



# LET'S TALK TEENAGERS

A supportive tool kit  
to help parents  
understand & navigate  
challenging behaviours

LET'S TALK  
TEENAGERS

# Contents

Unhealthy Relationships .....	6 - 11
Mental Health .....	12 - 18
Social Media .....	19 - 24
Community Challenges .....	25 - 30

A supportive tool kit to help parents understand & navigate challenging behaviours

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## Introduction



### Hello

Thank you for picking up this Tool Kit and deciding to give it a read, we really hope that you find it useful and that it will enable you to have honest and helpful conversations with your young person.

We believe that parents and carers have a really important role in keeping our teenagers safe. We think it is essential that you know about the current issues our young people are facing. As parents ourselves, we know how valuable it can be to have tips on how to speak to our children and what we can do to help, guide and support them. Safety and Resilience Consultancy wrote this toolkit for us so we can share with parents and carers of teens the current risks they face, tips to communicate and guide young people and to sign post you to direct specialist sources of help if you have more specific worries.

There is never a magic wand when looking after our children but we hope this Tool Kit will give you some insight into the issues affecting young people and the pressures that they face. We know that the support you can offer your teenager can make a massive difference in their ability to keep themselves safe.

Being a parent or carer of a teenager is incredibly rewarding but can also be very hard. Parents have told us it can feel very lonely sometimes, but we hope the tips and techniques mentioned here can make your journey just a little bit easier.

Thank you for everything you have done and will continue to keep your teen safe - be kind to yourself and remember they are worth the effort!

Best wishes,

*Becca*

Becca Hewitt  
Chair of South Devon and  
Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership

# Let's talk



Young people want to feel they're being listened to, not being told, so going in hard and laying down the law is unlikely to ever lead to an honest response. You're much more likely to get through to them if you try to start a dialogue. Throughout this booklet are suggestions for difficult conversations and ways of starting the conversation.

It may feel like there is never a good time, but try and start the conversation when you aren't feeling too emotional so you can calmly explain your concerns. Conversations when you are busy doing something else (but nothing important!) can be helpful so they don't feel so embarrassed or pressured.

**Tell your young person they shouldn't ever feel pressured into doing anything if they don't want to**, and that they should never do it just because other people are. Above all, let them know that you are there to talk to them if they have any questions, worries or concerns. Explain that although initially you may be angry or scared by what they tell you, you will look at a plan together and you won't just leap ahead into action without their input. When trust is broken, or repeatedly broken, then closer

monitoring or restriction of freedom is the only way you have as a parent to show that you care enough to hang on in there until some learning has taken place. Try to gradually give your teens opportunities for them to show you that they can be trusted and make encouraging remarks when all goes well. If you set a boundary or make a promise you must stick to it. Trust is two way - the more trustworthy you are, the more trustworthy your young person is likely to be.

**There's every chance they'll find this conversation awkward or unpleasant, (as will you).**

But knowing you're there to help if they need it can be a big comfort and decide they need it. Besides, any information or advice you're able to give can make all the difference when it comes to them making good decisions in the future. Try not to take things too personally, it may not be you they are angry with at all.

## Don't bully, blackmail or guilt trip your young person into doing what you want

If they do want to talk about things, make sure you listen to them. Even if what your young person has to say makes you feel uncomfortable or even disappointed, it's important that they know they can say it to you. Reacting negatively is likely to make them cautious about being honest, so **take them seriously** and help them feel they can disclose things if they need to. If they don't want to talk, you might like to suggest looking at one of the services later in the booklet so that they can talk to a professional. Create trust by learning to listen, be ready to discuss without judging and sometimes make allowance for them getting it wrong. This means not saying "I told you so" but listening to what they have learned from their experiences. Be prepared to listen carefully to what your young person has to say. Try to start from a position where you understand and can show that you have understood. **You may not agree but listening shows respect for their point of view.**

Try to encourage and invite discussion, without it sounding as though you are laying down yet more rules. Try to use sentences that begin with:

- I wonder if ...
- Have you thought about ...
- I find that ...

- Would it be a good idea if we ...
- I worry about ...

Showing your young person how to negotiate, present their point of view respectfully and come to an agreement is a vital life skill. Don't miss the opportunity to teach them how to do this at home. Look at compromises so that you both come away from the conversation feeling listened to and respected. **Be aware** of the language you use, try and find appropriate words to describe how you are feeling. Are you frustrated, annoyed, stressed, unhappy, irritated, wound up or let down? It can be much easier to explain how you feel if you can use the right words.

**It's a myth that you just need to have one 'big talk' with your young person when it comes to difficult conversations.**

Helping them to feel that their thoughts and actions are not a taboo subject - that they can bring them up without it being a big deal - can be a great comfort, and help them to feel they have someone to turn to if they do get stuck. This doesn't mean awkwardly shoehorning the topic into your conversations, but simply **checking in from time to time** and letting them know they don't need to be embarrassed if they do want to talk.



# Unhealthy Relationships



**What is domestic abuse?** Domestic abuse is 'an incident or pattern of incidents of abusive behaviour usually perpetrated by a current or former partner'.

This can include:

- **Physical violence** such as hitting, kicking, biting, etc.
- **Coercive controlling behaviour** such as isolation from family and friends, telling the victim what they can and cannot do and where they can go
- **Psychological abuse** (also known as emotional abuse) such as calling the victim degrading names or making the victim think that they are going 'crazy'
- **Sexual abuse** such as unwanted sexual contact, rape or forcing the victim to send nude images of themselves or sharing these nude images (also known as 'revenge porn')
- **Financial abuse** such as taking the victim's money or deciding how their money can be spent

- **Harassment or stalking** for example stalking the victim's location on apps such as Snapchat, turning up unannounced to where the victim is or making unwanted contact with the victim

