

County Lines

SPOT IT to STOP IT

‘Child criminal exploitation’ (CCE) what is it? And what are the signs that a child may be at risk?

CCE could be described as any situation where a child receives ‘something’ perhaps designer clothes and trainers, money, affection or gifts, in return for doing ‘something’, perhaps selling, hiding drugs, taking part in gang violence or being forced to work in businesses that are a front for an organised crime group.

‘**County lines**’ involves networks/groups or people from city’s expanding their drug dealing into smaller towns and rural areas, exploiting children to avoid detection themselves. Using a single phone line to supply drugs to customers, and so this phone line becomes a recognised and valuable ‘brand’ and is protected with violence and intimidation.

There are at least 720 county lines across England and Wales, with at least 283 of those lines originating in London, and over half linked to the exploitation of children.

Enforcers focus on children who are particularly vulnerable or at a crisis point in their lives. They are groomed and enticed by members to work within the drugs distribution network, and keep children in their service by enforcing drug debts – frequently inflated or made up – and by threatening family members to ensure their obedience.

SIGNS to look out for

- Persistently going missing
- Gang association
- Change in attitude
- Being stopped in other force areas
- Unexplained wealth, designer clothes and trainers
- Signs of travel (train tickets/cab receipts)