

# *going country*

## *Lesson Plan 2*



# going country

## ***Lesson Overview:***

This session is focused on the realities of gang involvement and that the choices people make may not be their own. It also covers why it's hard to escape and what the warning signs of being involved in a gang might be.

## ***Aims and Objectives:***

1. For young people to understand the complexities of involvement in county lines and gangs.
2. To begin to explore how we can spot the warning signs of gang involvement.

## ***Lesson Type:***

Activity and discussion based.

## ***Materials Needed:***

Going Country video.

## ***Learning Outcomes:***

- Young people explore the realities of gang involvement and the pressure which is exerted on gang members.
- Young people understand that leaving a gang is incredibly difficult and why that might be.
- Young people begin to understand the warning signs of gang involvement.



# ***Introduction***

This lesson plan is the second of three focused on knife crime and youth violence. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the 'Going Country' video available on this link:

<https://www.essexvvu.co.uk/essex-county-lines/>

Each of the sessions require the video for delivery. As the facilitator you will be asked to show the video, stop it at key points and then complete activities related to the content shown.



The purpose of all of the sessions is to challenge pre-existing knowledge, change attitudes and opinions and help young people make positive choices and decisions.

## ***This session***

This session covers key points related to:

- The choices people make and the pressure people are subjected to in a gang.
- Why it's hard to leave / escape a gang.
- Why it might be a different experience for males and females.
- And what some of the warning signs of gang involvement might be.

# ***Step 1***

Firstly use the introductory statement below to introduce this session to the group.

*“Today we are going to complete the second of three sessions focused on youth violence and county lines.*

*In the first session we looked at some of the realities of county lines and explored whether people knew the risks before they got involved.*

*We then explored why people may do things anyway, even if they know they are risky and that our developing brains in our teenage years may influence this.*

*Today, we’re going to continue to use the video to explore some of the realities of county lines and gangs.*

*As before I will stop the video at a certain point and we will then complete an activity related to what we have just watched.*

*Ok, let’s get started.”*

Now play the video from:

**1:36 - 1:45**

# ***Pause 1***

Now we have stopped the video we're going to discuss key messages from the segment of the video we have just watched.

We are going to work through them in order and the first one to discuss is below:

**1:36 - 1:45** – *'It's normalised, I feel sorry for them personally. A lot of the time it's not their choice, they are pressured into it'*

## ***Discussion***

Read the message from the video to the group and then facilitate a discussion using the key points below, you should work through these in order.

1. Do you think gangs and gang involvement is normalised? (*Define normalised to group if needed*)
2. We talked about choices in the last session and how our developing brains can affect this. Do you think it's always really a 'choice'?
3. Or is it more about pressure? Is it an informed choice? Can people really know what being in a gang means before they get involved?

## ***Statement***

At the end of the discussion read the following statement to the group:

*"Ok, so we have discussed the messages from the video. An important thing to remember is involvement in a gang is not normal, even in the areas with the highest number of gangs and people involved in them (e.g. London) it's still a very small minority of people who are involved.*

*And becoming involved in a gang is not like other choices. You cannot ever know what will happen so it can't ever be an informed choice.*

*There is always pressure on people to join a gang as there is always someone who gets you involved.*

*Once you're in it's a lot harder to leave than it is to join.'*

# **Pause 2 - 1:45 - 2:22**

**1:45 - 2:22** – This part of the video raises several issues and topics related to gangs and gang involvement. We're going to think about the pressure that is put onto people, feelings of being trapped and isolation from peers and friends outside of the gang.

## ***Discussion***

After watching the video clip use the following discussion points with the group.

1. We all like to think that we make our own choices and manage pressure from other people. Do you think that? Do you think you would be able to resist pressure in a gang? If not, why not?
2. How do you think you would feel if you felt trapped and unable to 'escape' a gang? Why can't you 'escape'?
3. Why do you think gangs want to isolate gang members from friends and family?

## ***Discussion / Statement***

At the end of the discussion read the following statement to the group and then discuss:

*"In this section we have discussed some of the realities of being in a gang.*

*We all like to believe we think for ourselves and make our own choices but the reality is we are all influenced by people all the time. This influence can be positive and negative and it does affect how we think and what we do.*

*Within gangs this pressure is serious and hard to escape. The threats of violence and the reality that violence may be used makes it incredibly hard for people to leave, even if they want to.*

*In gangs people get isolated as a means of control. The gang does not want you being influenced by anyone but them, and as we have discussed, this influence from people outside of the gang may make people want to leave.'*

# ***Pause 3 - 2:22 - 3:22***

**2:22 - 3:22** – This pause of the video is focused on the different experiences within gangs for males and females. It also begins to explore what some of the warning signs might be that indicate someone is exposed to gang involvement. As part of this section we will complete a specific activity related to spotting the potential signs of gang involvement.

## ***Discussion***

After watching the video clip use the following discussion points with the group.

