CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION - HOW DO GANGS RECRUIT AND COERCE YOUNG PEOPLE

Catch22 believe that children involved in criminality are victims first. Groomers exploit young people and force them to commit crimes. The stages below outline the pattern of exploitation we have seen in our Child Exploitation services:

1. 'FRIENDSHIP'

The groomer or gang builds a friendship with the young person and make them feel like a valued member of the group. They'll often give them money, gifts and lifts in their car. They usually also supply them with alcohol or drugs. At this stage the young person may enjoy the sense of freedom and lack of rules, they may also begin to feel a sense of belonging within the gang. Over time, many young people begin to see this group as family.

2. TRUST

Once the young person feels part of the group, the groomer begins to give them responsibilities. This could be something like holding a package overnight –and they'll be paid about £50 for doing a task like this. This makes them feel like the group trust them. The young person may feel in debt to the group gang "for everything they've done for them", and they'll begin to enjoy and get used to the money they're being given.

3. THREAT

At this stage the group may start asking the young people to carry out serious crimes. If the young person refuses, the group will then threaten the young person.

These threats could be to the young person themselves, to their friends or to their family. By this stage the young person is entrenched in the criminal group, and they will almost certainly have witnessed violent acts committed by the gang. They will understand that threats of violence are not empty threats, and are likely to do what is asked of them.

Levels of threat can vary depending on which area of the country the young person lives in. Typically, the more established criminal gangs are in the area, the more violent the threats to the exploited young person are.

Type of crimes a young person may be forced to commit:

- Holding firearms for an organised crime gang
- Carrying and using firearms or knives
- Supplying, sourcing class A-C drugs
- Involvement in planned harm to others
- Shooting and causing violence to others
- Planning and carrying out burglaries
- Damage of community or properties
- Mugging or street robbery