

#LookCloser

"I was pretty sure that I was going to be selling drugs for the rest of my life. I thought that was how the world had placed me". These words came from the mouth of a young person who had been groomed into child criminal exploitation, who should have been enjoying growing up in a carefree environment.

Every year, thousands of young people experience the horrific costs of exploitation; from violence, intimidation, sexual abuse and the long-lasting impact of trauma, they can feel trapped and without the help they urgently need to escape their situation. [The cost of living crisis is making the situation even worse](#). As families struggle to afford the essentials, children are feeling the pressure to step up and help. Criminals are taking advantage of this, grooming young people into sexual exploitation, or to carry drugs, steal, and launder cash with the false promise of 'easy money'.

The impact of child exploitation on a young life takes many forms, from physical and mental harm, to exclusion from education, and alienation from their family and friends, who are often oblivious to the reasons behind the changes that they see in the young person they love.

As part of our work, The Children's Society, in partnership with the British Transport Police and the National County Lines Coordination Centre, are seeking to encourage everyone to notice and report child exploitation and to realise that it can affect any child from any community. For the sake of children growing up today, we need to raise awareness among public, businesses and professionals on how to spot that a child may be a target of, or experiencing, exploitation. Our campaign offers advice on what to do if you think something doesn't feel right with a young person, and how to support young people who are identified as at risk of exploitation.

Our next #LookCloser highlight week begins on Monday, 27th February, although the campaign does run all year through. Will you please help us to raise awareness?

We have a [#LookCloser Webpage](#) (<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/child-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines/spotting-signs>) where you can provide us with simple details, and download [#LookCloser Resources](#), including suggested social media posts and downloadable PDF's of an awareness posters and leaflets which we would be grateful if you could have available in your church, and place across your community. You can also find a list of learning sessions aimed at those working with young people whether directly or indirectly that will be provided on the week of the 27th of February.



If you would like to support the campaign, please contact Rachel Brockie, The Children's Society's Community Relationship Manager for the West Midlands by calling 01367 241273 or emailing rachel.brockie@childrenssociety.org.uk.