Remember to role model this yourself!)

Take time out if you need to calm down before talking it through and saying how you feel or what you want. Young people may respond with either explosions or shutting you out completely but try to talk when you are both calm. After all, it may be a while before they're ready to chat about this sort of thing - especially if your initial suspicions aren't actually correct - so knowing that you're there when they are ready is going to count for a lot.

Trust your instincts, if you are worried seek help.

QuickPrint

finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Let's Feel Better on Social Media...

A resource for young people

Why do I use social media?

- .....
- .....
- .....

The social media sites I use are...

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

If I could change anything about social media I would ...

.....

.....

If I felt unsafe or upset about something to do with social media I could...

- Tell a trusted adult (e.g. my parent, a teacher or .....)
- Report what I have seen
- Block the person

Sometimes we all need a break from social media, instead of scrolling through Instagram, here are some nice things that I could do instead:

- Have a relaxing bubble bath
- Watch a movie
- Read a book
- Go for a walk
- Bake a cake

Some practical things that I could do on social media to make me feel safer:

- Make sure all of my profiles private
- Make sure everyone who follows me are people I know personally
- Make sure I don't have any photos or information on my profile that could give others a clue as to where I live, where I go to school/college, what my phone number is or what my bank details are
- Familiarise myself with the 'help' section on the social media sites I use and read some of the tips on there

Safety Plan

Talk through keeping safe with your young person

Let ..... know where I am.

Do this by ..... .

Places to feel safe

.....

.....

.....

If unsafe

.....

.....

.....

- ☐ Mobile phone, fully charged and with credit
- ☐ Leave any situation if unsafe
- ☐ Tell someone if unsafe
- ☐ Spend time with safe and happy people
- ☐ Keep social media profiles as private as possible

Phonebook

Police:
999

Non emergency police:
101

Crime stoppers:
0800 555 111

Childline:
0800 11 11

Other useful numbers:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

QuickPrint

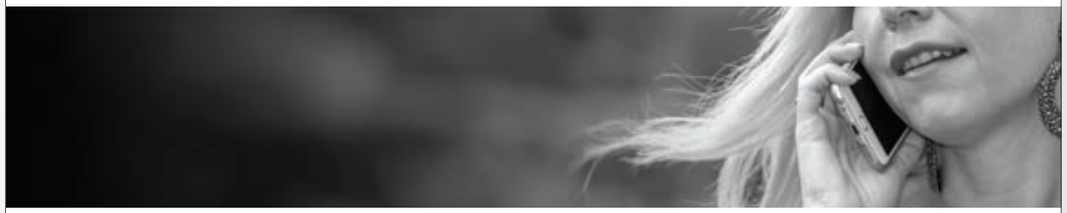
finalproof : EARLYH Giving parents the tools - 33327

Self-Care

A resource for to help people

https://www.splitz.org/resources/talk-toolkits/801-rediscovering-youtoolkit.html

Useful Contacts



Some helpful contacts to call for help and advice

Childline
Providing phone support to children and young people
www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
Open daily, open 24 hours a day

CASS Self Injury Helpline
Providing support to women and girls of any age affected by self-injury
www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
0808 800 8088
Open: Monday: 7.00-10.00pm
Tues-Thurs: 7.00-9.30pm

Devon Domestic Abuse Support Service - Splitz Support Service
Splitz Support Service is a registered charity delivering support services to adults and young people experiencing the trauma of domestic abuse and sexual violence
www.splitz.org
0345 155 1074
Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

The Hideout
Providing online help and support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse
www.thehideout.org.uk

KOOTH.COM
Providing online counselling for young people
kooth.com
Open Monday-Friday: 12.00-10.00pm,
Saturday-Sunday: 6.00-10.00pm

Samaritans
Providing emotional support over telephone, text and email
Free 24 hour helpline: **116 123**
jo@samaritans.org
www.samaritans.org

SPACE: Youth Centres in Devon
Find your local youth service online
spacepsm.org 01392 662112

Y-SMART
Providing a drug and alcohol support service for under-18s throughout Devon
ysmart.org.uk 0800 121 4751

Young Devon
Providing support for young people through advice, support and services for housing, skills development, mental health and counselling
www.youngdevon.org
Exeter: 01392 331666
South Devon: 01626 356720

QuickPrint