*These examples are not a comprehensive list*

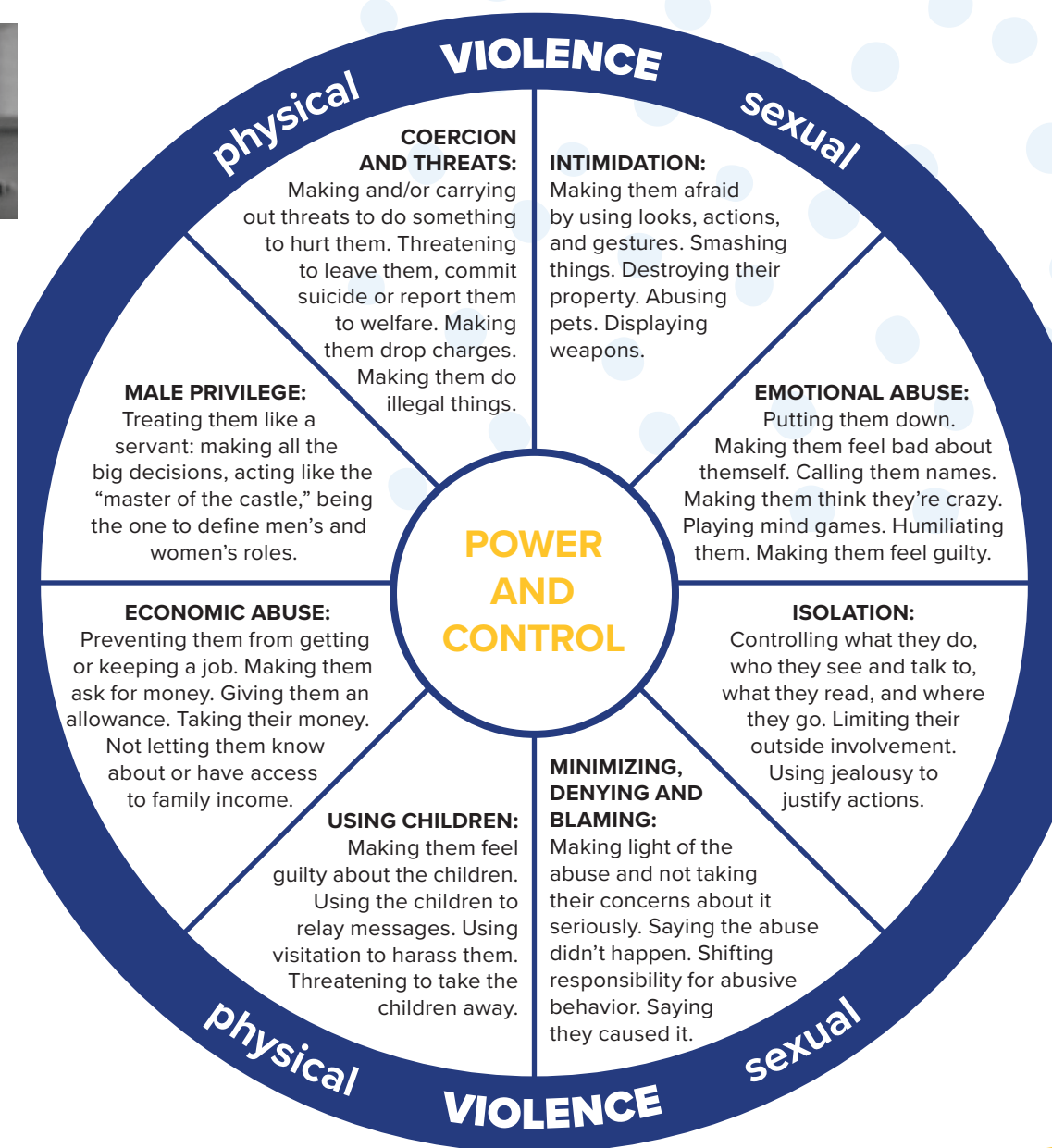
Domestic abuse can affect anyone of any age, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or background.

## Domestic abuse & young people

According to the national domestic abuse charity SafeLives:

- **25% of girls** and **18% of boys** aged 13-17 have reported to have experienced some form of physical violence from an intimate partner
- **31% of girls** have reported to have experienced some form of sexual abuse within their relationship

# The Power and Control Wheel



**What is it?** A person agreeing to something by choice, with freedom and capacity to make that choice.

**Consent and sex** - consent must be given by all of the individuals engaging in the sexual activity. This means all individuals must agree to the sexual activity by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make this choice. Consent can be withdrawn at any point throughout the sexual activity.

- To make this clearer type into [YouTube 'consent and a cup to tea \(clean\)'](#) and watch the short video clip

**Young people and sexual consent** - a young person under the age of 16 cannot **legally consent** to having sex. Despite this, health professionals can give contraception and contraception advice to young people from the age of 13-16 if they believe that the young person is mature enough to make these decisions. A young person under the age of 13 does not have the **legal capacity** to consent to sex meaning that if this were to happen it would be dealt with under rape laws.

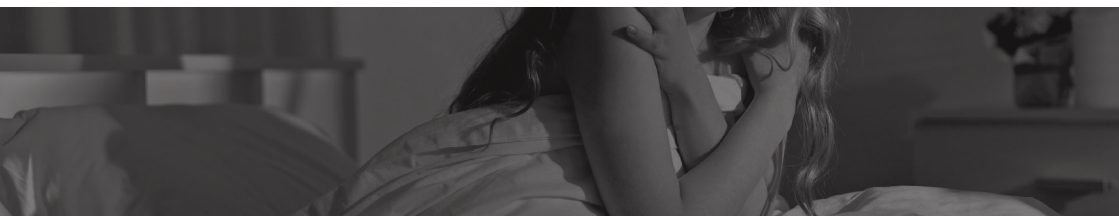
Talking about consent with young people is incredibly important as at this age, your young person may start forming relationships and exploring their sexuality. Talking about consent may feel like a big topic and so here are some tips to try and make it easier...

- Use a TV show or movie clip to introduce the topic of consent or you could show them the cup of tea consent video
- Bring it up at a relaxed time such as out for a walk, on the drive home from school, during dinner time
- You don't have to start by talking about them having sex, you could talk about their friend's relationships or talk about consent in regards to things like kissing or being touched
- Show interest in what they're learning about at school and ask if they have spoken about consent in sex education and what they learnt about it

Exploitative relationships are complex and parallel experiences of victims of domestic abuse.



# Unhealthy Relationships



## Signs that your young person may be in an unhealthy relationship...

- They might be over defensive of their partner
- They may seem pre-occupied, distant or 'on edge'
- They may check their phone more regularly than usual
- They could have unexplained bruises or marks
- They might seem unhappy down hearted or tearful, especially just after seeing their partner
- You might notice an obvious and sudden reduction in their self-esteem
- They may not see their friends as often as usual or not at all, or appear to have very little interest in seeing them
- Their partner may turn up to their location unexpectedly, without an invite

## What is Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)?

CSE is a form of sexual abuse. It involves a child or young person being manipulated and exploited into sexual activity in exchange for gifts, money, alcohol, drugs, etc.

- CSE is often used by gang members to exert power and control over children and young people. However, gangs are not the only individuals exploiting young people, sexual exploitation can be perpetrated by anyone with the ability to groom a child
- The true extent of CSE is not known due to the hidden nature of the crime, however it is estimated that around **600 young people per month** in the UK are safeguarded against the crime

## Warning signs of Exploitation:

- A sudden increase of unexplained gifts or money, including new clothes, shoes, make up, electronic devices, etc.
- Staying out late, overnight or going missing for a period of time
- Being unusually secretive and/or defensive
- Having a new group of friends (who may be significantly older than them)
- Becoming involved in criminal activity such as shoplifting
- Being in possession of drugs and/or alcohol
- Physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- Having a new partner who is older than them, who they don't want you to meet or who they are overly secretive and defensive about

What if your young person makes a disclosure that relates to not giving their consent, being a victim of exploitation or being in an unhealthy relationship?

