

Serious violence (tackling gang culture and abuse)

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Introduction

Gang culture is growing in the UK, with young people increasingly joining gangs and at risk of serious violence. Gangs are usually made up of networks who use coercion and violence to manipulate, groom and exploit those involved. These networks are usually involved in criminal activity such as trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime.

Gang culture and abuse

Young people can be victims of violence or pressured into doing things like stealing or carrying drugs or weapons. They can be abused, exploited and put into dangerous situations.

Vulnerable young people may have chaotic lifestyles and complex backgrounds which may put them at risk of recruitment into gangs and involvement in serious violence. They may join a gang because they feel they need protection and don't see any other option.

Spotting the signs

Changes in a young person's behaviour may indicate they are in a gang or are at risk of serious violence. Signs to look for:

- Missed appointments. Are they guarded about why they have missed their appointment, what they were doing, who they were seeing?
- Multiple mobile phones. Do they receive excessive amounts of calls or texts during their appointment? Are they secretive about who is calling or messaging?
- Unexplained signs of wealth. Are they unwilling to explain how they got items such as expensive clothes, trainers or phones?
- Gone missing for periods of times? Has this impacted their engagement with the Jobcentre?
- Wary of going to certain places. Do they appear scared or anxious?
- Isolated from friends or family.
- Unexplained marks or injuries. Has there been any major changes in their mood or confidence?

See Protecting claimants at risk

Support for claimants

Young people involved with gangs and at risk of serious violence need help and support.

Where a claimant is identified, DWP can provide this help and support through:

- early access to the Work and Health Programme
- the Youth Offer.

For information on Gangs and tackling gang culture and abuse, refer to your District Provision tool.