SESSION PLAN

Youth Group: Ages 10 to 16

Topic: Not Just Mates: The Truth About Gangs & Grooming

Learning objective:
- Help young people understand how gangs groom and exploit
- Teach how recruitment often starts with friendship or favours
- Recognise red flags and manipulation tactics
- Equip young people to stay safe and seek help

Materials Needed:
- Scenario cards
- Sticky notes or poster space
- Printouts or a slide of "Jay's Story" and Grooming Web
- Local helpline/resource cards if available

Icebreaker – "Would You Spot It?" (3 minutes)

Instructions: Read quick 'friend or threat?' scenarios and ask students to vote thumbs up (safe), sideways (unsure), or down (dodgy).

Examples:
- A new older friend buys you food and gifts
- Someone asks you to deliver a package "just once"
- You're invited to a party with people you don't know
- A friend starts keeping secrets and tells you not to "chat their business"
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Facilitator Notes:
These things might look like kindness, but they can be part of grooming. Grooming isn't always about strangers - it often starts with friendship and trust.

What Is Grooming? (4 minutes)

Definition:Grooming is when someone builds a relationship with you, then uses it to control, trick or exploit you.

Explain:
- Gangs often target young people who are lonely, want money, or want to feel part of something
- They start by giving: lifts, food, money, protection, "love"
- Then they ask for favours: hold something, pass something on, run an errand
- Before you know it, you feel stuck, scared, or in too deep

Warning Signs:
- New expensive clothes or cash with no explanation
- Secretive behaviour or new "friends" who are older
- Sudden changes in mood, missing school, or going missing
- Being made to feel guilty or scared if you say no

Case Study – "Jay's Story" (5 minutes)

(Facilitator reads or plays a short fictionalised story): Jay is 13. He meets a cool older guy who starts giving him trainers, food, and lifts. Jay is flattered and feels included. Soon he's asked to carry a package. Then money. Then he's told he can't back out.

Ask:

- What were the red flags?
- How did Jay get drawn in?
- What could he have done instead?
- Who could help Jay now?
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Message: This isn't friendship. It's control. Real friends don't put you at risk.

Grooming Tactics – "It's a Trap" (5 minutes)

Draw or show a "Grooming Web" visual with the following traps:

- 🪤 Gifts or money
- 🪤 Promises of protection
- 🪤 Flattery or attention
- 🪤 Threats or blackmail
- 🪤 Making you feel in debt
- 🪤 Saying "you're family now"

Let young people label each tactic as either:

✅ Respect
🚫 Manipulation

Ask:

- "Have you or someone you know ever seen these signs?"
- "What would you do if this happened to you or a friend?"

Know Your Exit – Staying Safe (3 minutes)

Share this key info:

- You can always get out, even if it feels scary
- You will be believed
- There are people who can help: trusted adults, teachers, youth workers, police, support charities

Final Prompt:
"If you feel trapped, or see someone being used – speak up. You're not a snitch. You're brave."

Optional Follow-Up:

- Anonymous question box or worry jar
- Invite a speaker from a youth violence prevention team or safeguarding officer
- Creative session: draw, write or film what healthy friendship really looks like