

# GANG MEMBER OR GIRLFRIEND?

## Age Range:

13+, KS3, KS4

## Topics Covered:

Gang culture

## Time:

20 minutes

## Equipment needed:

Flipchart paper, pens.

## Learning Outcomes:

- Young people have an increased understanding of the effects of gang culture on young women
- Young people have increased empathy for people affected by gang culture
- Young people have an increased awareness of the importance of voicing worries about gang culture

An exercise to explore how gang culture can affect young people and relationships.

## Introduction

This exercise uses creative thinking and reflective learning to explore issues around gang culture and relationships.

## Exercise

Use the instructions in the next sheet on 'Create a Character' and create a character with the group called Lou who is female and 15. Before allowing the young people to 'create Lou' read out the following text she has sent to her best friend recently about her relationship with a young man called Jay. Then when creating the character they can also draw out facts from this text.

*Lou's text to her friend: "Things are going really well with Jay. He is so much more mature than the lads in our year and it feels like he will always take care of me. Plus, his mates are well protective and say I am one of them. He smokes a lot of weed which I don't really like but I suppose everyone has bad habits, right?"*

Once you have created the character of Lou display it visually so the group can see. Then add the following information:

*Jay has asked Lou to keep his and his mates' cannabis at her house for a while. When Lou refused he said she had to because she was 'one of them'.*

Run a discussion using the questions below.

- How might Lou be feeling about Jay asking her to hide his drugs?
- Why might Lou agree to hide it for them?
- Why might she not want to?
- How might Lou feel about Jay saying she was part of the gang?
- If she was to hide it for the gang, what might that affect?

You can also look at what else Lou may have to do if she was part of the gang. If the group do not know then you can give the following information: Many young women (often girlfriends of male gang members) are used to carry weapons and drugs. They may also be used in retaliation against other gangs; putting them at risk of violence and sexual violence.

## Summary

Recap on the main feelings and effects of gang culture. You could briefly explore where Lou could go for support or who would be the best person she could speak to about being asked to join a gang.

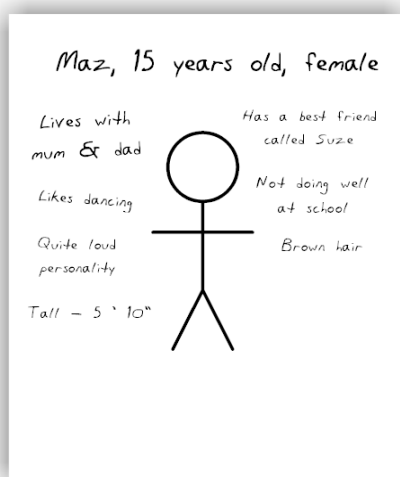
# Create a Character

This very simple technique is a great way to engage learners into talking and thinking about an issue.

The learners work together to create a realistic character by each providing a suggestion on the character's appearance, interests, family etc. The aim is to work together to build a realistic and consistent character that can be used to discuss and explore issues.

On a sheet of flipchart paper or on the board, draw a stick figure. Draw this in the middle of the sheet with plenty of room around to write the groups' suggestions. Give the stick figure a name (not the name of anyone in the group!), age and gender and write these at the top of the sheet. Usually the character is similar in age and background to the group to allow them to connect quickly and relate to the character's situation and feelings.

This works best when the learners are in a circle. Go round the circle asking each person to give one fact about the character. The two rules are that the suggestions must be realistic and consistent. They must all follow on from what is already written so if someone has said that the character is very tall then someone else can't say that the character is short. The aim is to build and develop the character as a group. You should have something that looks a bit like the illustration below.



Once everyone has had a chance to contribute (and you are happy that the character is realistic and there are no contradictions) then you can use the character to explore a situation. You could pick up on any issues that the group have added or simply add a new piece of information that places the character in a situation that focuses on the issue you want to cover. If we were using the character above we could add 'Maz's period is late, how might she be feeling and why?' and then explore the different feelings and reasons etc. You could follow a character's journey as they face decisions exploring different feelings the character might have and the different options and strategies available to them.

This technique can be adapted to work with many, many different issues and provides a safe and creative way to engage young people on an issue. Loudmouth run training courses that go into more depth and build confidence in using this and other interactive PSHE techniques. Ring 0121 446 4880 for more details.