- Stay calm and non-judgemental so that your young person feels able to speak to you open and honestly
- Speak to them then and there about what has happened and don't put it off - the opportunity may not arise again
- Try and gather information from them about what has happened or is happening in a gentle way
- Remind them that you are here to listen to and support them
- Create a plan with them for what happens next - depending on what has happened this may be speaking to school, reporting to the police, helping them to end the relationship or reminding them that you're here for them to speak to.
- Create a safety plan together (see page 27)
- There are specialist services to help your young person such as the local domestic abuse services or CSE services

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) investigate cases of grooming on the Internet and sex abuse and incidents can be reported by clicking the red button on the top right hand corner of their website

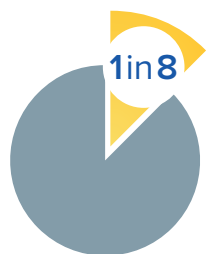
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

It is illegal in the UK for any young person under the age of 18 to take or send an indecent photograph of themselves. Similarly it is also illegal for anyone to receive an indecent image of an under 18 year old.

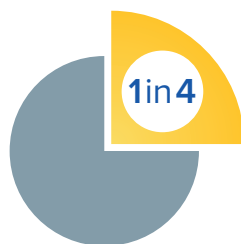
# Mental Health



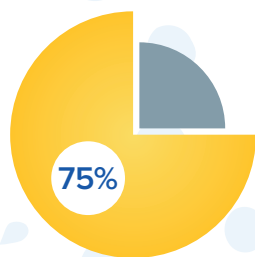
According to the NHS and the children's society...



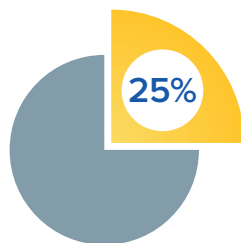
■ 1 in 8 young people have at least one mental health disorder



■ 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their life



■ 75% of all mental health problems are established before the age of 18



■ Only 25% of young people with a mental health difficulty have had contact with a mental health service

Mental health difficulties can affect young women and young men in differing ways. For example 75% of people with an eating disorder identify as female. Another example would be that sadly men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women.

## How can I help?

- Mental health is incredibly complex and can present at varying levels. Should you have concerns that your young person may be struggling with their mental health encourage them to speak to their GP with you. If your young person really doesn't want to speak to a doctor you could instead speak to other professionals such as school or third sector organisations that support young people's mental health
- There is still a huge amount of stigma around mental health. Try and have open and honest conversations about mental health as a family to reduce this stigma
- Particularly with teenage boys discuss '**toxic masculinity**'. Toxic masculinity is the idea that men and boys must adhere to the 'traditional male gender role' meaning that they do not express emotions readily and the idea that 'boys don't cry'. Toxic masculinity could contribute towards male mental health, promoting expressing their emotions via aggression or struggles with sexuality. Discuss with your young person that this is an outdated idea and that it is important that boys talk about their feelings
- Turn to 25 for ideas about how to engage your young person in self-care to help with their emotional well-being
- If your young person discloses that they are thinking about or have a plan to take their own life always take this seriously. **NEVER** downplay it by saying things like 'you wouldn't do that would you?' or 'don't be silly'. Phrases like this will make it less likely for your young person to speak to you about this again and could heighten their risk. Speak to them about it and call **999** in an emergency
- You could create a mental health safety plan with your young person. Some ideas of what you could include:



How they know they are struggling with their mental health  
*an anxious tummy, shaky hands, not wanting to get out of bed*



How they can make themselves feel better  
*spending time with friends, watching a comedy, having a bath, writing down how they feel*

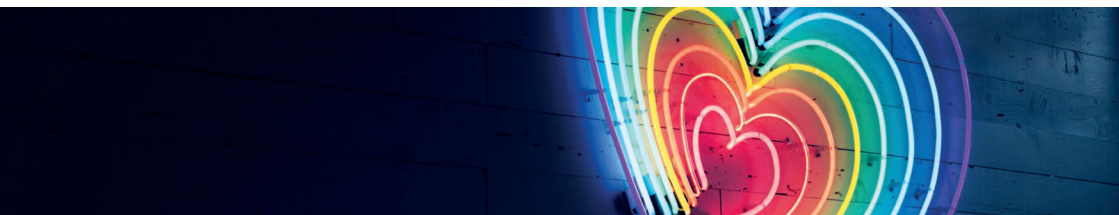


Who they can talk to about it  
*you, their friends, school staff, a counsellor*



What they can do in an emergency  
*call you, not be alone, call 999*





Young people face significant pressure to understand and categorise their sexual and gender identity.

There is a lot of new and sometimes confusing language being used around LGBTQ+ and this can make it hard for both parents and teenagers to be able to understand each other. Remind them as always that you are here to listen to and support them whatever their choices or future choices may be. Remain open and non judgemental, don't use sentences such as 'it's just a phase'. Phrases like this will undermine your child's experience and could leave them feeling that they have disappointed you with their choices.

If there is something you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask. [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) is a good starting point.

According to [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) and the NHS:

- A **third of LGBTQ+ young people** age 14-19 have a diagnosable mental health disorder
- At least **2 in 5** LGBTQ+ people have experienced an incident because they are LGBTQ+, such as verbal abuse or physical assault

Remind your young person that their sexuality and gender identity makes them, them! Remind them that you are here to **listen to them and to support them** regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. There are support groups and services specifically designed for LGBTQ+ young people, if your young person is struggling try and find out what further support is available to them. **Remain open and non-judgemental** when your young person discusses sexuality or gender identity, don't just use phrases like 'it's just a phase'. Phrases like this will undermine your child's experience and leave them potentially feeling confused and hurt.



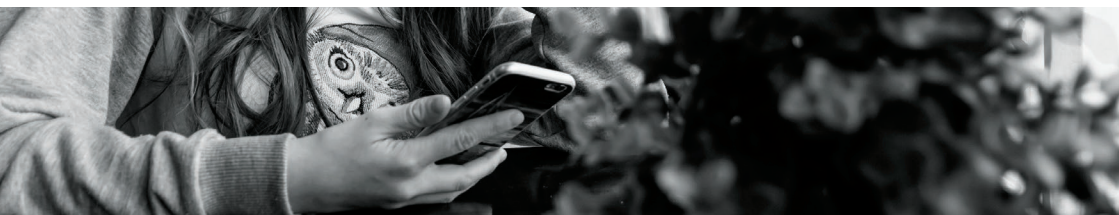
Bullying may be hidden by young people as a result of shame, embarrassment or feeling there is nowhere or nobody to turn to. Bullying can have an impact on school work, relationships, self-esteem, mental health and ultimately young people's futures.

