

Top tips for professionals and guidance.

If you are concerned that a child is at risk of gang involvement:

- Use supportive, not threatening, language.
- Tell them you will always listen to them and give them the opportunity to tell you what concerns and difficulties they have.
- Discuss the potential outcomes of gang involvement with them. These include:
 - Physical and sexual violence
 - Criminal convictions
 - Prison sentences
 - Drug/alcohol abuse and dependency
 - Limitations on job prospects and on foreign travel
 - Even death - their own or someone close to them
- Consider making a plan with the young person to respond to potential dangerous situations:
 - What would they do if someone offers them drugs and alcohol or asks them to do something that they felt was wrong?
 - Discuss ideas so that they know what they could say in order to keep themselves safe
- You could ask the young person to agree to:
 - Not associate with anyone that they know is in a gang
 - Not go to places that gang members or their associates go
 - Not wear clothing that could be interpreted as being gang-related

If you're concerned for a young person.

If you believe a young person may be involved in County Lines or Gang activity and could be at risk of harm you can contact the Surrey Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Availability: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Phone: 0300 470 910
Out of hours: 01483 517898

For concerns for a child or young person you can also email.

Email: csmash@surreycc.gov.uk
Secure email: csmash@surreycc.gcsx.gov.uk

For further information please visit the Surrey Police website at surrey.police.uk/cse.



COUNTY LINES & GANGS



A guide for
safeguarding
professionals



A professional's guide to **gang awareness**.

The criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is happening here in Surrey. Children are being groomed into "County Lines" which is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas as well as market and coastal towns, using dedicated mobile phone lines.

There are many reasons why young people feel the pressure to join gangs. They might be bored and looking for excitement, or feel attracted to the status and power it can give them.

They might join due to peer pressure, money or family problems. Gang membership can also make a child feel protected and that they belong.

Criminals are taking advantage new technology to exploit vulnerable young people into working for their gang without them realising they are a victim.

As a safeguarding professional, you will have long since played a role in encouraging young people to follow the right path in life and stay away from negative influences.

This guide will assist you in recognising and responding to signs of gang involvement in young people.

What does gang involvement **look like?**

Clothing

Gang members might dress in a certain type of clothing, including dark, baggy styles. Members now wear certain colours less often in an effort to deceive and deter authorities.

Tattoos

Gang names or titles are often referred to by initials. Many tattoos are homemade and not completed professionally.



Graffiti

Many gangs use 'tagging' to mark their territory or to intimidate rival gangs. Home-based tagging, such as signs drawn on school books or bedroom walls are also indicators that a young person is involved with a gang.

Popular culture

A young person may listen to gang-related music and watch films with gang involvement, violence and weapons. However on its own this sign does not necessarily make them a gang member.

What are the **signs** of gang involvement?

If you know the young person, or have information about them, you may be the best person to make an informed decision on their behaviour change of behaviour.

Are they:

- Displaying polarised views from family and friends?
- Spending time with a new group of friends, potentially older or from out of the area?
- Changing their appearance and clothing?
- Becoming withdrawn from family and friends?
- Going missing or not disclosing their whereabouts?
- Going by a new nickname?
- Using signal or code to communicate with friends?
- In possession of weapons or improvised weapons?
- Involved in the misuse of drugs or alcohol?
- In possession of unexplainable amounts of money or new expensive gifts e.g. mobile phones or jewellery?

A young person may disclose to you that they are in a gang. It could be a declaration of allegiance or a cry for help.

