

County Lines and Young People

Message for parents and communities supported



What is County Lines?

County lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas. Any city, town or village could be targeted, and cases have been noted in Cambridgeshire.

“Line” usually refers to the telephone line/number/sim card on which customers can place their order to buy drugs.

How are children involved?

The people with the most control and making the most money won't risk carrying drugs and meeting customers in case this raises suspicions and brings them to the attention of the police. Children are easy to intimidate or bribe, and less likely to be viewed suspiciously by authorities. They are also easy to replace in this “runner” role if they are found out by authorities.

My kid wouldn't do that!

The relationship is likely to begin as one that the child thinks will be positive. The child may be offered an easy, one-off task to earn the money they desire to fit in with friendship groups. They might be approached in person, via a friend or with innocuous-looking social media posts. If the child thinks this person is their friend and offering them an easy way to earn money then they may not consider it serious

enough to overtly tell their grown-up about until they are already in debt and feel trapped.

There are factors such as time in care, exclusion from school or placement in alternative education provision, living in poverty, special educational needs and disabilities that can leave some children more vulnerable to being exploited BUT all children are vulnerable.

So how can I tell?!

Signs that you can be alert to include:

- Having more than one mobile phone, or being unusually anxious about letting it out of their sight or you trying to look at it.
- Unexplained money, clothes or gifts.
- Missing school or college, or going missing from home.
- Uncharacteristic changes in behaviour.
- Using new vocabulary such as “Going country”, “OT”, “Trapping”.

[PACE](#) are a support organisation for parents and guardians of exploited young people and have a wealth of advice on their website and helpline.

For more info see: [County lines | Cambridgeshire Constabulary](#) or email communitysafety@scambs.gov.uk