# Concerns rise over young girls' involvement in UK gang violence



Concerns are intensifying across the UK regarding the increasing involvement of young girls and young women in gang-related violence and criminal activities. This development has seen a range of offences from unprovoked assaults on vulnerable elderly passengers to violent clashes in public places, with reports suggesting a surge in female participation in such acts often overlooked by authorities.

Recent incidents spotlight the breadth and gravity of the problem. On March 18, the British Transport Police (BTP) released images of three teenage girls suspected of perpetrating two separate attacks on elderly people aboard Southeastern rail services in south London. The assaults occurred within roughly an hour of each other, targeting an elderly man traveling from London Bridge to Woolwich Arsenal, and later an elderly woman on a train from London Bridge to Erith. One of the attackers was also aggressive towards a female passenger who intervened. BTP described these assaults as "vicious and cowardly," urging the public to help with identifying the suspects, although the force later acknowledged they were no longer actively seeking to identify them.

In West Sussex, the village of Barnham has been regarded by residents as being 'held hostage' by gangs of young girls engaging in violent disorder and shoplifting. In March last year, five girls aged between 13 and 16 were involved in an hour-long melee at Barnham railway station, which included assaults on train staff, police officers, and members of the public. The confrontation featured punches, headbutts, and hair-pulling, with a judge describing the disturbance as "chaos, mayhem, bedlam." Despite the severity, none of the girls received prison sentences due to their ages, instead being given referral orders and intensive referral orders. The children involved were otherwise described in court as bright and capable, with one of them having been head girl at her school.

Sussex Police have taken measures including dispersal orders to curb disorder in the area, following reports of looting at local stores and ongoing anti-social behaviour linked to groups of young people travelling along the South Coast by train. Local councillors and residents expressed frustration, highlighting persistent issues such as theft, abuse, and attacks on business owners and vulnerable individuals.

In Islington, north London, a more severe case saw three girls aged 14, 16, and 17 charged with manslaughter following the death of 75-year-old Fredi Rivero, who was attacked near a bus stop on Seven Sisters Road on 27 February. Rivero was treated at the scene but died in hospital the next day. The Old Bailey heard details of the incident following police investigations, and officials conveyed their concern about the impact on the local community.

Meanwhile, in Morecambe, Lancashire, a 13-year-old schoolgirl, Olivia Allan, suffered serious injuries after reportedly being "kicked like a football" by a gang of girls while walking home from school on 24 March. The attack left her with chipped teeth, bruises, and injuries requiring hospitalisation. A 12-year-old girl was arrested on suspicion of assault related to the incident. Olivia’s mother described the traumatic experience and warned of the severe consequences the attack could have had.

Experts and researchers have noted a worrying rise in female involvement in gang-related crimes. A report by the Local Government Association (LGA) highlighted increasing numbers of assaults on frontline workers, including police officers and social workers, as well as the use of girls in drug transportation and exploitation within gang contexts, particularly relating to 'county lines' – drug dealing networks operating beyond urban areas. The report pointed to factors behind these trends, such as childhood trauma, poverty, negative experiences with authority, and gaps in support systems.

Damian Allain, a former Metropolitan Police detective with 31 years' experience in homicide and organised crime, told MailOnline that girls’ involvement in gangs has been inadequate recognised, both publicly and within policing. He noted that research showed women made up about 35% of gang affiliations and may be groomed by male gang members, often known to be used for stashing drugs or weapons. "If you were to ask the average member of the public, and even many police officers, what characterises a gang member it's unlikely they'd identify it being female," he said, pointing out that gang culture promises a "get rich quick" appeal, especially for females growing up in deprived areas.

Additional concerns centre around the grooming and exploitation of girls by criminal gangs, with the St Giles Trust and other charities raising alarms about recruitment tactics involving offers of beauty treatments like lip fillers and Botox. The so-called 'boyfriend model' sees female partners exploited to provide cover for drug operations, with their properties sometimes being used as drug bases without their full knowledge.

In light of these developments, policing bodies and community organisations continue their efforts to address the growing complexity of youth gang violence involving girls, as families and local residents report anxiety over safety and the impact on their communities.

The Daily Mail is reporting on this evolving situation, capturing a detailed picture of incidents and expert insights across different parts of the UK as investigations proceed and authorities consider responses to this multifaceted challenge.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www2.local.gov.uk/publications/girls-involved-youth-violence-key-findings-and-recommendations> - This report by the Local Government Association explores the increasing involvement of young girls and women in youth violence, highlighting trends such as assaults on frontline workers and gang-related activities like drug transportation.
2. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10778012241233005> - This study examines the relationship between girls and gangs, discussing how the needs of women are being hindered due to governmental vacillation and the impact of violence against women and girls on youth violence and gangs.
3. <https://news.sky.com/story/at-risk-vulnerable-and-invisible-the-thousands-of-girls-in-england-exploited-within-gangs-12922878> - A report by the Commission on Young Lives and Manchester Metropolitan University estimates that as many as 60,000 girls in England are vulnerable to serious violence, often in gangs, but are 'invisible,' with most gang prevention services aimed at boys.
4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17488958211051513> - This article explores young women and girls' participation in gangs and 'county lines' drug sales, highlighting how gangs exploit the relative 'invisibility' of young women to advance their economic interests and stay below police radar.
5. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/education/report-warns-thousands-of-vulnerable-girls-who-are-at-risk-of-violence-exploitation-harm-and-involvement-with-gangs-are-being-left-without-help-and-are-suffering-in-silence/> - A report warns that thousands of vulnerable girls in England are at risk of violence, exploitation, harm, and involvement with gangs, and are being left without help, suffering in silence.
6. <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/resources/women-girls-and-gangs/> - This resource discusses the gendered exploitation of young women and girls in gangs, highlighting how they are often subject to sexual assault and rape by gang members and are both victims and perpetrators of violence.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14642951/Britain-vicious-girl-gangs-female-youths-wreaking-havoc.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data