

County Lines and Child Exploitation



Why Primary Schools?

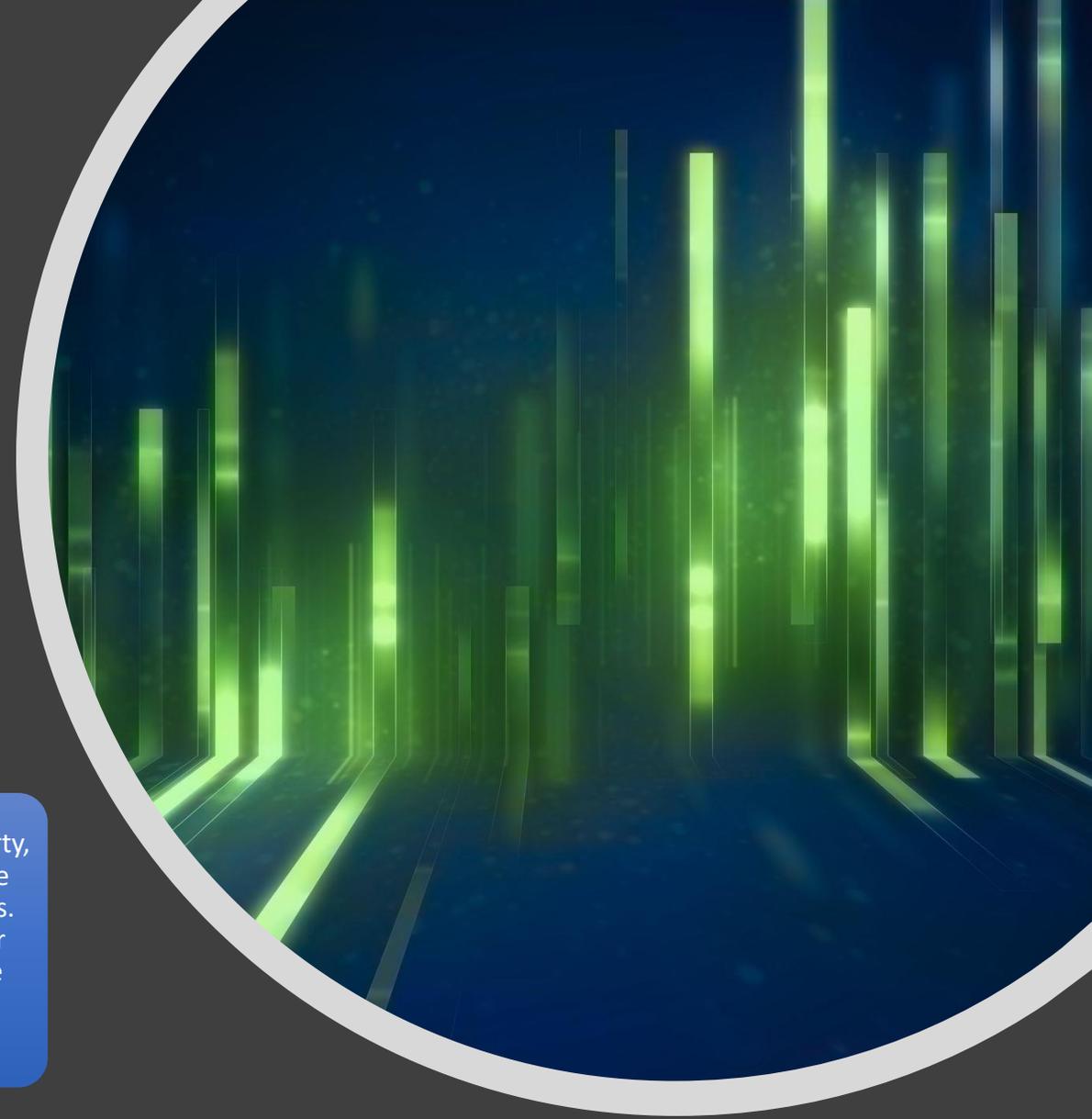
- As parents of younger children we use the parks and the shops and see the teenagers around the town. Their parents don't as they are not out with them. Therefore, if we are vigilant in observing what is happening, then maybe we will pick something up that can save a child from exploitation.
- There have been cases where children as young as 8/9 have been groomed over a couple of years.

