

BASILDON BOROUGH CRUCIAL CREW 2024

SAFERBASILDON

Working together for a safer borough

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER BOROUGH
Basildon • Billericay • Wickford • Pitsea • Laindon

Crucial Crew delivers important community safety messages to provide you with the information to make informed choices, hopefully for years to come.

If you/your child has attended a Crucial Crew session you will have learnt about vaping, respect, anti-social behaviour, and gang awareness all delivered by officers from Children's Society, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, and Reach Every Generation.

If you haven't attended a Crucial Crew session, this booklet can still provide you with lots of useful information on each of the above topics along with information on grooming and healthy relationships and is something you can use and refer in the future to help you make safe and informed choices as you get older and move into Secondary School.

Crucial Crew Project Team

On behalf of Safer Basildon Partnership

VAPING

WHAT IS VAPING?

Vaping is when someone uses an electronic cigarette that simulates tobacco smoking. Vapes consist of a heating element which vaporises liquid so the user inhales vapour instead of smoke. Vapes can be either disposable or reusable.

What is inside a vape?

- Vapes will contain the following:
- An internal battery
- A coil which heats the liquid into vapour
- A cartridge which holds 2ml of E-liquid (The legal limit)
- E-liquid contains nicotine, propylene glycol and food grade flavouring.
- Diacetyl has been banned in the UK but is still used in other countries to make E-liquid.

If you are vaping, chances are you are ingesting the following products:

- Rat poison
- Perfume
- De-icer
- Toilet cleaner
- Metal

CHEMICALS

Propylene glycol, vegetable, or a mixture of both, are the main ingredients in E-liquids. They are what gives the vapes their different flavours and tastes. They are aerosolised to resemble smoke and serve as carriers for substances. It is often found in perfumes, antifreeze and in the food and plastics industry. These are chemicals that are foreign to your body and not meant to be inhaled into your lungs.

If someone vapes, they may cough after a vape and taste the flavour of it within the cough. This is the glycol or glycerine settling into the bottom of their lungs once the vapour has evaporated. This can coat your lungs and lead to breathing and lung problems. Fluid in the lungs can lead to temporary and long-term diseases and infections.

WHAT IS NICOTINE?

Nicotine is a highly addictive substance that is derived from plant alkaloid, which releases artificial stimulants and serotonin (the happy hormone) into your brain while also being in your blood stream.

The brain

Did you know that your brain is not fully developed until you reach the age of 25. Adding something like an addiction to nicotine to your brain while it is still developing, can have negative effects such as disrupting your brains normal activities, which can affect your memory, emotions, and even your problem solving. You need your brain for revision, schoolwork and even socialising, it is really important to give them the best chance of development that we can, addiction is not something that will help.

Addiction

Just because people do not feel like they are, does not mean that they have not fallen into an addiction. Using our checklist below, these are some common symptoms that people feel when they are addicted.

- Irritable when they don't have a vape.
- Coughing
- Wanting to spend less time around family and friends so they can vape.
- Feeling 'woozy' or 'out of your head'
- Shaking
- Headaches
- Increased appetite when they do not have the vape.
- Increase in skin break outs.
- Feeling sick
- A lack of emotional control / feeling big emotions
- Changing plans so they can find a way to get / buy a vape.



THE LAW

In the UK it is illegal to sell vapes and e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of eighteen.

Vapes should only be sold in the UK with a maximum of '600 puffs. Anything over 600, can put too much pressure on the battery, use of it can cause the battery itself to break, this could lead to device explosions, breakage or even the device 'spitting' the liquid into your mouth causing you to drink the liquid.

THE COST

The average vape costs around £6.00 each, with most usage, vapes last around a day;

- One day costs £6.00
- One-week costs £42.00 (£6.00 x 7)
- One-month costs £186.00 (£6.00 x 31)
- One-year costs £2,190.00 (£6.00 x 365)
- What would you prefer to spend that money on?

QUITTING

Quitting vapes can be really difficult. It may take some time to get rid of some of the symptoms that quitting can give you such as headaches. Some people like to decrease the amount they smoke before they finally quit. Quitting plans are based completely on what works best for you. Make sure you have people around you who will give you help and support.

You can contact the Children's Society on 01245 493311 to speak to someone from Safe in Essex about some support. Alternatively, you can speak to your GP who can help.

RESPECT AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

WHAT IS RESPECT?

Respect is caring enough to consider how words and actions impact on others.

Having respect is when you feel good about someone because of how they act.

