

Child Criminal Exploitation: Peer Parent Group



The [It Was Hard to Escape Report](#) identifies that parents and caregivers play a key role in keeping their children safe. Parents need support to navigate the complexities of child criminal exploitation.

Aims and overview:

- Peer Parent Group (PPG) has been developed to deliver a weekly group to caregivers who are concerned about Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) via county lines / dangerous drug dealing lines
- The design and delivery will be co-produced / co-delivered with parents with lived experience
- There is scope to deliver the group in person and potentially online
- This programme is designed to be a prevention / early intervention
- The focus is to support caregivers to support their child or another caregiver / child
- To provide a space for the voice of caregivers to be heard. Learning could potentially come from this, in terms of patterns of exploitation and methods
- The PPG is designed to help build a community barrier around exploited children
- The caregivers may be known to Suffolk Youth Justice Service, Criminal Exploitation Hubs, the County Parenting Team or within the local community

Skills of the facilitator:

- The facilitator must have a good understanding of child criminal exploitation, in the context of drug supply.
- The facilitator should be culturally competent in this area (see the Suffolk Pathfinder tool on Cultural Competence) and be able to engage with a wide range of stakeholders (parents, caregivers, community members, statutory service etc.)
- The facilitator should have read and understood all the other tools produced by the Suffolk Pathfinder (resources can be found [here](#), search county lines)
- The facilitator must have good:
 - Group work skills
 - Communication skills (MI and CBT)
 - Restorative skills

Programme Focus:

- The group will provide a safe space for caregivers to receive information and support about issues relating to CCE
- The ethos of the group is to stress that exploitation often happens outside the home - it is not the caregiver's fault
- Session information:
 - Session 1 – Working collaboratively with all group members, ask the group if they want any specific information. Group agreement (to include disclosures

- and what will happen with information), outcome of programme, parent with lived experience to share their story
- Session 2 - Signs of CCE: Business model, ways to groom / recruit, indicators, how social media is used to identify and groom, and the impact of exploitation on the child
- Session 3 - How to manage conflict / communication tips. How to support your child - Open and honest, keep relationship at a level where you can talk to the child (or another trusted adult can), restorative conversations etc.
- Session 4 - How to navigate statutory agencies. For example, Youth Justice, Social Care, Police and Education (rights, where to go for support)
- Session 5 – Keeping safe and healthy: How to look after yourself, keeping your child and other household members safe, report and sharing information
- Session 6 – Recap and linking content together, Q&A, further support, feedback and ending
- At the start of each session:
 - There will be a recap of the previous session
 - Caregivers will be asked is there anything specific they would like covered
 - Caregivers can text or email programme lead or leave comments / question/s in a suggestions box at the venue
 - Session feedback to also be completed (online, paper etc.)
- Time after each session will be provided, should a caregiver wish to discuss anything (15 mins). Additional phone / email support to be offered
- Sessions will be 90 mins, max of 8 people
- Additional materials / signposting via a pack will be provided after each session
- Specific sessions designed by and for caregivers will help:
 - Increase safety within the home and promote stability (and possibly late entry into care)
 - Recognise that this cohort of caregivers have their own unique needs.
 - Develop awareness of CCE and ways to prevent / manage
 - Increase trust in statutory services by sharing information with caregivers on rights, responsibilities and how to challenge the system

Pre programme phase:

- Clinical session offered to parent with lived experience from psychologist (or equivalent)
- Identify evaluation support
- Existing caregivers identified through Youth Justice caseload, Criminal Exploitation Hubs, Parenting Team and community
- Build rapport with caregivers
- Check most convenient day / time to run group – ask caregivers
- Find out how they would like to receive handouts (email or paper)
- Find out what refreshments they want / any allergies / emergency contacts
- If appropriate, advertise the group in places such as barbers (call to join) if space on group
- Check police intel that there are no known issues with potential cohort
- Caregivers to be aware that we would like to evaluate the programme and how this information will be used (short report, to share learning)

Programme phase:

- Weekly programme delivered
- Additional time after each group offered or a phone call, should caregivers feel this would be helpful
- Responsivity – review / check material / topics to allow some flexibility following consultation with caregivers
- Additional reflective support sessions to be offered by Team Manager to parent with lived experience and facilitator (separately)

Post Programme phase:

- Post programme feedback
- Focus group with caregivers
- Evaluation Report and recommendations

Approach:

- Sessions will seek to model:
 - MI
 - CBT
 - Restorative questions
- Sessions will:
 - Seek to hear the voice of the caregiver and understand their perspective
 - Provide a weekly space for caregivers to gain information and support for issues relating to criminal exploitation (including follow up information / signposting)
 - Provide opportunities (should caregivers choose) for follow up contact outside of the group to discuss anything relevant in more detail
 - Provide opportunities for caregivers to develop / increase:
 - Resilience
 - Problem solving (including belief in self)
 - Conflict resolution skills
 - A network who can provide peer support

Programme structure and content:

- It is increasingly recognised that the risk of CCE often sits outside the child's home
- Many caregivers have done their best to protect their child but are not in a position to protect their child in spaces outside the home (including online)
- Caregivers can find themselves in situations that are almost impossible – torn by the consequences of any decision they make
- Caregivers play a crucial role in safeguarding their child:
 - They are more likely to notice changes
 - They see and hear things that professionals may miss or wrongly assess
 - They want the best for their child
 - They play a critical role in helping to reintegrate their child back into the family / community
 - They play a crucial role in helping the child with their identity
 - They will continue to be caregivers when the child turns 18 and many services are no longer able to work with the child
- Some families have reported that:
 - Their voices have not been heard

- They have not always been included in the meetings and / or plans that sit around their child
- They are not always clear about how statutory services work and how they can challenge them
- Agencies show significant interest in the child but could benefit from making more time to engage the wider family.
- Parents with lived experience have been consulted on the programme design and content. Conversations pulled out the main themes that were identified as being helpful and what parents felt was needed, when they reflected back on their journey's.

Programme context:

- It is important to enlist the support of those with lived experience in the delivery of the programme. Due to the unique position that caregivers find themselves in, it is important for professionals to develop our awareness and knowledge, but also for other caregivers to feel that they are understood and not being judged.
- Parents with lived experience should be offered support, in order that they are well contained and well looked after throughout the programme (including before and after).

Evaluation:

- For this programme, the evaluation process will be both in real time and dynamic. Feedback from caregivers during the programme may lead to elements of the programme being redesigned.
- There will be an individual session feedback form.
- Outcomes measures will establish whether there has been any positive benefit in terms of:
 - Emotional support / wellbeing
 - Education about CCE
 - Practical help
- A summary report will be produced highlighting the learning from the group, including whether there is any learning for professionals as to how best to work with this group of caregivers.