



County Lines Drug Gangs - 7Minute Briefing



1. WHAT IS IT?

- ▶ Whilst there is no official definition, typical county lines activity involves an urban criminal gang travelling to smaller locations to sell heroin/crack cocaine.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Many are London based but can be from any built up urban area
- ▶ Can be cannabis , Skunk or pills
- ▶ Starting to also use B and B's and air B and B's
- ▶ House owners will often owe them a 'debt'
- ▶ Single Parents , Isolated families , disabled, Leaving Care, drug concerns



2.

2. 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 women & children to transport drugs in the belief that they are less likely to be stopped and searched.
- ▶ Gang at the top not often known to rest of 'line'
- ▶ Each layer well protected
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Violence to other family members
- ▶ Violence to property and cars etc

3. 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, including Avon and Somerset Police , are now reporting established activity within their area
- ▶ Gang members are generally in their late teens to mid-twenties.

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



4. WHAT IS IT?

Motivators for setting up include:

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



5.RECOGNITION

- Children from urban areas are recruited by gangs to courier drugs and money to the county location, often by train but also via cars and coaches.
- 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,



6. KEY ISSUES

- ▶ How do I find out more?
 - ▶ How are children recruited?
 - ▶ What are the signs?
 - ▶ Are there links with CSE?
- ▶ You Tube Trapped
 - ▶ BBC 1 player Drugsland (series 2 part 4 is in the area of Somerset.
 - ▶ Recruitment starts young with links but escalates as child gets older
 - ▶ Two phones, expensive clothes, being elusive, new friends, disappearing for long periods
 - ▶ CSE is part of the harm/risks for boys and girls

7. HOW TO RESPOND

Speak to your agency safeguarding lead if you have any concerns.

- Read the National Crime Agency Report (Nov 2016)
- Home Office Guidance: Criminal exploitation of children & vulnerable adults county lines. (2017)
- It's Not Okay
- Trapped campaign

Operation Topaz

- Intelligence can help the police to build a vital picture about exploitation, an ongoing incident, identifying victims and offenders. This contributes to helping keep potential victims safe and bringing offenders to justice. In some cases we may want to contact you for further details, so it's important that you provide your correct contact details and keep any relevant information about the incident.
- It is important that partners understand this is **not** a referral form or early help notification form and does not replace any pre-existing referral or notification mechanism including referrals to SCU or social care. Always call 999 if there is an emergency, a crime is in progress, someone suspected of a crime is nearby, when there is danger to life or when violence is being used or threatened.
- You can access the form here <https://forms.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/vul>
- Also information can be found on the force web pages via these links:
- [Child Sexual Exploitation \(CSE\)](#)
- [Modern Slavery](#)
- Short link is been created to the form <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/exploitation>