

Criminal Exploitation & County Lines Policy

Secondary School Safeguarding Policy Supplement

1. Policy Statement

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and 'County Lines' involvement are severe safeguarding issues. This policy outlines our procedures for identifying, reporting, and supporting students who are victims of, or at risk from, criminal exploitation.

2. Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of a imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may be forced or led into criminal activity (e.g., drug dealing, money laundering, carrying weapons) for the financial or physical benefit of the exploiter.

County Lines refers to a specific form of CCE where urban criminal gangs expand their drug trafficking operations into suburban, rural, or coastal areas, using dedicated mobile phone lines ('deal lines') and exploiting children to transport and sell illicit goods.

3. Secondary School Warning Signs & Triggers

Staff must remain vigilant for indicators that a secondary-age student may be involved in or targeted for exploitation. These include:

- **Unexplained Absences:** Frequent truancy, missing school for entire days, or arriving late without valid reason.
- **Possession of Unexplained Items:** Having multiple mobile phones, significant amounts of cash, expensive clothing, or luxury goods they cannot afford.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Increased aggression, secretive behaviour, anxiety, emotional withdrawal, or use of street slang associated with drug culture.
- **Academic Decline:** Sudden, drastic drops in grades, lack of engagement, or extreme fatigue during lessons.
- **Altered Relationships:** Associating with older, unfamiliar individuals or groups, or spending time with known vulnerable peers.
- **Physical Indicators:** Unexplained injuries, signs of substance abuse, or carrying weapons/harmful items.

4. Reporting Procedures

All staff have a statutory duty to report any concerns regarding criminal exploitation immediately.

1. **Notice:** Recognise any of the warning signs or receive a disclosure from a student.
2. **Record:** Log the detailed facts immediately on CPOMS
3. **Report:** Verbally inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL immediately.
4. **Action:** The DSL will assess the threat and coordinate with external agencies, such as Children's Social Care and the police.

5. Prevention, Curriculum & Digital Safety

The school proactively builds resilience against exploitation through targeted education:

- **PSHE Curriculum:** Lessons explicitly covering grooming, peer pressure, healthy relationships, and the realities of gang networks.
- **Digital Safety:** Educating students on how criminal networks recruit via social media, gaming lobbies, and encrypted messaging apps.
- **Support Systems:** Promoting safe spaces, mentoring, and accessible reporting channels for students to voice concerns anonymously.