Showing respect is when you care how your actions impact others.

Ways of showing respect to others:

- Being kind
- Listening
- Showing gratitude (saying please and thank you)
- Saying sorry when you need to
- Offering to help others.
- Being on time
- Compliment the achievements of others.
- Accepting people for who they are

WHAT IS RACISM?

Racism is when people are treated unfairly because of their colour or ethnicity.

Discrimination is when a group of people are treated differently and unfairly because of who they are. The reasons for discrimination could be things like skin colour, belief, or gender.

Prejudice is when opinions are formed about people before we know them. Prejudice is usually negative. For example, deciding that a teenager you see across the street will be rude.

What might we describe as racist behaviour:

- Name calling
- Making fun of people
- Excluding people from things
- Threatening people
- Physical violence or harassment

WHAT IS A HATE CRIME?

Hate crime is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of the following protected characteristics:

- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Transgender identity

If someone is unkind to another person because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or transgender identity the police may become involved.

How might this make the someone feel:

- Sad or Scared
- Feel left out from their friends.
- Low self-esteem
- Insecure
- Nobody likes them.
- Angry
- Confused
- Stressed
- Not wanting to go to school.

If you see someone being unkind, teased, hurt, or bullied because of their race, religion, disability, who they choose to love or how they choose to identify, you must tell a teacher, parent, the police, or an adult you trust. Remember, it is never right to say unkind things to another person.

If you have been a victim of hate crime, tell a trusted adult such as your parent/ carers, teacher, or family member. You can also speak to Child Line on **0800 1111**.

WHAT IS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR?

Anti-social behaviour is any conduct that has caused, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.

Types of anti-social behaviour:

- Shouting, swearing, and fighting.
- Verbal abuse
- Abusive behaviour aimed at causing distress or fear to certain people for example, elderly or disabled people.
- Riding your bike or skating in an inconsiderate or careless way
- Anti-social drinking
- Animal nuisance, including dog fouling, dogs barking and being aggressive to people.
- Vandalism, graffiti and causing damage.

Did you know the age of criminal responsibility is 10, this means that you should know the difference between right and wrong and will be held accountable for your actions, you may also be arrested by the police, or be issued any of the following;

Young people can also be issued:

- Criminal Behaviour Orders, issued by the Magistrates Court
- Restrictions on where you can go.
- Curfews
- Expectations to attend counselling sessions.
- Expectations to attend further education (around behaviour change)

Remember, always treat others the way you would want to be treated and be respectful when you are using public spaces such as town centres, or parks and open spaces.

GANGS/ COUNTY LINES

WHAT IS A GANG?

A street gang are groups of people who see themselves, or are seen by others, as a group who engage in criminal activity and violence, lay claim to a specific territory, have some form of structure, and engage with conflict. Gang members are usually involved in illegal activities such as carrying weapons, dealing drugs, stealing cars and other property, and committing acts of violence.

What are County Lines?

County lines are a form of criminal exploitation and is the term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involving the movement of illegal drugs from one area to another, using dedicated mobile phone lines or deal lines. They are likely to exploit young people to committing crime using coercion, intimidation, and violence.

Many young people may not realise they are in a gang or involved in a county line and may just think they are with a group of friends. However, young people join gangs for several reasons such as:

- Recognition, respect and/or power
- Excitement
- Acceptance and/or belonging.
- To make friends
- Protection from bullies or other gangs
- Money

The reality of being in a gang is very different and comes with a lot of potentially harmful and life altering risks.



RISKS OF BEING INVOLVED WITH GANGS

Young people involved in gangs are more likely to be victims of physical violence, drug use, and gun and knife crimes. Gang involvement increases the risk of young people being arrested, having to go to court, being put on probation and even going to jail. Major risk factors associated with youth gang involvement include:

- Criminal activity
- Illegal gun/knife possession
- Drug handling
- Anti-social attitudes
- Aggression
- Alcohol and drug use
- Early sexual activity
- Violent victimisation
- Poor school performance
- Poor relationships with peers and parents/carers
- Pressure to do things that you might not want to do



GROOMING PROCESSES

Gangs often use a grooming process to encourage young people to join their gangs, and this is explained more in the next section. They will earn a young person's trust over a period of time and will then use this trust to get what they want. This can be anything from carrying money to travelling short or long distances to carry and deliver drugs, carrying out attacks on people or other criminal activity.

