

CrimeStoppers.

Speak up. Stay safe.

Media Release

DATE:

Children and young people risk becoming involved in gangs

Independent charity Crimestoppers is highlighting that children and young people across Essex are at risk of becoming involved with gangs and the violence and abuse that often follows.

Many young people join gangs for protection or say that it makes them feel part of a family. It is not only young men. Young women are also recruited and routinely suffer sexual violence to 'control' them.

Crimestoppers charity wants to raise awareness of the issue and encourage Essex residents to speak up 100% anonymously to help keep young people safe. Our charity gives people the power to speak up, stay safe and stop crime by calling our professionally-staffed 24-hour UK Contact Centre on **0800 555 111** or by using the untraceable Anonymous Online Form www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

In a recent report from the Children's Commissioner for England, it was stated that the number of children involved in gangs could be as many 46,000 and may be even higher.

Many young people associated with gangs speak of the dangers of gang membership. They can be transported to other parts of the country to deal drugs and be put into dangerous situations, such as carrying weapons and exposed to violence including knife crime. In Essex, the number of weapons offences last year rose by 50%.

Colin Dobinson, spokesperson for Crimestoppers in Essex, said: "As gangs expand their networks into Essex, they need new members and actively groom vulnerable young people, many from 11 years of age, sometimes even younger, to entice them into working for them. Gangs can start this process at school or parties where innocent children can provide them with potential recruits as they are less likely to have come to the attention of the authorities.

"I would urge parents and young people to visit the Fearless website (Fearless.org) which is a youth service, guided by Crimestoppers that develops effective anti-crime resources and advice for young people and their families. We know that many young people who are not involved in crime in any way may pick up information from school and friends on crime but are too scared to report it. Now Fearless provides them with a safe place to pass this information on – 100% anonymously. Always.

Youth professionals and teachers will also find many useful [educational resources](#) available on the site.

Caroline Wiggins, Chair of the Essex Community Safety Network, said: “Parents must play a key role in alerting their children to the risks. They need to make sure they know what their children are doing, who they are spending time with and look for any signs that their children might be being groomed or involved in gangs. I would certainly encourage parents, their children and anyone working with young people, to visit the Fearless website and access information that will help them prevent further wasted lives and wasted futures”.

-ENDS-

For more information please contact the Crimestoppers Press Office on 0208 835 3700 or press.office@crimestoppers-uk.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Crimestoppers is an independent charity helping communities to ‘Speak up. Stay safe.’
- Our 0800 555 111 telephone number and website crimestoppers-uk.org gives people the power to speak up and pass on information about crime 100% anonymously. Our guarantee has not been broken in over 30 years.
- Alongside our national campaigns, we have hundreds of volunteers across the UK who help us promote our services to those that need to hear about them.
- Every region of the UK has a Crimestoppers team responsible for raising awareness of our charity and running local campaigns about issues that affect their area.
- Around 10 people are arrested and charged every day as a result of information given to Crimestoppers.
- Since Crimestoppers began in 1988, it has received over 1.9 million actionable calls, resulting in more than 144,000 arrests and charges, over £136 million worth of stolen goods have been recovered and over £346 million worth of illegal drugs have been seized.
- In 2005, Crimestoppers launched the UK’s Most Wanted on its website which allows the public to view images of criminals and pass on vital information about their whereabouts. It has been highly successful, with over 4,100 arrests to date.