

County Lines

County lines is where gangs and organised crime networks groom children specifically to *sell drugs*. These children are often made to travel across counties, and mobile phone 'lines' are used for this criminal activity.

How could it affect the children and young people we live and work with?

The processes that take place are similar sexual exploitation and radicalisation. It may sometimes appear consensual, especially where the child has received something in exchange such as money, clothes or technology.

It is important that we realise these children are victims themselves, not criminals.

Key indicators include:

- Not attending school
- New relationships with perhaps older individuals or groups
- Decline in school performance
- Signs of self-harm
- Changes in behaviour and wellbeing
- Signs of assault or unexplained injury
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Children returning home late, staying out all night or not returning home
- As well as these, you may become aware of children being found in areas away from their home or may hear young people using drug-related language which you would not expect them to be familiar with.

What to do if you have concerns

The best advice is to trust your instincts. Even if someone isn't involved in county lines drug dealing, they may be being exploited in some other way, so it's always worth speaking out. You can speak to your local police by dialling 101, or in an emergency 999. If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity [Crimestoppers](#) on 0800 555 111.

