



Safe in East Sussex

In Focus – Serious Organised Crime and Vulnerable Young People

May 2016

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More and more, councils are working with law enforcement partners to disrupt serious and organised crime. Serious and organised crime (SOC) can have a profound impact on an individual, family, business or community. This is particularly prevalent where vulnerability plays a part within individuals, families and communities, as those who are most vulnerable are frequently targeted by organised crime groups and more likely to be exploited.

However it is not a crime itself. SOC is controlled and led by organised crime groups (OCGs) that use intimidation tactics and corruption for unlawful gain. OCGs are deceitful and unscrupulous in their pursuit of money, power or personal gratification through the harm of others.

These criminals often prey on vulnerable communities and individuals to profit financially or otherwise. They supply and distribute illegal drugs, firearms and counterfeit goods; commit fraud, tax evasion and facilitate human trafficking and child sexual exploitation (CSE)

[Tackling Serious & Organised Crime - a local response. LGA 2015](#)



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SOC and vulnerable young people

Exploited

To improve our understanding of how young people become involved in Serious Organised Crime (SOC) and inform more targeted Prevent activity, the National Crime Agency have been working with law enforcement and central government and to publish their first ever national assessment of SOC pathways.

Groomed

Cutting across different threats, the assessment explores the influence of family, friendship, ethnic/cultural, online and prison networks; the importance of individual or business vulnerabilities; and the intentional (or sometimes unwitting) involvement of crime enabling professionals.

Coerced

It is possible for people of any social or economic standing to become SOC offenders. [Pathways into Serious and Organised Crime](#) were released on the National Crime Agency website in February 2016. Forces and local partners will find it useful for developing their own pathways knowledge and informing local Prevent initiatives.

The Home Office published related SOC Prevent guidance in March 2015: ['Individuals at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime – a Prevent guide'](#)



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Young people brought up in deprived neighbourhoods by troubled or fragmented families with no impetus to complete their education are particularly vulnerable to approaches from members of crime groups and street gangs. The groups/gangs are likely to offer them a sense of belonging which they may not get from their family. Initially these young people can become involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime, before progressing

into more significant criminality as they become increasingly involved in gang activity. This can then potentially evolve into organised criminal activity.

Some offenders attribute their involvement to long-term friendships and associations centred on drug use and dealing, initially cultivated at school or during their formative years.

Home Office research suggests that a significant proportion of organised criminals have a history of prolific offending at a young age, with many receiving a criminal sanction before they were 18 years old.

Law enforcement estimates that just under than 25% of all organised criminals are under 25 years old. Early criminal experiences can result in continued involvement into adulthood and escalation into serious and organised crime.

Age breakdown of individuals involved in Serious Organised Crime



Information provided by UK police and law enforcement agencies, collated by the NCA (September 2014) consisting of 39,273 individuals

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An investigation into the Blackshades remote access Trojan (a type of malware designed to provide unauthorised, remote access to a user's computer) found the average age of purchasers to be 14-18 years, with the youngest being 12 years. Many were drawn in through curiosity – wanting to use malware on friends, without realising its illegality.

Are some children more at risk of participating in organised criminal activity than others?

There are overlaps between street gangs and organised crime groups in some local areas. Organised criminals may use gangs for transporting drugs and street-level drug dealing. There is growing evidence of street gangs involved in exploitation of children and vulnerable adults (including sexual exploitation).

Children and vulnerable adults can be groomed into criminal gangs, sometimes being promised or 'rewarded' with gifts for carrying out criminal tasks. They then become trapped, are exploited and in many cases violence is used to escalate their involvement. Many individuals disengage from gang activity in early adulthood. However, gang involvement can provide the criminal skills and networks to engage in more serious and organised crime.

Participation in serious and organised crime is often catalysed or motivated by personal vulnerabilities. These can take many forms including addiction, growing up as part of a dysfunctional or abusive family, becoming disenfranchised with society or living in deprivation.



