

# County Lines



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# What is County Lines?

- A group establishing a network between an urban location and county market into which drugs (primarily heroin and crack cocaine) are supplied
- The group exploits young or vulnerable people, to achieve storage and/or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of houses for supply (referred to as 'cuckooing')
- The group will exploit the vulnerable people by forcing them to regularly travel between the urban location and the county location to replenish stock and deliver cash
- A mobile phone line is established, to which orders are placed by customers. The line will commonly (but not exclusively) be controlled by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, who is remote from the market
- The group will use intimidation, violence and weapons to gain control upon the vulnerable people and to establish a foothold in the market place.





# What is Cuckooing?



- County Lines groups will target new dealing premises by pursuing vulnerable individuals who attend recovery groups, dependency units and areas associated with those experiencing problems/crisis.
- They are seeking to establish relationships with vulnerable individuals for access to their homes.
- The victims of cuckooing are most commonly class A drugs users or alcohol dependant however there have been numerous cases of victims with learning difficulties/mental health issues and to a lesser extent, physical disabilities.
- Once they gain control over the victim, whether through drug dependency, debt or as part of their 'relationship', groups move in. Once this happens the risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence increase. In some instances drug users may present as complicit in allowing their home to be used, however true consent is questionable.



# The Use of Young People Within County Lines

- County Lines groups use younger members to identify and target other children, either through personal or social media links
- They will focus on those who are particularly vulnerable or at a crisis point in their lives.
- Control can be asserted via drugs debts which are often exaggerated or staged - i.e. the group give the child drugs to transport then stage a robbery on the child before the drugs are delivered causing the child to incur a debt – ‘debt bondage’.
- Groups will also threaten children’s family members using violence and intimidation to ensure engagement and co-operation with the network.
- The majority of children being recruited by County Lines are between the ages of 15-17 years old, however there have been reports of some children as young as 12 being exploited by groups.

**‘Thousands of children used as drug mules by 'county lines' gangs expanding into rural parts of UK’ – The Independent 28/11/2017**



# Transport

- The group will exploit the vulnerable people by forcing them to regularly travel between the urban location and the county market to replenish stock and deliver cash
- Methods of transport include –
  - Rail network
  - Hire vehicles
  - Taxis
  - Owned vehicles
  - Stolen cars
  - Coaches



# Signs Someone is Being Exploited

- **Travelling**

- Alone
- During school hours or unusual hours
- With little knowledge of the area and an accent
- A long distance
- Paying cash for the journey
- Be with an older individual who is purchasing tickets for them or giving them money for tickets
- Arriving in taxis or unknown vehicles

- **Behaviour**

- Persistently going missing from school or home, or being found out of area.
- Leaving home or care without explanation
- Suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries
- Significant changes in emotional well-being
- Significant decline in school performance/attendance
- Unexplained new items such as clothes, mobile phones or money
- Carrying weapons
- Secretive behaviour
- Showing a lack of respect towards teachers/parents
- Aggressive or difficult behaviour



# Signs Someone is Being Exploited

- Relationships with others
  - Parental concerns
  - Relationships with new people
  - Relationships with controlling, older individuals or gang association
  - Isolation from peers or social networks
  - Being approached or intimidated by a controlling peer or group
  - Communication – excessive receipt of texts and phone calls or having multiple handsets



# County Lines Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLhGpS1f-F0>



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# Activity

## Jake

1. What is his association with the gang?
2. Why did he become involved?
3. What are the consequences of his actions?

## Katelyn

1. What is her association with the gang?
2. Why did she become involved?
3. What are the consequences of her actions?

## Jake's Mam

1. What is her association with the gang?
2. Why did she become involved?
3. What are the consequences of her actions?

## All Three

1. Who can protect them?
2. What crimes have they committed?
3. Could they be of interest to the Police?



# Punishments

## ‘Let the punishment fit the crime’

‘Male A will serve nine years and Male B faces six-and-a-half years in prison for running a "county line", which are systems run by organised crime groups in major cities such as London that provide telephones and drugs to sellers in seaside towns.

Male C was given a sentence of four years and four months for taking over the running of the county line after Male A and Male B were arrested.’ 09/02/2018



‘Five-man 'county lines' drugs gang who made £70,000 in four months by ferrying high-purity cocaine from London to sell in Cardiff are jailed for a total of almost 20 years.’ 24/10/2018

Police Forces clamp down on County Lines drug dealing - A number of arrests and drugs raids have been made as police forces...tackle the rising number of County Lines drug deals.

29/01/2019



# Case Study

A 16 year old male had been reported as missing from London and was considered at risk due to his age and links to gangs. He had recently failed to appear at court for his alleged involvement in a stabbing. He was found in possession of a 6 inch kitchen knife and 30 wraps of drugs.

Whilst in custody he was found to have significant burns to his body, on his stomach area, consistent with having being burnt by boiling liquid. He would not disclose further details; however it was suspected this may have been caused by those responsible for placing him in Ipswich to deal in class A drugs.

**groomed**  
**to sell drugs:**  
children exploited by 'county lines' gangs



# County Lines Video

<https://www.itv.com/news/2017-04-19/going-country-mother-tells-of-her-agony-of-watching-her-child-being-groomed-by-drug-dealers/>



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# Where to Find Help



The  
Children's  
Society

No child  
should feel  
alone



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ANY  
QUESTIONS  
?



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