## What can we do about bullying?

- If your young person discloses that they have been or are currently being bullied, with their involvement it is important that you speak to school. By law all schools must have policies and measures in place to prevent bullying. Schools therefore ultimately have the responsibility to safeguard their young people from bullying and have a responsibility to act on it
- If your young person discloses that they are being bullied try and find out who by and what the bullying feels like. This is important as bullying can be anything from name calling, physical attacks, to stalking and harassment to death threats, for example. Determining what is going on for them determines how you can respond and try and make things better
- If your young person is being cyber-bullied (bullied via social media/texts/calls) have a discussion with them about blocking the individuals involved if this would be safe to do so
- Talk to your young person about how to manage bullying such as telling teaching staff at School and other ways to keep themselves safe. This can include making sure that they have their phone on them should they need to call for help (see page 27 for safety plan)
- Most importantly remind your young person that experiencing bullying is **absolutely not their fault** and **should not be happening to them**. Remind them that you are there to support them and help to keep them safe



# Body Image



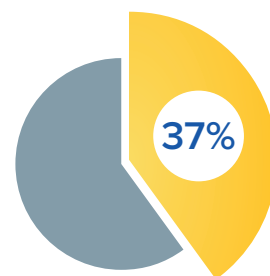
Struggles with body image are more prevalent than ever in both young women and young men. Young people are regularly exposed to the 'perfect' body image via social media, for example, Instagram.

These images have often been edited, the bodies have been reshaped, skin tones have been altered, acne has been removed and teeth have been whitened. Even more worryingly influencers and models who upload these images will sometimes be trying to sell the latest diet tea or protein shake and crediting these products for the way that they look. These images provide unhealthy and unrealistic expectations to young people and can have a significant impact on their self-esteem and even the development into disordered eating.

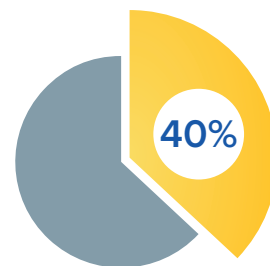
There are always ever changing 'trends' in the ideal body type. Young men may strive for a muscular appearance for example whereas young women may strive to be unhealthily slim or have larger hips.



Research shows that...



- 37% of young people felt upset about their body image



- 40% of young people said images on social media caused them to feel worried about their body image
- It is estimated that **1.25 million** people in the UK currently have an eating disorder

## Top Tips

- Try and avoid discussing dieting for weight loss in front of your young person
- Model positive self-talk about your own body
- Have open discussions about body image and how we view ourselves. This could include discussing who they follow on social media
- Have discussions around how our bodies are amazing and what they can do (*dance, keep us alive, run, make babies, hug the ones we love, eat amazing food*)
- Try and remind your young person that the images they see have often been edited or the person may have had plastic surgery or fillers
- It might be a good idea to remove the scales from the house if you find your young person using these at an alarming rate
- Remind your young person that we are all different. Even if we all ate the exact same food and did the exact same amount of exercise, we would still not all look the same

## Drugs and Alcohol



Peer pressure to experiment with drugs and alcohol is incredibly common in young people. Young people also may be experiencing pressure to deal drugs or pressure to engage in unwanted sexual activities for drugs or alcohol (see the Child Sexual Exploitation chapter).

### What can you do?

- Have open and honest conversations with your young person about drugs and alcohol. It is important to recognise that your young person may experiment with alcohol and potentially drugs at some point.

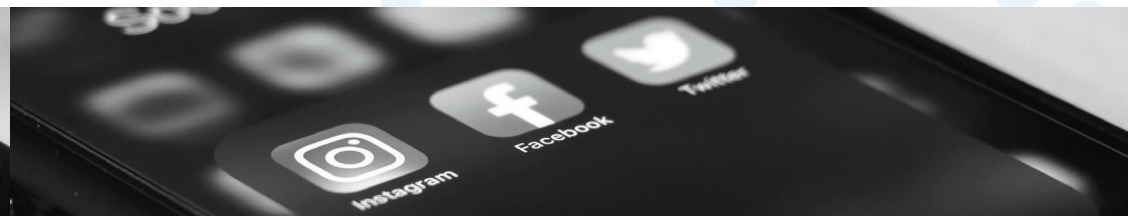
**Simply telling young people not to take drugs or drink alcohol isn't enough. Inform them of the risks of taking drugs and alcohol**

- Remind young people of the law and that it is a criminal offence to supply alcohol under the age of 18 or take illegal drugs at any age. Remind your young person that if they were caught doing so they could get themselves in trouble with the police
- Remind them of how to be safe at parties if drugs and alcohol are present such as being with a safe group of friends and calling **999** in

an emergency. Remind them that they can contact you if they have any worries whilst around drugs and alcohol

- Drugs and alcohol put young people's health at risk as well as their finances and their risk of being in trouble with the police. There is plenty of information online to help you explain these risks to your young person [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) is a good place to start
- If you find drugs in your young person's room talk to them about it. They could be involved in dealing drugs and may be extremely scared and unsure where to turn. Alternatively, if they are using these drugs recreationally this would be a good time to remind them of the risks. If you think they might be at risk of exploitation talk to someone who could help, you could start with speaking to school who may be able to support your family, or point you in the right direction

## Social Media...



### The good, the bad and the ugly...

Social media is always changing, there are new sites being added every day, however they all carry similar risks. Try and use these positives and negatives below as a starting point for a conversation with your young person.

It has its **positives**:

- Connecting with other people
- Sharing positive moments
- Engaging with support
- Finding out news and what's going on in the world
- It is now a career! (Influencers, social media co-ordinators, etc.)
- An escape from a rubbish day
- Inspiration (outfits, make up, career path, how to style your bedroom ... you name it!)

