

County Lines – Drug Gangs

Information every leader should be aware of...

Police arrested 586 people in the County Lines crackdown in just one week in May 2019. 500 men and 86 women were arrested in raids in Norfolk, Suffolk and other areas and over 500 vulnerable adults and almost 400 children in need were helped, some as young as 11 years old. Plus 30 people were identified as potential victims of slavery or human trafficking. Drugs with a street value of £231,000 were recovered and destroyed – in just one week.

WHAT IS A COUNTY LINE ?

The name “County Line” refers to the phone number (line) used by urban gangs to control and facilitate drug dealing in more than one rural location.



Drug gangs cross one or more police force boundary and set up secure bases to conduct day to day drug dealing, largely of Class “A” drugs.

Establishment of a County Line is achieved through exploitation of vulnerable people and children – it’s BIG business.

EXPLOITATION

Gangs recruit and use children and young people to move drugs and money for them, often recruiting young people via social media. They are forced to carry drugs between locations, usually by public transport. They are also forced to sell drugs to users, and this ensures the gang leaders are not easily identified.

CUCKOOING

This 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 of people coming and going
- An increase of bikes or cars outside the house
- Litter and / or signs of drug use
- No sighting of the people who usually live in the house, or if they are seen, they look stressed

RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Children are initially showered with gifts, the promise of easy money and respect within the “gang”.

After a few easy tasks they are given more responsibility and travel further with more drugs until the drug gang stage a theft of the money or drugs in order to make the carrier indebted to the drug gang.

From this point the young person is totally controlled by the drug gang and are constantly intimidated and forced to continue working the County Line for the drug gang.

IDENTIFYING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Signs that a young person is being recruited or used by a drug gang are:

- Excess of money / more than one mobile phone / new clothes / lots of bus or train tickets
- Missing / change of behaviour / change of attitude
- Malnourished / tiredness / poor hygiene / signs of abuse / sexualised behaviours

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

Contact one of the County Safeguarding Awareness Coordinators Trudy Musgrove or Peter Chetwynd to discuss your concerns.

Do not challenge the young person or any member of their family – the authorities will take the necessary actions.

