

Serious violence: tackling gang culture and abuse: Guidance

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Introduction

Gang culture is growing in the UK, with young people increasingly joining gangs and being 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
- 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 involved or at risk of being involved in gangs or serious violence. Signs to look for are:

- missed appointments: are they guarded about why they have missed their appointment, what they were doing and who they were seeing?
- use of an interpreter (family members or friends) who may display signs of coercive and controlling behaviour (see Speakers of other languages: Guidance)

- multiple mobile phones: do they receive excessive amounts of calls or texts during their appointment and are they secretive about who is calling or messaging?
- unexplained signs of wealth: are they unwilling to explain how they obtained items such as expensive clothes, trainers or phones?
- gone missing for periods of times: has this impacted on 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 identified as being involved or at risk of being involved in gangs or serious violence need help and support.

Where a claimant is identified as being at such risk, DWP can provide help and support through:

- early access to the Work and Health Programme and Pioneer
- the Youth Offer
- consideration of alternative appointment channels such as video or phone appointments if a claimant is unable to attend a jobcentre

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