

COUNTY LINES

What is County Lines?

County lines is a common term used by gangs or organised crime groups (OCG) involved in exploiting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line".

County lines often involves the exploitation of children or vulnerable adults to move or store drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (which may include sexual violence) and weapons.

What to look out for?

- An increase in visitors & cars to a particular house or flat.
- New faces appearing at a particular house or flat.
- Frequently travel at unusual times of the day/ night.
- Visible substance misuse and/ or drug paraphernalia.
- Unexplained, sometimes unaffordable new things (clothing, electrical items, jewellery).
- Having access to multiple mobile phones, often known as "burner phones".
- Changes in a young person appearance.
- Carrying weapons.
- Young people seen in the presence of different adults.
- Young people seen in different cars/ taxis driven by unknown adults.
- Truancy, exclusion or disengagement from school or college.
- An increase in anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- Unexplained injuries.
- Phrases used – "running a line" "going OT/out there" "going country" "going cunch".

Where can I find more information?

[County Lines - National Crime Agency](#)

[Protecting children from county lines | NSPCC Learning](#)

[County Lines: Protecting Our Communities and Families | Crimestoppers \(crimestoppers-uk.org\)](#)

Exploitation of young and vulnerable people?

A common feature in county lines is the exploitation of young people and/ or vulnerable adults. Dealers will target those with weaknesses who may suffer from mental health, physical disability or those that have an addiction problem.

As an example, dealers will often provide drug users with a supply of drugs that know the drug user cannot pay for, over time this will then create a "drug debt" that the drug user has accrued with no means of being able to pay. The dealer will exploit this situation instructing the drug user to work for them to "pay off the debt".

In other scenarios, dealers will take over a local property which normally belongs to a vulnerable person, and they will use this property to conduct their criminal activity, this is also known as cuckooing.

Individuals exploited may also experience physical, mental and sexual abuse, and in some cases will be trafficked to areas a distance away from home as part of a drug dealing network.

These vulnerabilities can and will be exploited, however there are certain things to look out for.

What is the impact?

The impact from county lines can be devastating for individuals & families, however can also negatively affect a local community.

This can result in local resident's becoming frightened and scared in the place they call home; this may result in increased ASB which could present further problems if local resident challenge the behaviour.

As a result, resident don't challenge are afraid to report and the problem continues.

What to do if you think someone you know maybe be involved in County Lines?

- Trust your instinct – Even if they are not involved in County Lines, they maybe experience other forms of exploitation or abuse.
- Call 999 in an emergency, or 101 in a non-emergency.
- If you would rather remain anonymous, contact crime stoppers – 0800 555 1111.
- Contact NSPCC – 0808 800 5000
- Contact Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together (WST) – 01902 550 477

