

Support and who to contact

West Yorkshire Police are dedicated to protecting your child and the general public from gangs, and serious and organised crime.

We need your help and support to identify children that may be at risk of exploitation. We also need as much information as you can provide about crime and gangs in order to enhance our investigations.

For support and further information please see below.



CrimeStoppers.

Speak up. Stay safe.

0800 555111

100% Anonymous Always.

SPACE - Stop & Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation

www.bespaceaware.co.uk/

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk/
what-is-county-lines](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines)

Contact us via

www.westyorkshire.police.uk

In an emergency always dial **999**

Is your child a target?

Any child, from any background can be targeted by gangs, even children as young as 11 years. All parents/carers should be aware of the signs of exploitation.

Your child could be targeted outside the school gates, through social media, on their game console, at parks, fast food outlets, clubs and other 'hangout areas' within your community.

Those that target your children may only be children themselves. They may be strangers, but may also be familiar faces or even someone your child knows.



NOT MY CHILD?

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW TO STOP CHILD EXPLOITATION



How will gangs build trust with your child?

Gangs will take time to build trust and 'friendship' with your child. This may start with a simple ride in a gang members' car, but is an opportunity for time and privacy to begin the grooming process. They may also offer your child money, food, alcohol, clothes or trainers, as well as a sense of safety, belonging, respect (initially), care or even love.

Gangs will then use this to make your child feel that they 'owe' something in return. Even accepting the apparently risk free car ride gives them a pull on a child to feel they owe a favour. At this point they may begin to ask them to participate in low level crime as such as storage of a knife or drugs, theft or recruitment of another friend. Peer pressure may influence your child to behave in the wrong way.

How will your child be exploited?

Once trust is established your child will be encouraged or forced to prove themselves to the gang by committing more serious crimes as such as:

- Drug dealing
- Transporting drugs
- Possession of a firearm/weapon
- Serious violence – usually on rival gang members.

THE RISKS RANGE FROM LOSING INTEREST IN SCHOOL AND FRIENDS, TO BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED

At this stage your child will be less likely to seek support from teachers, Safer Schools Officers, police and even yourselves. Your child will begin to isolate themselves from others, and may change their friendship group.

STOP CHILD EXPLOITATION

KNOW THE SIGNS:



JOURNEYS?

Frequent and repeat trips. Leaving without explanation.



CARRYING MORE CASH?

New phone and clothes - explained as being given by a friend.



POPULAR?

Frequent texts and calls. New friends, might be older.



DISTANT?

Signs of harm or depression. Missing school.



UNUSUAL ITEMS?

Balaclava, debit cards, drugs, knives.



NEW INTERESTS?

Aggressive music, weight training, designer labels.

They will be taught methods to defend themselves against questions from parents and concerned adults, and may be given secretive methods of communication with the gang members.

PROTECT YOUR CHILD BY KNOWING THE SIGNS AND TAKE ACTION QUICKLY

How to help before your child becomes a target

- Have a conversation with your child and make them aware of the risks. Make them aware this can happen to any child including them.
- Warn them not to accept money, food or favours, even a car ride if it doesn't feel right.
- Make time every day to talk with your child and listen to what is happening in their life. Children who have a trusted adult to talk to are less likely to become victims of exploitation.

How to help if you think your child is involved

If you have any concerns that your child may be being exploited, it is important that you act quickly.

- Speak to your Safer Schools Officer, school safeguarding lead, family members and other supportive adults. The greater the supportive network of adults around your child, the better your chances of helping them get out.
- Contact the support groups on the back of this leaflet.
- Contact the police.