

Gangs Risk Matrix - to identify children and young people who may be affected by gang activity

The purpose of this tool is to act as a prompt to enable statutory and voluntary agencies to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, those children and young people who may be affected by gang activity in order that the most appropriate action can be taken.

Tools such as this can assist in highlighting what to look for and can support decision making but they are no substitute for professional judgement. In some cases a single factor may be enough to warrant further intervention although in most situations a combination of indicators is more reliable. The more YES answers, the more likely the child or young person is to be at risk of, or already involved in, gang activity. The younger the age of the child or young person, the higher is their vulnerability. Older teenagers are also vulnerable and at risk of harm themselves and will experience victimisation and emotional and physical trauma not just from rival gangs but also from within their own gang. Young people in gangs will experience and witness serious levels of violence and intimidation including torture and sexual abuse. Girls who may be in a relationship with a gang member will be at risk from boys in rival gangs.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED THAT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON MAY BE AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM AS A RESULT OF GANG ACTIVITY YOU MUST REFER TO THE MASH

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Vulnerability factor	Indicator	Why is this significant?	Points to consider	YES/NO
<p>1 Offending Behaviour</p>	<p>Possession of cannabis</p>	<p>Possession of cannabis is one of the earliest indicators of possible gang involvement and can be the “hook” used by gangs to influence a young person to join a gang (the so-called “pull”)</p> <p>Children and younger teenagers or more vulnerable older teens are used (as a “mule”) to carry drugs around and/or to sell them because they are less likely to attract police attention. They may be asked to do this in return for some “free” cannabis</p> <p>Don’t assume that if police haven’t charged a young person with supplying drugs that this means they weren’t dealing. The standard of proof for prosecution is high and is not a reliable indicator of a young person’s actual behaviour or motivation</p>	<p>How much cannabis is involved?</p> <p>Is it a small amount that could be just for personal use? On its own, this may not be significant in terms of gang affiliation but young people buying or using cannabis brings them into contact with people who may try and recruit them. If they are vulnerable in other ways, they will be at risk.</p> <p>Larger amounts in separately wrapped packages, perhaps with weighing scales, might suggest the child/young person is selling or carrying drugs? This behaviour is highly likely to be gang related behaviour</p>	<p>YES/NO</p>

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	Robbery	This is a typical gang offence and sometimes used as a test of loyalty or initiation	The child or young person may not be the main perpetrator, they could be there to watch and learn. Any association with this type of offence is likely to be gang-related	YES/NO
	Possession of knife or other weapon	Children and young people carry knives or other weapons to protect themselves and to threaten and intimidate others	This type of offence is likely to be gang-related	YES/NO
2 Family Circumstances <i>Children and young people can be "pushed" towards gangs if they are unhappy at home</i>	Missing or staying away from home or care for more than 24 hours	<p>Belonging to a gang requires a significant time commitment and often involves overnight activity or periods of absence</p> <p>A young person may have little or no choice about where they sleep, how they spend their time, who they are with, where they go and when they are allowed to return home.</p>	<p>Does the parent/carer know where the young person is and whom they are associating with? They may know who they are with but not be happy about it, or not know the address. Alternatively, they may have no idea where they are but have indirect contact through a friend or via social media.</p> <p>How often do they go missing? How long are the absences? How do they present when they return? Are they stressed, or do they look as though they have had fun? Longer periods of absence are of more concern.</p>	YES/NO

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	Supervision and boundaries are inconsistent/parent (carer) is absent/ disinterested/or unable to exert control or influence over the child/young person	<p>Children and young people thrive on positive boundaries and supervision because this demonstrates care</p> <p>Gangs have lots of boundaries, rules, offer protection, help young people to feel “cared-for”, and give them a sense of belonging</p>	<p>Has the parent/carer actually reported the child or young person missing? Are they concerned about them?</p> <p>Is the parent/carer absent from the home for significant periods, through work or social activity, leaving the young person alone, perhaps even overnight?</p> <p>Has the parent/carer expressed concern that they are unable to control their child?</p>	YES/NO
	Children subject to abuse or neglect or from families experiencing domestic violence	Often there will be a history of referrals to/contact with social care	Is there a history of referrals to, or contact with, social care?	YES/NO
	Older sibling involvement in gangs – 8-13 year olds are the group most at risk	Younger siblings are often targeted/groomed by other gang members and can experience bullying and intimidation	All younger siblings of gang members are at risk of gang involvement or of being harmed or affected by their older sibling’s gang membership	YES/NO
3 School	Dips in educational attendance or attainment	Especially where previously attendance and attainment were not a cause for concern	Has the young person started missing school? Are they achieving less than they are capable of? Is this a different pattern of behaviour that previously?	YES/NO

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	Young people placed in alternative education provision such as the Pupil Referral Unit	Gang activity can thrive in some kinds of alternative education provision but it also thrives in mainstream education provision where it is unrecognised, unacknowledged or unaddressed	<p>Is there evidence to suggest that gangs may be recruiting members in the school environment?</p> <p>Is the child or young person associating with known or suspected gang members?</p> <p>Are they wearing or displaying any signs of gang affiliation? Specific colours, clothing, symbols, hand gestures?</p> <p>Is the child or young person scared of going to school?</p>	YES/NO
	Increase in fixed term exclusions especially for physical and verbal abuse at primary school	Children with behavioural/conduct disorder in primary school are especially vulnerable to gang influence	Are the numbers of fixed term exclusions at primary school increasing? What is the reason for them? Are other pupils afraid/wary of this individual?	YES/NO
4 Peers	Associating with known gang members/predominantly pro-criminal peers	The influence of peer groups is well evidenced. Some young people are more able to resist peer influence than others. The more vulnerable an individual, because of other factors, the harder it will be for them to desist.	Are the majority of his/her friends involved in criminal activity? Does s/he spend most of her/his time with pro-offending peers?	YES/NO

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	Girls who associate with male gang members	Girls may be coerced into sexual activity or be used to carry/hide drugs /weapons. They may be a target for other males.	Who is this girl associating with? Are her male friends protecting or abusing her? Does she understand what healthy relationships feel like?	YES/NO
5 Community	Children and young people charged with Possession of Class A Drugs / Possession with Intent to Supply Class A Drugs outside home areas	Gangs organised around the supply of high value drugs will use children and young people to sell drugs further afield. This is because they are less likely to attract police attention. Known as "county lines", Looked After Children are particularly susceptible.	Children and young people who are found or travel far away and are arrested in possession of heroin, cocaine and other Class A drugs, are highly likely to be involved with gangs.	YES/NO
	Living in an area of deprivation and poverty characterized by high level gang activity	There are some postcodes in the borough which carry a higher risk of gang involvement than others.	HA8 is an example of an area in which serious youth violence is more likely to occur. Gang members currently live in HA8, NW9, N3, N2, N12, N20, N11, N10	YES/NO
TOTAL (YES answers)				