

## Safeguarding Bulletin – County Lines

### Definition

County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. Importing areas (areas where the drugs are taken to) are reporting increased levels of violence and weapons-related crimes as a result of this trend.

These are locations that have been identified as having links to the local area



Access this website to find a video with information:

[https://www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/gangs-\(county-lines\)](https://www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/gangs-(county-lines))

# Risks

**Criminalisation**

**Drugs**

**Physical violence**

**Sexual abuse and exploitation**

**Trafficking and missing children**

**Cuckooing**

**Financial exploitation and abuse**

## What is cuckooing?

Dealers often convince the vulnerable person to let their home be used for drug dealing by giving them free drugs or offering to pay for food or utilities. Often OCGs target people who are lonely, isolated, or have addiction issues. It's common for OCGs to use a property for a short amount of time, moving address frequently to reduce the chance of being caught.

Signs to look out for

There are several signs to look out for that may indicate someone is a victim of cuckooing:

- frequent visitors at unsociable hours
- changes in your neighbour's daily routine
- unusual smells coming from a property
- suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside an address



## How do you know if County Lines drug dealing is happening in your area?

Some signs to look out for include:

- An increase in visitors and cars to a house or flat
- New faces appearing at the house or flat
- New and regularly changing residents (e.g different accents compared to local accent)
- Change in resident's mood and/or demeanour (e.g. secretive/ withdrawn/ aggressive/ emotional)
- Substance misuse and/or drug paraphernalia
- Changes in the way young people you

might know dress

- Unexplained, sometimes unaffordable new things (e.g clothes, jewellery, cars etc)
- Residents or young people you know going missing, maybe for long periods of time
- Young people seen in different cars/taxis driven by unknown adults
- Young people seeming unfamiliar with your community or where they are
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement from school
- An increase in anti-social behaviour in the community
- Unexplained injuries

## What to do if you have concerns

The best advice is to trust your instincts. Even if someone isn't involved in county lines drug dealing, they may be being exploited in some other way, so it's always worth speaking out. You can speak to your local police by dialling 101, or in an emergency 999.

If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity [Crimestoppers](#) on 0800 555 111.

If you notice something linked to the railways, you can report concerns to the British Transport Police by texting 61016 from your mobile. In an emergency dial 999.

**If you are a young person** who is worried about your involvement, or a friend's involvement in county lines:

A good option is to speak to an adult you trust and talk to them about your concerns.

You can also call Childline on 0800 1111. Childline is private and confidential service where you can talk to specially trained counsellors about anything that is worrying you.

Alternatively, speak to a children and young people's service like [Catch 22](#) (<https://www.catch-22.org.uk/offers/gangs/>). They work with children and young people of any age to help get them out of situations they're worried about, and have helped lots of children and young people involved in County Lines.

Working in partnership with other agencies, [St Giles](#) (<https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/>) offers specialist services to help young people make a safe and sustained exit from county line involvement. Caseworkers offer both practical and emotional support to the young person and their family to help address any issue which might be driving county line involvement.



## Edible highs

There has been recent information from the Police that 'Edible Highs' have been reported as circulating and have come to the attention of Safer schools officers within Hillingdon. 'THC' which is clearly labelled on the packaging is the "main psychoactive compound in cannabis that produces the high sensation" according to Healthline and the NHS website. The specific danger with edible highs is that as they are ingested via the stomach and the effects take longer to hit, as opposed to smoking that is fairly instant. This means that people chase the high and consume more than is sensible leading to increased risk of paranoia and/or psychosis type effects.

**Useful places to go for information for your son/daughter:**

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/county-lines>

[https://www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/gangs-\(county-lines\)](https://www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/gangs-(county-lines))

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/child-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines/what-is-county-lines>

Samaritans: 116 123

Childline 0800 1111 Specifically online safety 0808 800 5002

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/> 0808 802 5544

<https://www.kooth.com/>