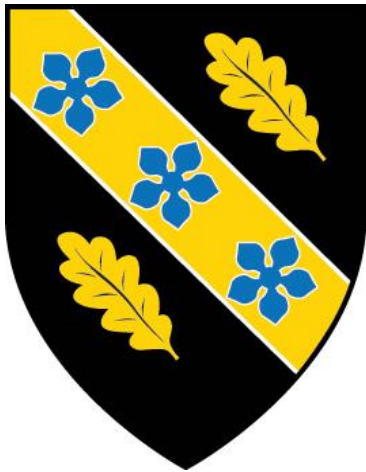




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UNIVERSITY OF WALES

Trinity Saint David

SWANSEA - ABERTAWE

**Public protection and County Lines:
Identifying victims of organised crime
groups, evaluating the current police
response and police officer perceptions on
training provided to identify and manage
victims of County Lines.**

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**BSc (Hons) Professional Policing Practice
April 2024**

Acknowledgments

As I approach the end of my probationary period and my studies with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, I would like to acknowledge those who have significantly contributed to my ability to advance through this time.

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Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: DAVIES.V

Date: 03/04/24

Statement 1:

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BSc Professional Policing Practice.

Signed: DAVIES.V

Date: 03/04/24

Statement 2:

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Abstract

The studies that are currently available on County Lines, vulnerability, victims, and safeguards are examined and investigated in this dissertation. The researcher seeks to know what UK police officers feel about how they respond to County Lines and the individuals who are vulnerable victims.

The purpose of the research is to determine the scope of County Lines as of now and the actions being taken by the police to address the issues. However, officers' perceptions of how adequate their reaction is will be given special consideration as the case study. It will also examine the resources and training available to UK police forces to address such problems, as well as how they are expected to evolve going forward. This action aims to address the opinions of police officers regarding the training they receive.

To give those connected to and impacted by County Lines the best support and protection, it is imperative that this investigation be conducted. The dissertation makes use of an online survey that various police officers completed to provide their perspectives and ideas about the training that is already in place.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1- Introduction	8
Background 1.2	8
Aims and Objectives 1.3	9
Chapter 2 – Literature review	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Overview of the County lines model.....	10
2.3 Vulnerability and victims	11
2.4 Victim support: The police response, identification, and safeguarding	13
2.5 Police perceptions: Victim identification and safeguarding	14
2.6 Public protection and victim support: Police training	15
2.7 Conclusion	16
Chapter 3 - Methodology	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Research strategy.....	18
3.3 Data collection	19
3.4 Data Analysis	20
3.5 Limitations and potential problems.....	20
3.6 Summary	21
Chapter 4 - Analysis of Results.....	22
4.1 Introduction	22
4.2 Results to Questionnaire.....	22
4.2.1 Participants	22
4.2.2 Initial training.....	24
4.2.3 Refresher training	28
4.2.4 Attendance at incidents	29
4.2.5 Officer perceptions	31
4.2.6 Close.....	32
Conclusion 4.3.....	32
Chapter 5 – Conclusion and recommendations.....	34
5.1 Introduction	34
5.2 Objective Achievement.....	34
5.3 Main Findings	35

5.4 Recommendations	36
5.4.1 Recommendation One: Further investigation and extension of the study. Utilise the survey on a wider sample group of officers.	36
5.4.2 Recommendation Two: Integrate findings into policy and practice. Develop initial and continuous training for police officers.....	37
5.4.3 Recommendation Three: Review of collaborative partnership work for more effective safeguarding.....	37
5.5 Limitations.....	38
5.6 Conclusion	38
Bibliography	39
Appendices.....	43
Appendix 1 – Survey questions	43
Appendix 2 – Survey responses	52
Appendix 3 – Research proposal Form	62
Appendix 4 – Application for Ethical Approval	68

Chapter 1- Introduction

The research for this dissertation research paper is centred on the constantly evolving County Lines model, the police's perceptions of their response to the issue, and their training to identify County Lines activity and effectively support victims. Each day, police officers deal with situations that are highly unpredictable, challenging, and complex. Most incidents, if not all incidents that Police Officer attend that Police officers attend involve victims and vulnerable individuals (Booth et al., 2017). When it pertains to County Lines, the police have faced enormous challenges in recent years.

This dissertation will respond to the question, "Do Police officers feel they are equipped to identify and support victims of County Lines through their training?" by integrating additional research with a review of the current literature on this topic. The research's conclusions will give a summary of the circumstances as it is, highlight apparent knowledge gaps, and make recommendations for future advancements around Police training.

Background 1.2

Known as "County Lines" in the UK, these serious and organised crime groups are more prevalent than ever. To function, they prey on and mistreat vulnerable individuals, seize control of their residences, and create destruction throughout communities. According to Williams and Finlay (2018), disadvantaged populations that are involved in County Lines are at increased levels of danger of modern slavery, drug addiction, violence, child sex exploitation, and criminal prosecution.

Every police force in the UK has procedures in place to look into cases of serious and organised crime, including protecting those who are vulnerable and safeguarding them. 'Prepare, Prevent, Pursue and Protect' is the goal of the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC), which collaborates with UK police and local authorities to meet the objective (CPS.GOV 2022).

'Protect, not punish' is the true goal, even if many vulnerable individuals involved in serious and organised crime groups are caught between becoming victims and perpetrating crimes. The police use strategies including awareness-building, early target identification, and consistent information and intelligence sharing with partner agencies and other criminal justice organisations to accomplish this (Olver and Cockbain, 2021). That said, do Police officers feel they are equipped to identify and support victims of County Lines through their training?

Aims and Objectives 1.3

The project aims and objectives are set out to establish Police officer perceptions around their response to victims of County Lines. One of the primary goals of this work is to examine current research and literature, expand on it, bridge any knowledge gaps, and offer rational and informed recommendations. The objectives are as follows:

- Provide an overview of county lines, identify vulnerability and victims, and outline current police practice.
- To ascertain if first responding officers feel their response is sufficient and if they feel equipped to deal with county lines victims.
- To establish perceptions of the training received by officers.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature in relation to the research aims and objectives previously documented. The researcher will provide an overview of the County Lines model, public protection, the police response, and training. This will allow the researcher to identify vulnerable victims and broadly outline the police practices in place to safeguard and support such persons. The intention is to establish any gaps in knowledge regarding the police response and training. This will allow the researcher to continue their study into the police perceptions of their role in public protection and training received to effectively support victims.

The reason for this review is to establish what literature, if any suggests about police officer perceptions of victim support and training. The overall aim is to bridge the gap of knowledge around this specific topic.

2.2 Overview of the County lines model

Robinson, McLean and Densley (2018) describes 'County lines' as the policing and Government term for organised crime groups (OCG's) and the high-profile drug supply market in the UK. The county lines model sees urban gang members commuting across police borders from 'hub' cities into towns and rural areas to transport, store and sell drugs.

The NPCC definition of County Lines is as follows:

"County Line is a 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."

(NCA, 2018)

According to Moyle (2019), the criminal phenomenon that is 'county lines' has become more distinguished than ever in the UK and is taking over the traditional UK drug supply market. Spicer (2021) supports this, whereby they refer to county lines as 'parasitic' in its nature and 'clandestine' in its activity. Spicer (2019) also suggests in other literatures that local drug dealing has become dominated by high profile out of city dealers that utilise 'import' markets.

Furthermore, a briefing report conducted by the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2017 discusses the threat of drug supply, violence, and exploitation by 'county lines' gangs. According to the research (NCA, 2017), 88% of UK police forces have reported county lines activity within their force areas. In addition to this, it was highlighted that 74% of these UK forces also noted the exploitation of vulnerable persons. The NCA went on to label the developing county lines model as a 'national threat'.

2.3 Vulnerability and victims

A notable element of the 'county lines' model is its exploitive nature whereby vulnerable persons are targeted for the purpose of labour (Moyle, 2019). This statement is supported by the aforementioned statistics from the NCA. The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC, 2015) offers a definition of vulnerable persons as "someone who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect". HMIC go on to state that effectively any person can be considered vulnerable to being subjected to OCG criminal exploitation, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and circumstances. However, those who are commonly targeted can range from, but is not limited to adults with learning disabilities, habitual drug users and children. Ultimately, from a broad perspective these vulnerable persons face several or a combination of the same risks. Said risks can include being victim to sexual and physical violence, debt bondage, and arrest (Windle and Briggs, 2015). As a case point and to provide further insight into different vulnerabilities, this section will continue with discussion around victims of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and 'cuckooing'.

The county lines model frequently use young children for the purpose of drug transportation and supply. This is referred to as Child criminal exploitation (CCE). These children often come from impoverished areas and have been subject to difficult upbringing, thus making them unchallenging victims. It is not uncommon for children to be lured into this criminal lifestyle not only with violence and coercion, but with the promise of large amounts of money, lavish gifts, and even a sense of community (Windle and Briggs, 2015). Many of these children have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) and trauma in their early years and home life that increase their risk of being targeted. Furthermore, children that are immersed in county lines and gang culture not only face the risks previously mentioned but face the risk of their home and future lives being tarnished or destroyed. Their affiliation can consequently lead to disruption in their education, general wellbeing, and strain family relationships (Coomber and Moyle, 2017). Despite children being considered 'vulnerable' by virtue of age, not all who are engaged in county lines activity consider themselves to be a victim. Robinson, McLean and Densley (2018) supports this whereby it is noted that many young male victims of CCE see their involvement as a choice, success, and a status symbol. This contrasting information implies there would be significant difficulties when attempting to identify and support these children. Shaw (2023) supports this, noting that the "victim status of criminally exploited children in the United Kingdom remains uncertain in frontline responses".

'Cuckooing' is the act of OCG members fostering relationships with vulnerable persons and invading their homes to utilise it as a base (Spicer, 2021). The victims are susceptible to being targeted, sometimes due to a combination of reasons such as having learning difficulties, mental health, and drug addiction. Their additional needs make them more attractive candidates as they are considered impressionable and less likely to report matters to the police (Coomber and Moyle, 2017). Furthermore, Moyle (2019) notes that although these vulnerable persons are exploited, there is a population who sometimes willingly and effortlessly fall into 'drug running' and enter 'mutually beneficial' relationships with the perpetrators. For example, a vulnerable adult who lives a very isolated lifestyle may be more willing to accept the exploitation as they depend on the company. In addition, habitual drug users have been seen to actively seek 'running' opportunities to fund their addictions. This suggests that there is a fine line between being a 'vulnerable' victim and 'wilful' victim.