However it also has its **negatives**:

- Making other people's lives seem 'perfect', leaving us to question our own
- Bullying, harassment, stalking, grooming, child sexual exploitation
- Fake news
- Not always a productive use of time
- Hackers
- It can lead us to question our own body image and focus on what we perceive to 'not have'
- Easy and accessible access to harmful content
- Pressure to send nude images or videos
- Lack of privacy



## Making Social Media a Happy Space



- **Have open and honest conversations** about social media as a family, focusing on both the negatives and the positives. Young people may not always be honest with you with what they are doing, but if you can get some important messages through to them about safety then that's better than not discussing it at all
- **Role modelling** - young people learn from what they see. Create a healthy relationship yourself with social media (see guidance below). Try having a social media free day or plan a movie night together fortnightly with a 'no phones rule'
- **Speak to your young person about their privacy settings.** Make sure that your young person's social media is as private as possible and they have to 'accept' friend requests or follows and cannot be followed by anyone
- There are **parent controls and separate apps** that you can use to ensure your young person is safe on social media
- **Be inquisitive** and ask your young person what social media sites they use and how they work
- **Stalking and harassment is illegal.** If your young person is experiencing any stalking or harassment via social media you can report this to the police by calling 101. You can also report to the social media site itself, there will always be an option on someone's profile to 'report'
- **Talk to your young person** about blocking anyone who is harassing them or sending nasty messages
- **Complete the plan** overleaf with your young person to help them feel better on social media
- **Have a family code/safe word**

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) investigate cases of grooming on the Internet and sex abuse, incidents can be reported by clicking the red button on the top right hand corner of their website:

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

## Trust in Technology



Many parents worry their young person's preoccupation with their mobile phone is something similar to an addiction, whereas equally lots of young people get frustrated with their parents' unwillingness to understand how important their phone is to their social lives.

It can be useful to try to see things from your young person's perspective. Like it or not, mobile technology has become a big part of many young persons' daily lives. Instead of going in hard and imposing a whole lot of rules on phone use from the outset, it can be much better to try to open a dialogue. Talk to them about what they're using their phone for and let them know any worries you might have. You may encounter a little resistance, but speaking openly and honestly is much more likely to allow you to have a proper conversation instead of a shouting match.

If you feel like their phone use is getting seriously out of hand and that it's causing real problems, you may want to talk to them about some reasonable compromises when it comes to how much time they spend on it. For example, you might agree with them

that they can go on it in their own time, but when it comes to spending quality time together at a family - say, during meals it's rude to start texting other people. Establishing a set of rules in your own home will help create a sense of consistency and reinforce a healthy understanding of boundaries when it comes to mobiles. (Remember to role model this yourself!)

Take time out if you need to calm down before talking it through and saying how you feel or what you want. Young people may respond with either explosions or shutting you out completely but try to talk when you are both calm. After all, it may be a while before they're ready to chat about this sort of thing - especially if your initial suspicions aren't actually correct - so knowing that you're there when they are ready is going to count for a lot.

Trust your instincts, if you are worried seek help.

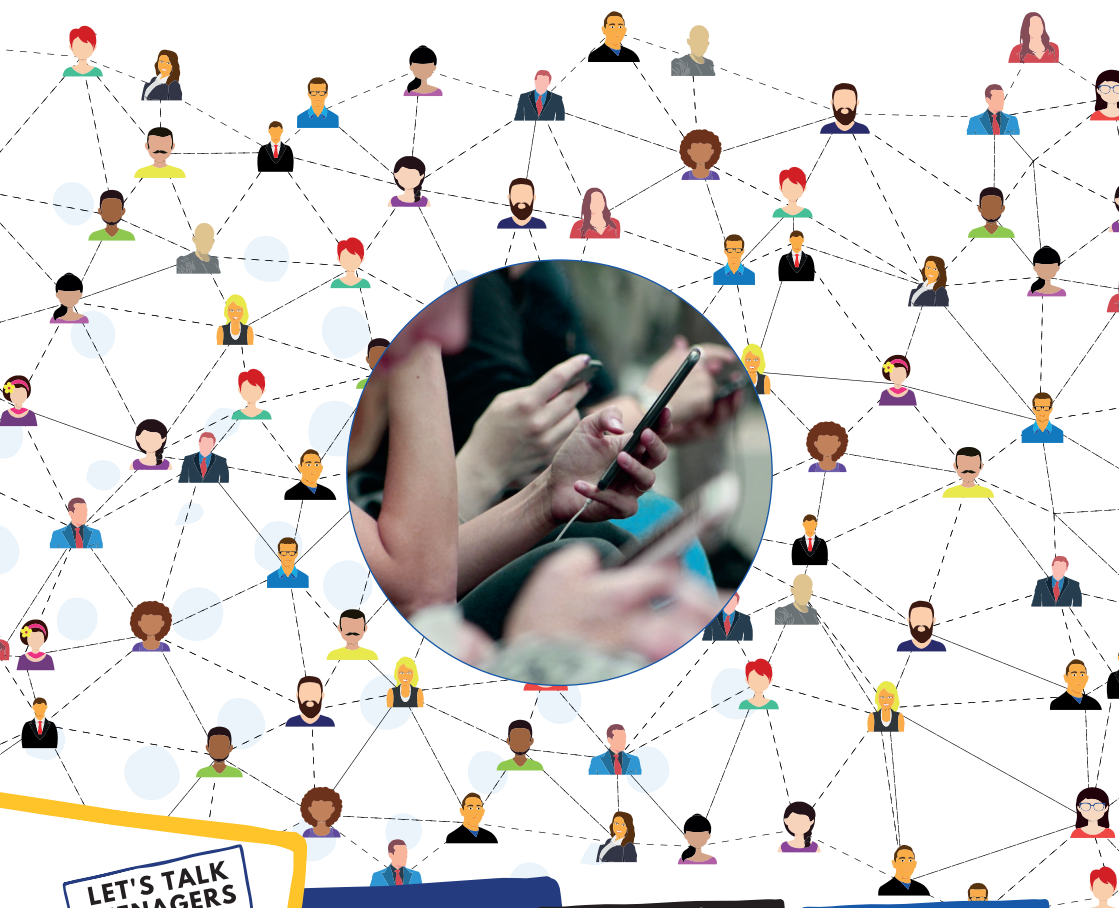


# Social Media Guidelines

All social media sites have a responsibility to keep their users safe and to ensure that all reports of cyber-bullying and abuse are dealt with effectively, however we and our young people as users of such sites, also have a responsibility to make sure they are using them in a safe, respectful and appropriate manner.

Although the law and guidelines are there it is important to acknowledge the immense pressure our young people are under to use social media, share their location, send explicit images, upload the best photographs, be ready and available to chat to friends 24/7, be on group chats ... the list goes on.

Did you know that most social media sites have age restrictions?



