




## Welcome from the team

Welcome to our third and final newsletter for this academic year! Our focus this time is around the safety of your young person post lockdown and over the summer.

Getting back to some form of normality after so many dark disjointed months, including 3 lockdowns, brings relief for many of us but also the potential for new anxieties. Have a read of this piece published recently in the NY Times where journalist Adam Grant talks about 'Languishing' a new term to describe a post-Covid 'Blah' feeling that many of us are experiencing.

The team are available on the email addresses in the Meet the Team section for any comments or concerns that you have, even if your young person is a second-year and has left college. We will also be sharing details of summer activities in the local area for young people on Instagram, check out our [@USPStudents](#) page. 

The USP Safeguarding & Wellbeing Team wish you a lovely summer.

## IN THIS ISSUE

COUNTY LINES

GIRLS & GANG  
INVOLVEMENT

GANG & EXPLOITATION

EVERYONE'S INVITED

SEXUAL HEALTH

RAIL SAFETY

FIKA MENTAL FITNESS APP

ACCESSING EXTERNAL  
SUPPORT

MEET THE TEAM

## County Lines

County Lines is a type of drug trafficking, where the drugs are moved from major cities to smaller towns and rural areas. Anyone can be unknowingly recruited or forced into becoming a runner. This means that they transport drugs and cash to different areas of the country, reducing the risk for the criminals. County lines drug tracking is often interlinked in other crimes such as sexual exploitation, violence, money laundering and human trafficking. Criminal gangs find a base in a particular area, this is known as 'cuckooing'. They will sometimes use force or coercion to take over the home of a vulnerable person. They will then groom young people into selling drugs. Once involved in the gang it is very difficult for them to escape.

### Signs of a possible victim:

- Change in behaviour
- Signs of assault and/or malnutrition
- Access to numerous phones.
- Use of unusual terms e.g. 'going country'
- Associating with gangs
- Unexplained bus or train tickets
- Unexplained gifts or cash.

### Signs of a possible cuckooing:

- An increase in people entering and leaving
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increasing litter outside
- Signs of drug use
- Lack of healthcare visitors
- Suspicious vehicles or people at an address.

## Girls & Gang Involvement

A briefing published by Public Health England says women and girls involved with gangs are exposed to violence, and often coercion, at every level. A girl's usefulness to a gang is not limited to tasks such as holding or transporting illicit items; as the abuse of girls referred to as "links" shows, those who associate with gangs are also vulnerable to being sexually exploited. "Links" are girls who can be as young as 12, and are expected to have individual or group sex with gang members at any time. According to a 2017 report by the National Crime Agency (NCA), sexual exploitation is a significant risk factor associated with county lines drugs gangs.

“

**Figures suggest that up to 34% of children involved in gangs are girls.**

”

“Trapped in a cycle of threats, intimidation, and violence, there are thousands of girls caught up in gangs in England who are at risk of both criminal and sexual exploitation,” says Anne Longfield, the children's commissioner for England. [Darcy Jimenez, The Guardian Nov 2019](#)



# Gangs & Exploitation

Children and young people can be exploited by criminal gangs. They may be pressured into committing offences such as drug dealing, stealing or carrying weapons/drugs. Gangs will sometimes use violence or fear of violence as a way to control the young person. They may also force the young person to travel away from their home, and 'work' for the gang. The young person might not realise that they are victims and, at times, it might seem that they are choosing that lifestyle, however, this is exploitation.

## Spotting The Signs:

- Withdrawing from family
- Secretive behaviour
- Unexplained injuries
- New friends
- Absconding from home or going missing
- Breaking rules or pushing boundaries
- Poor attendance/interest in college.
- Aggression
- Increase in phone calls/text messages
- Missing kitchen knives
- Carrying/concealing weapons/drugs
- Concerns raised by professionals
- Picked up in unknown cars/taxis
- Unaccounted for money, clothes, phone or gifts, cash or in a bank account.
- Loss of interest in hobbies/normal routines

## What Attracts Young People:

- The promise of protection from others (gangs/groups/peers)
- Acceptance & sense of 'family' or belonging
- Respect & sense of identity
- Family/friend involvement Status
- Fear, intimidation or threats
- Peer pressure & high levels of gangs in the area.
- Lack of family/emotional support
- Cultural identity
- Limited positive role models
- Boredom
- Financial gain or rewards

Click Here



[More Info On  
Gangs or  
County Lines](#)



### Talk/Listen

encourage open conversation, tell them your concerns, be prepared to listen, don't judge, encourage them to reach out for help and tell them how



### Monitor

Impose curfews, monitor their social media/bank accounts/phone where possible. Report any concerns Immediately. If they do not return home report them as 'missing' to the police on 101.



