

GANGS, YOUTH VIOLENCE AND KNIFE CRIME

Gangs and youth violence are a growing problem across the country. Membership of gangs and associated youth violence can have a devastating impact on children and young people and their families.

DEFINITION OF A GANG

A gang is relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group and engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also identify with or lay claim over territory, have some form of identifying structure feature, and/or conflict with other, similar gangs.

VUNERABLE GROUPS

- 🏠 Chaotic home life where children are not priority.
- 🏠 Poor supervision from an early age.
- 🏠 Issues within home (e.g., domestic abuse, mental ill health).
- 🏠 Familial history of offending.
- 🏠 Children with additional needs.
- 🏠 Poor engagement with education.
- 🏠 Poor self-image / self-worth.
- 🏠 Looked after children.
- 🏠 Children who have been permanently excluded from school.






REASONS FOR JOINING A GANG

- 🏠 gangs provide a sense of belonging and purpose.
- 🏠 to get respect / status or power.
- 🏠 for protection.
- 🏠 recruited by other gang members and are pressured to join.
- 🏠 boredom.
- 🏠 poverty.
- 🏠 feeling they will not find a better life or good job.
- 🏠 financial gain (legal or otherwise).

SPOTTING THE SIGNS

- 🏠 aggression and / or non-compliance.
- 🏠 difficulty concentrating.
- 🏠 difficulty developing relationships.
- 🏠 reduction in attendance and /or attainment / missing episodes.
- 🏠 low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety.
- 🏠 self-harm.
- 🏠 substance misuse.
- 🏠 change in behaviour and appearance.
- 🏠 unexplained possessions.
- 🏠 refusal to enter certain areas.
- 🏠 new nickname or starts to use tags/graffiti on books/possessions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

-  Create an environment based on equality and informed choice – provide information to allow pupils to make informed choices. It is well established that success in learning is one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime.
-  Check young people have safe relationships – in their family, with their peers and with your staff. Create the environment where it's ok to talk even about the most difficult things.
-  Contextual approach – be aware of the risks to children and young people in your local area in relation to gangs and youth violence.
-  Spot the signs & know what to do – use the checklists above, your safeguarding procedures and be confident in raising gang and youth violence as a possibility.
-  Take action – and keep taking action until you know they're safe.