

Safeguarding 7-minute briefing: County Lines

Further information

[NCLCC - County Lines Awareness Video - YouTube](#)

What is it?

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'

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 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. Always report concerns to the DSL.

How it works

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

Recognising vulnerabilities

Several factors that will make a child more vulnerable to being exploited include: 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

Groups and organized crime groups exploit children and young people 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.

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 to groom them

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