

Eyes Open Campaign Pack

Campaign Overview

Merseyside's Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) campaign asks the public to keep their 'EYES OPEN' to the signs of drug gangs grooming our county's kids, and if they see, hear or suspect anything to report it anonymously to Crimestoppers. Or, get advice from the NSPCC. Importantly, the campaign describes and highlights the many signs of kids being groomed to bring people's attention to them because there are still plenty people who don't even know this is a thing.

After London, Merseyside's drug gangs are the second biggest abusers of kids. Merseyside's VRP, supported by numerous organisations such as Merseyside Police, local authorities, Youth Offending Service and schools, felt compelled to do something to let people know and ask for help.

The 'EYES OPEN' campaign has been driven by the rising numbers of kids, from all sorts of backgrounds, being abused by local drug gangs in an attempt to hide criminal activity. They choose kids because they are easy to manipulate and exploit and they are less likely to be stopped by the police, saving drug gang members from being caught and reducing the risk of conviction. Vulnerable kids, whether they come from what looks like steady, normal homes or from care, are the ultimate target. Why? Because they want, (and need, as humans do), to 'belong'. They want to feel safe, and part of a family unit, even if that means compromising their safety and wellbeing by selling drugs for a gang.

Posters and billboards are up in Merseyside saying: **"Know what to look for. Know who to help,"** which explain the signs of grooming through kids' real-life experiences.

The digital collateral also highlights these signs and what people can do if they suspect or know something.

What's in the EYES OPEN media pack?

| Content | Description | Where do I find it? |
|--|---|---|
| A3 and A4 posters | Download and print yourself OR order them: Email | VRP website EYES OPEN resource |
| An educational pocket guide written specifically for young people aged 14+. It comes in two formats: digital PDF format for download and A6 20-page printed pocket size. | Download and print yourself OR order hard copies: Email | VRP website EYES OPEN Digital Download of Educational Pocket Guide |
| Three contemporary short animations featuring voice and black and white typography | <p>The main one runs for 1:30. It features a female and young male voice-over who convey the experiences of a real local mum who was kind enough to tell the VRP about what happened to her son, and her family when her son was groomed by gangs. We were able to use her testament in the campaign to highlight the signs. The young male voice represents another interview we secured with someone who had been groomed by gangs.</p> <p>The second one is an edited version featuring the mum.</p> <p>The shorter of the three (30 secs) is a young male voice talking about how innocence gets exploited.</p> | <p>VRP website EYES OPEN resource</p> <p>OR</p> <p>If you you'd prefer to use the VRP's YouTube channel where these three films are anchored, use this link</p> |
| Campaign website | EYES OPEN website focuses upon three regional areas: Merseyside, Lancashire and North Wales. It features all of the above content so the digital pocket guide can be downloaded and the films can | www.eyes-open.co.uk |

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| | also be watched. Plus other information around county lines. | |
| Social media content | <p>Examples...</p> <p>Criminal gangs look for vulnerable young people to control. You might think our kids are safe from grooming but #Merseyside drug gangs are the second highest child abusers in UK. Together, we can keep our young people safe. Let's keep our: #EYESOPEN https://eyes-open.co.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>After London, Merseyside's drug gangs are the second biggest abusers of kids in the UK. Watch this short film launched by @MerseysideVrp as part of their #EYESOPEN campaign and know what to look for and who to help. + link / embedded film / EYES OPEN website</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>We support @merseysidevrp and the #EYESOPEN campaign which asks us all to know the signs of drug gangs grooming kids on #Merseyside, and know how to safely report it +link / embedded film / EYES OPEN website / #MerseysideVRP</p> | <p>You can also download other social media assets such as mobile leaderboard GIFs and Insta pics HERE</p> <p>On this link you will find other assets such as photos of weapons and drugs seized after raids by police on drug gangs' homes or in 'cuckooed' homes, (homes that have been invaded by drug gangs in order to use them as base to sell drugs).</p> |
| Press release | Use any of the useful content from the press release for your own campaign | Find the release HERE |

What could you do with the content of the EYES OPEN campaign pack?

To support the VRP's EYES OPEN campaign and help safeguard the kids that your organisation works with, or cares for, you could:

- Create your own campaign by doing some or all of the following...
- Put up A3 / A4 posters – we have four different sorts to choose from.

- Share our digital pocket guide or give it out when you can meet them face-to-face.
- Get groups together and use the films, posters and pocket guide to inform discussions and information-giving sessions.
- Or, use the collateral to broker conversations with kids who you might think are at-risk and vulnerable to this sort of grooming and criminality.
- You might also want to use the films and pocket guides to help colleagues to better understand the signs and risks of kids being groomed by drug gangs in Merseyside.
- You can use the social media content, which can be cut and pasted into your own social media to show your support for the EYES OPEN campaign. Or, you can edit as you see fit to suit the needs of your own organisation.
- You can also use the social media images to accompany the content.
- You can repurpose the content you find in the press release for your own media.

Further context

The following quotes are drawn from our press release...

Superintendent Mark Wiggins, who heads up Merseyside's Violence Reduction Partnership said:

"It's time we saw drug gangs for the abusers they are. Drug gangs are grooming kids in Merseyside every day. Grown men, and sometimes women, are grooming vulnerable kids who come from all sorts of backgrounds. They are coercing them to sell drugs, to be on the end of a phone line 24 hours a day to deliver drug orders, to store firearms and weapons, and to invade vulnerable people's homes often hundreds of miles away from their homes to help the gangs make money.

"Merseyside's Violence Reduction Partnership, in conjunction with a number of key partners such as Merseyside Police, local authorities and schools, are asking everyone, whether a parent or not, to step up and know what the signs of grooming are. The 'EYES OPEN' campaign lists the signs of grooming so everyone can start to look out for the abuse and report it anonymously to Crimestoppers. We have also produced a booklet for schools to help kids understand what to look for. This depraved criminal behaviour has to stop."

Merseyside's Police Commissioner Jane Kennedy said:

"I welcome this hard-hitting campaign – the first by Merseyside's Violence Reduction Partnership - because it is designed to increase awareness of the criminal abuse of our children. Very often we do not notice or recognise the warning signs when a young person is being groomed for exploitation and even when we are worried we don't know what to do. We need the public's help if we are to prevent young people falling prey to the criminal gangs and I hope this campaign will enlighten and educate us all."

Interesting facts (find more in the press release)

- There are about 120 'county lines' running from Merseyside. That means that there are 120 places outside of the county right across the UK where Merseyside drug gangs have invaded vulnerable people's home ('cuckooing') to set up the business of selling drugs with one of our young vulnerable kids.
- County lines gangs are using social media and bulk texts to offer drugs and recruit vulnerable people.
- The estimated turnover for a typical active branded line is between £2K and £5K per day.
- The train and public transport network such as coaches is used because of the ease of use, links to other areas and because children don't drive.

Any poster orders, feedback or questions to the comms lead at Merseyside's VRP:

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And, thank you.