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East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships' Business Plan

2016/2017 to 2018/19

Through effective partnership working and information sharing with statutory and voluntary agencies, we will work together to prevent young people being exploited and victimised in connection with serious organised crime.

This is a new area of work selected by the East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership for 2016/17.

Over the coming year we will undertake further research and scoping to ensure we do not duplicate any work. Areas of investigation include missing young people; young people currently being supported by the youth offending team, targeted youth support and family key work teams. The outcome of the Home Office Ending Gang and Youth Violence Peer Review will assist with this and provide us with some multi-agency recommendations moving forwards.

Over the year we will work with partners to understand more about the following areas:

- Why young people get involved in serious and organised crime
- How organised criminals operate

We will also work with partners to identify and develop ways in which we can:

- Spot risks and identify when young people need support
- Help young people at risk to access the support they need

The Sussex Police Serious Organised Crime Profile 2015 is a first step towards increasing knowledge and joint working around organised crime. A number of recommendations to enhance partnership working identified further opportunities for law enforcement and partners to engage in preventative work in relation to organised crime, particularly where young people might be vulnerable to being drawn into organised theft or supporting the trafficking and supply of controlled drugs.

Our research will involve gathering various data sources from partners in relation to missing episodes, drug offences and cybercrime convictions as well as looking at developing some case studies of young adults who have been convicted of offences connected to serious and organised crime in East Sussex.



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Cybercrime

The UK is the most cyber-dependent economy of the G20 nations and, since 2006, has seen a year on year increase in the number of households accessing the internet. This has led to a rise in the threat to the UK from cybercrime.

Cyber crime means any crime committed using a computer, computer networks or other form of information communications technology (ICT).

Evaluation of UK arrests and prosecutions indicate that cyber-dependent offenders are less likely to engage in criminal activity offline. Based on interviews of debriefed individuals, there are often distinctive warning signs along the trajectory into becoming a cyber-dependent criminal.

Primarily, there is a technical proficiency required for coding/programming, a disconnection from the offline world, and in some young offenders, a disinterest in school. Cyber-dependent criminals involved in the creation and/or deployment of malware and hacking tools are typically intelligent individuals from a broad demographic, aged between 14 and 30 years. The challenge of solving a complicated technical problem or bypassing the network security of a high-profile institution can be more alluring than the financial benefit and elevates their online reputation amongst their peer group.

Cyber Choices

CyberChoices aims to help prevent young teenagers being drawn to the digital dark side.

More and more teenagers and young people are getting involved in cyber crime. Many do it for fun without realising the consequences of their actions – but the penalties can be severe. Cyber crime isn't a victimless crime and is taken extremely seriously by law enforcement.

Sadly a small minority of children will be drawn into using these skills for activities which are criminal. Many of the signs overleaf are just normal teenage behaviours. Taken in isolation they don't necessarily suggest a young person is at risk of getting involved in cyber crime. These are just possible indicators that your child is getting into the wrong activities.

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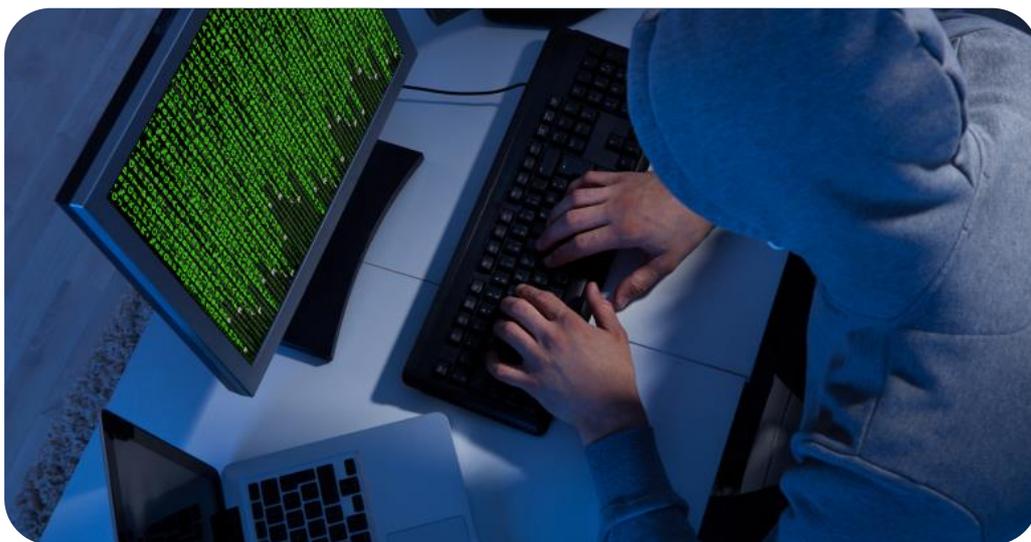
If a young person is showing several of these signs, try and have a conversation with them about their online activities. This will allow you to assess their computer knowledge proficiency so you can understand what they are doing, explain the consequences of cyber crime and help them make the right choices.

