



The **Ben Kinsella** Trust  
Stop Knife Crime

# Gangs: Lesson One

A lesson plan for teachers, youth workers and other practitioners working with young people

Key Stage 3

Key Stage 4

## Teacher notes

These resources have been created for KS3 and KS4. They have been written with flexibility in mind, allowing you to use them according to the needs of your pupils. It is important you use your professional judgement on the suitability of this resource for each individual in your cohort.

With this in mind, a needs (baseline) assessment is provided for each lesson. This will enable you to understand existing knowledge and learning, along with gaps, and will ensure you meet the needs of your cohort in these lessons.

Assessment for learning throughout the lesson is enabled through class discussion and activities and an assessment of learning at the end of each lesson provides time to reflect, clarify and evidence pupil learning.

The two 'Gangs' lessons offer more detail than the remainder of the lessons in the series. However, it is still crucial that you decide on what is best for you depending on your pupils understanding or experience of gangs. There are a few options with the two lessons in the gangs series. Some suggestions include; using Lesson 1 for KS3 and/or children who do not live in environments where they have much experience of crime or as a 'start' into the subject and Lesson 2 for KS4 for cohorts who may live in environments where there are gangs and where they may themselves be involved in gangs.

In order to ascertain this, and prior to teaching, it is strongly recommended that you read through the lesson plans and familiarise yourself with all of the resources and films, along with the websites/organisations which you will be signposting to. Consider your cohort and whether there is anything further required to make this accessible/fully inclusive, taking into account each individual's needs and adapting or differentiating the lesson if and where required to meet these.

Please note, if/when altering lessons, steer clear of adding any further content which may elicit your class to feel frightened, ashamed or distressed and be sure not to unknowingly glamorise or make risky behaviours seem appealing.

Check for any child protection, vulnerable children, SEN or other issues and read all Government guidelines and relevant school policies, asking SLT (Senior Leadership Teams) if you are unsure about anything. If you don't know already, it is imperative that you find out who pupils can go to with any worries whilst they are at school – including any specific adults and where they can be located - you will be sharing this with them in the plenary of each lesson.

When you are happy these are the right lessons for your pupils, spend some time researching the subject - it is important you understand some of the complexities before you teach it.

The Home Office has produced Teacher Guidance with some further notes on teaching this subject – see #knifefree. If your school or organisation is based in London, you might also find the London needs you alive toolkit from The Mayor's Office For Policing And Crime (MOPAC) useful.

Always start each lesson by creating a working agreement with each class to maintain a safe and respectful environment for all. Write these with your pupils. Examples might include showing respect, not disclosing private information about themselves or others, not chatting about others afterwards and to always seek support if needed.

Finally, always remember to signpost to useful organisations in each lesson so your pupils can go to trusted websites for more information and support should they need to. [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk), [www.knifefree.co.uk](http://www.knifefree.co.uk), [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org), [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk) (and 999 for emergencies).

# Gangs

## Learning Objectives

- To understand why people might join gangs
- To learn how choices affect our lives

## Learning Outcome

- I can explain why people might join a criminal gang
- I can assess how choices result in positive or negative experiences
- I can explain how people can correct the bad choices they have made
- I know where to go for more support

## Keywords

Gangs

Loyalty

Choices

Violence

Consequences

Crime

## Important notes

This is the first of two lessons on Gangs. You should use your professional judgement on the suitability of this resource for each individual in your cohort. Research the subject thoroughly and ensure you know where to signpost young people who need help. Please refer to the teacher notes for further guidance.

## Starter | 10 mins

- Create a working agreement with the class (See teacher notes).
- **Assessment:** Write on the board: What is a gang? Give them up to 5 minutes to draw or write their ideas down independently, reminding them to just

## Resources

- Video: Female Ex-Gang Member Interview [2.05 mins, subtitled]
- Video: Male Ex-Gang Member Interview [2.25 mins, subtitled]
- A4 paper
- Male ex-gang member script printed – 1 per pupil
- Female ex-gang member script printed – 1 per pupil
- Post it notes or stickers
- List of who to go to for support in school and other local organisations

write what they know and not to be worried about it's accuracy. This is for you to see what they already know and what they need to learn.

