

SPEAK OUT ABOUT CHILD EXPLOITATION

**Child Exploitation in Sport -
a guide for Coaches in Northamptonshire**



 Northamptonshire
Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire
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The Voice For Sport

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 leaflet 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.

Gangs – What is Gang Involvement?

“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.

‘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.



How is CE relevant to you

Sports clubs and teams play a vital role for young people and their families in providing positive activities and activities for young people to be involved in. You are in a unique place to be able to offer an independent space to young people while keeping them involved in a positive activity.

It is important for all coaches in contact with young people to be able to identify concerns about exploitation through county lines and gang activity.

Spotting the signs

Young people will often spend a large amount of their time attending your activities whether that be through training sessions, match days or competitions / tournaments and you will build positive relationships with them. This will put you in a unique place to spot any changes in behaviour, 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.

Young people may use your organisation / activity as a cover or escape from the exploitation they may be experiencing. If you see any of the above communicate with parents as they may also have concerns.

Relationships & listening to young people

As a coach make sure you foster positive relationships that may help young people disclose their experience in exploitative situations. Young people who attend your activity will often see you as someone they can trust, to enable this try 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 you suspect them to be exploited but are not ready to disclose
- Speak to the safeguarding lead in your club or association who will assist in making professional services aware if you have a concern

As a Coach, what can we do to help prevent exploitation?

By ensuring your club / team is 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.

Be open to talking to young people about any concerns they may have. Remember concerns may come from other young people within the team.

What to do if you have concerns about a young person

If you think the young person is at imminent risk of harm, **call 999** to report your concern.

Report the concerns:

- Speak to the safeguarding lead for your club. They will work with you to decide the best course of action and discuss what you need to do next.