- Are they resistant when asked what they do online?
- Do they get an income from their online activities, do you know why and how?
- Is your child spending all of their time online?
- Do they have irregular sleeping patterns?
- Have they become more socially isolated?

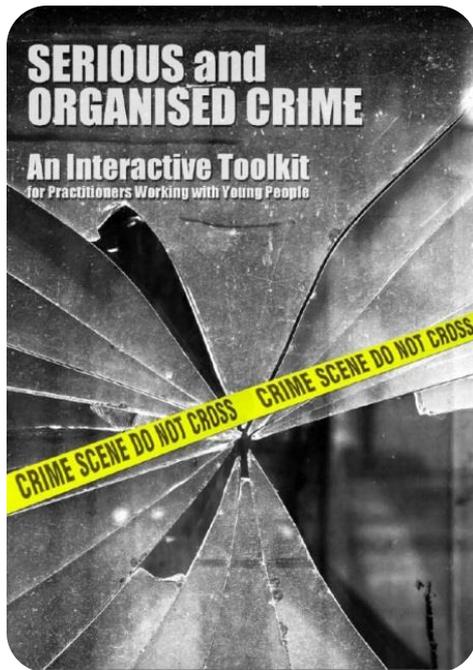
The average age of suspected cyber offenders has dropped from 24 to 17 over the past year, the NCA says

The NCA launched the CyberChoices campaign earlier this year – the campaign targets parents of youngsters aged 12-15 to explain them how it is easy to be involved in cyber criminal activities, even without their knowledge. Additionally, it aims to help parents and carers spot signs of potential problems and understand the consequences of computer misuse.

<http://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/42677/cyber-crime/nca-launched-cyberchoice-campaign.html>



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Serious and organised crime toolkit

Practitioners who work with young people play a vital role in helping to address the issues of serious and organised crime, whether they help young people to understand this world and therefore avoid being drawn in, or support young people who are already involved and want to get out.

This toolkit was developed by the Home Office, in partnership with the police and the voluntary sector, to provide information for practitioners working with young people to help them:

- understand why young people get involved
- understand how organised criminals operate
- spot risks and identify when young people need support
- help young people at risk to access the support they need

The toolkit can be used as the basis for interactive sessions with young people, aged 11-18. The toolkit is based on insight gathered from consultations with young people and practitioners who have had experience of serious and organised crime. It is a starting point, with the film 'Consequences' showing the impact of some aspects of serious and organised crime.

This toolkit includes a DVD, which contains three short films:

- The first is an introduction to serious and organised crime, aimed at practitioners.
- The second is an eight minute film called 'Consequences'. The film is divided into three parts based around a monologue which is acted out by the main character Sean. This film contains explicit and strong language. It is worth noting that the film touches on adult themes so practitioners should consider whether this content is suitable for their group.
- The third film is a version of 'Consequences' with the strong language muted. Practitioners can decide which of the two versions of 'Consequences' is more appropriate for the young people attending their session.

