

01 What is County Lines?

County Lines is the term commonly used to describe the approach taken by gangs and criminal networks to supply class A drugs from urban to suburban areas across the country, including market and coastal towns, using dedicated mobile phone lines known as 'deal lines' or 'graft lines'

How it works

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Typically, the 'graft phone' is kept away from the area where the drugs are sold, and a relay system is used to contact those acting as dealers.

A local property which is often occupied by a vulnerable person is used as a base for the group's activities.

The acquiring of the property is often by force or coercion and is known as 'cuckooing'.

07 What to do?

Police, Health, Education and Social Work should use The National Referral Mechanism. The NRM process is applicable when dealing with both children/young people and vulnerable adults who have been exploited into taking part in County Line activities, may have been moved around (trafficked) in order to run drugs, or may have had their properties cuckooed. The form can be accessed [HERE](#).

If you are concerned that a child or young Person is in immediate danger-Call 999

Suspicious about something you have Seen/heard, call your local Police on 101 Information can be given anonymously online, crimestoppers-uk.org or call crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

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Why it matters?

Groups and organised crime groups exploit children and teenagers to deal on their behalf.

Children are seen as, easily controlled and inexpensive to resource.

These children will often fall into some form of debt to the group, and this can lead to violence and assaults against them.



06 What are the signs?

Recognising a child who is being exploited means seeing changes in behaviour including:

- going missing from home or absent from school without explanation;
- mixing with new friends and their parents don't know;
- experimental drug use, often cannabis;
- having more than one mobile phone
- appearing nervous/ scared/ evasive/ secretive;
- suffering injuries they can't explain;
- having tickets for train or coach travel.

05 Recognising vulnerabilities

There are several factors that will make a child more vulnerable to being exploited including:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household;
- Drug or alcohol misuse;
- History of abuse;
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships;
- Friends with children who are exploited;
- Lacking friends from the same age group; Living in residential care.

Why it matters

The children involved often do not perceive themselves to be victims of exploitation, as they consider they have acted voluntarily. This is further complicated as the exploited children often receive cash or gifts/drugs from their abusers as a means of grooming them.

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