

County Lines Briefing – April 2017

'County lines' is the term used to describe the approach taken by gangs originating from large urban areas, who travel to locations elsewhere such as county or coastal towns to sell class A drugs. Gangs typically recruit and exploit children and vulnerable young people to courier drugs and cash. Typically, users ask for drugs via a mobile phone line used by the gang. Couriers travel between the gang's urban base and the county or coastal locations on a regular basis to collect cash and deliver drugs

Gangs recruit children and young people through deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming. Gangs also use local property as a base for their activities, and this often involves taking over the home of a vulnerable adult who is unable to challenge them.

County lines was first identified in 2014. The first [National Crime Agency](#) threat assessment on county lines was published in August 2015 based on information gathered in 2014. An [updated assessment by the National Crime Agency](#) was published in November 2016, which provided a more comprehensive picture and showed that this was a growing issue.

Whilst progress is being made, more needs to be done. The Government is very keen to ensure that all the key sectors (police, safeguarding, children's services, adult social services, housing, schools and others) are aware and are taking this issue seriously. The Home Office has established a new Working Group on County Lines which will oversee a 12-month action plan to tackle this issue and brings together key departments, the National Police Chiefs' Council, National Crime Agency and other key partners.

It is critical that practitioners working directly with children and vulnerable adults are aware of what county lines is, how to identify those at risk or involved in county lines exploitation and what action to take. County lines cuts across a number of issues including: drug dealing, violence, gangs, exploitation, safeguarding, modern slavery and missing persons, and to tackle it requires the efforts of a range of departments, agencies and organisations.

For more information visit ESCB's dedicated [Missing and Runaway Children \(including Trafficking and County Lines\)](#) webpage

To report any concerns relating to the welfare of a child or young person

Contact Children's Single Point of Entry (SPOE) on **020 8379 5555** (Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm; Fri 9am-4.45pm).

Out of office hours call: 020 8379 1000 (select option 2 and you will be transferred to an advisor)

You may also make contact by [email](#);

In an emergency, call 999.

For further information on making referrals visit the [Single Point of Entry \(SPOE\) webpage](#)