

County Lines

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NCA County Line Definition

A typical county lines scenario is defined by the following components:

- A group (not necessarily affiliated as a gang) establishes a network between an urban hub and county or coastal town, into which drugs (primarily heroin and crack cocaine) are supplied.
- A branded mobile phone line is established in the market, to which orders are placed by introduced customers. The line will commonly (but not exclusively) be controlled by a third party, remote from the market.
- The group exploits young or vulnerable persons, to achieve the storage and/or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of dwellings (commonly referred to as cuckooing).
- The group or individuals exploited by them regularly travel between the urban hub and the county market, to replenish stock and deliver cash.
- The group is inclined to use intimidation, violence and weapons, including knives, corrosives and firearms.



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County Line – Violent Reality



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County Line Exploitation – Case Study



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West Midlands – Net Exporter

Legend

-  = 4+ lines or groups
-  = up to 3 lines or groups
-  = towns likely to have CL

County Line Victim Profile

- Young people (aged between 14-24yrs), exploited for drug running purposes. Victims come from a diverse range of ethnic groups.
- It is highly likely there is a cross over between CL Groups and CSE (either for victims or offenders) due to similarities in risk factors, though this has not been conclusively identified.

CL Exploitation Risk Factors		
Mental Health Problems	Drug Use	Debt Bondage
Known to Care System		Prone to Missing Episodes

The Tell Tale Signs

Below are some of the signs that would indicate that a young person or vulnerable adult maybe involved or at risk of becoming involved in gang activity:

- *Child withdrawn from family*
- *Sudden loss of interest in school*
- *Decline in attendance or academic achievement*
- *Started to use new or unknown slang words*
- *Holds unexplained money or possessions or cannot explain where large sums of money have gone (financial exploitation)*
- *Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or ‘uniform’ similar to that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour*
- *Dropped out of positive activities*
- *New nickname*
- *Unexplained physical injuries*
- *Graffiti style ‘tags’ on possessions, school books, walls*
- *Constantly talking about another young person or adult who seems to have a lot of influence over them*
- *Broken off with old friends and hangs around with one group of people*
- *Increased use of social networking sites*
- *Started adopting certain codes of group behaviour e.g. ways of talking and hand signs*
- *Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past*
- *Signs of sexual exploitation e.g. pregnancy, abortion (perhaps forced), sexually transmitted infections and injuries*
- *Signs of psychological effects of exploitation – depression and suicide attempts for example*
- *Scared when entering certain areas; and*

(DCSF, Safeguarding Children & Young People who may be affected by Gang Activity, 2010)



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Video Resource

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLhGpS1f-F0>



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Next Steps

- National and Regional priority
- Joined up approach
- Criminal Exploitation forum - Birmingham