

Where's the Harm?

A Guide for Parents
keeping your child safe.



In Partnership with



FOREWORD

Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire

Protecting children and young people in Lancashire is a key priority for me as part of my commitment to supporting vulnerable people and creating safe and confident communities across the county. We all have a part to play in making sure our young people have the knowledge they need to stay safe and that we as parents and carers know what we can do to support them.

By working together we can improve the well-being of our young people, reduce anti-social behaviour and make our communities safer for everyone. Our police officers work hard to protect children and young people every day and a lot of work goes into crime prevention to help equip children with the skills needed to protect themselves.

For those that have been affected by crime, harassment and bullying I have set up Nest Lancashire, a specialist service to support young people and help them recover from whatever it is they have experienced.

This booklet has been produced to provide you with information that will help keep your children or those in your care safe from harm.

Educating young people about risks and consequences is important to their continued safety and well-being and I hope that you find the information useful in discussing the issues covered with young people in your care.

Thank you

Clive Grunshaw – Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner



CRIME

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WHERE'S THE HARM - ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

It's important to remember that not all young people will experiment with or misuse alcohol and drugs. Many do not and for those that do, not all will come to any direct harm as a result. However, for some young people it can impact significantly on their health and wellbeing. Research shows that cannabis and alcohol are the most commonly used illicit substances by young people.

Most young people say that they would speak to their parents to get information about alcohol and drugs. So it is important for you to know where you can go to access up-to-date information on the various substances that are out there. This will help you answer any difficult questions your child may ask.

It is important to let them know that while you may not approve, they can always talk to you about any worries they may have.

Keeping your child safe around alcohol

Teenagers like to test boundaries, drinking alcohol is often a way of doing this. So it is important to set some rules around your child's use of alcohol.

Some parents allow their children to drink small amounts of alcohol in supervised situations at family celebrations or house parties and some parents are not aware that their children are drinking alcohol unsupervised.

Drinking alcohol can increase the risk of your child getting into trouble or hurting themselves or others.

Lots of young people with alcohol are stopped by the police at weekends. They have told their parents they are at a sleepover at a friend's house, when they are not where they say they are and are often in risky situations.



Do you know where your child is and who they are with?

Have you checked any sleepover arrangements?

Have you or other parents given them alcohol for the evening?

Make sure your child knows that it is important that you are always able to contact them on their mobile.

Encourage them to always travel home in groups and never leave anyone to walk home alone.

Remind them to always keep money for bus or taxi fare home and to never rely on a friend, who has been drinking, to get them home.

Tell them that it is ok to call 999, if they need to, and encourage them to get adult help if a friend becomes ill, very drowsy or unconscious, through drinking alcohol.

Drug use – What are the signs

To avoid making assumptions or worrying unnecessarily, it can be useful to be able to recognise the signs that your child may be taking drugs.

The following signs don't necessarily mean your child is taking drugs, but could be worth looking out for.

Is your child:

- mixing with new friends who may use drugs?
- experiencing mood swings?
- behaving badly or showing a bad attitude?
- not sleeping properly and getting up very late?
- being secretive or evasive about where they're going and what they're doing?
- having problems in school, like poor performance or absences?

Other potential signs of drug use are:

- poor hygiene or appearance
- staying out late
- falling out with old friends, hanging out with a new crowd
- loss of appetite
- drowsiness
- red-rimmed eyes and/or a runny nose
- an uncharacteristic loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends
- money going missing regularly for no apparent reason
- unusual equipment found in the house, such as burnt foil or torn cigarette packets

If you're worried your child is using drugs, the best thing to do is sit down and have a calm and honest conversation with them.

Young Addaction deliver drug and alcohol services for young people across Lancashire. For more information email lancashireinfo@addaction.org.uk

For more information

Look at: www.youthhealthtalk.org.uk
 visit: www.alcoholeducationtrust.org
 Young Addaction www.addaction.org.uk
 Talk to Frank www.talktofrank.com
 Mentor UK www.mentoruk.org.uk
 Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

**Courtesy of Drinkaware
and Talk to Frank**



WHERE'S THE HARM - KNIFE CRIME

Whilst many young people do not carry knives it is useful for you and your child to be aware of the issues. Consequences of being found in possession of a knife are serious & long lasting, affecting education, employment & travel opportunities but most importantly the threat to life.