- Explain that the word 'gang' can have many different meanings. It could be a group of mates for example or it could be a criminal gang. Tell them today they will be learning about criminal gangs.
- Ask: What do they know about criminal gangs? Allow 2-3 mins for discussion, paired or small groups and give them time to talk freely (use this as an assessment.) Allow time to get feedback, keeping it pacy.
- Summarise: A gang can be a group of people who spend time in public places who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a noticeable group who engage in a range of criminal activity and violence.
- Share the objectives.

## Main: 40 mins

### Ask them

- Why might people join a criminal gang? Write their ideas on the board and add any reasons that they might have missed:
    - Fitting in with friends and other gang members
    - Having the same interests as other people like sports or music
    - Feeling respected and important
    - To be protected from bullying or from other gangs
    - Making money from crime or drugs gaining status and feeling powerful
- [CHILDLINE.ORG.UK | ACCESSED MAY 2020]
- Explain that when choosing, or being pressured, to join a criminal gang it often starts out well but someone could end up being caught in a world of violence, crime and prison which can be increasingly hard to get out of.



### Tell them

- They are going to watch two films and for each film they need to think about why that person got into a gang.
- Start with the Female Ex-Gang Member Interview then the Male Ex-Gang Member Interview. Discuss why did each person get into a gang?
- Highlight that it seems in the first, she was having problems at home. She says

*"Being in a gang is like carrying your own little family...I never did disclose why I was a part of that collective...I kept it hidden but I felt like I had family in them..."*

- In the second film Elijah seems to have fallen into it, he says

*"It's not that we're born bad and just want to be gangsters... but there's no structure or help... then you take a whole negative lifestyle..."*

- Show the films again this time ask them to think about how each person's choice to join a gang worked out for them (one was shot, the other went to prison)

### Discuss

- How each person left their gangs. We don't know exactly why the girl gang member left. It could have been after she was shot, but she also says

*'being in a gang is hard work... Just getting up in a normal day and having to sell drugs and having to be this character or this 'name' that you've made yourself...it's hard work...'*

Elijah explains that he was in prison and realised he didn't want this life any more.

He says whilst in prison he thought,

*'...Do I want to live like this...sitting next to a toilet, with a little TV just doing this all day for the rest of my life?'*

Elijah goes on to say that it was really hard to leave because he lost a lot of friends but he made the choice, stuck to it and he came through.

These two stories highlight how the choices we make can take us in positive or negative directions.

## Activity

Tell the class they will now focus on one of these people and imagine they are them. What positive choices did they make? What negative choices did they make? Handout A4 paper and film scripts. Working individually or in pairs, pupils should create a piece of work to show the positive and negative choices made by the person in the film. This could be a timeline, a mind map or something similar of your/their choice. They can refer to the film scripts to remind them.

### Ask them:

What would have helped these two people earlier on, before they were shot/went to prison? Encourage them to give you ideas. (Talking to an adult they trust, seeking support from a website or helpline, trusting their gut instincts, thinking of the pros and cons of a situation carefully and not making quick/rash decisions.)

## Optional Extension



If you want to spend more time on this you could also look at a few other more high-profile examples of people who have left gangs and turned their lives

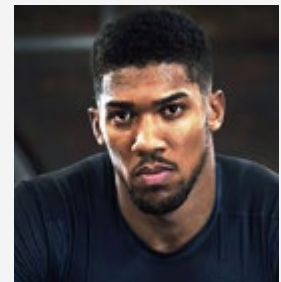
around.

One of these is Junior Smart. Junior now works for the St Giles Trust where he has set up the SOS Plus programme to steer young people away from gangs and knife crime.

In December 2019 Junior was awarded an OBE for his services.

More information on Junior's story can be found [here](#) & [here](#)

There is also the story of Anthony Joshua who was arrested in 2009 and remanded to Reading prison and released on a tag. A year later he



was stopped for speeding and was convicted of possession of cannabis. Following this, he turned his life around to become a boxing world champion. He says,

*"People who do crime do it for a reward. But going to jail is no reward. Through crime your ambitions are low"*

More information on Anthony's story can be found [here](#) & [here](#)

## Plenary: 10 mins

### Tell them:

These people and many others who find themselves caught up in criminal gangs, eventually made the right choice and can now live free and happy lives. They show how it is always possible to change our direction and put it right, though sometimes we might need some help to do this. Remind them life is all about choices – we might not always make the right choices first time but we often have a gut instinct – maybe butterflies in our stomach or a feeling that something isn't right.

