



PSA Bulletin

This week let's talk about 'County Lines'

This may not be a phrase that parents and carers are familiar with.

The topic itself is quite daunting and sad but is very much a subject that we hope you will recognise the importance of us sharing this with you.

County lines is a form of **criminal exploitation** where gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK and is against the law and a form of **child abuse**. The 'lines' refer to mobile phones that are used to control a young person who is delivering drugs.

I attended some training this week delivered by the [The Clewer Initiative](#) about how County Lines is considered one of the most prevalent forms of exploitation leading to modern slavery.

More often than not, social media is used to begin the 'grooming' of these children and often children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences are most vulnerable. That said, there is a growing body of evidence highlighting that children from all backgrounds and life experiences can fall victim to this type of exploitation.

The NSPCC highlight that the grooming process involves the gang:

- seeking out a child to exploit
- observing the child for vulnerabilities
- finding out what the child's needs and wants are
- manipulating the child into believing that being in the gang can fulfil these needs.

Children as young as seven are targeted

Young people aged 14-17 are most likely to be targeted by criminal groups but there are reports of seven year olds being groomed into county lines.

Primary school children are seen as easy targets because they're less likely to get caught. The grooming might start with them being asked to 'keep watch' but it soon escalates to them being forced to stash weapons, money, or become drug couriers.

Click [here](#) to find out more about **recognising the signs** of a child becoming involved in County Lines.

Listen to this [podcast](#) to understand why we here in a rural community must be particularly vigilant and to understand more about this form of exploitation.

What can we do as parents and carers to help to keep children safe?

Devon and Cornwall police have the following [advice](#)

The message is clear; exploited children and young people do not always appear vulnerable... we need to look closer.

With primary aged children we can be monitoring online and mobile activity very closely; parents should know pin numbers etc to be able to access their devices and apps / chats should be checked

frequently. We can ensure that we create an environment and familiar culture for talking about things that 'worry us' and initiate early conversations about 'staying safe'.

We can be keeping a close eye on things such as 'gifts' that are received by our children or items which you cannot account for and at all times being sure that you know the whereabouts of your children.

Exploited young people don't always look and act vulnerable

Look closer

If something doesn't feel right, it may not be. Young people can be exploited anywhere and may be most visible in public spaces.

Help us protect children and young people from exploitation and abuse.

Don't wait. Report it:

 If you are concerned about a child and think it's an emergency, dial **999** or **101** if it's not an emergency.

On a train text British Transport Police on **61016**.

 If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers online or call **0800 555 111**.

childrenssociety.org.uk/lookcloser

#LookCloser



The Children's Society

National County Lines Coordination Centre
 **NCA**  **NPCC**  **ROCC**
National Crime Agency National Police Chiefs' Council

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How to contact me:

It's never too soon to make contact if you have any concerns. You can reach me via text on the PSA mobile

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Normal working days are Tuesday and Wednesday 8.00-16.00 and Thursday 8.00-13:00

