THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME OUT TO READ THIS FREE GUIDE, WE HOPE YOU FOUND IT USEFUL.

Care 4 Children work with children, young people and families. We specialise in supporting children who have suffered sexual trauma, through abuse and exploitation, and also children who have been or are on the edge of gang involvement, committing crimes and radicalisation. We are in the process of developing a pioneering gang and radicalisation intervention programme offering safe accomodation and recovery for young people.

If you are viewing this online, you can use the enquiry form below to contact us, to explore what support we can give you and the young people in your care.

Please feel free to visit us at **www.care4children.co.uk**, or call us **0345 521 5155**. Let us help you, to help others

Kamran Abassi, Managing Director

C4C CARE 4 CHILDREN
BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

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PARENT AND CARER GUIDE TO GANG AWARENESS

Radicalisation • Gangs • Exploitation
Intervention • Education • Awareness

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PARENT AND CARER GUIDE TO GANG AWARENESS

Identifying potential gang influences affecting young people

As a result of the increased threats, risks and vulnerabilities facing young people that live in our communities, Care 4 Children have designed this information pack to assist parents, carers and professionals in recognising the potential dangers affecting young people.

Please be aware that the content of this leaflet is for your information only.

This particular guide will not 'cure' gang involvement, it will however supply parents, carers and professionals with information that will allow them to make a more informed decision in relation to recognising and responding to the threats of gang involvement affecting young people in their care.

Remember, gangs are not just about young men and boys, there are increasing numbers of young women and girls becoming involved.

Parents, carers, teachers and other safeguarding professionals have long since played an active role in encouraging young people to stay free from negative influences. However, due in part to a general increase in access to social media and the corresponding access to information and methods of communication, it is becoming more and more difficult to shield young people from potentially harmful and, in some cases, inappropriate or criminal relationships and influences.

Computers and smart-phones are potentially as dangerous to a young person as they are useful, as they can supply an open door to risk and threat as well as general knowledge.

Each topic mentioned, or sign or symptom that you may observe, may not necessarily be indicative of gang involvement. Try not to base your decisions and subsequent responses on one aspect of appearance and behaviour. Remember that the transition between child and teenager can be a difficult and confusing time. Some of the signs discussed in this document may just be indicative of growing up.

Let Care 4 Children help to empower you to make a more informed decision.

WHAT DOES GANG INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Clothing and Colours

Some gangs associate themselves to particular colours, the influence of which has originated from the infamous Los Angeles street gangs named 'Bloodz' (adopting 'Red' as an identifying colour) and their rivals, 'Cripz' (adopting 'Blue' as their signature colour). In the UK today, however, this practice is diminishing as gang related offences committed by identifiable/identified gang members often receive more punitive sentences than non-gang related incidents.

There has been an increasing trend for gang members to wear clothing bearing the name, street name or picture of other gang members that have been killed by rival gangs, especially on the day of the funeral. Many of these t-shirts, if not worn, are retained in wardrobes or mounted on bedroom walls.

WHAT DOES GANG INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Tattoos

Gang names or titles are often referred to by their initials, for example in Manchester there are the Moss Side Bloods- MSB, Old Trafford Cripz- OTC , Fallowfield Man Dem- FMD to name a few. Again, similar to the wearing of colours, should the gang member be discovered bearing his gang name or initials, offences or crimes deemed by the police to be 'gang-related' can potentially be easier to prove, with corresponding punishments greater than non-gang related offences. Many gang tattoos are homemade and therefore there is no age restriction on young people obtaining them. Although gang tattoos in relation the gang names do not seem to be particularly popular, similar to the t-shirts mentioned previously, it is not uncommon for a gang member to have details of a deceased fellow gang member or friend on their body.

Graffiti

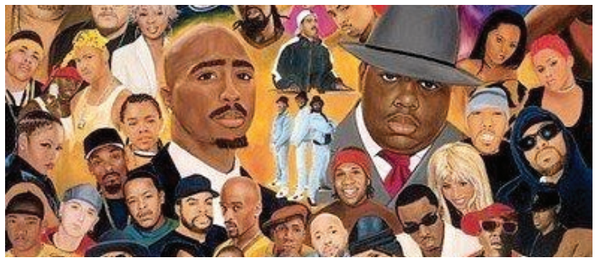
Gangs have always used graffiti, often referred to as 'Tagging' to indicate two things; firstly, this is 'our area' and secondly, 'look what we just did, we left our mark in your area'- this is when gangs 'deploy' into rival gang territory. Tagging is criminal damage and young people involved in this generally are in possession of spraypaint and marker pens. Unfortunately, involvement in 'Tagging' may be hard for carers to recognise, but what could be more apparent is 'home based tagging'. These may include unrecognisable marks or symbols on school books, sketch books or on walls in the young persons bedroom.

