

7. Where can I find out more?

[Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#)
[National Crime Agency](#)
[National Referral Mechanism](#)
[Child Exploitation - an appropriate language guide](#)

6. What should I do?

County lines is against the law and a form of child abuse. If you are worried that a person is being exploited or involved with county lines, discuss with your line manager immediately and [make a referral](#) to social work. An Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) should take place which may lead to the decision that the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is completed. The NRM process is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of Human Trafficking and Exploitation. If you are concerned a person is in immediate danger, you should contact the Police on 999. Trust your instincts. Even if someone is not involved in county lines then they may be being exploited in some other way.

5. What should I look out for?

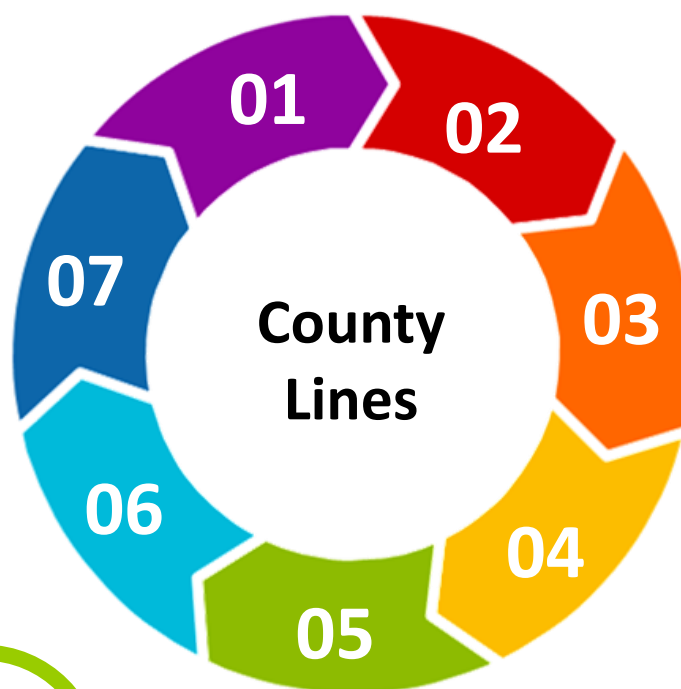
- Going missing from home or absent from school without explanation
- New unknown friendship group
- Increase in visitors to home
- Unexplained increased income
- Experimental drug use
- Having more than one mobile phone
- Appearing nervous, scared or evasive
- Having unexplained injuries
- Having unexplained train/bus tickets

1. What is County Lines?

County Lines is the term used to describe when gangs and organised criminal networks are involved in transporting illegal drugs from urban to suburban areas across the country. Perpetrators use children and vulnerable people to store drugs and cash to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs.

2. How does it work?

'County Lines' are the dedicated mobile phone lines known as 'deal lines' or 'graft lines' that are used to take the orders of drugs. Typically, the phone is kept away from the area where the drugs are sold, and a relay system is used to contact those acting as dealers. In some cases, the dealers will take over a local property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person and use it to operate their criminal activity from – known as cuckooing.



3. What are the risks?

Perpetrators will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. People exploited in this way will often be exposed to physical, mental and sexual abuse, and in some instances will be trafficked to areas a long way from home as part of the network's drug dealing business. Children and vulnerable people can often fall into debt to the gang or organising group and this can lead to violence against them.

4. Who is most vulnerable?

Drug dealers will frequently target children and vulnerable adults - often with mental health or addiction problems. Some factors make people more vulnerable to being exploited: living in a chaotic household, substance use, history of abuse, recent loss, gang association, being friends with others who have been exploited, lack of friends in same age group, living in residential care, low self-esteem.

