

## **County Lines**



### **What does County Lines mean?**

County lines exploitation is the process by which gangs, usually from large urban areas, supply drugs to suburban and rural locations using vulnerable children and young people to courier drugs and money.

### **Who can be involved?**

Children can be vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation for a wide range of factors from living in poverty to a desire to earn “street cred” amongst their peers.

Typically, gangs use mobile phone lines to facilitate drug orders and supply to users. They also use local property as a base; these often belong to a vulnerable adult and are obtained through force or coercion (known as ‘cuckooing’).

The County Lines process is now understood as a driving causal factor in youth violence and, in some cases, includes elements of child trafficking. An updated report by the National Crime Agency (NCA) has found that the use of ‘county lines’ by gangs, is a growing issue, and is exploiting ever-younger victims.

### **Signs and signals of County Lines or other forms of criminal exploitation include:**

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- Having a second, old phone (i.e. not a smart phone)
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn’t expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places