2.4 Victim support: The police response, identification, and safeguarding

The UK police response to County Lines has undergone several notable developments in later years. In 2018 the UK government launched a ‘Serious Violence Strategy’ (Home Office, 2018), that outlines tackling County Lines as a new priority. It was noted the proposed response to the emerging issue would incorporate early intervention, prevention, community support and a multi-agency approach. Moyle (2019) suggests that many police forces are working tirelessly to navigate the complexities and growing impact of the expanding County lines model. Developments include adapting strategies to not only combat criminal aspects, but to also understand and support those exploited as victims. This indicates that the earlier recommendations are being implemented as required. This section will continue to discuss the literature in relation to how UK police respond to County Lines. As a case point, particular focus and attention will be drawn upon identification and safeguarding measures.

A crucial aspect of the police response to County Lines victims is identification and rescue. The identification process encompasses multi-agency work, social services intervention and intelligence sharing. Equally, initial response officers’ perceptions and knowledge of the issue plays a pivotal role in correctly identifying and supporting victims. Police are ‘over-worked’ and ‘under-resourced’, which can cause difficulty in identifying vulnerability of victims and the risks potentially posed to them (Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020). As aforementioned, identifying individuals who are potentially subject to exploitation is high on the list of policing priorities. Whereas the identification process is improving, it remains inconsistent (HMIC, 2022). Despite this, Espeute and Lanskey (2023) highlights that the Police service alone made approximately 43% of National referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals between 2009-2018. Further to this, referral figures doubled between 2018-2020. This information is however limited to child victims of CCE. The NRM is a framework used to identify victims of criminal exploitation through determining trends, crime, and abuse models. The data is then used to inform practices and policies, police action and safeguarding methods (Turner, Belcher and Pona, 2019).

Safeguarding begins when initial contact with vulnerable victims is made and is continued via support of police and partner agencies. To provide example of immediate safeguarding, police evaluate the risk during initial attendance, and where appropriate will remove a vulnerable person from a situation and take them to a place of safety if necessary (Olver and Cockbain, 2021). Additionally, The UK police use public protection units (PPUs), where specialised police offices examine safeguarding alerts submitted by police officers and personnel, to address safeguarding. The departments forward safeguarding notifications to other agencies, primarily adult and child social services, as appropriate. Within 24 hours after the incident, police must notify the PPU of any safeguarding concerns they believe warrant a referral to these agencies (Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020).

Hudek (2018) provides a valuable insight into effectiveness of safeguarding tools. It is highlighted that tools like risk orders and prevention exacerbated the risk to vulnerable victims who had also taken advantage of others across county lines - by cutting them off from their networks of support. This information however is limited to perceptions of police forces in the West Midlands. Olver and Cockbain (2021), supports this, stating that Individuals in need of support who have developed attachments with providers in one place are subsequently severed away from their support systems and driven to look for support elsewhere. The varied information suggests that it is evident that much more research is required to support nuanced solutions and safeguarding that take into account the difficulties of offending and safeguarding under the rising County Lines model.

2.5 Police perceptions: Victim identification and safeguarding

There has been a dramatic change in the Policing role whereby it has become vaster and more diverse due to budget cuts throughout other areas of the public sector. Officers note that, whereas historically the policing role was to 'fight' crime, it is now also geared towards safeguarding and vulnerability (Charman, 2018).

The police believe that such an issue requires collaborative working with partner agencies and other forces, not only to identify offenders, but to sufficiently support direct and indirect

victims in the appropriate way (Spicer, 2019). Following on from this, it has been noted that the police have raised concerns that there is a lack of consistency and understanding by partner agencies such as social services in relation to CCE and County Lines targeting. This results in poor safeguarding following initial police contact (Shaw and Greenhow, 2019). In support of this, Olver and Cockbain (2021) suggest that there are challenges and barriers in relation to insufficient understanding and disorganised information-sharing between agencies.

Additionally, although persons exploited by county lines participate in the sale of the most lethal drugs and other serious and violent crimes they are often victimised by virtue of their vulnerability. While recommendations and policies call for safeguarding, some frontline practitioners such as the police may find it challenging to perceive these young people as victims (Windle, Moyle and Coomber, 2020).

2.6 Public protection and victim support: Police training

Initial recruitment and Police training in UK forces consists of a combination of academic learning and field training. The length of training differs between forces but typically sits between 20-30 weeks (Belur et al., 2019). Initial Police training programmes typically still incorporate lessons on crime detection, prevention, conflict resolution and case-file building. This leaves new officers entering the front-line role with minimal training or knowledge on victim support and public protection (Charman, 2018).

Studies conducted in the West Midlands identified that police officers have varied opinions of their level of competence to handle County Lines situations, with the majority expressing at least some reservations (Olver and Cockbain, 2021). In support of this, Shaw and Greenhow (2019) suggest that Police officers have had minimal, if not zero training inputs in relation to identification and support of County Lines victims. Therefore, the knowledge officers do have is through their own research and experience. This suggests that there is an overall lack of knowledge across practitioners, by no fault of their own.

According to Sturrock and Holmes (2015) there is a clear necessity for all professionals to be well trained to effectively understand the needs of vulnerable persons affected by county lines and gang culture. There is limited information available on Police training, specifically in relation to victim support and public protection. This suggests there is either a gap in research or an overall oversight of this specific area.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the police face a multifaceted challenge with the complexities county lines activity presents. The county lines model has evolved significantly whereby it has taken over the 'traditional' drug supply market. The model sees several vulnerable persons affiliated in gang and drug supply activity, where they are at significant risk of being subject to violence and criminalisation. Due to the ever-changing model the policing approach has had to develop to encompass a victim centric approach. Police recognise the importance of understanding those affected by County Lines. The overall aim is to not only apprehend criminals but to identify and sufficiently support victims. There is difficulty in identifying what vulnerable participants are involved 'willingly' and 'unwillingly'. The nature of the model and the intricate factors of vulnerability present Police and partner agencies with several safeguarding challenges.

There is an array of literature with regards to the police response to county lines and victim support. Following further research into the specific areas of identification and safeguarding, it has been recognised there are several barriers. These barriers include poor knowledge and dis-jointed information sharing that ultimately leads to poor support of victims after initial contact.

Whereas Police receive intensive training before initial appointment into the role, there does not appear to be a large amount of information into the continuation of training. Aswell as this there is little information with regards to police training specifically in relation to public protection and county lines. It has been noted that Police feel they are not equipped with the knowledge to deal with such victims. However, the information is vague, undetailed and has notable limitations.

There is a clear gap in information around Police perceptions of their response and training provided. This study will aim to address this gap and pose the very important question; Do Police officers feel they are equipped to identify and support victims of County Lines?

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The researcher has decided to undertake this study due to the growing impact of County lines. The aim of this dissertation project is to understand police officers' views on the response to victims of county lines and how they feel current police procedures and training can be improved on. Following a literature review of the topic, it has been noted there is a gap in relation to this specific topic.

The objective of the research project is as follows:

- Provide an overview of county lines, identify vulnerability and victims, and outline current police practice.
- To ascertain if first responding officers feel their response is sufficient and if they feel equipped to deal with county lines victims.
- To establish perceptions of the training received by officers.

This chapter of the dissertation will discuss the method that will be utilised to conduct research and analysis into the specified topic.

3.2 Research strategy

Consideration has been given to several research methods to complete this dissertation project. However, it was concluded that a questionnaire would be the most suitable method to obtain the desired mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. In addition to this, the practical element of this method aligns with the time constraints of the research project. Despite the disadvantage of not having any personal communication with participants, a questionnaire is simplistic, cost effective and can obtain further reach. Furthermore, the participants are not required to answer the questionnaire but do so by their own free will anonymously. This would suggest the responses will be authentic, genuine, and truthful.

The questionnaire will be targeted predominantly at response officers of UK police forces. However, it will also be available to officers of any rank, inclusive of those based in specialist departments. The desired outcome is for an informative response and those working in specialist departments can possibly provide alternative opinions. The questionnaire will be disseminated via South Wales Police internal intranet, email and online forum Reddit. This method provides ease of distribution whilst reaching greater than the target number of respondents, ensuring the target is met or exceeded.

The target is to have a minimum of 20 respondents from a range of UK police forces. The researcher deems this to be a satisfactory amount to collate a varied and informative result. A greater response would of course be welcomed as it would provide a comprehensive sample size and further pivotal information.

In online survey research, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality are vital ethical issues that need to be taken into perspective. Furthermore, being able to consent and make an informed decision about whether to agree to participate is a fundamental requirement of ethical research (James and Busher, 2015). The questionnaire will be answered only by serving officers of UK police forces. In addition to this, the questions posed will not request personal information that can identify the participant or any victims they may have dealt with. The questionnaire will not be of an intrusive nature and will not infringe on personal liberties. All questions have been carefully considered and created by the researcher using Google forms. The questionnaire does not require participants to complete pre-requisite reading and has been designed to consume as little time as possible. All relevant variables have been taken into account, where the chosen method for this research study is unlikely to pose any ethical issues.

3.3 Data collection

The questionnaire has been designed in a way that will cover a range of topics relevant to the research. The researcher has included a combination of open and closed questions to give participants the opportunity to elaborate where necessary. Data will be retrieved in both quantitative and qualitative forms. Quantitative data is obtained in numerical form based on facts, whereas qualitative data provides insight and understanding through unstructured

explanation. Qualitative data can assist in corroborating and interpreting quantitative data, providing further explanation of the data Ahmad et al. (2019).

The quantitative data will be obtained through questions limited to multiple choice only. These questions will include specific options and/or ranges.

The qualitative data will be retrieved through the questions that allow free text following selecting the “other” option. The researcher may also incorporate an open-ended free text section to conclude the questionnaire.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analysed and presented in the form of visual pie charts. This will make for easy reading and reference. Each key finding will be briefly and concisely summarised question by question. The results will be further discussed in depth in the results chapter where necessary.

Each qualitative response will be manually reviewed and managed. The key trends will be summarised in a short paragraph question by question. Qualitative data may also be presented in an infographic format, where key themes will be amalgamated accordingly for ease of reading. To ensure all data is presented fairly and not inadvertently missed, all replies to open ended questions will be noted in the results chapter of this research project.

