

# SPEAK OUT ABOUT CHILD EXPLOITATION

**A Guide for Sports Governing Bodies  
and Associations in Northamptonshire**



 Northamptonshire  
Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire  
**sport**  
The Voice For Sport

## 1.0 Introduction

This guide is for all sports governing bodies and associations working in Northamptonshire to assist in fighting the growing issue of Child Exploitation in the County. This guide will assist you in providing support to the leagues, clubs, teams, coaches and volunteers working with young people. It will also equip you with the tools you need to make appropriate and good quality assessments of risk to young people.

In addition to this document a booklet and leaflet has been produced for you to disseminate to clubs, team and coaches to give them an overview of the issue and the role they can play in helping prevent this form of abuse.

At the end of this guide you will find links to further reading and relevant websites on all aspects of Child Exploitation as well as additional resources for you to use. Our response and resources available to combat Child Exploitation are being developed and expanded all of the time, please visit the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) website on a regular basis to find the latest materials including resources relating to Contextual Safeguarding as we develop this approach in the County.

Any questions or queries about this document should be directed to the NSCP Business Office at



[nscp@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:nscp@northamptonshire.gov.uk)



## **2.0 Definitions**

### **2.1 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 document 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 these are covered in the resources available as additional reading at the end of this guide.

The NSCP aim to raise awareness of child exploitation by helping people recognise the signs, encourage reporting and provide support to victims. Key points to remember are:

- Child Exploitation can affect any child or young persons (male or female) under the age of 18;
- Exploitation can also affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 (although this guide focusses on children and young people a lot of the signs and information is relevant to safeguarding vulnerable adults;
- Exploitation can still occur even if the activity appears to be consensual;
- The exploitation often involves grooming of a young person through enticement based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- The exploitation can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, young people or adults;
- It is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour 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. (Home Office, 2018)

## **2.2 Gangs - what is gang involvement?**

A useful definition of a gang is from Report of the Office of the Children's Commissioner 2017 (Children's Voices)

"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 in 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.

## **2.3 'County Lines'**

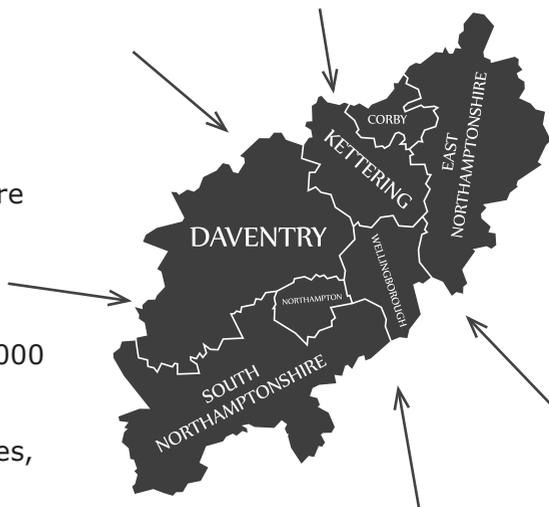
County lines is when criminals from major cities across the UK expand their drug networks to other areas of the country. The crime is called county lines because a single telephone number is used to order drugs, operated from outside the area. County Lines is a major issue, cross cutting across many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

A young person's involvement in county lines activity often leaves signs. A young person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member or as an associate of a gang dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a young person's lifestyle should be discussed with them. Some indicators of county lines and gang involvement can be found in section 5.0, Spotting the Signs.

### 3.0 Child Exploitation in Northamptonshire

It should not be assumed that Child Exploitation does not and cannot occur in Northamptonshire with all towns / villages susceptible to county lines and gang activity. As well as a growing issue in Northampton it can be said that Wellingborough possibly contains the largest operational gang in the county, while Kettering at one stage had the largest number of County Lines going into it in the County. Instances of County Lines activity have also been seen in places like Brackley showing that no part of the County is immune to the issue.

To help tackle the issue Northamptonshire Police have invested in a number of covert operations to combat this, following an initial enforcement stage of the operation in November 2019, 105 people were arrested 87 individuals were charged (62 remanded) and over 70 warrants executed in Northampton, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and London. £250,000 of good were seized. 30 drugs lines were identified, disrupted and dismantled. Of these 30 lines, 21 were 'County Lines'.



Since this enforcement we have already seen 2 addresses being cuckooed in Northampton by gang members from Birmingham and a 16 year old being stabbed in Northampton, who was also a victim of a previous attempted murder where he was stabbed 13 times in Birmingham.

Operations have provided details that Birmingham dealers will attend Northampton town centre and offer high purity, largely weighted bags of heroin to lure customers. London dealers have also driven up to Northampton daily in order to deal. One such dealer was described by the Hackney Gangs Unit as one of the most dangerous people they had ever encountered. It's has also been seen that one such County line has exploited children to deal drugs from a cuckooed address.

Analysis suggests there are over 2,000 individual deal lines in the UK, linked to approximately 1,000 branded lines.

## 4.0 How is CE relevant to sports clubs and teams?

It is important that as governing bodies and associations you understand the role you and your affiliates can play in preventing exploitation. Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner or person can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children are to receive the right help at the right time everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

Sports clubs and teams play a vital role for young people and their families in providing positive activities for young people to be involved in. This role should not be underestimated in the way it can help ensure young people are not drawn into exploitation or can provide a therapeutic environment in which to help leave a gang lifestyle they may have previously been 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 coaches / volunteers in sports clubs and teams. These people 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. This relationship should not be underestimated in how they can provide support to encourage a young person 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 them to escalate concerns to yourselves in governing bodies and associations who can then assist in making referrals for appropriate statutory agencies where appropriate and ensuring the young people get the help and support they need.