Sometimes we can be tricked though. Something can start off feeling great and then slowly, almost without us realising, become bad. If you have time, discuss this. (Examples include doing things we know are not right; drugs, crime, carrying knives or other weapons or being forced to have sex. We might become controlled, bullied or abused.) If this is the case it is never our fault and there are people who can help us.

### Tell them:

There are organisations to help -

- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- [www.knifefree.co.uk](http://www.knifefree.co.uk)
- [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)
- [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)
- (and 999 for emergencies).

You should also tell them who they can go to in your school or organisation, and any other local groups or organisations.

### Activity (Assessment)

Hand out post it notes or stickers and ask the class what advice they would give to the people in these films if they were in their class and stick these on to their work.

Then ask them to write down if there is anything they don't understand or need to know more about.

## The story of a female ex gang member - Video script

**I done so much, there's not a particular occasion that stands to mind but what's on record I can discuss. I stabbed someone.**

I was charged with Section 18 wound with intent, and that only come about because I had a serious argument at home and I, once again, took my anger out on to the streets and stabbed a boy. It was purely unprovoked.

At the time I had no remorse. Didn't care about what I was doing.

In 1996 there was the riots in the case of Wayne Douglas. He was killed in police custody. Big riots broke out in Brixton, made its way up Brixton Hill. I decided to go out and join the riots because I saw it on the news.

When I was out there a friend of mine came to me and said to me that he had an electrical good and it was robbed from him. "Can we go and look for the person who done this?"

And in fact I did that because I was the hard nut and I was a well known name at the time. And you got to remember it wasn't just me. Much of the looters was behind this boy.

We went to the guy, found him, started to chase him; he turned around and he opened fire. Sawn off shotgun. Simple as that. So that's how I got shot.

For me, being in a gang is like carrying your own little family. People that understand you. I never did disclose to anyone why I was part of that collective. Only I knew, I kept that hidden but I felt like I had a family within them.

And I just needed that adrenaline rush on a daily basis, so we'd meet up and decide what criminal acts we would go and perform. Little did they know, I wasn't doing it for the money side, I was doing it for the adrenaline rush. Just to feed that need that I had.



Being in a gang is hard work. If a young lady channelled that energy into a business she'd be an entrepreneur. Just getting up on a normal day and having to sell drugs and having to be this character, or this name that you've made for yourself. You have to keep yourself current. It's hard work.

## The story of a male ex gang member - Video script

### **My real name is Elijah Kerr, also known as Jaja Soze.**

I was part of a collective called PDC, which was classed as a gang at the beginning. We changed to a hip hop and R n B record label.

I came to London when I was 9 years old and we started forming a collective called PDC. It started off with just us in a park just playing around. Just normal kids on the estate. Then it kind of grew, without us thinking about it, into this big gang.

We were doing a lot of robberies from a young age. I went to prison when I was 15 for bank robbery. Came out when I was 18. Went back to prison again when I was 22. Came out when I was 24, nearly 25. And at that time I changed PDC, the whole negative approach that we had, into a record label.

It's not that we're just born bad and we wanna be gangsters from the get go. You have a good intention at first, but there's no structural help or no one around you to help you so you take a whole negative lifestyle.

I think the worst thing that had a big effect on me was one of my friends; we started a business plan together for a record label and the day before I was getting released, the night before, he got shot in his chest five times, and he died.

When you're in your prison cell and you've got all that time to think over everything you've done, you're just thinking you know what I'm actually gonna die or I'm gonna be in prison for the rest of my life. So you have to think "OK, do I wanna be in prison for the rest of my life? Do I wanna live like this right now, sitting next to a toilet and this little TV and just doing this



all day long for the rest of my life?". My last prison sentence I was like "You know what, I gotta change my life".

It wasn't easy because I lost a lot of friends along the way because some of my friends wanted to stay in the whole gang culture and some of them wanted to stay with me, so I lost a lot of friends along the way, it was a bit rocky at the beginning.

There needs to be more schemes, there needs to be more opportunities, and more mentoring. Some kids do have ideas of ... a business idea or ideas of what they wanna do. But then how do they go about implementing this business? How do they go about starting it? So a mentor can just say "Hey, you need to fill in this form, you need to go and see these people, you need to go and see those people" so it kind of helps them. And that gives them hope.