

7 Referral process

If you believe that a child or adult has been the victim of, or is at risk of abuse and or exploitation then you should contact OneCall on 01670 536400

Please use the following links

[Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines \(The Home Office\)](#) - This guidance outlines what county lines (and associated criminal exploitation) is, signs to look for in potential victims, and what to do about it.

[A presentation for team meetings](#)

[A poster for team rooms](#)

1 What is County Lines?

'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 vulnerable 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.

It is also known as criminal exploitation

2

Involvement in County Lines

Gangs recruit vulnerable people through deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming. This could be in the form of a 'runner' in the county location to make cash deposits into bank accounts registered to associates or family members of members in the urban location.

3

Despite gangs often consisting of larger groups, only a small number of members will be present in each county location at any given time, usually 2-4 individuals. Gang members could be rotated between county locations to try and evade detection. The presence of larger groups would usually be in response to conflict, as a show of strength.

4

Links to abuse and Sexual Exploitation

Vulnerable people continue to be exploited by county line gangs. Although Abuse/Sexual Exploitation is not the driving factor in county lines gangs exploiting vulnerable people, a clear link between county lines exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Exploitation exists. Appropriate measures for safeguarding both males and females from Abuse/Sexual Exploitation should be a high priority within and county line approaches.

5

Gangs are also known to utilise consenting adult females to assist criminal activity. The common form of assistance provided by females is allowing the use of their home address to running and holding drugs. It is important to think about the child who may reside in the property who will be affected and possibly involved as a runner. In addition females are reported to be used to book hotels, hire cars and identify addresses for cuckooing. 'Cuckooing' is the term used to describe the practice where drug dealers take over the property of a vulnerable person and use it as a place from which to run their drugs business.

Raising Awareness of County Lines

'Cuckooing'

Gangs must establish a base in the county location to develop a market. Gangs take over addresses of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion. In some cases social housing accommodation has been targeted by the gangs who have identified vulnerable people who reside in these properties.



Northumberland
Strategic Safeguarding Partnership