## 5.0 Spotting the signs

Ensuring that coaches and volunteers are able to spot the signs of exploitation is one of the key roles you can play as a governing body / association in helping combat exploitation in Northamptonshire. Young people will often spend a large amount of their time attending the activities associated with your sport whether that be through training sessions, match days or competitions / tournaments and will build positive relationships with the coaches / volunteers and officials they come into contact with. This will put your sport in a unique place to spot any changes in behaviour, it is important to put these signs into a sporting context and remember that one single sign may not signal abuse or exploitation but when looked at with other factors may give volunteers warning signs, 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.

In addition to the overleaf it should be noted and considered that young people may use your organisation / activity as a cover or escape from the exploitation they may be experiencing. It is important that should any of the above be suspected that communication takes place with parents / carers as they may also have concerns.

## **6.0 Relationships and listening to young people**

Equipping coaches and volunteers with the skills they need to form effective and positive relationships with young people will be key to ensuring our young people feel able to discuss any concerns they have and report potential abuse and exploitation. The coaches and leaders in your sport have direct access to young people and are ideally placed to foster positive relationships that may help young people disclose their experience in exploitative situations. Young people who regularly attend activities 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 coaches and volunteers in your clubs and teams 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 they suspect them to be exploited but are not ready to disclose.
- Speak to the safeguarding lead at their club or association who should assist in making professional services aware if they have a concern.



## 7.0 As a governing body / association, what can we do to 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 their setting. You can support them by ensuring this is in place and ensuring that your own policies make clear your commitment to preventing exploitation.
- **Lead** – Clubs / teams 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. You should also ensure that the Safeguarding Lead for the organisation has all of the skills and knowledge they need to be able to take an active role and lead for Child Exploitation in your sport offering any support clubs / teams need.
- **Education** – The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) has produced a number of guides / leaflets on exploitation. Share these with your teams, clubs, leagues, coaches' volunteers and parents, this will all help raise awareness of this type of abuse.
- **Environment** – By ensuring your sport encourages clubs / teams to provide 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.
- **Critical Ear** – The staff and particularly the safeguarding lead for your sport should be on hand to be a critical ear for clubs / teams with support. Often being able to discuss a case with another person will help reach a decision on the correct course of action.
- **Assist with assessment/referrals** – We recognise that many of the coaches/volunteers within club and teams will have no safeguarding experience and making a referral will often be a daunting task. You can assist this by sitting down with a concerned party and considering the NSCP Gang Involvement Practice Guidance which includes a Screening Tool, this will help you establish the risk and help inform any referral you might wish to make. A copy of this guidance and screening tool can be found at:



[www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/about-northamptonshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/policies/gang-involvement-practice-guidance/](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/about-northamptonshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/policies/gang-involvement-practice-guidance/)

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

Call the Police non-emergency number **101** or if you think the young person is at imminent risk of harm, call **999** to report your concern.

### **Making a Referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).**

By completing the Signs of Gang Involvement Screening Tool you will have been assisted in reaching a reasonable working conclusion as to levels of risk. Based on this assessment it may be necessary to make a referral to the MASH. Professionals with concerns about a child or young person or vulnerable adult should follow the safeguarding referral protocols and procedures which can be found here. MASH can be contacted on 0300 126 1000 option 1



[http://northamptonshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_referrals.html](http://northamptonshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_referrals.html)

### **CIRV - Community Initiative to Reduce Violence**

CIRV is a gang's intervention programme to help reduce violence and drugs associated with gangs. CIRV provides various programmes and services to clients that are of the highest quality. The programmes are designed to provide opportunities to people to give them the chance to make a change to their chaotic lifestyles either through education, employment or other diversionary schemes. More information on CIRV and how to make a direct referral to them can be found at:



[www.cirv-nsd.org.uk/](http://www.cirv-nsd.org.uk/)

A poster for the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV). At the top, the word 'CIRV' is written in large red letters, with 'Community Initiative to Reduce Violence' written in smaller text to its right. Below this is a photograph of a hand holding a red-bordered card. The card contains the text: 'IN A GANG? We can help', 'Phone number: 07539 183975', '24 hours a day - 7 days a week', and the CIRV logo. At the bottom of the poster, the text 'Choose CIRV' is written in red, followed by the website 'www.aimonline.org.uk' and 'Northamptonshire'.

## **9.0 Contextual safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Therefore children's social care practitioners need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts.

Within Northamptonshire we are currently developing our Contextual Safeguarding approach along with a suite of resources and tools for you to use. Keep checking the NSCP website regularly for the latest resources.

## **10.0 Further resources/additional reading**

[Northamptonshire Child Exploitation Guide](#)  
[Knives End Lives Campaign Resources](#)  
[Gangs / County Lines Tea Break Guide](#)  
[Gang Involvement Practice Guidance including Screening Tool](#)  
[CSE & Gang Activity Campaign](#)

## **11.0 Relevant Websites**

[CIRV – Community Initiative to Reduce Violence](#)  
[Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Homepage](#)  
[Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Child Exploitation Resources](#)  
[Northamptonshire Sport](#)  
[NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit \(CPSU\)](#)

# SPEAK OUT ABOUT CHILD EXPLOITATION



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