Site	Age	Safety
WhatsApp	16	<p>Once you install the app, it checks your address book and connects you automatically to anyone else you know who is using the App.</p> <p>You can block and delete a contact who may be bullying you through WhatsApp:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Click on their name then using the dropdown menu,</li> <li>2. Choose to 'block' the person</li> </ol> <p>You can find out more by emailing WhatsApp at <a href="mailto:support@whatsapp.com">support@whatsapp.com</a></p>
Instagram	13	<p>Instagram's advice is to block and unfollow the person who is being abusive.</p> <p>To block someone on Instagram, tap their username to open their profile, tap the three dots and press the option to '<b>Block User</b>'. Under this same menu there is also the option to restrict a user which means no one else will see their comments on your posts, their messages will go into your message request folder and they won't be able to see if you're online or have read their messages.</p> <p>This feature is good to use if you feel that you need space from someone, rather than if you're experiencing online abuse, harassment or bullying. If someone is being abusive you can report them by going to the '...' menu on their profile, press '<b>Report</b>' and follow the next steps.</p>
TikTok	13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To block someone; Go to the user's profile that you want to block Hit '...' in the upper right hand corner of their profile. Select '<b>Block</b>'</li> <li>2. The user will not be notified when you block them; however, if a user is blocked, they will not be able to follow you or view your videos.</li> </ol> <p>Blocked users cannot see your TikTok videos or comments.</p> <p>When they try, they will see a message that says '<b>You cannot view this user's videos due to their privacy settings</b>'.</p>

YouTube	13*	<p>You can report users, inappropriate background images, or inappropriate profile avatars using the reporting flow located on the bottom of every channel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sign in to <a href="#">YouTube</a>.</li> <li>2. Go to the channel page you want to <a href="#">report</a>.</li> <li>3. Click <b>'About'</b>.</li> <li>4. Click <b>'Report'</b>.</li> <li>5. Select the option that best suits your issue.</li> </ol> <p>To block someone ; Click <b>'About'</b> on their profile, then hit the flag button. In the drop down menu, you'll see an option <b>'Block User'</b>. Once you confirm your decision to block this commenter, they won't be able to send you direct messages, or be able to comment on your videos or your channel.</p>
Snapchat	13	<p>To block a <b>'friend'</b>. Tap the Menu icon, Select <b>'My Friends'</b>, Locate their name in the list and swipe right across their name: press <b>Delete</b>.</p> <p>To block someone who added you on Snapchat: Tap <b>'Added Me'</b> on the Profile Screen, Tap their name and tap the 'Wheel Icon' next to their name. Press <b>'Block'</b>. This will prevent them from sending you Snaps or Chats or from viewing your content.</p> <p>If a person is bullying or harassing you or you receive an inappropriate image report it by pressing and holding on their username, tap <b>'Manage Friendship'</b> and then tap <b>'Report'</b></p>

Site	Age	Safety
Twitter	13	<p>If a person sends you a tweet or replies to a tweet with a comment that you don't like, you can unfollow that person.</p> <p>To stop them from further contacting you, you can block them. If you receive unwanted replies or abuse or threats from someone on Twitter you can report them direct to Twitter.</p> <p>To do this, go onto their profile tap the <b>'...'</b> on their profile, Press <b>'Report'</b> and follow the next steps.</p> <p>You can protect your tweets so that people can only follow you if you approve them first.</p> <p>Do this by going into the <b>'Settings'</b> menu, then <b>'Security and Privacy'</b> and ticking the <b>'Protect My Tweets'</b> box.</p> <p>To remove or block someone on Twitter, click on the button with a head icon on it next to the <b>'Follow'</b> button on a user's profile.</p> <p>When you click on this you will see a menu with the options to <b>'Block'</b> the user to prevent them from seeing your profile and you can also <b>'Report for Spam'</b>, which will alert Twitter to any users who are abusing the service.</p>

\* 13 with parent's permission, 18 without parent's permission



A resource for young people

Why do I use social media?

- .....
- .....
- .....

The social media sites I use are ...

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

If I could change anything about social media I would ...

- .....
- .....

If I felt unsafe or upset about something to do with social media I could ...

- Tell a trusted adult (e.g. my parent, a teacher or ..... )
- Report what I have seen
- Block the person

Sometimes we all need a break from social media, instead of scrolling through Instagram, here are some nice things that I could do instead:

- Have a relaxing bubble bath
- Watch a movie
- Read a book
- Go for a walk
- Bake a cake

Some practical things that I could do on social media to make me feel safer:

- Make sure all of my profiles are private
- Make sure everyone who follows me are people I know personally
- Make sure I don't have any photos or information on my profile that could give others a clue as to where I live, where I go to school/college, what my phone number is or what my bank details are
- Familiarise myself with the 'help' section on the social media sites I use and read some of the tips

Talk through keeping safe with your young person

Let ..... know where I am.

Do this by .....

Places to feel safe

- .....
- .....
- .....

If unsafe

- .....
- .....
- .....

- ☐ Mobile phone, fully charged and with credit
- ☐ Leave any situation if unsafe
- ☐ Tell someone if unsafe
- ☐ Spend time with safe and happy people
- ☐ Keep social media profiles as private as possible

Phonebook

Police:  
**999**

Non emergency police:  
**101**

Crime stoppers:  
**0800 555 111**

Childline:  
**0800 11 11**

Other useful numbers:

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....





**‘County lines’** is the police term used to describe gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas, market and coastal towns across the UK using dedicated mobile phone lines.

The 2019 National Crime Agency report on county lines estimates there are around 2,000 active county lines operating in the UK. These organised crime networks exploit young people to store, move, sell and deliver their drugs, often making them travel across counties.

Drugs gangs operating in these areas are increasingly seeking to exploit local young people, using younger children because they are cheaper, more easily controlled and less likely to be picked up by the police. This is done through deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming.

Sexual exploitation is also used in gangs to exert power and control over members or initiate young people into the gang. Sexual activity can also be used for status or protection, or used as a weapon and inflicted as sexual assault.

Vulnerable young people, for example, those who are homeless or living in care, have special educational needs or mental health problems, are targeted by gangs and are recruited, often via social media.

Gangs also look for young people with emotional vulnerability, such as those experiencing problems at home, absent or busy parents or bereavement, and then seek and fill that emotional gap and become ‘their family’, then take advantage of them.

Due to austerity there are fewer youth clubs and there is less provision for our young people, this creates a vacuum. Young people, some children younger than 10 are turning to gangs for friendship and protection. They then find themselves forced into illegal activities, notably selling and trafficking illegal drugs and find it difficult or impossible to leave.

### Knife crime. County lines. Gangs.

These are all words used to describe a situation where young people have their lives put at risk through criminal exploitation.

### But what exactly is a gang?

Is it a group of friends who gather together but who also wear similar clothes simply because they happen to like that fashion?

Is it a gathering of more than ten young people, or a group of young people who like the same music?

There are multiple described definitions of ‘a gang’. In this tool kit the following definition is used, which has been taken from the Centre for Social Justice in 2009. According to this definition, a gang is:

**gang** /gɑŋ/

*verb:* 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

Young people involved in gangs cannot be viewed as a mutually exclusive vulnerable group of young people: young people in gangs typically have multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability.



Young people are also threatened or tricked into trafficking drugs for gangs who often use intimidation and violence, or threaten the young person's family.

