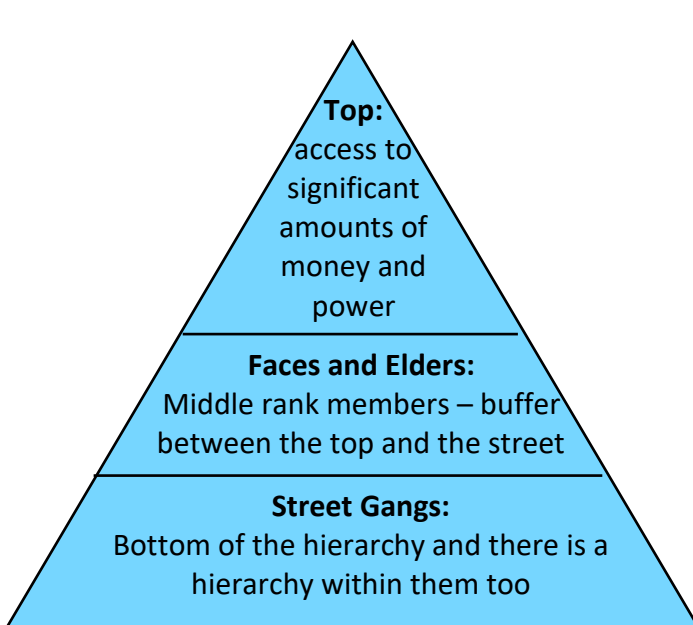


Gang Culture and Drugs Information Sheet

Gang Structure



Street Gang Structure

Soldiers and Youngsters: recruited and controlled to sell drugs

Wannabees: may have aspirations to climb higher, may want the glamour or sense of belonging that comes with being in a gang

Reluctant affiliates: forced to be a part of the gang or apart of the gang because their partner is

What are County Lines?

- A term used when drug gangs or organised criminal networks, from bigger cities expand their operations to smaller towns.
- The gangs often use violence and exploit children and vulnerable individuals to sell drugs.

What is Cuckooing?

When drug gangs take over the home of a vulnerable person through violence and intimidation, using their base for selling/manufacturing drugs.

Gang Culture in the UK

- Helbanianz (Albanian based gang in Barking East London) and Peaky Blinders (older Birmingham gang) are examples of large UK gangs.
- They may expand their operations outside of large centres to places such as Leeds.
- The most common drugs involved in this are heroin, cocaine, MDMA, cannabis, amphetamines and spice.

How do gangs in the UK try to recruit members?

(1) Target

- The young person is identified to be a protentional recruit.
- They may be someone who is viewed as being vulnerable – for example from an unstable home.
- They may be befriended to establish power over them.

(2) Experience

- The gang member creates an appealing lifestyle for the victim to reel them in, including gifts, offering protection and a sense of belonging.

(3) Hooked

- The young individual will feel like a member of the gang or group.
- At this point they may be given responsibilities.

(4) Trapped

- The victim feels dependent on the gang for survival, including money, drugs, etc.

Legislation Related to Gang Culture/Drugs

Drugs

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is the primary legislation for the UK surrounding drugs and drug use.

- It aims to prevent non-medical use of certain drugs
- Covers offences including, possession of drugs, intent to supply, import or export of controlled drugs, etc.
- It classifies drugs into Class A, Class B and Class C

Class A Drug: cocaine and crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, crystal meth, etc.

Penalties: Up to 7 years in prison for possession and up to life in prison for supply and production

Class B Drug: amphetamine, codeine, ketamine, synthetic cannabinoids, cannabis, etc.

Penalties: Up to 5 years in prison for possession and up to 14 years in prison for supply and production

Class C Drug: anabolic steroids, minor tranquillisers, etc.

Penalties: Up to 2 years in prison for possession and up to 14 years in prison for supply and production

Gangs

If an individual commits an offence, they are able to rely on certain defences, such as duress, which may minimise the individual's sentence.

In terms of a gang situation, the defendant may try to argue that any criminal activity they were involved in was due to the fact they were forced by the gang to commit it

However, if the defendant was voluntarily associated with the gang they cannot rely on duress as a defence against the offences committed

Cases such as: Sharp (1987) QB 853, Shepherd (1988) CR APP R 47, Harmer (2002) Crim LR 401 etc. demonstrate this at work