Some young people carry weapons because they feel it will provide protection or increase the respect they are given by their friends but the sad fact is that they are more likely to become victims of serious violence.

What you need to know

It is illegal to carry any knife even if the knife belongs to someone else, such as a friend or a boyfriend / girlfriend. Girls sometimes carry or store weapons for their boyfriends or other male friends because they believe they are less likely to be stopped by the police.

Police can and will search someone if they believe they are carrying a knife. Both the police and school staff can also search young people for weapons at school. Carrying a knife could mean being arrested, going to court and ending up with a criminal record or even a prison sentence.

Having a criminal record can prevent your child getting a job, going to university or college or even travelling abroad to some countries.

If someone is injured or killed by a knife in your child's presence they could be prosecuted even if it's not them that uses it. They could be sent to prison for murder in what is referred to as '**joint enterprise**'.



CRIME

What to do if you are concerned.

If your child makes you aware of concerns they have about other young people in their school or community, you can make a report to the police directly by calling **101** Or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111** or via **www.crimestoppers-uk.org**

Most young people decide they need to start carrying a knife because they feel threatened.

Signs to look out for that may suggest your child is feeling this way are;

- school's not going well / they don't want to go in to school at all
- they have been a recent victim of theft/bullying/mugging
- a different network of friends who may be older than your child.

Remind your child that they should always walk away if confronted with the threat of violence.

There are many organisations out there willing to help if you have concerns about your child.

For more information

About knife possession,
www.direct.gov.uk/talkaboutknives

Useful Contacts:

NEST Lancashire (victim support) For young people who have been affected by crime.
www.nestlancashire.org

WHERE'S THE HARM – CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

Criminal Exploitation is when individuals or gangs target children and force them to carry out criminal activity such as dealing drugs, stealing or committing violent acts often involving weapons.

Children who are being criminally exploited will usually be subject to physical violence and threats. Parents often aren't even aware it's happening. If you think your child is being exploited it's important to know that you are not alone and not to blame.

You should report your concerns to Children's Social Care or the NSPCC's helpline on **0808 800 5000**, or to the police using their non-emergency number. If you feel your child is in immediate danger then call the police on **999**.

If your child isn't where they are supposed to be, report them missing straight away on 101. You do not have to wait 24 hours.

There may be other evidence that your child is being exploited, such as interactions on social media, unexplained money or phones, clothing or gifts and changes in behaviour.

Try to speak to your child then let them know they aren't in trouble – and that you're worried about them. Remember that there may be threats made against you or your family by the people exploiting your child. Your child may believe that they are protecting you. Let your child know that you know about this risk and that it is not their responsibility to protect you.

If they don't want to talk to you, let them know that they can always call ChildLine on **0800 1111** or Get Connected on **0808 808 4994** (text 80849).



Courtesy of The Children's Society

An emerging threat across Lancashire is criminal exploitation known as **'county lines'**. This is when gangs and organised crime networks groom and exploit children to sell drugs. Children are made to travel across counties, and they use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs.

