

# County Lines

## What is County Lines?

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas in the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons. Gangs based in cities like London are targeting the most vulnerable people in small towns across the country to sell class A drugs on their behalf.

## How are young people being exploited?

Gangs are deliberately targeting vulnerable young people – those who are homeless, living in care homes or trapped in poverty. These children are unsafe, unloved, or unable to cope, and the gangs take advantage of this.

These gangs groom, threaten or trick children into trafficking their drugs for them. They might threaten a young person physically, or they might threaten the young person's family members. The gangs might also offer something in return for the young person's cooperation – it could be money, food, alcohol, clothes and jewellery, or improved status – but the giving of these gifts will usually be manipulated so that the young person feels they are in debt to their exploiter.

However they become trapped in county lines, the young people involved feel as if they have no choice but to continue doing what the gangs want.

## What are the signs of criminal exploitation and county lines?

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled

- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

### **Cuckooing**

Drug dealers will often take over the homes of vulnerable people as they use it as a base to deal drugs in the area. The vulnerable person may be being kept inside against their will.

Have you noticed more people calling at an address? Sometimes at unsociable hours?

Have you noticed a neighbour has not been seen for a while?

Are there suspicious smells coming from an address?

Are there suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside the address?

### **Going country**

This is the most popular term that describes county lines activity. It can also mean the act of travelling to another city/town to deliver drugs or money.

### **Trap house**

A building used as a base from where drugs are sold (or sometimes manufactured). These houses usually are occupied by someone (usually adult drug users but sometimes young people are forced to stay in trap houses) location.

### **Trap line**

This refers to when someone owns a mobile phone specifically for the purpose of running and selling of drug.

### **Useful info:**

**Crimestoppers – 0800 555 111**

**Police – 101**