3.5 Limitations and potential problems

As with any research method, there will come some limitations and potential problems. Consideration has firstly been given to the desired audience. Owing to the high workload and physically demanding shift patterns many officers work there may be a lack of time for them to complete the task. In addition to this factor, there are many other student officers completing similar projects and disseminating questionnaires.

Secondly, although the questionnaire will be disseminated on Reddit forum, the reach to other forces beyond South Wales Police (SWP) may be limited. The potential problem that would

arise here is that the data would be limited to a small number of forces, if not solely SWP. It may transpire that due to increased volume of requests or a change of policies, the forum may reject my survey. Ultimately this would leave a gap in the research this dissertation intends to address.

3.6 Summary

In summary, a questionnaire is the chosen method to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data within a dedicated time frame. The target is to receive at least 20 responses from across several UK forces. Limitations and problems in relation to receiving the desired response has been noted, though it is not anticipated they will have a detrimental or largely negative impact on research project. All data will be displayed and summarised in the appropriate ways so ensure the findings are communicated clearly to readers.

Chapter 4 - Analysis of Results

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and critically interpret the data obtained from the survey. Due to time constraints the researcher was unable to utilise Reddit as planned as there was a requirement for slow time liaison with the forum administrators due to an increased number of requests. The survey was disseminated through email and internal intranet to officers of South Wales Police and received a total of 22 responses. Only the key data that is relevant to the research objective will be presented in this chapter. The objective of the research project is as follows:

- Provide an overview of county lines, identify vulnerability and victims, and outline current police practice.
- To ascertain if first responding officers feel their response is sufficient and if they feel equipped to deal with county lines victims.
- To establish perceptions of the training received by officers.

4.2 Results to Questionnaire

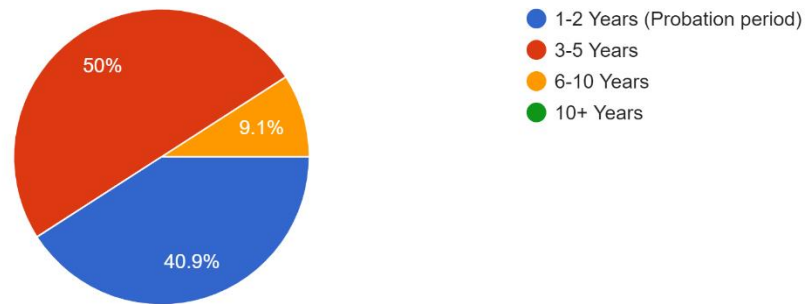
4.2.1 Participants

Q4.

The data shows all but two respondents were relatively young in service. Only two respondents had 6-10 years' experience.

4. What is your length of service?

22 responses

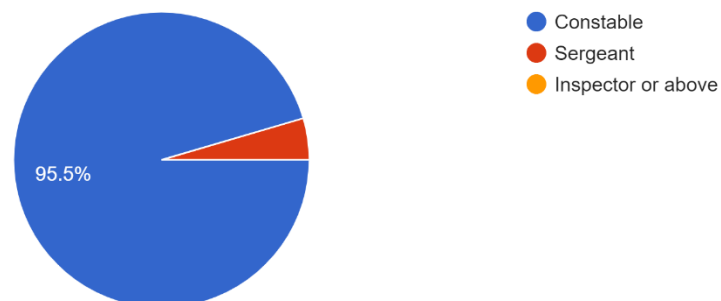


Q5.

The purpose of this question was to establish what rank respondents were and to investigate if rank had any impact on knowledge and perception. All but 1 respondent were Police Constables. This data was expected due to the dissemination methods.

5. Rank

22 responses

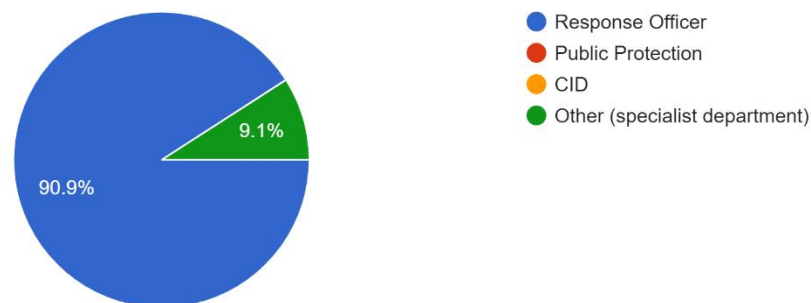


Q.6

Due to the large number of departments within South Wales Police, like the previous question, the researcher aimed to establish if there were differing perceptions across departments. All but 2 respondents were response police officers. This data was expected due to dissemination methods.

6. What is your role?

22 responses



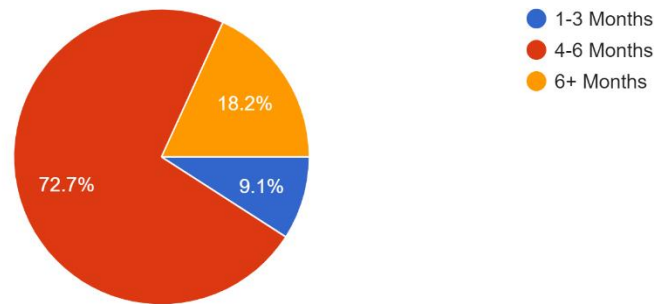
4.2.2 Initial training

Q.7

Majority of respondents received 4-6 months initial training. This data was expected upon sighting the results of question 4 regarding length of service. The data supports findings within the literature review where it is stated initial training typically sits between 20-30 weeks.

7. Length of initial training to join the force

22 responses

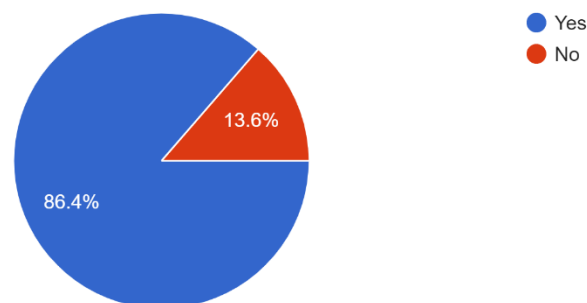


Q8.

19 out of the 22 respondents answered 'yes'. Previous findings noted in the literature review chapter suggested that new officers were receiving minimal or no training regarding County Lines. This data offers new and contrasting information.

8. Did your initial training incorporate lessons on county lines?

22 responses

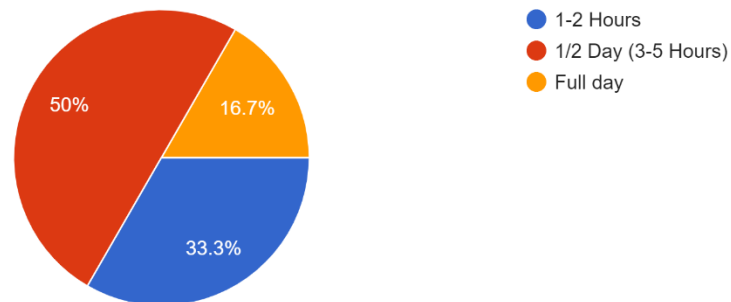


Q9.

Only 16.7% percent of respondents received a full day of training. The answers largely support the findings in the literature review where it was noted officers receive minimal training, despite the multiple complexities of County Lines.

9. If so, how long was the training? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

18 responses

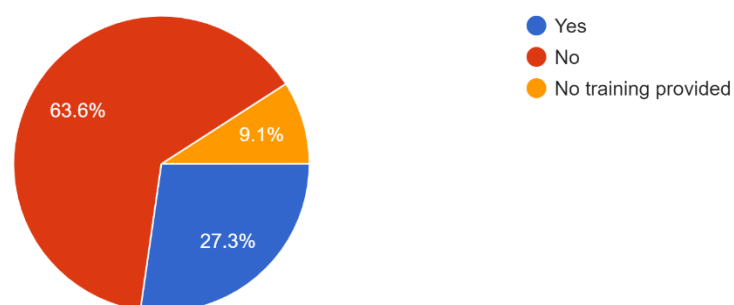


Q11.

This question is directly linked to the research question. This question was key to establish Officer perceptions. Most respondents did not feel the training was sufficient. This data supports the findings in the literature review.

11. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient?

22 responses

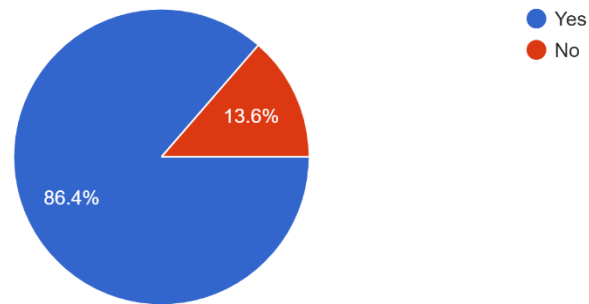


Q.12

The data mirrors the findings of question 8. Again, offering new and contrasting information.

12. Did your initial training incorporate a lesson on victims and vulnerability?

22 responses

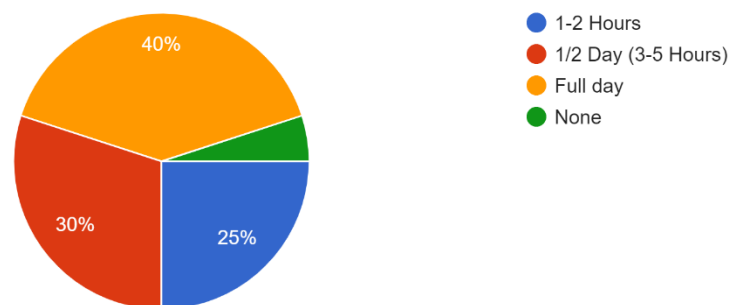


Q.13

The data shows that respondents received significantly more training on victims and vulnerability than they did specifically County Lines. This was expected due to the nature of policing, whereby police deal with vulnerable persons daily as noted in the literature review.