<http://infed.org/mobi/soctoolkit/>

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The Gang and Youth Violence team within the Home Office identified a growing body of intelligence, emerging in particular from London and the South East, that vulnerable young people are being exploited in order to facilitate the running of street level drug dealing within county lines.

NCA Intelligence Assessment County Lines, Gangs, and Safeguarding Date published: 12/08/2015

A County Line describes a situation where an individual, or more frequently a group, establishes and operates a telephone number in an area outside of their normal locality in order to sell drugs directly to users at street level. This generally involves a group from an urban area expanding their operations by crossing one or more police force boundaries to more rural areas, setting up a secure base and using runners to conduct day to day dealing.

A 'county lines' enterprise almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable persons; this can involve both children and adults who require safeguarding.

Children can be recruited in both home and county forces and can be used to run the operations on the ground. This can include delivering drugs and money between locations (often via trains), staying in safe houses to look after the drugs and money or in some cases selling drugs to local users. Children are believed to be used as they are inexpensive, easily controlled and less likely to be detected by the police.

Boys aged 14-17 are the most often targeted, however girls can also be exploited. In some cases girls may engage in a relationship with a group member and can later become victims of sexual and domestic violence.

Further reading can be found here: <http://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/678-urban-drug-gangs-target-coastal-communities>

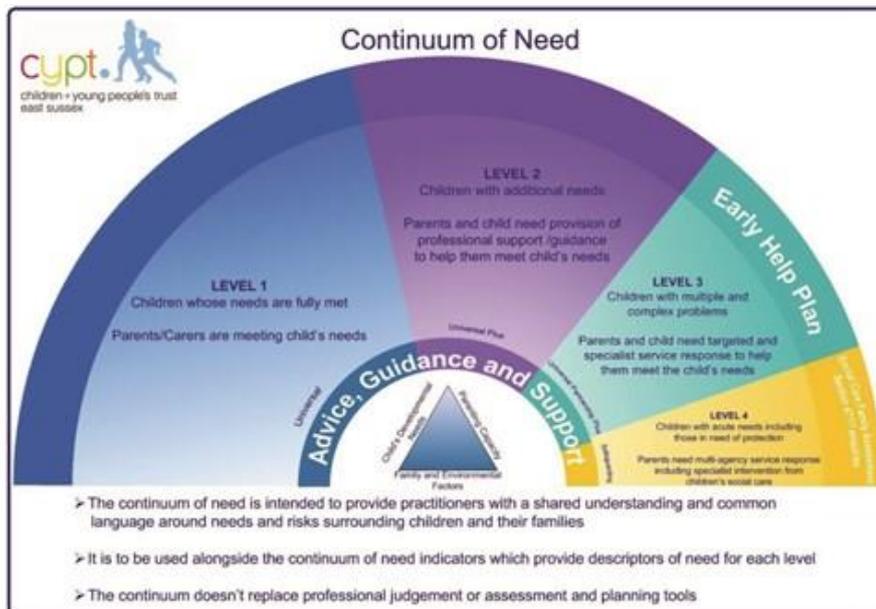


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The Single Point of Advice will provide a sustainable way of managing all initial contacts to Children's Services and helps professionals to respond to the right referrals so that children and their families are provided with support and interventions quickly.

By having a Single Point of Advice it is anticipated that duplication in services will be reduced. This will ensure families receive a more coordinated approach and that the referral process into Early Help and Children's Social Care is more streamlined.

The Single Point of Advice (SPOA) advises practitioners with Level 3 or 4 concerns (targeted and child protection services).



All referrals will now go through the SPOA including Child Sexual Exploitation and Prevent referrals.

Further information: <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/professional-resources-including-safeguarding/contacting-the-single-point-of-advice/what-is-the-single-point-of-advice/>

If you would like to find out more about what the team have been doing, then why not sign up to the monthly e-bulletin. This complements the current bi-monthly newsletter which will continue to provide an in depth focus on our priority areas.

Click here to sign up: <http://eepurl.com/bfQM6H>

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