Potential signs of gang involvement

Some of the signs to look out for if you are worried about a friend or young person are listed below;

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing for days or weeks at a time.
- Being found in areas away from home, especially areas where they have never travelled alone before.
- Increasing the use of drugs or having a large quantity of drugs when they don't use drugs themselves.
- Being secretive about where they are going and who with.
- Having new clothes, jewellery, or phones which they can't usually afford or large amounts of cash.
- Unexplained injuries.

It is often easy to believe that girls aren't involved with gangs, and it is mostly a male environment, however this isn't true. Girls are often involved in gangs whether their boyfriends are part of one, or they are involved themselves. There are specific risks to girls, such as: high risk of being sexually victimised, involved in abusive relationships, early sexual activity.

PREVENTION FROM JOINING GANGS

To avoid becoming involved in a gang and the associated criminal activity, try and follow some of the prevention tips below, as being in a gang can have devastating consequences for the rest of your life:

- Avoid people who you know are in gangs or involved with them.
- Most people who are involved in gangs drop out of school. Staying in school gives you the chance to live up to your potential and explore different possibilities.
- Join a sports team or a club. Try a new hobby like drawing or photography. Joining teams and club means you meet new people all of which have a common interest that you can enjoy together.
- Be strong! - Do not let anyone pressure you into joining a gang. If you feel like you are being pressured, then talk to an adult you can trust or contact one of the helpline numbers in this booklet.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IF THEY ARE INVOLVED IN A GANG

If you are worried about a friend whose behaviour may have recently changed or you know they are hanging around with people that they normally wouldn't, then try and follow the tips below:

- Offer to hang out with your friend. Ask them to join a sports team or get involved in another group activity with you.
- Tell your friend how you feel. It is okay to say that you are worried or scared for them.
- Tell your friend to talk to someone they trust. This person should not be a gang member.
- Be patient and supportive, and make sure your friends knows that you will be there for them when they need it.
- Talk to a youth officer or teacher and ask for help. A trusted adult can help you deal with this situation

GROOMING

WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when someone builds a connection and an emotional bond with a young person in order to gain their trust over a period of time and then uses it to exploit the young person. This can happen online or in the real world and this section will help you learn more about this process and how to protect yourself against these types of relationships.

WHY YOU MIGHT BE AT RISK?

A person that wants to form this relationship is known as a 'groomer' and a 'groomer' can be anyone – friend, family member, sports coach, or faith group leader. They often look for certain things that will make it easier for them to make friends with a young person, such as:

- A young person using the internet or social media to chat and make friends.
- A young person that maybe doesn't have a good relationship with their family and/or friends.
- A young person that doesn't attend school regularly.
- A young person that isn't very confident or isn't happy with themselves.
- A young person that may be going through a hard experience such as moving home, a loss in the family, changing schools.



DIFFERENT STAGES

Grooming is a process with certain stages, in order for a young person to build trust within the relationship, this can take a few weeks or a few years. It is important that you can recognise the signs to look out, so you are better able to protect yourself in the future:

Stage 1 – Meeting someone new

A groomer will find a young person either online or they could speak to a young person in a public place such as outside a school, on public transport or in a fast-food restaurant.

Stage 2 – First contact

A groomer may contact directly or through friends, family, or neighbours or indirectly online. They will use social media and online gaming to find out information so they can talk to about common interests to start a relationship. Always remember that people online aren't always who they say they are, and anyone can be a groomer.

Stage 3 – Becoming your friend

A groomer will talk to you and gain your trust by helping and giving you support, advice and lots of attention, which you might not otherwise be getting. They may also give you presents to make you feel special.

Stage 4 – Separation from family and friends

Once the young person is more comfortable the groomer will find ways to spend time alone together. This can be by offering to tutor, babysit or organise trips out. This is to make the relationship seem even more special and create some distance between family and friends.

Stage 5 – Change in the relationship

Once the groomer has gained your trust, the relationship will begin to change. They may ask you to do things that you aren't comfortable in return for the gifts or trips such as engaging in sexual activity, meeting their friends, or encouraging you to take and send pictures of yourself. them. As they now have your trust, you are more likely to agree to these requests.

Stage 6 – Keeping things secret

The groomer will do what they can to keep the relationship a secret. They may blame you for what is happening, threaten to tell your family or friends or even threaten to end the relationship. In some instances, they may become physically violent and threaten to hurt you.

WHY ARE PEOPLE GROOMED?