13. If so how long was the training? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

20 responses

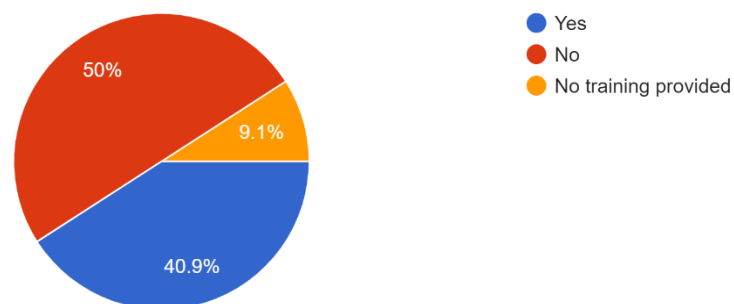


Q15.

50% of respondents felt their training was not sufficient, with 9.1% not receiving any training. This data shows a contrast of opinions, however, does offer some support to previous findings noted in the literature review.

15. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient?

22 responses



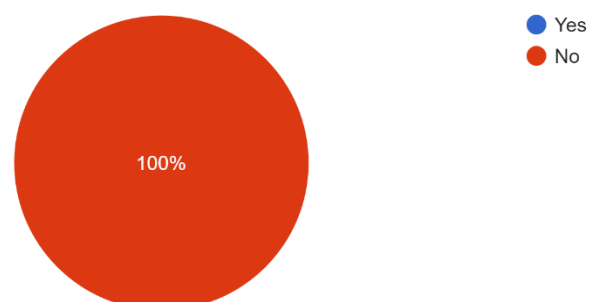
4.2.3 Refresher training

Q.16

The data heavily supports finding in the literature review, whereby no respondents have received any refresher training on County Lines within the past 12 months.

16. Have you received any refresher training on County lines in the past 12 months?

22 responses

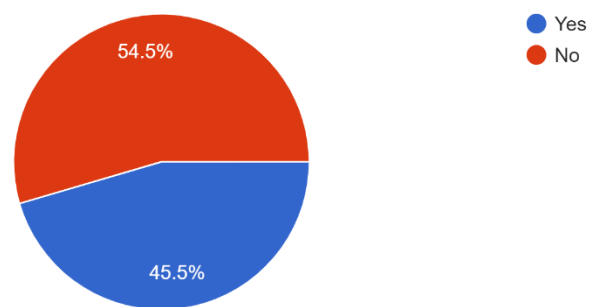


Q.17

There appears to be a relatively equal response to this question. This data was expected following the response to question 13 where it was established more training was provided around this specific topic.

17. Have you received any refresher training on vulnerability and victims in the past 12 months?

22 responses



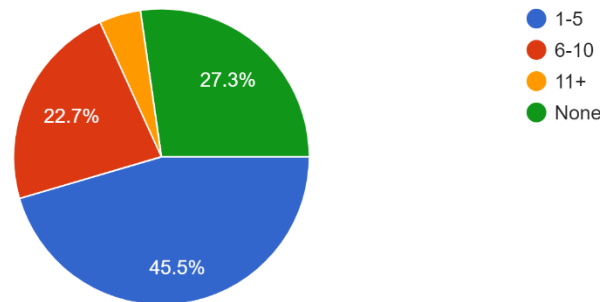
4.2.4 Attendance at incidents

Q.18

The data shows that only 6 out of the 22 respondents have not dealt with any County lines matters in the past 12 months. Therefore, the data obtained is from respondents who have had first hand experience and can be considered reliable.

18. How many incidents have you attended in the last 12 months relating to county lines?

22 responses

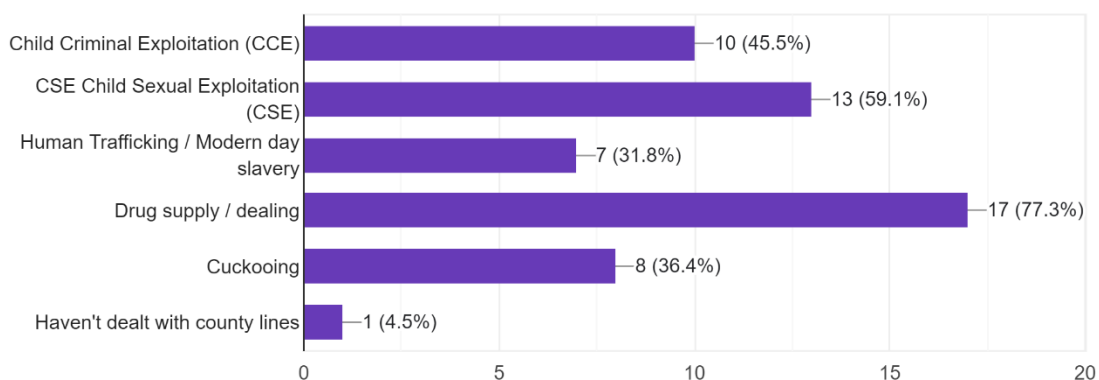


Q.19

The data shows that the largest concerns for officers were around drug supply/dealing, CSE and CCE. It must be noted that CCE is heavily linked to the drug dealing aspect of County Lines as mentioned in previous research. This data was not surprising when taking into consideration the findings of the literature review.

19. What has been your main concern during the incidents you attended? (multiple choice)

22 responses



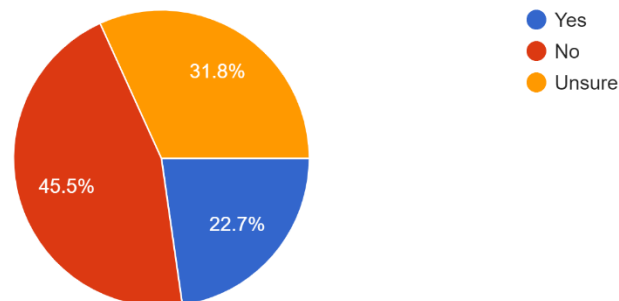
4.2.5 Officer perceptions

Q.20

Only a small proportion of respondents felt they had sufficient training, knowledge, and tools. The data supports findings in the literature review around the lack of Police officer knowledge and confidence due to lack of training.

20. When attending incidents, do you feel you have the sufficient training, knowledge and tools to effectively identify county lines activity?

22 responses

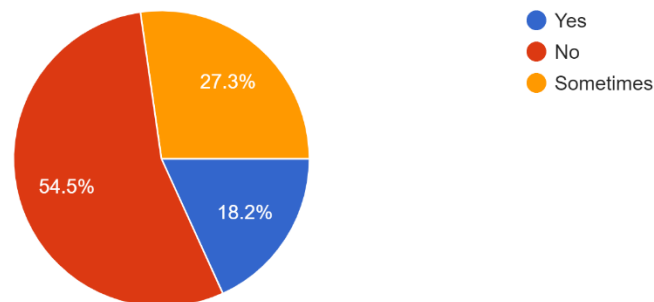


Q.21

The response to this question equally supports and opposes findings in the literature review. It has been highlighted that officers have difficulty in identifying victims of County Lines.

21. Do you find it difficult to differentiate between who is a victim and an offender in relation to County Lines incidents?

22 responses

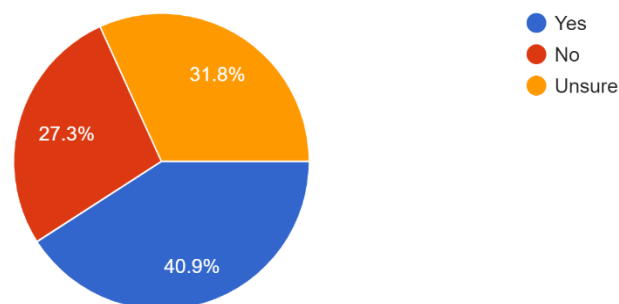


Q.24

Only 40.9% of respondents felt the safeguarding provided was sufficient. This suggests that Officers are not confident in the current safeguarding processes and response.

24. Do you feel the safeguarding was sufficient?

22 responses



4.2.6 Close

Q. End: Feedback/concerns

This question received 3 responses. A prominent theme within these responses were that any training received has been limited and not sufficient when considering the real magnitude of County Lines. It was also mentioned that Officers feel other specialist departments could better support victims or potential victims through early intervention.

Conclusion 4.3

The Survey obtained 22 responses from serving officers of South Wales Police force. All but one of the respondents held the rank of Police constable. Every respondent—all but two—was a response police officer. Although the survey was limited to responses only from South Wales

Police, the survey provided valuable insight into responses police officers' perceptions of training on County Lines, Victims, and vulnerability. The data obtained was from officers who had first hand experience and is considered reliable and transparent.

The data suggests that new in-service response police officers of South Wales Police have received minimal training. The perception is that the training is largely insufficient and does not allow officers to feel confident in their knowledge and skills to effectively deal with victims of County Lines and related incidents. The data provides evidence of lack of refresher training; therefore it would be recommended practices in relation to training are reviewed.

If the time constraints hadn't existed, the researcher would have carried out the original plan to distribute the survey via Reddit to gather feedback from all UK police forces. To obtain additional responses, the survey could have been conducted for a longer amount of time. The literature review chapter points out that there is an absence of substantial research on police officers' opinions of training. A minor knowledge and research gap regarding police officer perceptions in SWP has been addressed by the survey; nevertheless, more study is needed to close the remaining gap with respect to all UK forces.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

An introduction, a review of the available literature, planning and methodology, and the results of a research survey have all been covered in earlier chapters of this dissertation. This final chapter will conclude the dissertation by highlighting the main findings and produce recommendations that reflect on future needs.

5.2 Objective Achievements

The increasing significance and influence of county lines led the researcher to decide on conducting this investigation. The primary objective of this research project was to gain insight into police officers' perspectives on how they respond to county lines victims and how they believe that existing police practices and training might be enhanced. The research objectives were as follows:

- Provide an overview of county lines, identify vulnerability and victims, and outline current police practice.
- To ascertain if first responding officers feel their response is sufficient and if they feel equipped to deal with county lines victims.
- To establish perceptions of the training received by officers.

The first objective has been achieved by reviewing literature that has previously been published and was available for review in the wake of related studies. The literature review chapter effectively gave an extensive overview of the County lines model, police procedures, and identified the most vulnerable victims.

By distributing an online survey to South Wales Police's existing police officers, the second and third objectives were both partially met. As previously stated, it was challenging to obtain a larger sample size from a range of UK forces through the survey.

5.3 Main Findings

In addition to the previously published works that are referenced in this dissertation's literature review, it is hoped that the research carried out for this project will function as supporting evidence for future studies. This may assist in delivering officers more relevant and educational training so they can safeguard and respond to communities in the most effective way.

