

IS MY CHILD  
IN A GANG?



If you are reading this now, you could already be worried that your child or someone you know is being groomed or involved in criminal activities.

With the increase in the movement of drugs and the money to be made instantly, more and more young people are being drawn into the lure of making vast amounts of money.

Communication around this increasing trend is becoming more and more complicated leaving many parents confused at spotting the signs early.

Once a young person has been recruited into the process, it can be a very challenging time. There are many signs of grooming that often go unseen and this is where the real work begins.

Organised circles of drug dealers do not care about the outcomes for your child! they are simply used to fill the rising demand for drugs and weapons. Once they are used they are often discarded and left to deal with the consequences alone.

There are countless cases of young people ending up in debt because of their involvement with these groups. The prisons are filling up with young people that believed that they were part of a friendship or even an intimate relationship.

## **What is a gang?**

The word 'gang' means different things in different contexts, the government in their paper 'Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity' distinguishes between peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs.

### **Peer group**

A relatively small and transient social grouping which may or may not describe themselves as a gang depending on the context.

### **Street gang**

"Groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity."

### **Organised criminal gangs**

"A group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise). For most crime is their 'occupation.'"

## **Being aware is the most powerful weapon you can have!**

Awareness is the key to breaking the cycle or pattern of grooming.

Learning to spot the signs early can save you a lot of heart ache and pain.

Much of the grooming process happens because there is a lack of communication and sensory acuity.

We must notice the changes and act on them without wasting any time. We have added some tips on what you should be looking out for.

### **Friends and associates**

Always have an interest in your child's friends or associates, this is a powerful way of understanding the dynamics of the relationship.

Many parents pay little attention and will often just assume that they are a natural group of friends that attend the same school, provision or college.

This can be so far from the truth, as young people that are in the grooming process are introduced to new people frequently. The aim here is to keep the young person away from advice or rapport. Young people that are initiated into county lines or the child sex trade are put to work with people they don't even know!

### **Changes in routines**

Look out for significant changes in routine, this can be the time it takes to arrive home from school or the frequency of leaving and returning home for short periods of time. This often spells out that there is something happening in the background.

Often young people will develop a pattern of staying out for many hours without an excuse or evidence of where they have been, they will often lie when challenged about their activities outside of the home. If your child is being used during the day when they are normally at school, provision or college, there will be a lot of evidence of this. Many young people are targeted here and find it difficult to avoid seeing a potential groomer. Children that are targeted and groomed in these situations are often referred to as new skins, as they are fresh and will have little knowledge of the intent. They will most certainly not of had any complications with the police before.

## Phones and other means of communication

None of the grooming process works without communication.

Communication is the key driving force behinds this type of manipulation and should never be ignored.

The excessive use of mobile devices to drive the increase in grooming has be one of the key factors in the simplicity in grooming. be aware of your child's phone activities. Be particularly aware of the second line, or the road phone, which will often be a cheap handset that could easily be disguised as a spare phone. You may often be told that it was found or that a friend upgraded and gave it to them for free.

These second phones or 'Burners' are the crucial link to the cycle. Without this method of communication, there is little contact and certainly no way in. There are a lot of parents and carers that allow unlimited usage of mobile phones and will often give their children unlimited data packages etc. social media and its many wonders has fuelled the communication process, with many young people being targeted online

In grooming gangs, it is not uncommon for a young person to be put in charge of finding others. Gangs will often recruit specific members that are in schools or colleges to befriend individuals for the groomers. they will establish rapport with them and encourage them to join their gangs or meet with groomers direct.

## Money and material items

The easiest way to know if your child or young person is buying or receiving items is to do random searches! It blows me away the amount of parents that have no knowledge of what they have in their own houses. Some parents only become aware when there is an arrest or search carried out. Money also plays in major part in understanding where your child is at. It's simple, if you didn't give them that money, then who the hell did! QUICK MATHS!!!!

Don't walk around with your head in the sand wondering where the excess money is coming from,

Act on it and ask the question, sooner than later. If you're child comes home and has a new item of clothing or money, challenge them and get an answer fast! Do not be afraid to confront this and most certainly do not accept any contribution of gift that can be part of an illegal activity