There are many reasons why a groomer targets a young person and forms this relationship. The most common reasons are below:

Sexual Exploitation – This is the term given to a relationship where a young person under the age of 18 is involved in situations where they may receive gifts or presents to take part in sexual activity. The young person believes they are in a happy relationship and consent to this activity and may not understand they have been groomed.

Gangs – Gang members often use grooming to encourage young people to join their gangs. This process will earn the trust of the person by introducing them to the lifestyle in a positive way such as showing off their valuables e.g., trainers, watches, and generally making the person feel safe and wanted. Once groomed, the relationship changes for the worse and the young person would have to do things such as carry drugs or weapons or commit violence against someone else.

Radicalisation – As a young person gets older, they may be exposed to new ideas and views about the world by accessing the internet, watching the news or from people they know. A young person may be groomed to believe in different things such as extreme and violent behaviour regarding different religions and people can be encouraged to do things, they normally wouldn't such as acting violently towards other people.

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG?

If you are worried or scared about any of the issues discussed, there are lots of services and people that will be able to help, if something doesn't feel right it's important that you ask for help:

Tell a trusted adult – If you feel you may be involved in a relationship where you don't feel safe tell a parent/carer or schoolteacher/nurse, any adult you trust. They will listen to you and provide you with support to get help to deal with your worries.

Call a helpline – If you don't have anyone to talk to or are too scared, there are 24 helplines dedicated to helping young people deal with these situations, they will provide you with vital information and advice. You will find these details at the back of this booklet.

Remember to also look out for your friends, if your friends start showing some of the signs below it could mean they are being groomed:

- They have become quiet and withdrawn and more secretive.
- Have new older friends that you haven't heard of or met before, and they may want you to meet.
- They start missing school.
- Are always tired.
- May be showing off new items such as clothes or jewellery.
- May now have access to drugs or alcohol.

If you do have concerns or worries about a friend, then speak to an adult you trust such as your parent or a teacher or call a helpline and they will be able to help.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships come in many forms and throughout our lives we encounter many different types of friends and acquaintances. Our relationships can change and grow as we get older, and we can form new relationships at any time.

We may behave differently amongst the various relationship types, for example your friends may see you differently to your family but making sure that all our relationships are healthy, respectful, and equal is important to ensure that we can stay safe and happy.

If relationships are unhealthy, we can be hurt emotionally and sometimes physically.

Conflict or disagreement can happen in any relationship – it's important to remember that we all make mistakes, and we don't always get it right every time.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Remember that to remain healthy, each person in the relationship should;

- Value and respect the other person, including their ideas, opinions, and decisions.
- Understand that the other person needs to spend time with family and other friends.
- Communicate his or her feelings and try to understand the feelings of the other person.
- Own up to making mistakes and know that they are not always right.
- Allowing the other person to be themselves and feeling comfortable enough to be yourself as everybody is unique.
- Be able to say 'no' if there is something they don't want to do.
- Be honest and talk about things if they are feeling worried.

WHAT IS AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Sometimes a relationship that you are in may be unhealthy and you may not realise it, if the relationship is unhealthy a person in the relationship:

- May not respect the other person and won't let them have their own opinions or ideas.
- May not let the other person see friends or family or use their mobile phone or social media.
- May not tell or explain how they feel to the other person, which may result in them being frustrated and acting physically violent.
- They may make the other person feel like they aren't good enough and insult them and generally make them feel bad about themselves.
- They may make the other person feel intimidated and make them worry about how to behave around them.
- They may make the other person do things that they don't want to do and aren't comfortable with.

If you are worried that you may be involved in or have experienced an unhealthy relationship or are concerned for someone you know, you can talk to friends, family or trusted adults at your school who will be able to help. There are also several helplines at the back of the book that you could contact if you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know.



USEFUL CONTACTS

BELOW IS A LIST OF USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITE ADDRESSES THAT YOU CAN CONTACT FOR HELP OR ADVICE.

Childline

Telephone: **0800 1111**

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Crime Stoppers/Fearless

Telephone: **0800 555 111**

Website: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless>

Essex Police

Telephone: **101 or 999** in an emergency

Website: www.essex.police.uk

The Children's Society

Telephone: **01245 493 311**

Website: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/young-people/east/safe-in-essex

Victim Support

Telephone: **0808 16 89 111**

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk

NSPCC

Telephone: **0808 800 5000 (18 and under)**

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

Telephone: **0870 000 3344**

Website: www.ceop.police.uk

Essex Victims Gateway

Website: www.essexvictimsgateway.org