Firstly, a preliminary review of recent research indicates that County Lines is now more prevalent than it has ever been in the UK, leading to several significant changes in the police response in recent years. This implies that police demand around County lines has grown and is expected to continue to do so. With this, it is reasonable to say there is a requirement for training to be continually assessed and increased to effectively tackle the crisis.

The survey results concluded that all but two officers were relatively new in service. However, their training around County Lines and victims was very minimal. The results showed that officers mostly received a short, classroom and online learning input. In relation to County lines, 83.3% of respondents confirmed they had between 1 hour – half a day of training. However, there was a slight increase with regards to training around victims and vulnerability where 40% of respondents confirmed they had a full day or training. The results directly support the findings in the literature review, whereby Shaw and Greenhow (2019) suggest that Police officers have had minimal, if not zero training inputs in relation to identification and support of County Lines victims.

Secondly, the survey results showed that the officers had a poor perception of the standard of training received. Survey results showed that more than 50% of the participants felt the training received around County Lines, vulnerability and victims was not sufficient. In addition to this, only 22.7% of participants felt equipped with the knowledge and tools to effectively identify and tackle County Lines. This is no surprise when the results also showed that none of the participants had received refresher training on County Lines. Additionally, less than half,

45.5% percent of participants received refresher training on vulnerability and victims. These results are supportive of studies conducted in the West Midlands that have been documented in the literature review. Majority of the officers expressed some reservations regarding their own competencies to handle County Lines situations (Olver and Cockbain, 2021).

Lastly, research indicates that while safeguarding is now a focus of policing, the effectiveness of long-term safeguarding strategies may be inadequate. Police officers believe that collaborative partnership work is necessary to address the safeguarding challenges, however there are barriers arising from poor information sharing, inconsistent practice, and limited understanding from partner agencies. The survey results support this finding where only 40% of participants felt the safeguarding put in place was sufficient. Response officers also felt that other specialist departments and partner agencies could better support victims.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendation One: Further investigation and extension of the study. Utilise the survey on a wider sample group of officers.

The current study might be seen as an initial investigation into how police officers perceive their training in relation to victims, vulnerability, and county lines. However, given the limited sample size and absence of participants from various UK forces, the results should be interpreted tentatively.

In order to collect a mass response, future study may utilise the survey on a more extensive basis over an extended duration to further examine the research topic. A more diverse sample that includes officers from other UK forces as well as officers from various policing areas would boost the research's validity and credibility. An in-depth understanding of officers' opinions across the United Kingdom can be established. This can then result in UK forces re-evaluating their requirements to fulfil officer's needs and support them accordingly.

This is a realistic, measurable, and actionable recommendation that will assist in the completion of the recommendations to follow.

5.4.2 Recommendation Two: Integrate findings into policy and practice. Develop initial and continuous training for police officers.

The study has obtained supporting evidence that the standard and length of training is insufficient. There is an increased demand on Police Forces surrounding County Lines that calls for further training. There is a clear need to develop initial and continuous training for police officers.

It would be advantageous for forces to examine the particular areas within their forces, gather information on local patterns, and develop a training strategy that is specifically focused on any issues identified. In order to meet the ever-evolving demands of victims and the ongoing expansion of County Lines, training must be continuous. In support of this, Spicer (2018) predicts that the focus will likely shift to how police might reduce the negative impact of County Lines continues to evolve.

Developments in policies and training strategies will help officers acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and self-assurance to carry out their duties. As a result, this will guarantee that police officers are doing their utmost to understand, respond to, and support their local communities.

5.4.3 Recommendation Three: Review of collaborative partnership work for more effective safeguarding.

The study has shown that a number of obstacles prevent collaborative partner agency work from being as effective as it could be. The research might provide a springboard for future investigations into the reasons behind officers' perceptions that safeguarding is insufficient and could identify areas in which partner agencies fall short.

It is possible to identify and overcome barriers by looking into partner agency procedures and information-sharing mechanisms. The indicated inadequacies may be addressed and the police forces' ability to protect and serve the public may be strengthened by a comprehensive review of the processes.

In support of this recommendation, Shaw (2023) emphasised the necessity of increasing practitioners' knowledge to address failures in identifying and supporting victims.

5.5 Limitations

There are limitations that will fall beyond the researcher's control, as is the case with any study. Due to the project's time constraints and word count limits, the research's scope is confined. The county lines model includes numerous facets, and given the small sample size, it is unlikely that a precise and comprehensive image has been obtained. Furthermore, little data exists regarding the training officers receive on the subject and their perspectives. These aspects may have provided limits for the research. Given the opportunity to repeat my study, I would attempt to obtain a significantly larger, more diverse sample size.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the County Lines model is a serious threat to everyone involved, regardless of whether they are actual victims or simply vulnerable to being exploited. Officers in South Wales have received initial training from the police force; nevertheless, there are significant uncertainties about the success, duration, and continuity of this training.

Despite the limiting sample size, the participating officers felt the training they have received is insufficient. Officers also lack confidence in partner agencies' capabilities and the safeguarding measures that are currently in place. Officers believe partner agencies and specialised units need to provide more assistance and greater efforts.

Several recommendations have been made to address the gaps in knowledge, integrate findings into new and existing training, and to better support services from partner agencies. The recommendations were made with the aim of supporting and informing the UK Police Force, ensuring that officers can serve and protect the public to the highest of standards.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey questions

POLICE OFFICER PERCEPTIONS - RESPONSE, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND TRAINING RELATING TO VICTIMS OF COUNTY LINES

Degree Research Project: Anonymous survey exploring UK Police officer perceptions, opinions and concerns.

* Indicates required question

1. 1. What area of the UK force are you situated in as a serving Police Officer? (If *
you are not a serving officer of any UK force, please discontinue this survey).

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ WALES
☐ ENGLAND
☐ SCOTLAND
☐ NORTHERN IRELAND

2. 2. Are you a serving officer of South Wales Police (SWP)? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

3. 3. Age *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and over

4. 4. What is your length of service? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-2 Years (Probation period)
- ☐ 3-5 Years
- ☐ 6-10 Years
- ☐ 10+ Years

5. 5. Rank *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Constable
- ☐ Sergeant
- ☐ Inspector or above

6. 6. What is your role? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Response Officer
- ☐ Public Protection
- ☐ CID
- ☐ Other (specialist department)

7. 7. Length of initial training to join the force *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-3 Months
☐ 4-6 Months
☐ 6+ Months

8. 8. Did your initial training incorporate lessons on county lines? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

9. 9. If so, how long was the training?

Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-2 Hours
☐ 1/2 Day (3-5 Hours)
☐ Full day
☐ Other: _____

10. 10. How was the training relayed?

Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Classroom input
- ☐ Online training package
- ☐ Practical activities
- ☐ Combination of above
- ☐ Other: _____

11. 11. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No training provided

12. 12. Did your initial training incorporate a lesson on victims and vulnerability? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. 13. If so how long was the training?

Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-2 Hours
- ☐ 1/2 Day (3-5 Hours)
- ☐ Full day
- ☐ Other: _____

14. 14. How was the training relayed?

Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Classroom input
- ☐ Online learning package
- ☐ Practical activities
- ☐ Combination of above
- ☐ Other: _____

15. 15. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No training provided

16. 16. Have you received any refresher training on County lines in the past 12 months? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

17. 17. Have you received any refresher training on vulnerability and victims in the past 12 months? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

18. 18. How many incidents have you attended in the last 12 months relating to county lines? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11+
☐ None

19. 19. What has been your main concern during the incidents you attended? (multiple choice) *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
☐ CSE Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
☐ Human Trafficking / Modern day slavery
☐ Drug supply / dealing
☐ Cuckooing
☐ Other: _____

20. 20. When attending incidents, do you feel you have the sufficient training, knowledge and tools to effectively identify county lines activity? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

21. 21. Do you find it difficult to differentiate between who is a victim and an offender in relation to County Lines incidents? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Sometimes

22. 22. If you answered 'Yes/unsure' to the previous question, please explain why.... *

If you answered 'no', please write N/A.

23. 23. What support was provided during/after the incidents? (Multiple choice) *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Immediate Safeguarding (Removal to safe place, arrest of offender etc.).
☐ PPN
☐ Referrals
☐ Combination of above
☐ Other: _____

24. 24. Do you feel the safeguarding was sufficient? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

25. 25. Where do you believe the task of future safeguarding should sit? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Police
- ☐ Social Services
- ☐ Partner agencies
- ☐ All of above
- ☐ Other: _____

26. 26. What department of the UK Police Force do you feel should be first responding to incidents relating to County Lines? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Response Policing
- ☐ CID
- ☐ Specialist departments (Priority policing teams, Child abuse unit, vulnerable adult unit etc.)
- ☐ All of above
- ☐ Other: _____

27. End: Feedback/Concerns

Please use this section to note your feedback/concerns regarding any of the questions raised.

Please use this section to also provide your own recommendations/ideas.

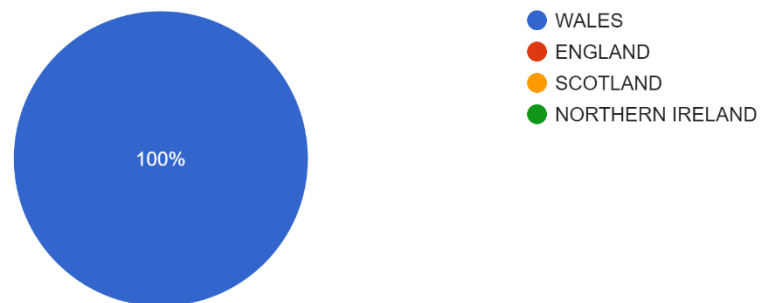
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Appendix 2 – Survey responses

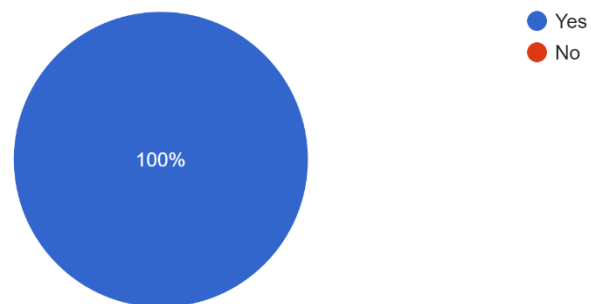
1. What area of the UK force are you situated in as a serving Police Officer? (If you are not a serving officer of any UK force, please discontinue this survey).