WHAT DOES GANG INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Gang Films, Music and Computer / Video Games

This potentially may be a weak indicator of gang involvement, as such 'Proceed with caution!'. Young people having viewed gang related films, listened to the music and/or played such video games, may display an inordinate knowledge of weapons, violence, and use of inappropriate language. Response to such stimuli would be dependant on the age and cognitive ability of the viewer and it would be up to the corresponding carer to explore whether the young person is 'parroting' what they have seen and heard, or are they 'investing and becoming committed to the gang lifestyle'.

Just because a young person watches gang films, listens to 'Gangsta-rap' and plays computer games that involve the use of cyber-violence and weapons, this does not necessarily make them a gang member.



WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIGNS?

Changes in Behaviour – What could this mean?

You know the young person in your care or have information about them. As such you are potentially the best person to make an informed decision as to what their normal base line of acceptable behaviour is. This may differ massively for each young person.

Things to look out for

- For no apparent reason, displaying polarised views in relation to previous friends, activities and hobbies
- Making extreme negative statements about what they used to do and whom they used to associate with, abandoning previous interests and ignoring former friends
- Increase in negative opinions and/or aggressive behaviour aimed at figures of authority such as the police, teachers, parents, carers, social workers and other 'non-gang' individuals
- New friends and peer group (potentially older and from out of area)
- Reluctance or refusal to go to locations previously visited, offering no explanation why
- Becoming withdrawn from usual interaction within family and community
- Becoming secretive, reluctance to speak freely on the telephone, not explaining their whereabouts and activities away from the home or returning home late
- Change of general appearance and clothing, music and media choices
- Unexplained graffiti such as drawings and marks on school books or bedroom walls
- Unexplained injuries, potentially related to assaults either as victim or assailant
- Corresponding damage to clothing
- Possession of weapons and improvised weapons
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Possession of unexplained money and items such as mobile phones and jewellery
- A young person may actually tell you they are in a gang. Take solace from this as opposed to seeing it as a negative- at least you are communicating!
- Dependant on how the young person communicates to you that they are in a gang, will influence your response. Such a statement may be their declaration of allegiance to their chosen gang or conversely, it may be a cry for help, asking for you to acknowledge their problem and for you to support them to get away from the gang

AS A PARENT AND CARER, HOW CAN I RESPOND? WHAT CAN I DO DO?

Don't Panic but Communicate, Communicate & Communicate some more

Ensure that the young person in your care knows that you will support them. Discuss with them what the potential outcome of gang involvement is. This can include physical and sexual violence; death; criminal convictions; prison sentences; drug/alcohol abuse and dependency; limitations on job prospects and limitations on foreign travel.

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING OR GOING TO DO TO SUPPORT THEM. ISOLATE THE BEHAVIOUR NOT THE YOUNG PERSON. USE SUPPORTIVE NOT THREATENING LANGUAGE.

'I will always listen to you and give you the opportunity to tell me what concerns and difficulties you may have.'

'I will always listen to you and want to know what you think about drugs, gangs or anything else that you want to discuss with me.'

'Let's discuss how we can plan to respond to potential dangerous situations, if someone offers you drugs and alcohol or asks you do something that you feel is wrong, what do you think you could do to keep safe?'

'I think that you could say/do.....What do you think?'

'If I cannot help you, I will find someone that can help me....to help you.'

'I will be setting some rules. I need to know where you are and who you are with so that I know you are safe. We can talk about how we can agree on this.'

'I may want to meet some of your friend's parents, especially if you are staying overnight with them. We can talk about how we can agree on this.'

'Time spent with family is important; I want us to spend time together. We can talk about how we can agree on this.'

'I will always listen to you, but it has been a while since I was your age, help me to remember what it can be like, help me to understand what you are going through.'

PLEASE DO YOUR BEST TO:

Not associate with anyone who is in a gang.
Not go to places that gang members or their associates go.
Do not wear clothing that could be intepreted as gang related.