

Signs of County Lines

Worksheet 4

What is County lines?

County lines refer to a criminal activity where drug gangs from urban areas exploit vulnerable young people and children to transport, distribute, and sell drugs across county boundaries, often into rural or suburban areas. This term originated in the United Kingdom but similar phenomena have been observed in other countries as well.

In the context of county lines operations, gangs establish a network of supply and distribution routes, often using young people, including children as young as 12 or 13, to transport drugs from urban hubs to smaller towns and rural areas. These young people, referred to as "runners" or "couriers," are coerced, manipulated, or groomed into participating in criminal activities, sometimes through threats, violence, or exploitation of vulnerabilities such as poverty or substance abuse issues.

County lines operations typically involve the exploitation and victimization of vulnerable individuals, including children and teenagers, who may be lured into criminal activity with promises of money, status, or belonging. However, they often end up facing significant risks to their safety, well-being, and future prospects, including involvement in violence, exploitation, substance abuse, and legal consequences.

Law enforcement agencies and policymakers have been working to combat county lines operations through various strategies, including targeted enforcement efforts, community engagement, prevention and intervention programs, and support services for vulnerable individuals. Additionally, there has been increasing recognition of the need for multi-agency collaboration and holistic approaches to address the underlying factors driving county lines exploitation, such as poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunities for young people.

Young people involved in or affected by county lines operations may use various terms and slang to refer to this phenomenon.

Some of the terms commonly used include:

1. Trapping:

Refers to the act of selling drugs, often in a county lines context where drugs are transported and sold in areas outside of the dealer's usual territory.

2. Running:

Describes the act of transporting drugs or carrying out other tasks for a county lines operation, such as delivering packages or collecting money.

3. Lines:

Short for "county lines," this term may be used to refer to the specific routes or operations involved in transporting and selling drugs across county boundaries.

**4. Country:**

Used to denote the areas outside of major cities or urban centres where county lines operations are conducted. For example, "going country" may refer to traveling to these areas to sell drugs.

5. Plug:

Refers to the source or supplier of drugs in a county lines operation. Young people involved in the operation may refer to their contact or supplier as the "plug."

6. Jakes:

Slang for police or law enforcement authorities. Young people involved in county lines operations may use this term to warn others about potential police presence or surveillance.

7. County:

Another term for areas outside of urban centres where county lines operations are conducted. It may be used interchangeably with "country" or "going country."

8. OT (Out of Town):

Refers to traveling outside of one's usual area or territory, often to participate in county lines activities such as drug dealing or running drugs.

9. Food:

Slang for drugs, particularly heroin or crack cocaine, which are commonly trafficked in county lines operations. The term "food" may be used to refer to drugs being transported or sold.

10. Pack:

Refers to a quantity of drugs, typically packaged for sale. In the context of county lines, young people involved in the operation may be tasked with transporting packs of drugs from one location to another.

These terms and slang are used within the context of county lines operations and may vary depending on region, local culture, and individual preferences. They serve as coded language to communicate about illegal activities while minimizing the risk of detection by authorities.