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**Quality Assurance Policies & Procedures**  
**SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT POLICY**  
**CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION**

## Appendix K

**Child criminal exploitation:** county lines Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs.

Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation: -

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years;
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults;
- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favor of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

**Gangs:** The vast majority of young people are not involved in gangs and want nothing to do with them. However, the behaviour of the small number of young people who are involved has a significant impact on communities, on their families and associates, as well as themselves.

Young people join gangs for reasons which make sense to them, if not to adults. Some reasons why young people may join a gang are:

- Respect and status
- To gain friends
- A sense of belonging
- Excitement
- To find a substitute family

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- Power
- Protection
- Money
- Peer pressure

Gangs often leave signs of their presence and your child might adopt some of these signs; either as a member or as an associate of a gang. Any sudden changes in your child's lifestyle should be discussed.

Signs may include:

- Specific dress style
- Poor behaviour
- Talking differently – new slang or language with an aggressive tone
- Poor school results or skipping school
- Carrying weapons
- Unexplained injuries or sums of money/possessions
- Staying out unusually late
- Graffiti style tags on possessions Interest in music which glorifies weapons/gang culture
- Gangs will often have profiles on social or networking websites like Facebook or Twitter

Girls can be affected by gangs, but their involvement may be harder to spot. They may be asked to hide weapons or drugs, or be targeted by male gang members in acts of revenge or gang initiations. All of this tends to go on 'behind closed doors'. Girls who are linked to gang members (sisters, girlfriends, friends, cousins, daughters) as well as female gang members themselves, are at risk of emotional, physical and sexual violence. Many girls who are involved with gangs may believe that what they are being pressured, forced or choosing to do is acceptable, even normal. They may not realise that what is happening to them is wrong; they may be afraid of what might happen if they tell anyone and/or they may think that no one will believe or protect them.

Some signs that a girl you know might be involved with a gang include:

- Changes in physical appearance (for example wearing more 'adult' clothes, or wearing baggy clothes and no make-up)
- Unexplained money or possessions
- Getting involved in fights
- Committing crimes such as shoplifting
- Regularly staying out late or going missing from home

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- Abusing drugs and/or alcohol
- Physical injuries (which may indicate violence from others and/or self-harming)
- Refusing to seek medical help for such injuries and becoming fearful and/or withdrawn and/or prone to unexplained outbursts of anger

Committing crime and ending up with a criminal record will affect the rest of your life. Having a criminal record can prevent a young person getting a job, going to university or college, or even travelling abroad.

<https://www.cleveland.police.uk/police-forces/cleveland-police/areas/cleveland-police/campaigns/campaigns/2020/county-lines/>

### **Knife Crime**

Knife crime has a huge impact on young people and the communities in which they live, and not just in London but nationally. It is a societal problem and it cannot be tackled by schools or single agencies alone. Schools and colleges can only do so much. They must identify, support, help and protect young people on site, and they can do their best to teach them about the dangers of knives and related dangers. They can also teach them to read, write and add up, allowing them to achieve in school and experience success. But young people need everyone in society – the police, LAs, health, youth services, welfare services, housing services, local communities, their parents, social media providers and so on – to work together and to put children first and protect them from county lines, gangs, knives, drugs and from adults who pose a risk to them.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>