

# SPEAK OUT ABOUT CHILD EXPLOITATION

## A Guide for Sports Clubs and Teams in Northamptonshire



 Northamptonshire  
Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire  
**sport**  
The Voice For Sport



## **What is Child Exploitation (CE)?**

Child Exploitation is a crime with devastating and long lasting consequences for victims and their families. Childhoods and family life can be ruined and this is compounded when victims, or those at risk of abuse, do not receive appropriate, immediate and on-going support.

Child Exploitation takes on a number of forms and in some instances children will be subject to multiple forms of exploitation. This leaflet focusses on 2 elements exploitation of young people by gangs / gang affiliation and exploitation by county lines. Other forms of exploitation include sexual exploitation, trafficking and Modern Slavery.

## **Gangs – What is Gang Involvement?**

“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.”

Teenagers can be particularly vulnerable to recruitment into gangs and involvement in gang violence. This vulnerability can be aggravated by factors in a young person’s background such as lack of money, violence within the family, sibling involvement in gangs, poor school achievement or mental health problems. The teenage years are often a crucial point to prevent a young person becoming involved in gangs by offering alternative positive interventions.

## 'County Lines'

County lines is when criminals from major cities across the UK expand their drug networks to other areas of the country. The crime is called county lines because a single telephone number is used to order drugs, operated from outside the area.

County Lines is a major issue, cross cutting many areas involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, Modern Slavery and missing persons.

The response involves a range of agencies from Police, National Crime Agency, Local Government and the voluntary / community sector. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.



## How is CE relevant to Sports Clubs and Teams

Sports clubs and teams play a vital role for young people and their families in providing positive activities and activities for young people to be involved in.

Young people who are victims or at risk of being exploited may present across a range of different activities in a variety of ways. Many young people may be disengaged from mainstream statutory services and be more likely to respond to you in sports clubs and teams. You are in a unique place to be able to offer an independent, confidential service to young people while keeping them involved in a positive activity. You can provide support to encourage them to remain engaged with a service and encourage initial engagement with other services.

It is important for all sports clubs and teams in contact with young people to be able to identify concerns about exploitation through county lines and gang activity enabling you to escalate concerns to your association and make referrals for appropriate statutory agencies where appropriate.

## Spotting the signs

Young people will often spend a large amount of their time attending your activities whether that be through training sessions, match days or competitions / tournaments and you will build positive relationships with them. This will put you in a unique place to spot any changes in behaviour, particular signs to look out for are as follows:



Attendance at your activity become sporadic including not attending training sessions, dropping out of games / tournaments at short notice



Having more than one mobile phone



Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes etc. including new boots, trainers or training clothing



Significant decline in performance



Being seen with and relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups



Carrying weapons



Young people being dropped / picked up early / late for sessions by adults not recognised as parents / carers



Excessive receipt of texts and phone calls during sessions



Young people with injuries such as bruising or blood stains



Change in language to include gang terminology



Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Young people may use your organisation / activity as a cover or escape from the exploitation they may be experiencing. If you see any of the above communicate with parents as they may also have concerns.

## Relationships & listening to young people

Your coaches and leaders have direct access to young people and are ideally placed to foster positive relationships that may help people disclose their experience in exploitative situations. Young people who regularly attend your activity will often see those running the activity as people they can trust and build relationships with. Young people may feel their coach is more approachable and therefore may be more inclined to make disclosures about the exploitation.

You can help by ensuring that your coaches / volunteers are ready to listen and support young people who may want to talk about their concerns or make disclosures. Encourage your coaches and volunteers to:

- Develop effective communication skills to engage with young people.
- Build rapport and trust.
- Understand the root cause of any challenging behaviour which a young person who may be being exploited is displaying. See the young person not the behaviour.
- Don't pressure a young person to 'tell their story'.
- Take responsibility to safeguard a young person where you suspect them to be exploited but are not ready to disclose.
- Speak to the safeguarding lead in your club or association who will assist in making professional services aware if you have a concern.



## **As a Club / Team, what can we do to help prevent Exploitation?**

Policy – All clubs / teams should have a safeguarding policy, this should specifically include exploitation or have a separate policy which addresses how you will address all types of exploitation in your setting.

Lead – Your club / team will have a safeguarding lead, this person should have knowledge of exploitation and how you as a club / team can help refer a young person to statutory services.

Education – The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) has produced a number of guides / leaflets on exploitation. Share these with your coaches, volunteers and parents, this will all help raise awareness of this type of abuse.

Environment – By ensuring your club / team is a positive and encouraging environment for a young person, you will be helping to provide young people with activities that keep them away from abuse by exploitation and where a young person may be being exploited you can provide a positive route out of that exploitation.

## **What to do if you have concerns about a young person**

If you think the young person is at imminent risk of harm:

- Call the Police non-emergency number **101** or in an emergency **999**
- Speak to the young person and explain you are concerned that they may be at risk
- Speak to the safeguarding lead in for your association/sport who will work with your club/team to complete the 'gang involvement' risk assessment which can be found on the NSCP website: **[www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk)**
- If the assessment demonstrates that they are at risk you must then make a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) either by telephone (**0300 126 1000**) or by using the online referral form. Remember to use your risk assessment as evidence for the referral.
- You may also want to consider a direct referral to CIRV (Community Initiative to Reduce Violence) more information on this can be found here: **[www.cirv-nsd.org.uk](http://www.cirv-nsd.org.uk)**

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**SAY SOMETHING** IF YOU **SEE SOMETHING**