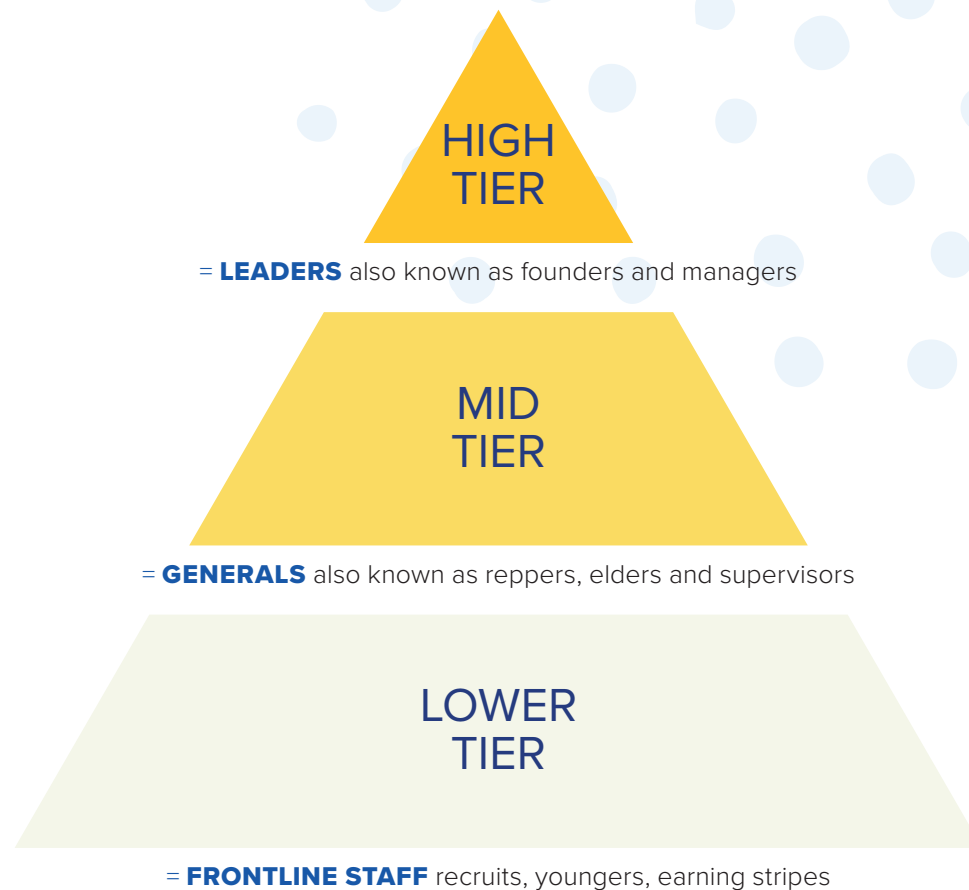
Sexual exploitation is also used in gangs to exert power and control over members or initiate young people into the gang. Sexual activity can also be used for status or protection, or used as a weapon and inflicted as sexual assault.

They might also offer something in return for the young person's cooperation, for example money, food, alcohol, clothes and jewellery, or improved status, but these gifts will usually be manipulated so that the young person feels they are in debt to their exploiter and have no choice but to do what they want.

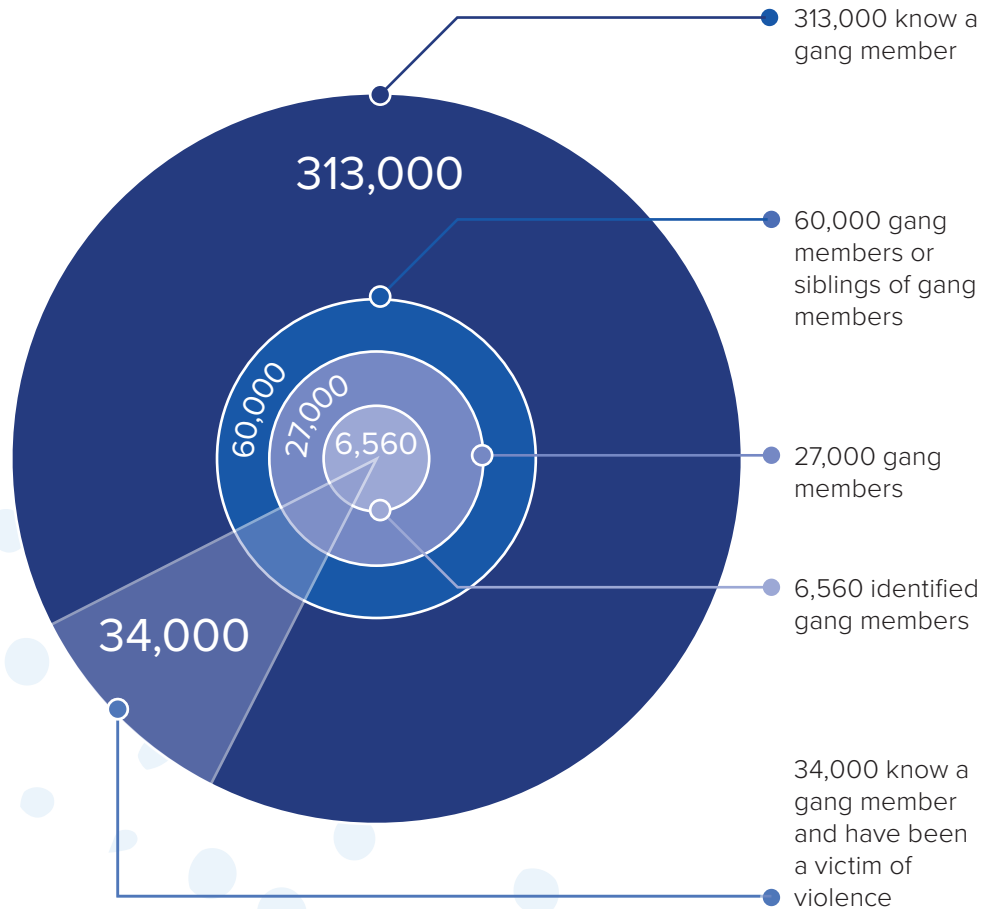
"I didn't want to do it, but I had no way out. I keep thinking what I could have done to stop it sooner, but I was so scared."  
15 year old girl talking about her experiences of county lines and exploitation

"Boys are predators, girls are prey, innit?"  
16 year old young man (Beckett 2013)

All of our young people recruited into gangs start at the lower tier of the structure model below.



## Young people in England who are members of gangs or have connections with them



Source: Children's Commissioner for England/British Crime Survey

## Warning Signs



A young person might be recruited into a gang because of where they live or because of who their family is. They might join because they don't see another option or because they feel like they need protection.

Young people may become involved in gangs for many reasons, including:

- Peer pressure and wanting to fit in with their friends
- They feel respected and important
- They want to feel protected from other gangs, or bullies
- They want to make money and are promised rewards
- They want to gain status, and feel powerful
- They've been excluded from school and don't feel they have a future

**If your gut feeling is that something isn't right, don't sit on concerns - share them with others and seek help and support.**



What are the signs that a young person could be involved in something?