22 responses



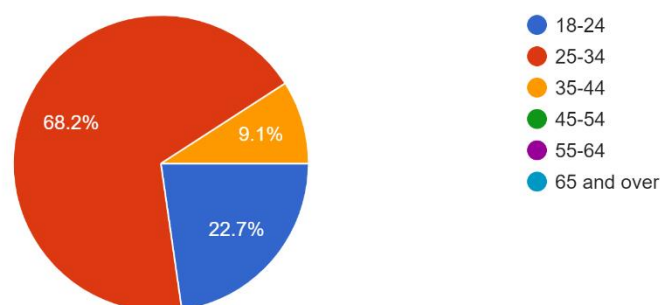
2. Are you a serving officer of South Wales Police (SWP)?

22 responses



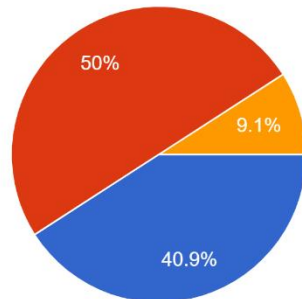
3. Age

22 responses



4. What is your length of service?

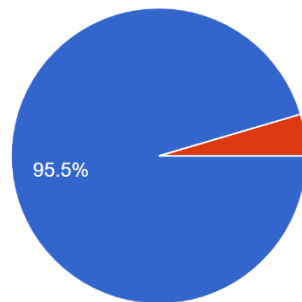
22 responses



- 1-2 Years (Probation period)
- 3-5 Years
- 6-10 Years
- 10+ Years

5. Rank

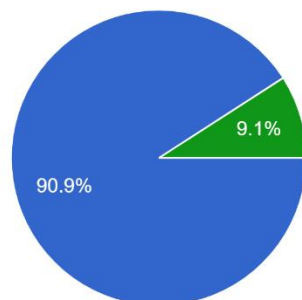
22 responses



- Constable
- Sergeant
- Inspector or above

6. What is your role?

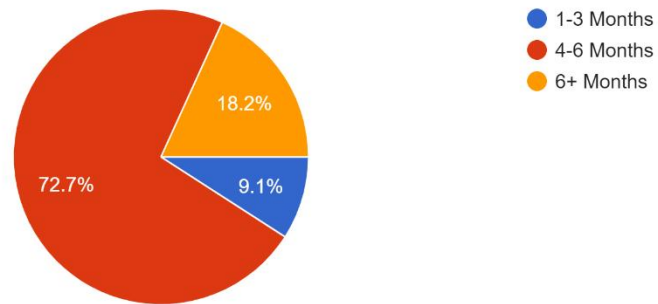
22 responses



- Response Officer
- Public Protection
- CID
- Other (specialist department)

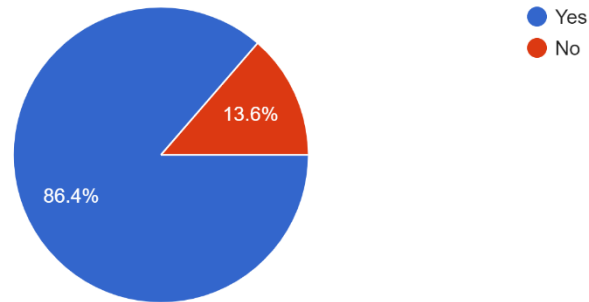
7. Length of initial training to join the force

22 responses



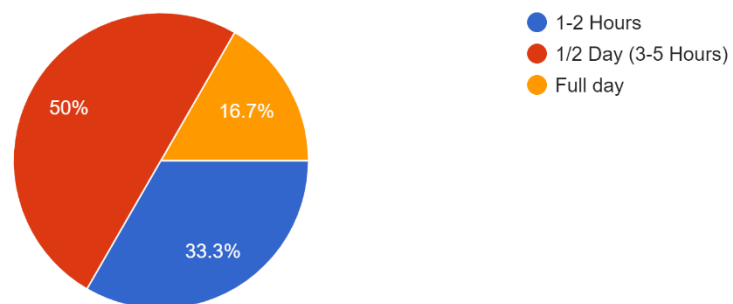
8. Did your initial training incorporate lessons on county lines?

22 responses



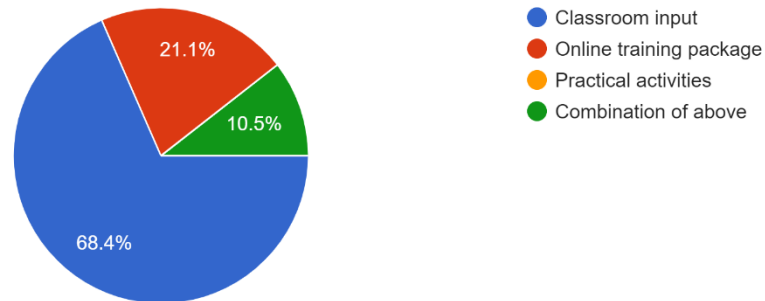
9. If so, how long was the training? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

18 responses



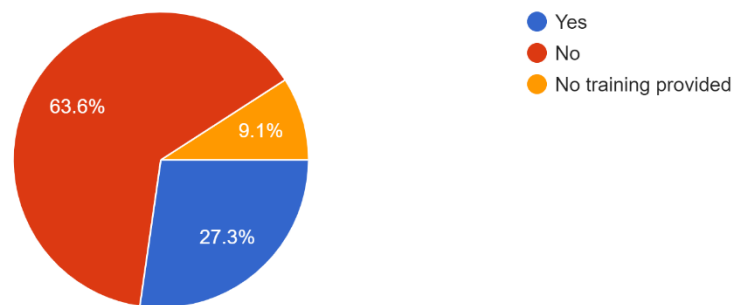
10. How was the training relayed? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

19 responses



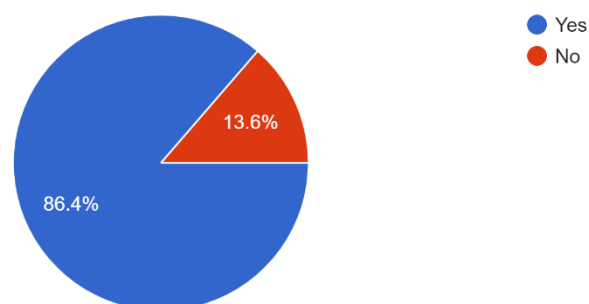
11. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient?

22 responses



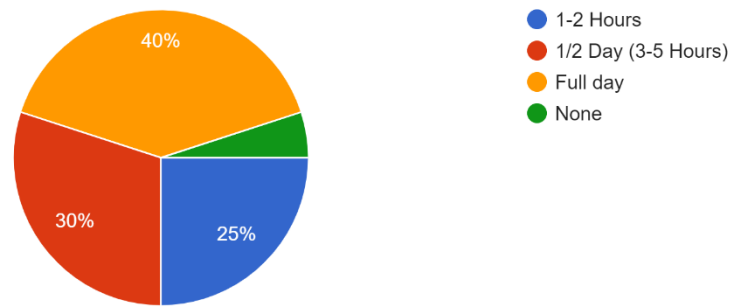
12. Did your initial training incorporate a lesson on victims and vulnerability?

22 responses



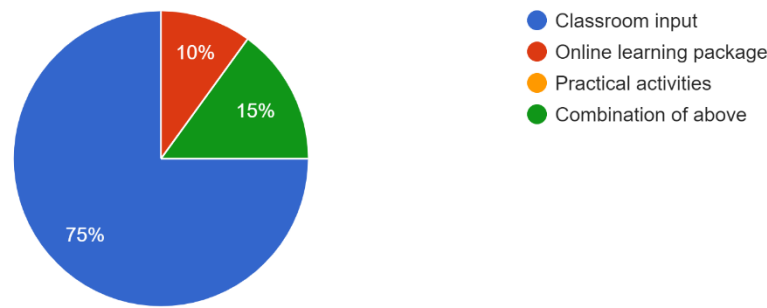
13. If so how long was the training? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

20 responses



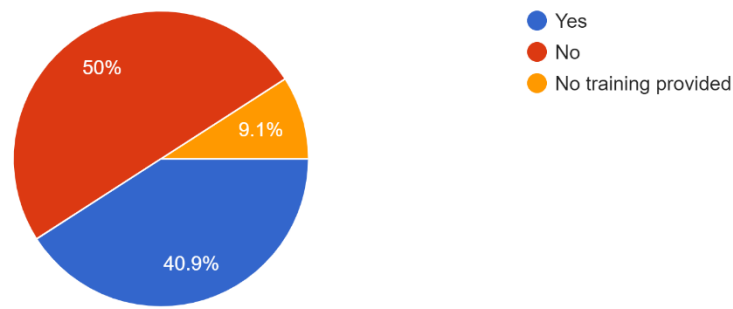
14. How was the training relayed? Please skip this question if you did not receive training and answered no.

20 responses



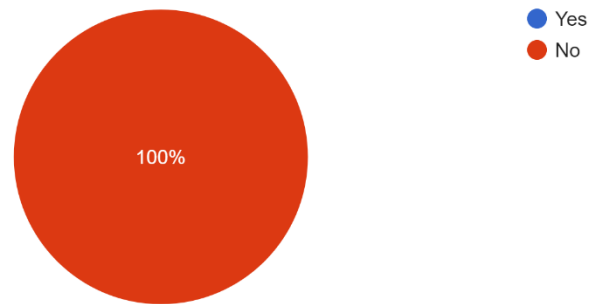
15. Do you feel the training provided, if any was sufficient?

22 responses



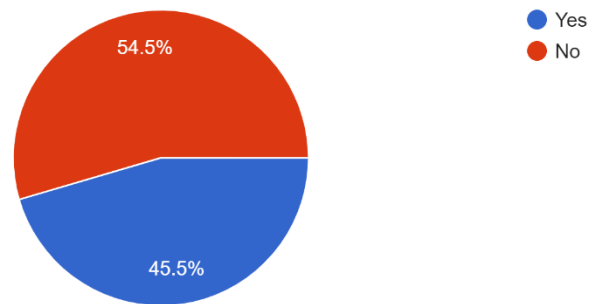
16. Have you received any refresher training on County lines in the past 12 months?

22 responses



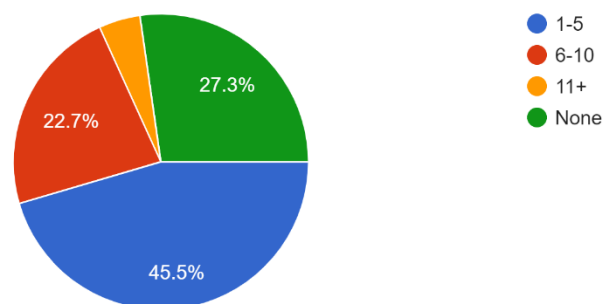
17. Have you received any refresher training on vulnerability and victims in the past 12 months?

22 responses



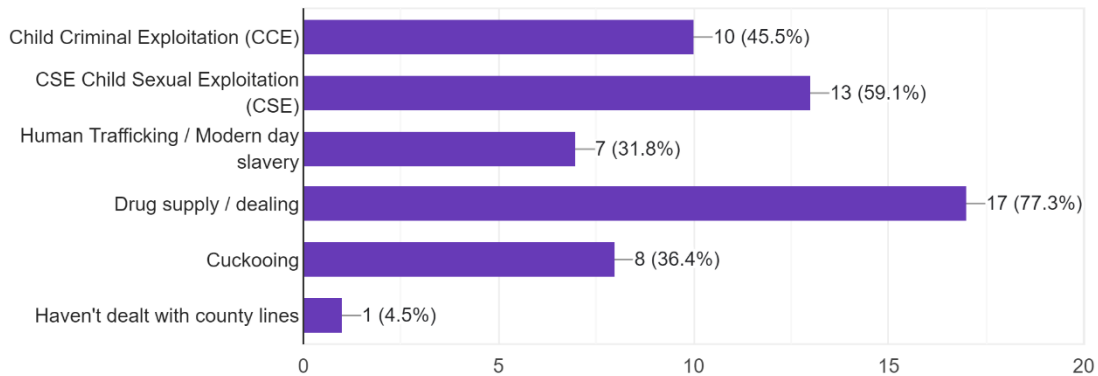
18. How many incidents have you attended in the last 12 months relating to county lines?

22 responses



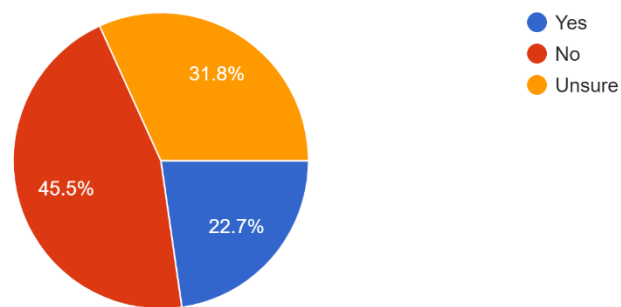
19. What has been your main concern during the incidents you attended? (multiple choice)

22 responses



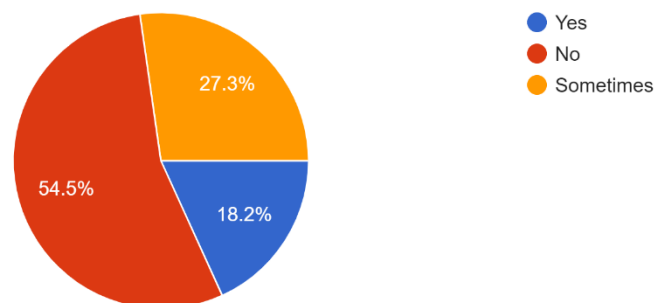
20. When attending incidents, do you feel you have the sufficient training, knowledge and tools to effectively identify county lines activity?

22 responses



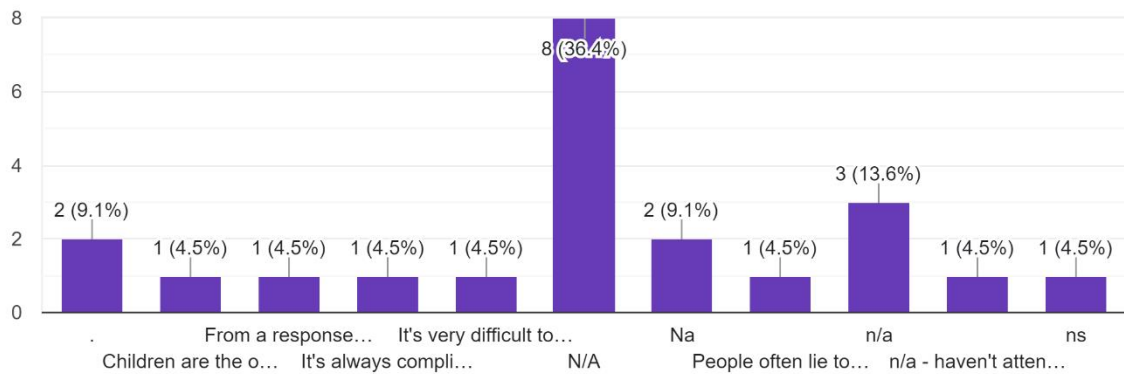
21. Do you find it difficult to differentiate between who is a victim and an offender in relation to County Lines incidents?

22 responses



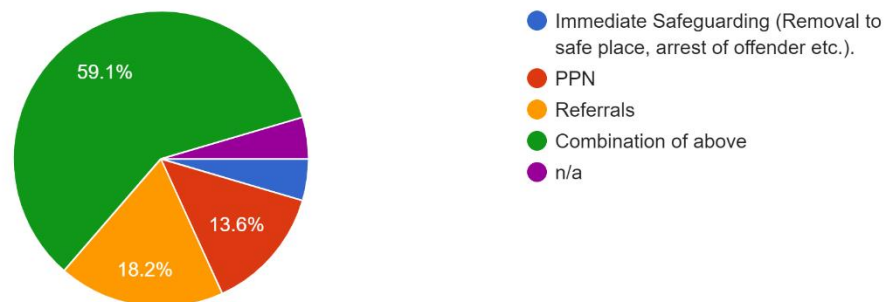
22. If you answered 'Yes/unsure' to the previous question, please explain why.... If you answered 'no', please write N/A.

22 responses



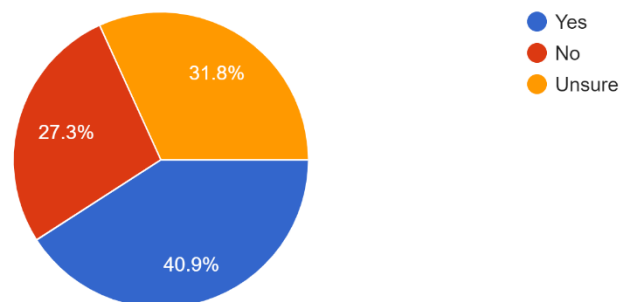
23. What support was provided during/after the incidents? (Multiple choice)

22 responses



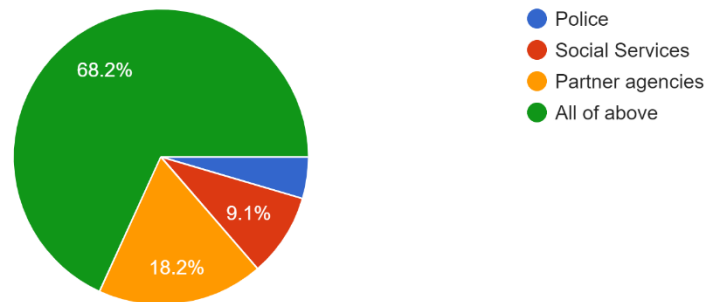
24. Do you feel the safeguarding was sufficient?

22 responses



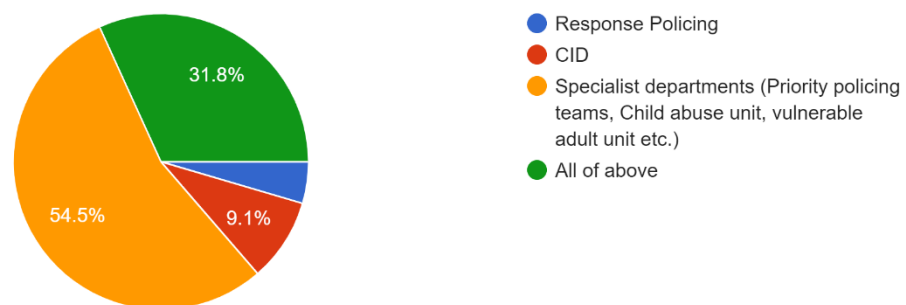
25. Where do you believe the task of future safeguarding should sit?

22 responses



26. What department of the UK Police Force do you feel should be first responding to incidents relating to County Lines?

22 responses



End: Feedback/Concerns

Please use this section to note your feedback/concerns regarding any of the questions raised.

Please use this section to also provide your own recommendations/ideas.

3 responses

County lines and vulnerable victims are both very complex matters and there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Training is very limited to broad matters and not localised. I personally feel my initial training county lines input was sufficient at that point, due to the relatively large volume of tuition provided across a wealth of topics during the six month period. This training provided me a foundation to move into my initial response time with. Since this point however, I have not received any further county lines related training or inputs, which I feel would be beneficial. Additionally, my view is that people potentially involved within county lines are generally removed to a safe place in the short term upon police interaction, however I am not confident this resolves the long term risk and connection.

County lines is a ongoing issue. Relevant departments are expecting Response Policing teams to deal and intercept the magnitude of calls that are coming through into SWP force area. Other departments can take early intervention at a young/early stage to prevent vulnerable persons entering into County Lines. It is evident that County Lines is a easy and accessible way to earn street credibility and money at a young age to have a comfortable and easy life of going through the system before the age of 18

Appendix 3 – Research proposal Form



UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

Please complete the following research proposal and submit it to Turnitin.

Which project option are you taking?

8,000 word project

NAME: VICTORIA DAVIES	STUDENT ID No.: 2031208
DRAFT RESEARCH TITLE QUESTION: Public protection and County Lines: Identifying victims of organised crime groups, evaluating the current police response and police officer perceptions on training provided to identify and manage victims of County Lines. INTRODUCTION: The researcher has been a serving Police Constable of South Wales Police for approximately two years. They have dealt with several organised crime related calls and works with victims daily. This topic has been chosen as the researcher endeavours to progress into a department that is more	

victim focused and has a particular interest in how the police support victims of organised crime in the UK.