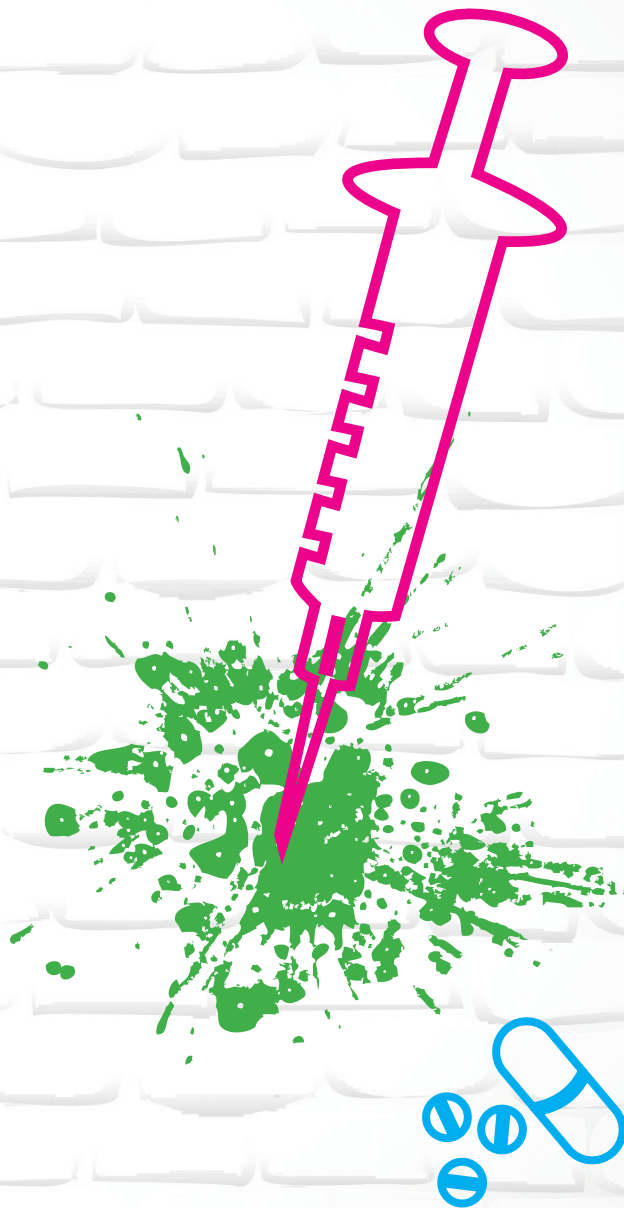
These gangs deliberately target young & vulnerable children who they know are easy to manipulate & control. They groom them into trafficking their drugs for them with promises of money, friendship and status. Once they've been drawn in, these children are controlled using threats, violence and sexual abuse, leaving them traumatised and living in fear.

What are the signs of criminal exploitation and county lines?

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

See page 15 for contact details for more information

Courtesy of Lancashire Constabulary



WHERE'S THE HARM - CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual exploitation affects thousands of children every year. It is a form of sexual abuse where a young person is manipulated, or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay.

Spotting the signs of sexual exploitation

Children and young people often do not realise that they are being exploited. There are a number of signs that a child is being groomed.

Signs to look out for:

- A sudden change in behaviour / or the way they look.
- Going missing or regularly coming home late
- Regularly missing school.
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions.
- Getting constant messages on their phone.
- Being more secretive with their phone, not allowing you to look at it.
- Having older boyfriends / girlfriends.
- Misusing drugs and alcohol.
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
- Use of 'street' language.

Steps you can take:

- Stay alert to behavioural changes or physical signs of abuse such as bruising.
- Monitor late nights out and any unexplained belongings.
- Limit their access to money.
- Understand online risks and try to minimise them.
- Use the parental controls software provided by your internet service provider and keep passwords confidential.
- Use applications such as **'find my friend'** to ensure you know your child's whereabouts.



WHERE'S THE HARM

Understanding online risks: Technology and social media is often used to target and locate vulnerable children. Mobile phones can provide a direct link to a child to start the grooming process.

What can you do:

- Make sure you have a good understanding of the technology your child uses.
- Ask the experts - get your child to explain what apps they use, what they do and why they like them.
- Stay up to date with privacy settings, help them stay in control of their profile.
- Talk to your child about what they share, who they talk to and how they know their online friends.
- Encourage them to think about their online safety.

For more information

For more platform-specific advice, including game consoles, check out www.childnet.com

Report online grooming behavior to:
www.ceop.police.uk

You can also find out more about the apps your child uses from the NSPCC's excellent NetAware site at: www.net-aware.org.uk

Safeguarding pages for Parents and Carers:
www.lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk/online-safeguarding/parents-and-carers.aspx



WHERE'S THE HARM - SEXTING

It may feel awkward, but it's important to explain to children the risks of sexting, how to stay safe and remind them that they can talk to you if something ever makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.

