

## County lines

### What is County Lines?

County line is the organised distribution of drugs from big cities to small rural areas using children to sell drugs. Faces from the cities are not known in rural areas, so their activity can go undetected for some time. Cannabis and heroin, cocaine and amphetamines are widely associated with county lines. Teenagers are often arrested by police and viewed as a drug dealer in their own right, rather than seeing the exploitation behind their activity. For more information please watch this short video

<https://www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/county-lines/>

### Recent Trends

The main county line gangs are in London, but there are large gangs in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Reading, if you work in these areas, please be extra vigilant and share county lines information with your learners during sessions with them.

Children and adults from Birmingham have been found in Lincolnshire. A landmark case that has recently been in the media has involved teenagers from Birmingham who have gone missing, they were found selling drugs in Lincolnshire in squalid drug dens. The gang leader was convicted of human trafficking as well as county lines, you can read more about it here.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/04/drug-dealer-county-lines-jailed-trafficked-children-sell-heroin-birmingham>

### Children at risk

- Missing children
- Children in care
- Chaotic backgrounds
- Poor attendance at school
- Offenders
- children who hang around with older people.
- Children who are lured in by material things, such as new clothes.
- Children are typically 15-16 years of age and want the respect of the gang.

### Signs

- Unexplained money and new clothes or mobile phones
- Carrying weapons
- Involvement with older people
- Unexplained injuries
- Missing from home
- Self harm or poor mental health

### What can I do as a tutor/trainer assessor?

As a professional working with young people at FIT UK, you may have opportunities to identify issues early so it is important to familiarise yourself with the signs that a young person is being exploited and to share this information by completing the safeguarding disclosure form and alerting your safeguarding lead.

Other steps you can take to help protect young people include:

- Staying alert to changes in behaviour
- Ensuring you know who the safeguarding lead is and that you are aware of the safeguarding disclosure process to follow if you have concerns about a young person.
- Visit websites such as the children's society who offer information on a national disrupting exploitation programme in London, Manchester and Birmingham  
<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-children/disrupting-exploitation-programme>
- Share this factsheet
- Share the home office factsheet and discuss the case studies with your learners  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf)