



On successful completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. **Explain** what is meant by County Lines.
2. **Identify** risks and implications associated with County Lines.
3. **Identify** factors that could make a person vulnerable in relation to county lines.
4. **State** what information would be obtained from a member of the public who may have intelligence regarding County Lines.

What is County Lines?

Term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. **(Home Office Definition)**

Gangs from large urban areas such as London, Birmingham and Liverpool, travel to smaller locations to sell heroin and crack-cocaine.

Gangs communicate with users via a 'branded' mobile number. This number is typically held in the urban 'home' location and a relay system is used to contact those acting as the dealer in the county location.

Gangs function with a high degree of affiliation and loyalty, enforced through violence, fear and intimidation.

Gang members or low level runners travel between the urban and county locations on a regular basis to deliver drugs and collect cash.



Trainer to reveal the definition of "County Lines" and allow the students to read it.

Trainer to then explore understanding to ensure that the group recognise the nature of the issue and how difficult it is proving to tackle.

Trainer to reveal the 4 pop up annotations that provide further information regarding the issue.

National County Lines Coordination Centre



[NCLCC - County Lines Awareness](#) [Video - YouTube](#)



Trainer to introduce **Video Clip 1 – National County Lines Coordination Centre – County Lines Awareness video**

Link - [NCLCC - County Lines Awareness Video – YouTube](#) video is 9min 48 Secs

Video explains what County Lines is, and introduces some of the terms that will be discussed during this session.

What is County Lines?

- Gangs often **challenge** existing groups or other county lines enterprises for **territory**, which leads to an **escalation of violence**.
- Gangs will use a **local property**, generally belonging to a **vulnerable person** as a base for their activity. This is often acquired by **force or coercion** and is referred to as **cuckooing**.
- Gangs **exploit** children to deliver drugs from the urban area to the county location using **intimidation, violence, debt bondage** and/or **grooming**.
- Adult **drug users** and **vulnerable females** are also **exploited** for their properties or to assist with dealing within the county market.
- Although not a driving factor, a clear link between County Lines and **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** exists.



Trainer to make links with the previous video and ask “What were the key points?” - emphasize that the basis of County Lines is drugs and that it is the emerging drugs markets that attracts these persons. Trainer to then ask the group to identify in plenary what they think the associated risks/implications are as a result of County Lines.

Trainer to then reveal the 5 x topics

1 - Gangs often **challenge** existing groups or other county lines enterprises for **territory**, which leads to an **escalation of violence**.

2 - Cuckooing is a form of crime in which drug dealers take over the home of a

vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for drug dealing. *Criminal exploitation of vulnerable people involving the use of their homes as a base for criminal activities, through intimidation or in exchange for drugs.* The crime is named for

the cuckoo's practice of taking over other birds' nests for its young.

23% of forces report county lines using other forms of accommodation in rural areas such as holiday lets, budget hotels, caravan parks and apartments

3 - Gangs **exploit** children to deliver drugs from the urban area to the county location using **intimidation, violence, debt bondage** and/or **grooming**.

4 - **Adult drug users** and **vulnerable females** are also **exploited** for their properties or

to assist with dealing within the county market.

5 - Although not a driving factor, a clear link between County Lines and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) exists.



Trainer to introduce **Video Clip 2: “1_How_It_Works”** (1 min 30 sec)

Explain that this was the result of an ITV News investigation. Once the video has finished trainer to allow brief pause to see if spontaneous conversation is generated. If not trainer to ask the group what they think about what they have just seen.

County Lines: SWP & Gwent Police Situation



Previously South Wales & Gwent never had a big problem with the knife crime and gang culture

Drug markets were relatively free from high levels of violence and conflict

Gangs from large urban areas are likely to bring the violence that exists in their home territory

'Local Lines' beginning to be seen – lines between Cardiff and Swansea to outlying areas of the forces



South Wales traditionally has not had high levels of knife crime and gang culture compared to cities like London and Birmingham.

Although there is a clearly a drugs market this has also not been violent.

County Lines Criminality is increasing the level of knife related offences and gang culture.

'Local Lines' beginning to be seen – lines between Cardiff and Swansea to outlying areas of the forces

County Lines in South Wales

Escalating levels of violence in areas of the forces where lines are established - Tension between local groups and external gangs is increasing.

Gangs from London, Merseyside and Birmingham are operating in the force area.

Quality of Life' issues - Open street dealing, 'Turf Wars', ASB, Cuckooing etc.

Gangs are well established in SNP and CAV BCUs.

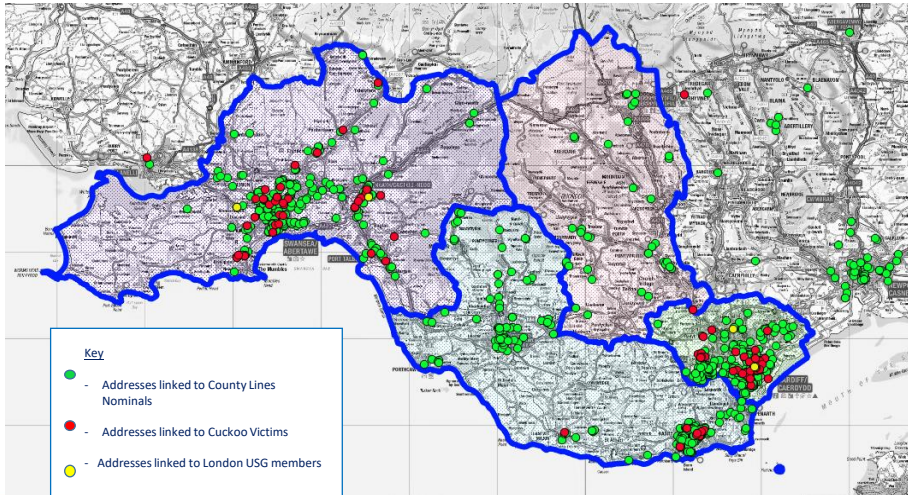
County Lines gangs and criminality have been confirmed in Mid Glamorgan BCU and Gwent Police areas

'Local Lines' beginning to be seen – lines between Cardiff, Newport and Swansea to outlying areas of the forces



Trainer to introduce the information points relating to the situation in South Wales.
Trainer to explain that we are already seeing established criminality in whereby links are being made to organised crime groups from England.

Geographic Scope: County Lines within South Wales/Gwent



Map shows that County Lines has impact in all areas of SWP and Gwent.

There are 130 County lines recorded across the entire of the Welsh forces. In August 2021 21 of these were within South Wales.

SWP and Gwent currently have CL investigations running.

The majority of lines run into either Swansea or Cardiff. The next towns most impacted in Wales by County Lines are Rhyl and Llandudno in North Wales and Llandrindod Wells in Dyfed Powys. These lines mainly originate from Liverpool, Birmingham and London

There are 492 nominals linked to these lines, (477 in South Wales and 5 in Gwent) The majority – 86.6% - of those nominals involved in County Lines around Wales are recorded as being in workforce roles (either runners/local enforcers). This reflects Wales's position as a primarily importing region. Those classified as Other include Cuckoo victims and those at risk.

County Line: Exploitation

Can affect any **child or young person**, under the age of 18

Can impact any **vulnerable adult** over the age of 18

Can still be **exploitation**, even if the activities appear **consensual**

Can involve **force, enticement, fear, intimidation, threats of violence or debt bondage**

Use of '**clean skins**' from local area to avoid detection



Point 1 – not just youths in gang culture can be **Male, Female, Young or old, Black or White, local or distant** – Often children of 'well to do families' are caught up in County Lines - Children not known to services are also utilised to minimise police detection – **Social Media** is often used to recruit from stable family backgrounds

Point 3 - Consider power relationship between gang members and child/vulnerable adult

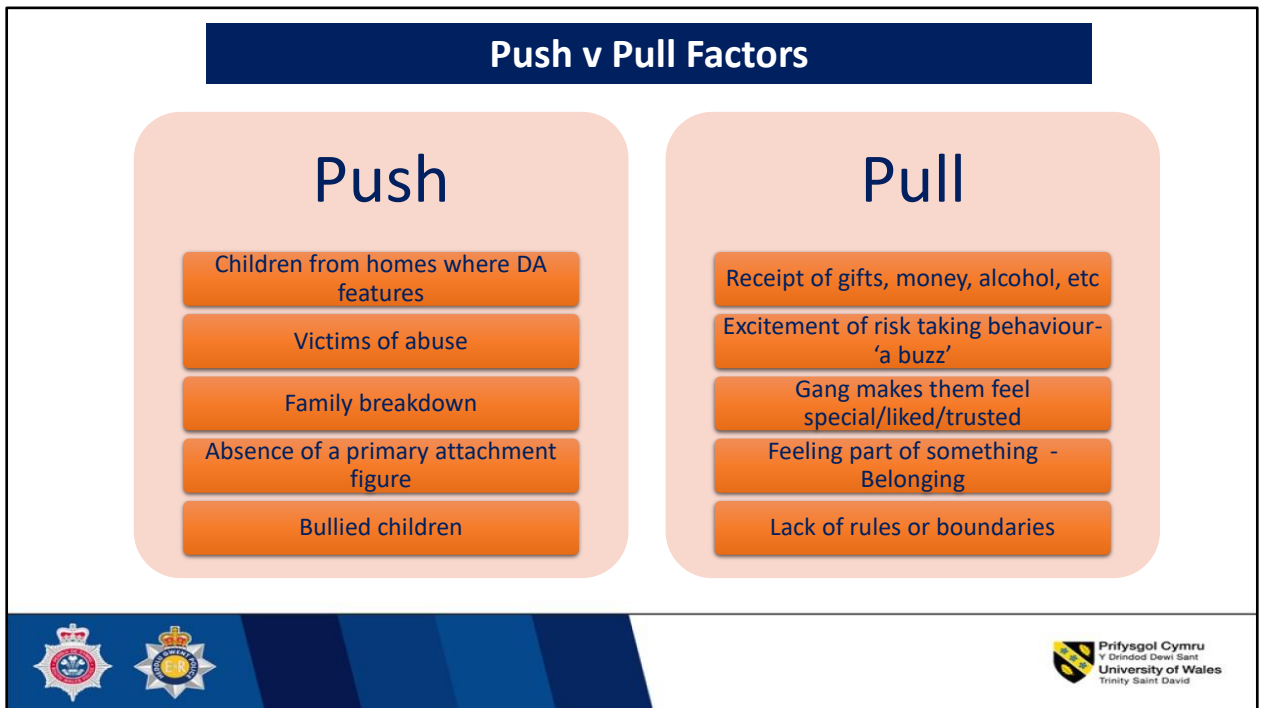
Point 4 – Trainer ask class if they are aware of debt bondage, if not explain - When the young person is arrested and their drugs stash/cash is seized by police they are then indebted to the gang and the only way to escape is to carry on dealing for them or face repercussions – violence or threats of violence to friends/family are common.

Point 5 – term '**CLEAN SKINS**' is used to describe persons with no prior involvement with Police. Can be from all walks of life - moves away from the targeting of traditional vulnerabilities. Clean Skins often utilised in a driving capacity for their knowledge of the local

area. Negates the looking lost aspect when they travel from out of force areas. They have been known to taxi around more than one line. But also used to travel to the main exporting areas.

Often using hire vehicles as a method of travel – consider this if stopping a hire vehicle.

Trainer to introduce **Video Clip 3: “AB_1-ITV News Item 190417-1”** (3 minutes)
VIDEO – Click on camera icon – shows affect on teenager from a ‘normal’ family.
The impact on his parents.



Children or others exploited by County Lines gangs suffer **push v pull** -

Push Factors – matters at home that could push vulnerable children into County Lines activities

Pull Factors – the ‘appeal’ of the gang – excitement, feeling of belonging etc. As we have seen and will see further through this presentation those pull factors are often false and can quickly turn into control and exploitation.

Who is Vulnerable?

Factors that heighten a person's vulnerability:

Having prior experience of neglect, physical or sexual abuse

The lack of a safe/stable home environment

Social isolation or economic vulnerability

Homelessness or an insecure housing situation

Connections to other people involved in gangs

Having a physical or learning disability

Resident of social housing, particularly young females with children

Having substance misuse issues

Having mental health issues

Being a 'looked after' child, particularly in residential care

Excluded from mainstream education



Trainer to explain each point as required

Vulnerability

The use of Violence, Fear and Intimidation

- Murder, stabbings, acid/chemical burns, access to firearms
- Kidnap, sexual assault and rape
- Armed confrontations in the street
- Carrying of Knives and other weapons

Drug Markets and Supply

- High purity, generous deals – Increased drug deaths
- Violent enforcement of drug debts and 'taxing' of other dealers

Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults

- 'Cuckooing'
- Drug users
- Sex workers
- Elderly
- Mentally ill



The use of Violence, Fear and Intimidation

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Kidnap, sexual assault and rape
Armed confrontations in the street
Carrying of Knives and other weapons

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Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults

'Cuckooing'
Drug users, sex workers, elderly, mentally ill

Vulnerability

Exploitation of Children

- Runners, dealers and couriers – as young as 14
- Expendable resource – controlled by fear and violence

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- Grooming of MISPERs and most vulnerable children
- Many of the signs of children being involved in County Lines criminality are the same as CSE



Human Trafficking

- Moving children around the country (often 'plugged' with Class A)
- County Lines will often rotate operatives to prevent police being aware
- Can be within one force area, eg from Cardiff to Bridgend



Exploitation of Children

Runners, dealers and couriers – as young as 14
Expendable resource – controlled by fear and violence

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Grooming of MISPERs and most vulnerable children
Many of the signs of children being involved in County Lines criminality are the same as CSE –

- Regularly going missing without explanation
- Unexplained money, clothing phone calls
- Excessive telephone calls and texts
- Unexplained injuries
- Carrying weapons especially knives
- Gang associations

Human Trafficking

Moving children around the country (often 'plugged' with Class A)
30% of Forces report plugging with male and females for transport but also storage routinely

Patrick's Story: 15 Year Old

"I was forced to come back to Swansea to deal drugs for a gang."

"When I was last down in Swansea I was in an address and when the police raided it, I threw drugs away so the police couldn't find them."

"I was then back in London and the gang members stopped me in the street and said I owed them money for losing drugs last time, and I had to go back to Swansea to sell drugs. I informed them I was on Tag, they threatened me and made threats towards my mum if I didn't do it."

"They cut my Tag off, they told me to put the drugs in my bum so I wouldn't get caught, I then got on a train and ended up back in Swansea, I will get £500 a week for selling the drugs."



Example of vulnerable child exploited by gang

Links to Child Sexual Exploitation

Not a fundamental motivating factor - but an intrinsic element of county lines criminality.

Many young victims already have risk markers/flags for CSE.

The vulnerability risk factors are similar for each type of exploitation.

Gang members often groom young females by initially becoming their 'boyfriend'.

Victims are used and abused by gangs – sexual assault and rape are just another way to control and exploit them.



Daisy's Story



Trainer to introduce **Video Clip 4: “Daisy”** and explain that a 35 minute video is about to be shown that shows a victim/participant of County Lines Criminality. Give the health warning that some material is emotive.

After the video trainer to ask the students what they think and to facilitate a discussion.

What Can You Do?

Consider the wider picture in regard to changes in your local community:

- Open Street Dealing
- Increased ASB and raised levels of tension or violence
- New 'faces' spending time with known drug users and local criminals
- Vulnerable people suddenly having house guests that don't seem a natural relationship.

Submit PPNs in regard to vulnerable people you think may be being exploited.

Link with MisPer Co-ordinators in relation to young people you suspect of involvement with County Lines gangs.

Use Police Protection Powers to safeguard young people if applicable

Use BWV wherever possible to gather evidence



Eastern/Central Officers - St Giles Trust Advocate -

Cardiff and The Vale are currently piloting an advocacy service for county lines exploitation. Any children identified within Cardiff and the vale as being exploited will also need to be referred to the advocate.

This may well be rolled out force wide in the future.

Additional notes –

Reference: St Giles Trust (2019)

[https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/article/new-cardiff-services-will-open-doors-for-disadvantaged-adults-and-young-people.](https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/article/new-cardiff-services-will-open-doors-for-disadvantaged-adults-and-young-people)

Accessed on 18th February 2019.

“St Giles Trust Cymru’s CLIC (County Lines In Cymru) project was launched in July 2018 and funded by Children in Need.

CLIC works in conjunction with Police and agencies such as the local authority to identify and support under 18’s being exploited and coerced through gangs. Through intensive mentoring and advice, it helps young people stay safe and address any underlying problems such as family issues and money. It ultimately aims to re-engage young people with education, training and positive lifestyles.

CLIC has been developed in response to a distressing and growing phenomenon of London gangs sending young people to Cardiff to deal drugs and recruit other vulnerable young people locally as drug runners and dealers through county lines activity.

It builds on St Giles Trust's experience in tackling county lines through it's London based SOS Project which helps young people exit gangs.

Justine Jenkins, manager at St Giles Trust states, "The effects of county line involvement are devastating for the young people involved and those around them. Gangs deliberately target young people who are vulnerable and least likely to cry for help".

What Can You Do?

Flag up to a LIO any stop-searches you have undertaken if you think there may be a county lines link.

Engage with your local community and help identify those at risk of exploitation.

Consider potential links to county lines criminality when dealing with reports of public order, affray or serious assault.

Comply with all officer safety requirements and remain vigilante to the threats posed by groups linked to county lines criminality.

Submit detailed, accurate Intelligence in regard to anything you think may be relevant. Mark all relevant Intelligence as OPERATION GUARDIAN



In addition there is now a CL marker on PNC. Under Operational Information there is a facility to record CL Perpetrator, CL Vulnerable or both (as sometimes it is unclear). As a Force SWP hasn't really yet started using this marker and it can be crucial when dealing with individuals.

Intelligence Requirements

When speaking with members of the public who may have information on County Line activity please consider the following questions:

Are you aware of any persons from outside of this area who are now frequenting or living at any address in your locality?

- especially vulnerable people

Have you, or any persons you know been befriended by such persons? Or have they asked to stay at your address?

- If so, where are they from?
- What names do they use for themselves?
- What are the telephone numbers they have been giving out to people?

Has there been increased activity since the arrival of the subjects?

- A lot of callers to the address;
- An increase in noise or other anti-social behaviour;
- Public groups of persons, especially with the use of weapons



Intelligence Requirements

Has there been an increase in vehicles coming to the address? If so, do you know any index numbers?

Do you feel intimidated by the arrival and activities of these persons? If so, have you made your housing officer, support worker or drug worker aware?

Do you have any concerns over any children or young persons who may have been befriended by gangs from outside the area? If so, are they now behaving differently, going missing on a regular basis or exhibiting sudden and unexplained cash or material items.



Post Arrest Safeguarding

If a child is arrested for county lines type offences, minor offences and it is clear during the custody process and interview that they are being exploited.

