

Children are being exploited by gangs involved in drug crime. Know the signs to spot.

County lines gangs use children and vulnerable people to courier drugs and money. A young person who is involved in county lines activity might exhibit some of these signs:

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|  Perseverently going missing from school or home, or being found out-of-area |  Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones |  excessive receipt of texts or phone calls |  Relationships with controlling, older individuals or gang association |  Leaving home or care without explanation |
|  Suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries |  Parental concerns |  Significant decline in school performance |  Significant changes in emotional well-being |  Home Office <small>Working in partnership with</small> CrimeStoppers. |

In an emergency call **999**
For non-emergencies call **101**
Visit www.leics.police.uk

Help and advice:

Leicester City Council - **0116 454 1004**
Leicestershire County Council - **0116 305 0005**
Rutland County Council - **01572 758407**



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County lines



What is County Lines Exploitation? County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within 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 (including sexual violence) and weapons. The crime is called county lines because a single telephone number is used to order drugs, operated from outside the area. Vulnerable children and adults are being recruited in large cities to transport cash and drugs all over the country. This keeps the true criminals behind it detached from the act and less likely to be detected or caught.

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited, even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. They recruit vulnerable adults and children to act as couriers to move drugs and cash to suburban or rural areas. They often set up a base in a rural area, taking over the home of a vulnerable person and use adults and children to act as runners for drugs.

How to spot possible victims

There are several signs to look out for when someone has been lured into this activity. These include:

- Change in behaviour
- Signs of assault and/or malnutrition
- Access to numerous phones
- Use of unusual terms e.g. going country
- Associating with gangs
- Unexplained bus or train tickets
- School truancy or going missing
- Unexplained gifts (clothes, trainers) and cash.

One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange. Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection). It is important to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a young person or vulnerable adult does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a young person who engages in county lines activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Key Terms:

CUCKOOING

Cuckooing is when drug gangs take over the home of a vulnerable person through violence and intimidation, using it as their base for selling/manufacturing drugs. Signs:

- An increase in people coming and going
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Litter outside
- Signs of drugs use
- You haven't seen the person who lives there recently or when you have, they have been anxious or distracted.

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.

TRAPPING

The act of selling drugs. Trapping can refer to the act of moving drugs from one town to another or the act of selling drugs in one.

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.