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## What is a County Line?

- A. A group (not necessarily affiliated as a gang) **establishes a network** between an urban hub and county location, into which drugs (primarily heroin and crack cocaine) are supplied.
- B. A branded mobile **phone line** is established in the market, to which orders are placed by introduced customers. The line will commonly (but not exclusively) be controlled by a third party, remote from the market.
- C. The group exploits **young or vulnerable persons**, to achieve the storage and/or supply of drugs, movement of cash proceeds and to secure the use of dwellings (commonly referred to as cuckooing).
- D. The group or individuals exploited by them **regularly travel** between the urban hub and the county market, to replenish stock and deliver cash.
- E. The group is inclined to use **intimidation, violence and weapons**, including knives, corrosives and firearms.

(National Crime Agency)

## Current Intelligence Picture

County lines offenders are highly adaptable in their operating methods and practices, including the recruitment and exploitation of vulnerable people, changing their use of phones, transport and accommodation.

## Current Intelligence Picture

The current county lines operating model continues to rely on targeting of vulnerable individuals to facilitate supply at a local level. Offenders will seek to exploit any vulnerability which produces a broad spectrum of victims exploited by county lines businesses.

## Current Intelligence Picture

The greatest volume of county lines originate from areas covered by the Metropolitan, West Midlands and Merseyside areas. County lines will rotate their operatives at regular intervals to prevent them becoming known to the Police.

# 'Cuckooing'

- Phase 1 – A county lines dealer will travel to the relevant town and identify and befriend a vulnerable individual.
- Phase 2 – Once the individual has established a relationship they rapidly seek access to their home exploiting their specific vulnerability.
- Phase 3 – Once they have access to the premises they soon establish control and use it as their base to run their operation from.
- Phase 4 – County lines groups will then maintain control through debts, intimidation and violence.

# Tackling the issue

- County lines scoring matrix
- Traditional enforcement tactics
- Working with partner agencies
- Briefings to schools and colleges
  - Identifying vulnerable persons/addresses
- Press releases and use of social media

# Case Study

- Zakaria Mohammed, 21, groomed them before transporting them from Birmingham to rural Lincolnshire.
- Jailed for 14 years
- trafficked teenagers to sell heroin and crack cocaine through his "county lines" narcotics network
- First conviction under the modern slavery act for trafficking children
- befriending young and vulnerable children, aged 14 and 15 at the time, to use as a commodity to further his drug-dealing business.
- Children, who had previously been reported as missing to the force, were found inside three flats in Lincoln when police conducted raids and recovered money, drugs and weapons.
- He was stopped in his vehicle by police in February, which led officers to finding a phone to run the drugs line, called "Castro", which contained more than 100 customer contacts. The car also had school uniform trousers, a white shirt and school tie inside it belonging to a missing child from Birmingham
- At least one flat was described as "unsanitary", littered with drug paraphernalia, with no heating or food, despite police believing Mohammed was making as much as £500 a day.
- Although it is believed that as many as 10 children were involved, Mohammed was prosecuted for trafficking two boys who were found in a flat and a girl he bought a train ticket to Lincoln for.

# What you may see

Someone who appears scared or uncomfortable in the presence of someone they have arrived with. There may be an imbalance of power.

Stab wounds

Beatings

Burns

Sexual exploitation

Does their account raise any concerns?

Does the story match the injury?

Any questions?