Normal safeguarding procedures process begin **NOW**.

PPN **MUST** be completed.

Urgent referral to children's services and out of hours EDT.

Must not be released from custody until a safeguarding care plan has been established.

Police are not the main safeguarding agency, but have a huge part to play in safeguarding.



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Barriers to engagement

- Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a safeguarding issue, but there is a mixed multiagency understanding of safeguarding requirements. .
- Can be viewed as a lifestyle choice which can make a child or young person feel blamed for their exploitation
- Children and young people fearful of repercussions towards themselves, friends and family and may not feel safe or protected from their exploiters
- Children and young people may be fearful of the police, Children's Services and Social Care providers
- Children and young people are often embarrassed or ashamed of their experiences

Play **Video 5 – Arrested.**

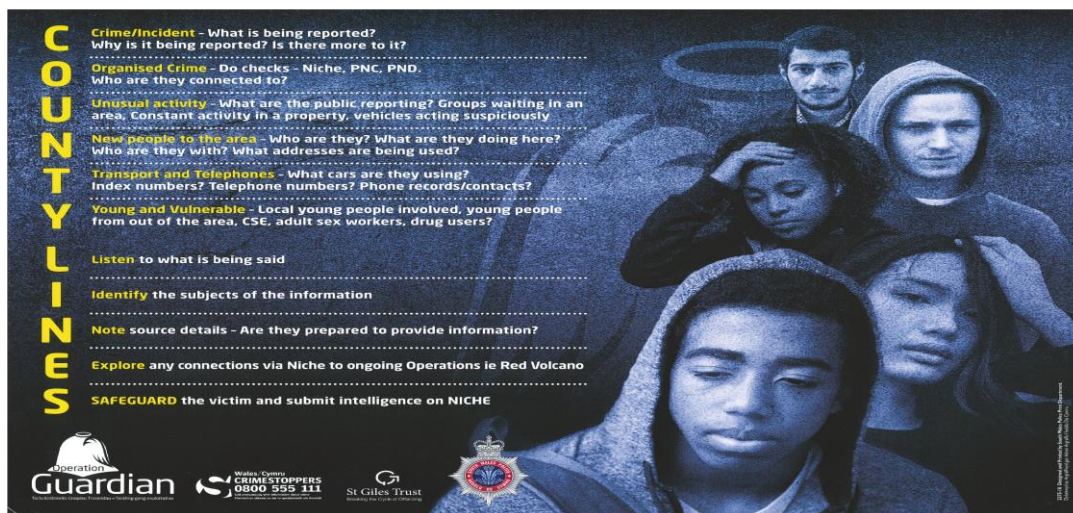
This video shows how the Police and partner agencies can work together on arrest of vulnerable victims of county lines gangs and longer term help them to escape the exploitation.

What Are We Doing About It?



Operations in SWP force area.

Trainer to introduce **Video Clip 6: “Operation Red Jet 2”** – Cardiff Operation (2 minutes)



Above posters are in classrooms, to be considered by operational officers – go through acronym **COUNTY LINES**

C – Crime/Incident –

What is being reported? Why is it being reported? Is there more to it?

O – Organised Crime –

Do the necessary checks – Niche, PNC, PND. Who are they connected to?

U – Unusual Activity –

What are the public reporting? Groups waiting in an area, constant activity in a property, vehicles acting suspiciously

N – New People in the area –

Who are they? What are they doing here? Who are they with? What addresses are being used?

T – Transport and Telephones –

What cars are they using? Index numbers? Telephone numbers? Phone records/contacts?

Y – Young and Vulnerable –

Local young people involved, young people from out of the area, CSE, adult sex workers, drug users?

L – Listen to what to what is being said

I – Identify the subjects of the information

N – Note source details - Are they prepared to provide information?

E – Explore any connections via Niche to ongoing operations

S – Safeguard the victim and submit intelligence on Niche

