Criminal Exploitation: Stages of Recruitment

Children At Risk of Exploitation (CARE)

There are a number of different stages that people and gangs use when they're trying to exploit you. Knowing what these stages of recruitment are, and what signs to look out for, can help you keep yourself safe from exploitation.

There are four main recruitment stages when somebody is trying to exploit you:

Targeting stage

Experience stage

Hooked stage

Trapped stage

The Children's Society

No child should feel alone

Targeting stage

This is when a person or gang target a young person who is vulnerable, as this reduces their chances of getting caught. **Signs of this stage include a person or group:**

- Observing you, finding out your vulnerabilities, needs and wants
- Glamourising their lifestyle to you
- Gaining and developing your trust
- Sharing information about you with other members of their gang
- Recruiting you to their gang or friendship group

Experience stage

This stage is where this person might try to get you used to their lifestyle, or train you up in what they're doing. **At this stage a person or gang might:**

- Make you feel wanted
- Give you gifts and rewards
- Test out your loyalty
- Offer you protection
- Relate to you and offer you advice
- Give you a sense of belonging
- Give you a weapon
- Introduce you to more established members of their gang

Hooked stage

This is the stage where people make you feel like you're a member of their gang, even though actually they're just exploiting you for their own gain. **Signs of this stage include:**

- You getting more responsibilities within the group eg more money
- You might be asked to commit low level crimes
- You getting involved with trap houses
- Asking you to recruit others to the gang
- Engaging in activities such as drugs, alcohol and sexual behaviour

Trapped stage

Now you feel dependant on the group, the relationship with the person or group exploiting you may start to become unpleasant, as they reveal their true intents or character. **At this stage you may experience:**

- Threatening behaviour and physical violence
- People playing on your guilt, shame and fear
- Attempts to isolate you from your family, friends and society
- People forcing you to abuse others, assault or even shoot people
- Involvement in Class A drugs (cooking or running)

© The Children's Society 2018

Charity Registration No. 221124 CFD266b/0418