

01

Background: 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'. Unlike other criminal activities where telephone numbers are changed on a regular basis, these telephone numbers have value so are maintained and protected. 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. 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.

What to do?

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](#)

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

Questions:

How do I find out more?

How are children recruited?

What are the signs?

Are there links with CSE?

06

Why it matters:

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 Greater Manchester Police, are now reporting established activity within their area.

Gangs from London dominate this activity (reported in 85% of areas) but there has been an increase in reports from other counties, highlighting the emergence of gangs in the North West.

Gang members are generally in their late teens to mid-twenties.

02

03

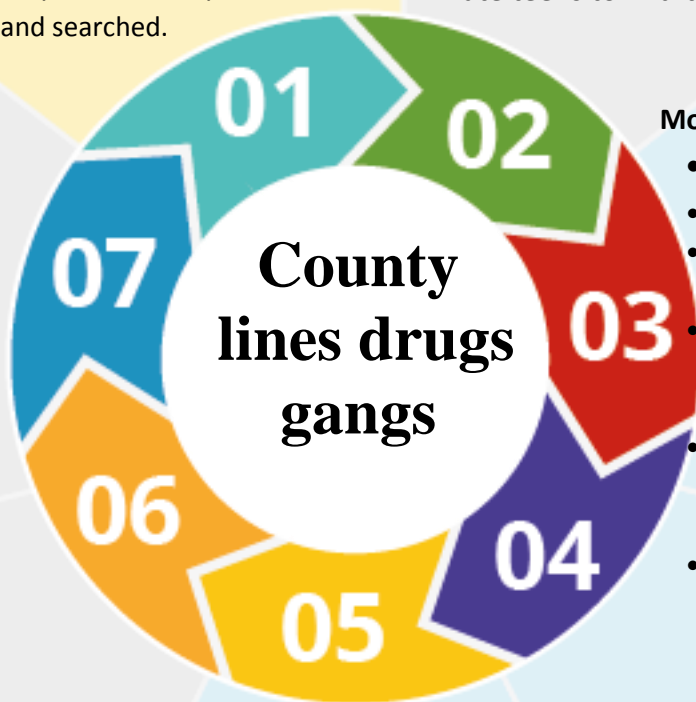
Information:

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 include:

- The emergence of a 24/7 market. In 2014 activity was almost exclusively day time
- Gang members establishing roots in areas that have had county lines activity over a long period and creating spin off markets around those established bases
- The use of Tasers and acid as weapons for enforcing local dominance
- The targeting of adults with mental health issues
- 80% of police forces reported the exploitation of children, typically to deliver the drugs to customers, using a combination of intimidation, violence, debt bondage, and grooming to control them.
- Adult drug users, often addicts, & vulnerable females are also exploited.



Information:

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.

Many children are also used to deal drugs within the county markets.

80% of areas saw exploitation of children by gangs but the true scale of exploitation is not known and it is likely that many children are

not safeguarded.

05

04

