

Safeguarding Newsletter

21st May 2019

County Lines

'County lines' is known as criminal exploitation and is when gangs and organised crime networks exploit children to sell drugs. Often these children are made to travel across counties, and they use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs.

Gangs are deliberately targeting vulnerable children – those who are homeless, living in care homes or trapped in poverty. These children are unsafe, unloved, or unable to cope, and the gangs take advantage of this.

These gangs groom, threaten or trick children into trafficking their drugs for them. They might threaten a young person physically, or they might threaten the young person's family members. The gangs might also offer something in return for the young person's cooperation – it could be money, food, alcohol, clothes and jewellery, or improved status – but the giving of these gifts will usually be manipulated so that the child feels they are in debt to their exploiter.

However they become trapped in county lines, the young people involved feel as if they have no choice but to continue doing what the gangs want.

Today, the BBC reports:

Nearly 600 suspected members of county lines drugs gangs have been arrested across the UK in the past week, the National Crime Agency has said.

Police forces led by the National County Lines Coordination Centre also seized cocaine worth £176,780; £312,649 in cash; and 46 weapons.

The NCA estimates there are about 2,000 city-based gangs exploiting young people to sell drugs in smaller towns.

It says tackling the gangs is a "national law enforcement priority".

In the operation between 13 and 20 May:

- 500 men and 86 women were arrested in raids in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cheshire, Bedfordshire and other areas
- 519 vulnerable adults and 364 children in need of support were helped
- 30 people were identified as potential victims of slavery or human trafficking
- Four guns were seized, as well as swords, machetes, an axe, knives, samurai swords, and a crossbow
- Drugs including cocaine with a street value of £176,780, crack worth £36,550 and £17,950 of heroin were recovered

You can read the whole article here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48345399>

