



# Gangs and County Lines

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# County Lines

County lines supply class A drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) from an urban hub into smaller towns or county locations. This is facilitated by a group who may not necessarily be affiliated as a gang, but who have developed networks across geographical boundaries to access and exploit existing drugs markets in these areas.

(County Lines, Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply, National Crime Agency, 2017).

# What is an urban street gang?



A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who:



see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group,



engage in a range of criminal activity and violence,



identify with or lay claim over territory,



have some form of identifying structural feature and;



are in conflict with other, similar, gangs

(Dying to Belong, 2009)

# Child Criminal Exploitation

*Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*

The risk to an individual , their family and friends, as a result of experiencing criminal exploitation can include but is not limited to:

- Physical injuries: risk of serious violence and death
- Emotional and psychological trauma
- Sexual violence: sexual assault, rape, indecent images being taken and shared as part of initiation/revenge/punishment, internally inserting drugs
- Debt bondage - young person and families being 'in debt' to the exploiters; which is used to control the young person.
- Neglect and basic needs not being met (not washing)
- Living in unclean, dangerous and/or unhygienic environments
- Tiredness and sleep deprivation: child is expected to carry out criminal activities over long periods and through the night
- Poor attendance and/or attainment at school/college/university

# If you have concerns...

- **Call 999** - if there is immediate danger to someone, crime is in progress, you need police help immediately, someone is using violence or threatening violence, serious damage is or could be caused to property, a potential criminal has been disturbed or stopped
- **Call 101** – to report a crime that has already happened, seek crime prevention advice or make the police aware of any policing issues in your area.
- **Online reporting form on police website** to include reporting non-urgent crimes including making the police aware of any policing issues in your area. <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/contact-us/report-something>
- **Customer First** - Emergency safeguarding concerns call **03456 066 167**
- **Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board - MARF**  
<https://www.suffolkscb.org.uk/working-with-children/how-to-make-a-referral/>
- **The Children's Society** - If a parent is worried about their child being criminally exploited, you can [read our guidance](#).
- **NSPCC** - Email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) or call **0808 800 5000**
- **Family Lives** - Confidential helpline: 0808 800 2222