1. Do you agree with the points in the video about how the experience of gangs might be different for males and females?
2. Do you think the motivators for being involved in a gang are different for males and females? The video mentions perceived positives of being in a relationship with a gang member for example.
3. Who's more at risk?

## ***Discussion / Statement***

At the end of the discussion read the following statement to the group and then discuss:

*“The experience of males and females in a gang can be very different, as can the risks people are exposed to. There is no correct answer to who may be more at risk, it’s a serious risk for everyone, regardless of their gender.*

*The motivations that make people join gangs can be very different for males and females.*

*Being aware of the warning signs of involvement in gangs can be an important skill which can help keep us, and our friends, safe.*

*We are going to complete an activity now focused on possible warning signs that might indicate someone is exposed to gang involvement.’*

# ***Warning Signs - Activity***

1. Start this activity using the following statement:

*"In this activity we are going to develop a list of warning signs which might indicate someone is involved in a gang.*

*Remember this isn't meant to be a definitive list, many of the things you come up with could be explained by something other than gang involvement.*

*Remember, whatever the reason behind these signs it is still concerning. We should seek support and help for our friends if we notice any of these warning signs.*

*In your groups, use the worksheet we have provided to come up with as many concerning signs that may indicate gang involvement as you can.'*

2. Now use the provided worksheet to complete the activity. We have provided a blank worksheet and an example worksheet that has been completed to assist you.

We have also provided further supporting information which can help complete the activity.

You can find these documents on the following pages.

You should ask young people to work in small groups to complete the activity.

# ***Warning Signs - Worksheet***

<b><i>What is the behaviour you have seen?</i></b>	<b><i>How much would this worry you? / How serious do you think this is?</i></b>	<b><i>How likely do you think it is that this means they are involved in a gang?</i></b>

# Warning Signs - Worksheet - Example

<b><i>What is the behaviour you have seen?</i></b>	<b><i>How much would this worry you? / How serious do you think this is?</i></b>	<b><i>How likely do you think it is that this means they are involved in a gang?</i></b>
Unexplained money and new items without any obvious reason e.g. job	You should worry, this is a serious sign	Likely, if not gangs may indicate other criminal behaviour
Recently started using drugs	You should worry, whilst it may not mean involvement in a gang, drug use is serious and can have serious consequences	This could indicate involvement in a gang but could just indicate recent use of drugs
Become very secretive and won't tell you where they have been	While this is worrying and could be serious, you would need to try and find out what's going on for your friend	If your friend is vey reluctant to talk to you about what's going on or gets very defensive or aggressive when questioned it could indicate something serious like gang involvement
Doesn't respond to your calls anymore	While this is worrying and could be serious, you would need to try and find out what's going on for your friend. People do change peer groups when they are younger and something else could have happened	If your friend is vey reluctant to engage with you about why your relationship has changed or gets very defensive or aggressive when questioned it could indicate something serious like gang involvement
Missing school or college regularly	This is a worrying sign and your friend needs support regardless of the reason	Missing school can be a sign of gang involvement but it can also be a sign of other issues.
The way they speak and the words they use has changed. Using slang you haven't heard before	This could be a serious sign and certainly indicates someone is involved with a new group of people	It could be likely. Gangs have their own ways of speaking and communicating with each other
Suddenly becoming interested in gang-influenced videos / music / films	This could be a serious sign and certainly indicates someone is attracted to gangs and the associated lifestyle	It could be likely. Even if they are not yet currently involved in a gang they are clearly attracted to the lifestyle.

# ***Warning Signs - Supporting Information***

To further assist with this activity we have provided a longer list of warning signs for gang involvement. You should familiarise yourself with these before delivery of the activity.

## ***Signs to look out for***

There are several signs to look out for that may indicate someone is involved in county lines:

- Repeatedly going missing from school or home and being found in other areas.
- Having money, new clothes or electronic devices and they can't explain how they paid for them.
- Getting high numbers of texts or phone calls, being secretive about who they're speaking to.
- Decline in school or work performance.
- Significant changes in emotional or physical well-being.

List provided by Essex Police

# ***Session Close***

We are now going to bring the session to a close. Use the following statement to summarise the learning from the session:

*"We are going to bring things to a close now and introduce the next session.*

*Let's recap on what we have covered today.*

*We discussed several realities of gangs and gang involvement, this included how the choices people make are not really informed choices and that many people will feel pressure to join a gang and stay in it, even if they want to escape.*

*We started to think about how the motivations for joining a gang and the consequences may be different for males and females, but it's a serious risk for both.*

*And we started thinking about warning signs and how we can support people who might be at risk of joining a gang and what the warning signs might be.*

*In the next session we are going to continue thinking about how we could support friends and who can help if we have concerns.*

*Remember, just because we are not involved in a gang it doesn't mean that our friends are not.*

*Thanks for all your hard work today.'*

# *going country*