WHAT IS IT?

County lines activity involves an urban criminal gang travelling to smaller locations to sell drugs

The group will use a single telephone number for customers ordering drugs, operated from outside the area, which becomes their 'brand'.

The gangs tend to use a local property, generally belonging to a vulnerable person, as a base for their activities. This is often taken over by force or coercion (cuckooing), and in some instances victims have left their homes in fear of violence.



WHAT IS IT?

They employ various tactics to evade detection, including rotating gang members between locations so they are not identified by the police or competitors, using children to transport drugs in the belief that they are less likely to be stopped and searched.

What is it?

- County lines gangs pose a significant threat to vulnerable adults and children, upon whom they rely to conduct and/or facilitate this criminality.
- Over 70% of police forces in England and Wales are now reporting established activity within their area

Motivators

Motivators for setting up include:

- A receptive customer base
- Less competition
- Less likely to be known to police
- **Recent Trends**
- The targeting of adults/children with mental health issues
- 80% of police forces reported the exploitation of children, typically to deliver the drugs to customers

County Lines

- Children from urban areas are recruited by gangs to courier drugs and money to the county location
- Children are reported to have stayed in very poor conditions in cuckooed addresses that generally belong to Class A drug users
- Trafficked: Trafficking children for the purpose of recruitment , transfer , harbouring and or/a receipt of a child for the purpose of slavery , forced labour or exploitation is illegal – distance is irrelevant. From one end of town to another is still trafficking

North Yorkshire

- North Yorkshire Police have arrested 27 people and made 60 welfare visits to vulnerable people during a national week of action to tackle “county lines” drug dealing- October 2022
- County lines is the name given to a form of organised crime in which drug dealers from larger cities exploit vulnerable people - including children - and force them to deal drugs in smaller towns and cities. It takes its name from the mobile phone lines used by dealers to communicate between towns and advertise their drugs for sale.
- The week of action took place between 3 and 9 October 2022 and was coordinated by the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC).
- During the high intensity week of action officers arrested 27 people on suspicion of drugs offences ranging from the possession of controlled substances through to being concerned in the supply of controlled drugs.

Signs of exploitation

New clothes

New friends (unrelated)

Distancing from old friends

Two phones

Changing their taste in dress or music

Looking tired

Marks on their body that they try to hide

Receiving calls from outside their friends

Going to parties, unfamiliar houses, hotels.

Signs of exploitation

Changes in behaviour

Quiet or Loud

Lack of communication

Secretive

Invisible gifts – phone credit

Interest in making money

Missing school

Not saying where they have been

Children are groomed and exploited to deal drugs on behalf of organised criminals. These are the signs to look out for:

Persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area

Unexplained money, clothes, or mobile phones

Excessive receipt of texts / phone calls

Relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups

Leaving home / care without explanation

Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries

Carrying weapons

Significant decline in school results / performance

Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks

Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

Travelling long distances on public transport - is it term time? Should they be in school? Are they paying high cost fares with cash?

What can you
do as a parent?

Be

Be vigilant

Ask

Ask the questions

Take

Take notice of changes

More information:

County Lines: the phone number you call to get the drugs. This line is from a different city. Then they will contact a local rep to get the drugs to you.

Cuckooing: houses are taken over by a drug group and operate out of it.

Trafficking: Trafficking children for the purpose of recruitment, transfer, harbouring and or/a receipt of a child for the purpose of slavery, forced labour or exploitation is illegal – distance is irrelevant. From one end of town to another is still trafficking.

Child exploitation: Children being coerced in to actions and situations that they are too scared to say no.

Get help and support – help keep our children safe!

Anyone with concerns about county lines can speak to their local police on 101 or call 999 in an emergency. If you'd rather stay anonymous you can call the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If you are a young person who is worried about being involved in county lines, or knows someone who is, you can speak to an adult and let them know how you feel.

You can also contact www.fearless.org who allow you to pass on information about crime anonymously.

You can also contact Childline on 0800 1111 – they are a private and confidential service where you can talk to counsellors about anything that is worrying you.

