

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Every year thousands of children are the victims of modern-day slavery. These children may have been forced to cross international borders, have been groomed into 'county lines' drug trafficking or have faced exploitation in their own communities. Child exploitation involves exploitative situations, contexts, and relationships where young people receive something (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection) because of engaging in some form of usually illegal activity which may or may not include sexual activities (Child Sexual Exploitation).

Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for affection or gifts, to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim which increases as the exploitative relationship develops.

Sexual exploitation involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation, or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying including cyberbullying and grooming. However, it is also important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

If you are concerned about your son, daughter or young person please contact the safeguarding team at school for advice by emailing safeguarding@sjc.ac or calling 020 8761 1426 and request to speak with the DSL or DDSL, call 101, or 999 if it is an emergency, and explore advice given – the links below are good places to start:

www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/child-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines

www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/cse

www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/

County Lines

County lines are illegal drug dealing networks between large urban centres, small towns, and rural locations. Children and young people are coerced, using intimidation, blackmail and violence, to transport and sell drugs, cash and weapons across the country via dedicated mobile phone lines which may be referred to as "deal lines".

Children and young people are at risk if they become caught in county lines networks. To reduce the risk to themselves, the dealers use people they think others will not suspect. Any child or young person on the periphery of drug use, taking drugs, or otherwise encountering drugs, is vulnerable.

Sometimes gangs establish a secure base in the home of a vulnerable person, forcing their cooperation through violence or exploiting a drug dependency. Leaders or dealers can enter relationships with vulnerable young females, which can also lead to sexual exploitation or domestic abuse. Young people can have drugs or money stolen and become indebted, forcing them to continue to cooperate to pay the money back.

If you have any suspicions regarding drug taking or the potential for county lines you should contact the police on 101 (or 999 if you feel someone is in imminent danger) and alert the school safeguarding team immediately.