

The logo for The Children's Society, featuring the text "The Children's Society" in a serif font, centered within a white rectangular box. This box is part of a larger graphic element consisting of a vertical black bar on the left and a horizontal black bar extending to the right from the white box.

**The
Children's
Society**

Criminal Exploitation and County lines:

***A North East perspective on a
national issue***

Jayne Edwards - Service Manager

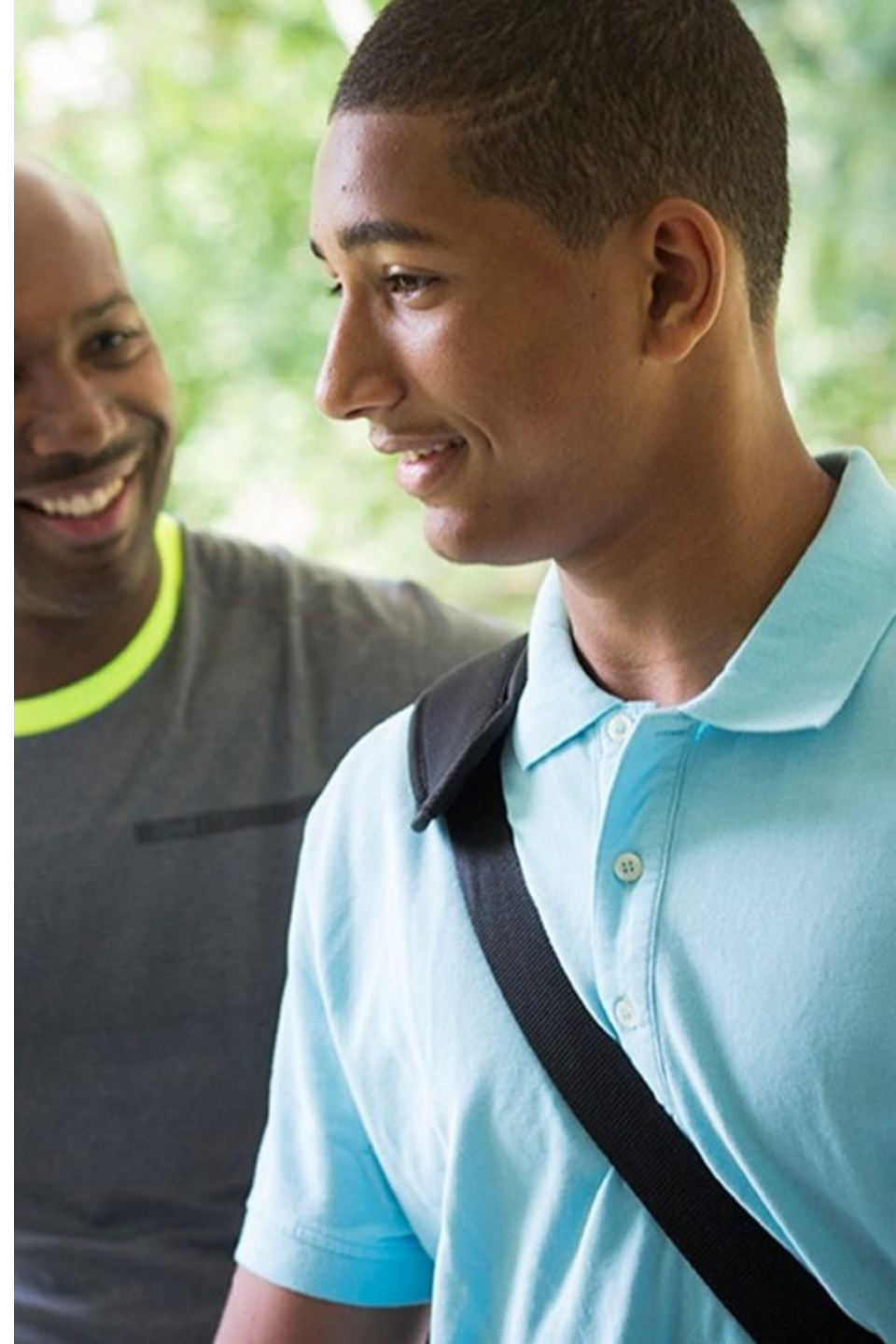
Overview

The Children's Society (TCS) is a National Charity that works in various areas to focus on 'disrupting exploitation' in its various forms.

Within the North East we are working both on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Much of our work incorporates contextual safeguarding approaches that allow us to work, within a multi agency partnership, directly with young people or through intervention with the 'systems' around a young person.

Our aim is for individuals, communities, organisations & systems to understand 'Child Criminal Exploitation' in order to safeguard young people with greater confidence and ability.



What is Exploitation?

The act of benefitting from someone's work or actions at the expense of that person.

