

County Lines

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) & “County Lines”

What is “County Lines”?

- A child is groomed by a criminal gang, then exploited to transport drugs and money from one area (county) to another
- The child may be trafficked to the gang’s ‘trap houses’ miles away from home, to find ‘customers’, deal with rival gangs and sell drugs
- To the gang, the child is an expendable commodity. They’re likely to face violence and sexual exploitation
- The ‘line’ refers to the phone line that the gang uses for selling drugs

What are the signs to look out for?

A child may:

- Receive an excessive numbers of texts or calls, or have multiple phones
- Be anxious if they can’t check or respond to calls and messages
- Use drugs or be found carrying a large amount of drugs
- Be secretive – about where they’re going after school, or what they’re doing online
- Be meeting with older peers or adults outside of school
- Have money, expensive clothes or items that they can’t or won’t explain, including weapons
- Become increasingly disruptive or aggressive, or isolated/withdrawn
- Use sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn’t expect them to know
- Look particularly tired or dishevelled
- Show physical signs of abuse, such as bruising or bleeding
- Carry hotel cards or keys for unknown places

Listen for children using any of these key terms:

- *“Bando”* – House used for storing and selling drugs
- *“Ting”* – Weapon used for protection
- *“The line/trap line/deal line”* – Number or phone line used to take drug orders
- *“Worker/runner”* – Child groomed and exploited to sell drugs
- *“Going OT”* – When a child is being sent “out there” to another area to transport and sell drugs
- *“Bagged/spun”* – Arrested or stopped by the police while carrying drugs
- *“Pebbs/pebble”* – Small quantities of drugs

Action to prevent exploitation:

Be informed:

- Both boys and girls can be exploited
- Children between the ages of 10 and 17 and vulnerable adults are targeted
- Children from all backgrounds are targeted. Those with particular vulnerabilities may be at more risk
- Exploitation is taking place in towns and villages across the south west of England, irrespective of wealth or location

Be part of the solution:

- Know where your child, or the children you are responsible for are and who they are spending their time with.
- Be aware of what children are doing on the internet and who they may be interacting with.
- Speak with your child about the realities of child exploitation.
- Encourage and maintain communication and involvement in positive activities.

Reporting a concern:

If you are concerned about exploitation in your community, contact your local police on 101

Alternatively you can report it to Crimestoppers anonymously by calling 0800 555 111 or visit <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

In an emergency, or if a crime is ongoing, always dial 999.

Useful websites:

Escapeline – <http://www.escapeline.org.uk>

NSPCC – <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation/>