### Stay 'In The Know

listen to what they're listening to, research about gangs/exploitation, be aware of what is going on locally and nationally (incidents in other areas can impact young people here), use [Urban Dictionary](#) for slang word definitions.



### Share Concerns

reach out for help, share concerns with professionals, make notes of names/ dates/concerns



## Everyone's Invited

As you will have seen in our recent email, here at USP College, sexual harassment will not be tolerated. We are collaborating with students to incorporate their ideas and views on addressing healthy relationships, consent, sexual harassment and respect. We also have a range of awareness activities planned for the next academic year to ensure the college is seen as a safe space for all students, where they can raise any concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and supported appropriately.

## Sexual Health

Young Peoples Health found that the "Average age of first heterosexual intercourse is 16 years of age". The promotion of safe sex for young people is incredibly important as "Young people account for significant proportions of new STI diagnoses, for example, 68.2% of new Chlamydia diagnoses are people between the age of 15 and 24.

Brook Sexual Health focuses on healthy lives for young people and offers sexual health advice and information.



## Rail Safety



Network Rail has seen a high level of trespassing on train tracks by young people in the local area. The information video is being used in our tutorial sessions, to raise awareness of the dangers of playing/hanging around on train tracks, in order to prevent them from putting themselves and others at risk. Network Rail have advised that the amount of young people putting themselves at risk in the summer break, is likely to increase, due to lighter evening and more free time.



[Click Here To Access The Video](#)

## Fika Mental Fitness App

We have some really exciting news to share with you. The college is piloting a new mobile app called FIKA, which is designed to strengthen the mental health fitness of students and staff. It's a simple and effective way to work on seven key components that can have a positive effect on your mental health and wellbeing, and in doing so help you to work confidently towards achieving your life goals. Fika has worked closely with the NCFE to ensure that the app will remain relevant to all students and accredited certificates for each of the components to enhance the users CV.

### Fika Key Components



We will keep you posted on the impact of the app as we progress through the next academic year. If you would like to find out more about it you can visit their [website](#).



# Accessing External Support

**CEOP** – The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is a branch of the police which helps young people who are being approached online for sex or are suffering from sexual abuse. This can be the most effective means for stopping grooming, sexual abuse & exploitation.

**Young Minds** – This is a charity that is committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. It offers 24/7 access to trained volunteers with support from experienced clinical supervisors. You can also contact their parent helpline - **0808 802 5544**.

**Childline** – This is a free service that is able to support young people dealing with a range of problems including online safety issues. It offers a 24/7 service to children and young people who are struggling to deal with a situation and need support. For a young person who feels uncomfortable with talking directly to someone, there is a one-to-one online chat service - **0800 1111**

**Shout** - This organisation is the UK's first free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It is a place for people to go if they are struggling to cope and need immediate help - **Text 85258**

**Kooth** – This service provides free safe and anonymous online support for young people. Access to teams of counsellors who are experts in providing mental health support to young people

**NHS Every Mind Matters** - Coronavirus and mental wellbeing support.

**NHS Sexual Health Support** - Guide to free sexual health services, the services are free and available to everyone, regardless of sex, age, ethnic origin and sexual orientation - **0300 300 1514**

**Wize-Up** - Free and confidential drug and alcohol service for young people under 18 (including young offenders) and families in Thurrock. - **01375 376111**

**Seed** - Offers eating disorders support services online. They offer one-to-one support via phone or e-mail, as well as help groups, workshops and self-help advice. They also offer support and advice for Parents - **01482 718130**

## Meet the Team

The USP Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team are available to provide advice and support on a variety of topics. All conversations are confidential. We currently can be contacted by email.



**Andy Shepherd**

Designated Safeguarding Lead & Head Of Student Services

**Jon Briggs**

Assistant Principal - Vocational



**Nickie Hillebrandt**

Student Services Manager

**Michelle Lagden**

Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Mental Health Coordinator



**Mandy Monksfield**

Wellbeing Advisor

**Stacey Pearson**

Wellbeing Advisor



**Zainab Abdul**

Counsellor

**Barbara Wilkins**

Counsellor



**Emma Roles**

Positive Behaviour Officer

**Lorraine Stoten**

Head Of HR



**Palmer's Campus**

wellbeingpalmers@uspcollege.ac.uk

**Seevic Campus**

wellbeingseevic@uspcollege.ac.uk

Follow us on social media for news and updates