According to McLean, Robinson and Densley (2019), serious and organised crime groups have become more prominent than ever in the UK. South Wales is the fifth most affected area for county lines, whereby Swansea and Neath Port Talbot has 14 recognised organised crime groups (OCG's) and multiple Urban crime groups (UCG's) operating within.

The vulnerable populations who are engaged are at the greatest risk of modern day slavery, child sexual exploitation, drug addiction, violence, and criminal conviction (Williams and Finlay 2018).

From the researchers experience as a serving officer and senior to officers now joining the force there appears to be a lack of knowledge on how to identify and support these victims during initial attendance.

The aim of this dissertation project is to understand police officers' views on the response to victims of county lines and how they feel current police procedures and training can be improved on.

Furthermore, through researching this topic, it may be possible to improve practice for the researcher and colleagues, in turn helping and supporting the UK police force.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the direct and indirect victims of organised crime groups and county lines.
- Outline current police practice when responding to victims, identifying the 'lessons learnt' (what works well, what does not). Analyse the effectiveness of police response to victims of county lines.
- Establish and analyse police officers' views on current practice, response, and training.
- Make recommendations on how police practice can be improved in relation to training on victim support, public protection, and county lines.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

There are several pieces of literature available to assist in this research project. An example of these are listed below:

1. Spicer, J. (2021) discusses policing practice and the ways police support victims of county lines 'cuckooing' and further details the 'spiral' in which victims are met with.
2. Moyle, L. (2019) explains the vulnerabilities of victims of county lines who are targeted for drug running and 'cuckooing'.
3. Robinson, G., McLean, R. and Densley, J. (2018) delves into child criminal exploitation, however the information is limited to Merseyside and Glasgow Police force area.

There is an abundance of information in relation to county lines and police practice in relation to public protection. Common themes suggest that the victims are often already vulnerable and susceptible to being targeted by OCG's. Their vulnerabilities stem from characteristics such as, but not limited to their age, living in impoverished areas and already living a criminal or chaotic lifestyle.

Despite the in depth research on county lines and police practice, there is little information available regarding police officer views regarding public protection and training received. This research project aims to address and fill this gap through having comprehensible understanding of the views to produce newly informed literature and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH –SURVEY METHOD:

For the purpose of this dissertation project an online survey will be utilised to gather the required information. Due to the wider dissemination and reach that can now be obtained online, the researcher anticipates a quality response from several sources in a short time span which will assist in keeping within time frames.

The researcher does not believe conducting interviews will obtain many responses due to the already high workloads and demands placed on officers. Furthermore, the collection and analysis of interviews will generate a larger and greater workload and will not be suitable within the time constraints of the project.

SUMMARY OF SAMPLING FRAMEWORK:

The survey will be directed only to serving police officers of South Wales Police and other UK forces. The researcher will not be requesting information or response from other persons such as victims, partner agencies or professionals not employed by the Police service.

The reason for this is because the aim of the dissertation project is to solely identify officer's opinions on the topic. The questionnaire will be tailored in order to obtain the relevant information and an example of questions are as follows:

- Are you a serving member of South Wales Police or another UK force?
- How long have you been employed as a serving officer?
- Specialist department?
- Length of service
- Age & Gender
- Length of initial training
- Did you training incorporate county lines?
- If so, length of training (1 day, 1 week etc.)
- Did the training consist of a classroom input, training package, practical activities etc.)
- Do you feel the training provided was sufficient?
- How many incidents have you attended in the last 12 months relating to county lines
- Out of the calls you have attended, what is the main concern (Child exploitation, trafficking, drug dealing, violence etc.)
- When attending calls, do you feel you have the sufficient information and knowledge to identify county lines activities?
- As above, in relation to identifying victims?
- Have the victims been direct, indirect victims or both?
- Have you contacted other departments for assistance on call?
- What support was offered?
- Has the call resulted in any arrests?
- Has the call resulted in any victims having to seek refuge?
- Do you feel sufficient support was offered?
- Did you leave the call fully satisfied that the victim was safeguarded using the tools available to you?
- Are you a response officer?
- If so, do you feel you should be first attending to these calls?

- If not, why?

ETHICAL ISSUES:

At present, the researcher does not anticipate any ethical issues arising. This is predominantly due to the target ordinance being serving police officers within South Wales Police and other UK forces. These issues will be managed via the proper dissemination of the survey to the relevant subjects in force, PNLD and UK police forums.

There will be no questions directly relating to specific victims or incidents, nor will response from victims or any persons out of force be requested.

TIME SCALE:

See below Gant chart outlining timescales.

<u>DISERTATION PROJECT TIMESCALES</u>	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-23
Research Proposal & Ethics Form									
Literature Review									
Research Methology and Planning									
Analysis of Results									
Findings and Conclusions									
Final Project									

The researcher aims to meet deadlines, if not complete the work in advance to allow sufficient time for liaison with tutor and utilise the opportunity to re-work if required.

REFERENCE LIST:

Reference list

Glover Williams, A. and Finlay, F. (2018). County lines: How Gang Crime Is Affecting Our Young People. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, [online] 104(8), pp.730–732.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2018-315909>.

McLean, R., Robinson, G. and Densley, J.A. (2019). *County Lines: Criminal Networks and Evolving Drug Markets in Britain*. [online] *Google Books*. Springer Nature.

Moyle, L. (2019). Situating Vulnerability and Exploitation in Street-Level Drug Markets: Cuckooing, Commuting, and the ‘County Lines’ Drug Supply Model. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 49(4), pp.739–755.

Robinson, G., McLean, R. and Densley, J. (2018). Working County Lines: Child Criminal Exploitation and Illicit Drug Dealing in Glasgow and Merseyside. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(5), pp.694–711.

Spicer, J. (2021). OUP accepted manuscript. *British Journal Of Criminology*, 61(5).

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab027>.

Appendix 4 – Application for Ethical approval



PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Victoria Davies			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	BLUE LIGHT ACADEMY			
4	Campus:				
5	E-mail address:	2031208@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			

6	Contact Telephone Number:	
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2031208
8	Programme of Study:	BSc (Hons) Professional Policing practice
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Kate Colclough

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☒
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): <i>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</i>	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☒		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice ☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy ☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i> ☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	N/A
2	Contact person name	N/A
3	Contact person e-mail address	N/A
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES ☐ NO ☒
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES ☐ NO ☒

6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☒
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☒
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☒
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☒

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☒
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Public protection and county lines - Identifying victims of organised crime groups, evaluate the current police response and analyse police officer perceptions on the support and training provided to deal with such victims.			
2	Proposed start date:	28/08/23	Proposed end date:	08/04/24	
Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>					
3	Purpose of Research Activity The researcher has been a serving Police Constable of South Wales Police for approximately two years. They have dealt with several organised crime related calls and works with victims daily. This topic has been chosen as the researcher endeavours to progress into a department that is more victim focused and has a particular interest in how the police support victims of organised crime in the UK. From the researchers experience as a serving officer and senior to officers now joining the force there appears to be a lack of knowledge on how to identify and support these victims during initial attendance. The aim of this dissertation project is to understand police officers' views on the response to victims of county lines and how they feel current police procedures and training can be improved on.				

	Furthermore, to improve police practice and knowledge for the researcher and colleagues, in turn informing and supporting the UK police force. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question Public protection and county lines - Identifying victims of organised crime groups, evaluate the current police response and analyse police officer perceptions on the support and training provided to deal with such victims. (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity The aim of the research is to understand how UK police identify and deal with victims of county lines. Furth more, to ascertain officers views on the training they receive and if it is deemed adequate enough for sufficient public protection. The overall aim is to improve police practice and knowledge for the researcher and colleagues, in turn informing and supporting the UK police force. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity • Identify the direct and indirect victims of organised crime groups and county lines. • Outline current police practice when responding to victims, identifying the 'lessons learnt' (what works well, what does not). Analyse the effectiveness of police response to victims of county lines. • Establish and analyse police officers' views on current practice, response, and training. • Make recommendations on how police practice can be improved in relation to training on victim support, public protection, and county lines. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	For this dissertation project the researcher will utilise an online questionnaire to gather the required information. Due to the wider dissemination and reach that can now be obtained online, the researcher anticipates a quality response from several sources in a short time span which will assist in keeping within time frames. The questionnaire will be disseminated to serving South Wales Police (SWP) officers via the internal intranet and email. Other UK serving officers will be reached via the PNLD forum. This method enables the researcher to capture quantitative and qualitative data from serving police officers in the UK. The researcher does not predict any ethical issues as the questionnaire will not include intrusive questions or capture personal details. (this box should expand as you type)

	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	The research questionnaire will be disseminated only to SWP serving police officers and members of the PNLD. These members will include officers from other UK forces. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO ☒	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒

6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☒

Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected? At this time a specific number of participants can not be predicted. However the researcher aims to receive between 20-50 participants. This can be considered a proportionate amount to facilitate the research project. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be? SWP serving police officers and members of the PNLD. These members will include officers from other UK forces. All participants will be over the age of 18. (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants? The questionnaire will be disseminated to serving SWP officers via the internal intranet. Other officers will be identified via PNLD forum. (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☐	☐	☒
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☐	☐	☒
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☐	☒
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☐	☐	☒
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☐	☐	☒

21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☒
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

Information for participants:		YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.					
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended? <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>☒</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	☐	No	☒
Yes	☐				
No	☒				
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information <table border="1"> <tr> <td> Risk to participants: None identified <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i> </td> <td> How you will mitigate the risk to participants: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i> </td> </tr> </table>	Risk to participants: None identified <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
Risk to participants: None identified <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest <table border="1"> <tr> <td> Risk to the investigator: None identified </td> <td> How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: </td> </tr> </table>	Risk to the investigator: None identified	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:		
Risk to the investigator: None identified	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:				

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: At present the researcher has not identified any risk to the university. There are no ethical issues to consider as the research methods and questions are not intrusive of personal information or detail. Personal opinion and unintentional bias will be avoided by maintaining an investigative mindset. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: None identified <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? N/A - No de-briefing necessary. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. Questionnaire will be answered by persons own free will. There is no obligation to complete the questionnaire and participation can be ceased at any time. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity

	Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	N/A – No personal details will be obtained <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	<i>"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.</i>	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	<i>"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes).</i>	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒

12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		



26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	V.DAVIES	Date: 28/08/2023

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☒	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate). ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.