- **Leaving home suddenly** without an explanation
- **Returning home unusually late** or staying out all night
- Coming home looking **particularly dishevelled**
- **Unexplained injuries** or suspicion of physical assault
- Persistently **going missing** or being found in areas away from home
- **Being secretive** about who they are talking to and where they are going
- **Meeting with unfamiliar people**, lots of new friends who you don't know
- Becoming **isolated from peers** and old friends
- Having a **friendship or relationship** with someone who appears older or controlling
- **Unexplained absences** from school, college, training or work
- **Loss of interest** in school, college or work and decline in performance
- **Sudden changes** in lifestyle, change of clothing style and brand
- **Significant changes** in emotional well-being
- **Increasingly disruptive** or aggressive and violent behaviour
- Using sexual, gang, drug-related or violent **language you wouldn't expect them to know**
- **Listening to new music** linked to gangs/drug use, see page 37
- **Starting or increasing drug use**, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- **Unexplained money**, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- **Having hotel cards** or keys to unknown places
- Using **more than one phone** and being very secretive about it
- **Receiving an excessive amount of texts** or phone calls and answering/responding immediately
- **Carrying a weapon**

This list is not designed to scare parents and carers, however the indicators for exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours' and ignored. Share this with your young people and open discussions.

## Language



It often feels that young people have their own language and with the Gang culture this is definitely true. Words are used so that people outside of the gang are unable to work out what is happening, things are said in code.

But language changes all the time. Remember there are different dialects around the country and just because your young person is using some of this slang doesn't mean they understand it. If you hear these words ask what they mean! Some common slang:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| ■ <b>All White Bricks/Nose Whiskey/White Chalk:</b> cocaine   | ■ <b>Canned/Nailed/Bagged:</b> to be arrested  | ■ <b>Mule:</b> a carrier or supplier of drugs   |
| ■ <b>April:</b> a weapon  | ■ <b>Coco:</b> after all white bricks/nose whiskey/white chalk                               | ■ <b>Pranging out:</b> paranoia coming from a drug induced state                        |
| ■ <b>Bagging:</b> used to describe someone packaging drugs for distribution or Stabbing in the lower body | ■ <b>Cunch:</b> used to denote going to a faraway area in order to sell drugs (county lines) | ■ <b>Ps:</b> Money - usually paper cash   |
| ■ <b>Beef Tings:</b> to start a conflict or fight   | ■ <b>Driller:</b> shooter or gang member   | ■ <b>Shank/Sword:</b> a knife or blade weapon   |
| ■ <b>Bottle:</b> to insert something into your rectum or vagina for later retrieval, e.g. drugs           | ■ <b>Drilling:</b> attacking, aggressing or invading   | ■ <b>Turn A Drum Over:</b> Police search of a house                                     |
| ■ <b>Burner:</b> a cheap phone that's often used in drug dealing  | ■ <b>Feds:</b> Police  | ■ <b>Washed:</b> a term used to describe someone who isn't held in high regards         |
|   | ■ <b>Going Country/Going Long:</b> going to a faraway area to sell drugs                     | ■ <b>Woolies:</b> a marijuana cigarette laced with cocaine                              |
|   | ■ <b>Joey:</b> a person employed by gang to sell to customers                                | ■ <b>Wrap Street:</b> quantity of heroin or cocaine in folded paper bag or foil packets |
|   | ■ <b>Ketchup:</b> blood  |   |

# Useful Contacts



## Some helpful contacts to call for help and advice

### Brook

National sexual health charity providing help and advice

[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

### Childline

Phone support to children and young people

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) **0800 11 11**

Open daily, open 24 hours a day

### CASS Self Injury Helpline

Support to women and girls of any age affected by self-injury

[www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk](http://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk)

**0808 800 8088**

Open: Monday: 7.00-10.00pm

Tuesday-Thursday: 7.00-9.30pm

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS)

Specialist mental health support provided by the NHS for children and young people

[www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/camhs/](http://www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/camhs/)

[nhs.uk/camhs/](http://nhs.uk/camhs/)

Speak to your GP about referring to this service

### Devon Domestic Abuse Support Service - Splitz Support Service

Splitz Support Service is a registered charity delivering support services to adults and young people experiencing the trauma of domestic abuse and sexual violence

[www.splitz.org](http://www.splitz.org)

**0345 155 1074**

Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 4.30pm

### The Hideout

Online help and support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse

[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

### Kidscape

Practical support and advice to challenge bullying and protect young lives.

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

### Parent advice

**020 7823 5430**

[parentsupport@kidscape.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@kidscape.org.uk)

### KOOTH.COM

Online counselling for young people

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Open Monday-Friday: 12.00-10.00pm,

Saturday-Sunday: 6.00-10.00pm

### PAPYRUS

Prevention of young suicide

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

**0800 068 4141** Text: **07860 039967**

Open 9.00am-midnight everyday

### Parent's helpline

**0808 802 5544**

Open Monday-Friday 9:30am-4.00pm

There is also a parents webchat available for support on their website.

### Samaritans

Emotional support over telephone, text and email

Free 24 hour helpline: **116 123**

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### Shout

24/7 confidential text support service for anyone who is struggling to cope

**Text: 85258**

[www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org)

### SPACE: Youth Centres in Devon

Find your local youth service online

[www.spacepsm.org](http://www.spacepsm.org) **01392 662112**

### St Giles Trust

Supporting to build better futures for those who have experience of poverty, exploitation, abuse, addiction, mental health and crime.

[www.stgilestrust.org.uk](http://www.stgilestrust.org.uk)

### Y-SMART

A drug and alcohol support service for under-18s throughout Devon

[www.ysmart.org.uk](http://www.ysmart.org.uk) **0800 121 4751**

### Young Devon

Support for young people through advice, support and services for housing, skills development, mental health and counselling

[www.youngdevon.org](http://www.youngdevon.org)

**Exeter: 01392 331666**

**South Devon: 01626 356720**

### Young Minds

National support for young people's mental health

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

# Let's Talk Teenagers...



The toolkit has been produced by the South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership. If you are interested in finding out more about the Let's Talk programme or would be interested in a local version of the Toolkit please contact [communitysafety@teignbridge.gov.uk](mailto:communitysafety@teignbridge.gov.uk)



## Safer Devon Partnership

[saferdevonpartnership@devon.gov.uk](mailto:saferdevonpartnership@devon.gov.uk)

<https://saferdevon.co.uk>



## Safety and Resilience Consultancy

[safetyandresilienceconsultancy@gmail.com](mailto:safetyandresilienceconsultancy@gmail.com)

LET'S TALK  
TEENAGERS