What is sexting?

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages.

Why do young people sext?

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi – naked picture, video or message to someone else.

- Joining in because they think that *'everyone is doing it'*.
- Boosting their self confidence.
- Flirting with others and testing their sexual identity.
- Exploring their sexual feelings.
- To get attention and connect with new people on social media.

They may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent.

Childline have developed a useful tool to support young people who may feel pressured into sending inappropriate images. - 'Zipit' helps young people to stay in control and get flirty chat back on track.

For more information

Search for Zipit App – Childline



WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF SEXTING?

Young people may think 'sexting' is harmless but it can leave them vulnerable to;

Blackmail: An offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends money or more images.

Bullying: If images are shared with their friends as a result the child may be bullied.

Unwanted attention: Images posted online can attract the attention of sex offenders, who know how to search for, collect and alter these images.

Emotional distress: Children can feel embarrassed and humiliated. If they are very distressed this could lead them to self-harm or attempted suicide.

How to talk to your child about sexting

- Explain your rules of having a mobile, tablet or smartphone.
- Ask them what they feel is acceptable to send to people, if they'd be happy for you or a stranger or other children to see certain photos. If the answer is 'no', explain that the image, video or message is probably not appropriate to send.

- Make sure they are comfortable saying no and that they know their body is private and being asked to share explicit images is inappropriate.
- Tell them what can happen when things go wrong. Do not accuse them of sexting, but do explain the dangers and legal issues.
- Make sure they know that you are always there for support if they feel pressured by anyone.
- Explain that they can come to you if someone asks to send them a nude picture or if they receive an explicit message.
- Let them know that you won't be angry with them, you are making sure they are safe and happy.

For more information

Search for:

Dont fall for it - Say No

George's Story

Anna's Story

Teaser

Courtesy of NSPCC

GROOMING



We Are With You Lancashire — Support Services

We provide free and confidential support to young people, under 25, experiencing issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health. We help young people achieve their goals, whether that's staying safe and healthy, making changes or reducing harm.

As part of our service we:

- Work one to one and in groups with young people to address their own substance or alcohol misuse
- Deliver group work sessions with young people in schools, colleges and youth groups etc.
- Train professionals, parents, and foster carers on substance misuse and the wider risks associated
- Address a range of issues that impact on the young person and affect their resilience e.g. smoking, self-harm, emotional health and wellbeing
- Support families and carers

CONTACT DETAILS:

Email – spoc.yalancs@wearewithyou.org.uk

YP Freephone Number – **0808 164 0074**

Central Office

Ringway House,
Percy Street, Preston,
PR1 1HQ
01772 281495

North Office

YMCA, Fleet Square,
Lancaster
LA1 1EZ
01524 239570

East Office

CVS, 62-64 Yorkshire Street,
Burnley, BB11 3BT
01282 505037

www.wearewithyou.org.uk

lancashireinfo@wearewithyou.org.uk

www.facebook.com/wearewithyoulancs

Twitter: [@WAWYLancs](https://twitter.com/WAWYLancs)

VICTIM

WHAT IS LANCASHIRE DOING?

NEST Lancashire (victim support) has been set up to support young people 10-18 who have been affected by crime, bullying or threats of harassment. They offer emotional support and practical help through one to one support or group sessions.

There are dedicated teams across Lancashire from different organisations to help victims escape the cycle of abuse.

They work closely with young people who are being exploited and to find ways of helping them to break free from the position they find themselves in.

How can I get help or find out more?

Anyone with concerns about child sexual exploitation can contact police on 101. In an emergency always dial 999.

For more information

Operation Awaken – covers Blackpool, Fylde, Lancaster, Morecambe & Wyre

01253 477 261

email: awaken@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Operation Engage – covers Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Pendle and Rossendale

01254 353 525

email: engage@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Operation Deter – covers Preston, Chorley, South Ribble, West Lancs

01772 209 122

email: deterteam@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

NEST Lancashire

www.nestlancashire.org

Where's the Harm



**Lancashire
Constabulary**
police and communities together



Lancashire
County Council