Child Sexual Exploitation

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for

(a) something the victim needs or wants

and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

Statutory Definition of CSE – February 2016

Child Criminal Exploitation

“Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

Home Office County Lines Guidance September 2018

*“When someone you trusted makes you
commit crimes for their benefit.”*

D, aged 12

County Lines

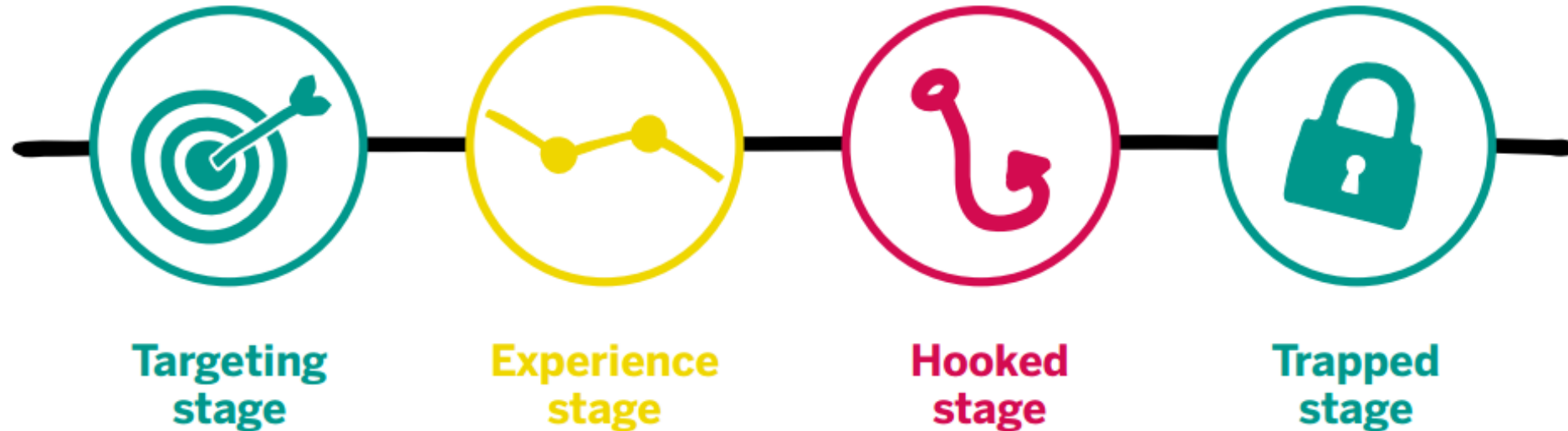
- Drug dealers from big cities expand their operations to smaller towns, often using violence to drive out local dealers and exploiting children and vulnerable people to sell drugs.
- These dealers will use dedicated mobile phone lines, known as 'deal lines', to take orders from drug users.
- In most instances, the users or customers will live in a different area to where the dealers and networks are based, so drug runners are needed to transport the drugs and collect payment.

Criminal Exploitation: Stages of Recruitment

Children At Risk of Exploitation (CARE)

There are a number of different stages that people and gangs use when they're trying to exploit you. Knowing what these stages of recruitment are, and what signs to look out for, can help you keep yourself safe from exploitation.

There are four main recruitment stages when somebody is trying to exploit you:



Created by young people – CCE grooming



Targeting stage

This is when a person targets a young person who is vulnerable, as this reduces their chances of getting caught. **Signs of this stage include a person:**

- * Observing you, finding out your vulnerabilities, needs and wants
- * Glamourising their lifestyle to you
- * Gaining and developing your trust
- * Sharing information about you with other members of their gang
- * Recruiting you to their gang or friendship group

Experience stage

This stage is where this person might try to get you used to their lifestyle, or train you up in what they're doing. **At this stage a person might:**

- * Make you feel wanted
- * Give you gifts and rewards
- * Test out your loyalty
- * Offer you protection
- * Relate to you and offer you advice
- * Give you a sense of belonging
- * Give you a weapon
- * Introduce you to more established members of their gang

Hooked stage

This is the stage where the person will make you feel like you're a member of their gang, even though actually they're just exploiting you for their own gain. **Signs of this stage include a person:**

- * You getting more responsibilities within the group eg more money
- * You might be asked to commit low level crimes
- * You might feel more powerful (although this may not be the reality)
- * Exposure of possible consequences to your actions
- * Engaging in activities such as drugs, alcohol and sexual behaviour

Trapped stage

Now you feel dependant on the group, the relationship with the person exploiting you may start to become unpleasant, as they reveal their true intents or character. **At this stage you may experience:**

- * Threatening behaviour and physical violence
- * People playing on your guilt, shame and fear
- * Attempts to isolate you from your family, friends and society
- * People forcing you to abuse others, assault or even shoot people
- * Involvement in Class A drugs (cooking or running)

Risk Factors of Exploitation

We see in our work the commonality of risk factors across different forms of exploitation, including:

Lack of a safe home environment (e.g. domestic violence or parental substance misuse)

Being in care or on the edge of care

Children who go missing from home or care

Prior experience of neglect, physical and/ or sexual abuse

Children who have been excluded from mainstream education

Economic vulnerability; including homelessness, destitution/insecure accommodation/ immigration status

Connections with gangs; or a lack of connection or barrier to positive peer relations or positive aspects of a community.

Having a physical or learning disability

Having mental health or substance misuse issues

Practical Tips on Responding to CCE

- Child Criminal Exploitation is a Child Protection issue- always follow your local safeguarding procedures
- Consider the strengths around the young persons context – does the young person have any existing positive relationships which we can build upon to provide understanding and support?
- Do you have any information or insight to share or access that we could consider as ‘intelligence’ that will help inform a safeguarding response?
- Listen to the young person and how they might describe criminal exploitation or what is happening to them in their terms
- Continue to use appropriate language in practice, ensuring that CCE is framed accurately
- Consider the context that CCE occurs in and that young people often have multiple vulnerabilities
- Remember, CCE often involves trafficking of young people – if you have suspicions that a young person is being trafficked for the purpose of exploitation, you should make a NRM referral (National Referral Mechanism).

As told by young person

“I was scared, they were older than me and I knew their reputation so I knew I couldn't do anything about it. So I stayed for another two weeks without a bath and not leaving that place apart from selling the drugs.”- ‘Andre’,
16, speaking to ITV News

[Alfie's story:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV_EbjNklec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV_EbjNklec)

Thank You

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