

County lines

What is ‘county lines’?

- › A child is groomed by a criminal gang, then exploited to transport drugs and money from one area (county) to another – usually from an urban location to a rural or coastal one
 - › The child may be trafficked to the gang’s ‘trap houses’ miles away from home, to find ‘customers’, deal with rival gangs and sell drugs
 - › To the gang, the child is an expendable commodity. They’re likely to face violence and sexual exploitation
 - › The ‘line’ refers to the phone line that the gang uses for selling drugs
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How do I spot it?

A child may:

- › Be absent from school, sometimes only for a single lesson. They may be late or leave early
- › Have multiple mobile phones, or get excessive numbers of texts or calls
- › Use drugs or alcohol, or be found carrying a large amount of drugs
- › Be secretive – about where they’re going after school, or what they’re doing online
- › Associate with other children involved in exploitation, or spend time with older children and adults
- › Have money, expensive clothes or items that they can’t or won’t explain, including weapons
- › Be involved in serious violence (as a victim or perpetrator)
- › Become angry, aggressive or violent
- › Become isolated or withdrawn
- › Self-harm
- › Use new slang words
- › Show physical signs of abuse, such as bruising or bleeding, or have infections and soreness from concealing drugs internally
- › Go missing and be found away from home, or in accommodation they have no connection with
- › Carry hotel cards or keys for unknown places
- › Owe money to their exploiters
- › Have their bank account used to facilitate drug dealing

Listen for pupils using any of these **key terms**:

“Trap house / bando”	House used for storing and selling drugs	“Going OT / going country / going cunch”	When a child is being sent “out there” to another area to transport and sell drugs
“The line / trap line / deal line”	Number or phone line used to take drug orders	“Pebbs/pebble”	Small quantities of drugs

What do I do if I have a concern about a child?

- Talk to our DSL (or deputy) as soon as possible, and make a written record, too

If a child is in immediate danger:

- Tell our DSL (or deputy) as soon as possible; **and**
- Contact children’s social care (and the police, if appropriate) **immediately**

Sources

This factsheet was produced by [The Key Safeguarding: thekeysupport.com/safeguarding](https://thekeysupport.com/safeguarding)

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- [County Lines, National Crime Agency](https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines)
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- [Criminal exploitation and gangs, NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/gangs-criminal-exploitation/)
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- [What is county lines?, The Children’s Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/child-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines/what-is-county-lines)
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