

**Would you like to  
understand some of the  
Child Criminal  
Exploitation concerns  
police might have in your  
area?**

## What is Child Criminal Exploitation?

If you have received this resource, this does not definitively mean that your child is involved in criminal activity, or that your child has been criminally exploited. However unfortunately, criminal exploitation of young people does exist and in order to protect more young people, it is important that parents and carers are made aware of the signs and indicators and how to get help, should they need it.

Police are able to use a number of powers to try and combat child criminal exploitation, and disrupt county lines activity. This includes the power to stop and search, the power of arrest, the power to make specific orders to disrupt criminal exploitation, amongst other powers. The purpose of this resource is to raise awareness of the issue of child criminal exploitation, in order to help you safeguard your child.

If your child came into contact with police in an area that is known for county lines/drugs activity, or was found in the company of individuals who are known to be associated with drugs, then it is worth thinking about the associated risk to your child of being present in that area or friends with those people.

You should have a conversation with your child about these risks and to come up with an agreed plan between you. But remember that Child Criminal Exploitation is a form of child abuse and child victims are not to blame for their exploitation – the blame lies with the exploiter. It is important to remember that you are not alone in this process, and that support is available for you and your child.

## What is County Lines?

County Lines is a term used to describe organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone 'lines'.

County lines is an issue of real concern; it is a criminal model through which young people tend to be criminally exploited. 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.

A process of grooming is used to entice a child into acts of criminality. This may include promises of something the child needs or wants, such as money, expensive clothes and shoes, power and status, and a sense of belonging.

The act of travelling to different parts of the country moving drugs is sometimes called '*going country*', '*going cunch*' or '*going OT*'. They may be away for days at a time.

However, it is important to remember that Child Criminal Exploitation can also include travel over short distances - within the same town, neighbourhood or even street.

Any time a child is transported from A to B by older people to commit crime which is of benefit to the older person or organised criminal group, this constitutes exploitation and child trafficking.

**It is important to know that you are not alone and not to blame. There are many parents and carers in similar situations and there are things you can do to help protect your child:**

Report your concerns to Children's Social Care. A social worker can help you take steps to protect your child. They will make an assessment based on your concern that your child is at risk of harm from outside of the family.

If you would like more support, go to other professionals who can help: your GP, school, police or a youth worker.

You can report your concerns to the police and say 'I suspect my child is being trafficked for criminal exploitation'.

If your child isn't where they are supposed to be, report them missing straight away on 101. **You do not have to wait 24 hours.**

If your child is picked up in a car, or has train or bus tickets, keep a record of this information to give to the police or social worker

There may be other evidence that your child is being exploited, such as interactions on social media, unexplained money, clothing or gifts, change in behaviour; where possible try to keep a record of this.

**If you are concerned that your child might be being criminally exploited, then be assured that you can speak to the police about this – their job is to protect your child.**

- Speak to your child about what you're worried about.
- Let them know they aren't in trouble – and that you're worried.
- Your child may believe that they are protecting you from harm by their exploiters. Let your child know that you know about the risks and that it is not their responsibility to protect you.

To get help, report a suspicion or seek advice, you can call the Modern Slavery Helpline number on **08000 121 700**.

If your child doesn't want to talk to you about their situation, let them know that they can always call ChildLine on **0800 1111**.

If you are concerned that your child is at risk of harm, please call your local social care team, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council> and the **police on 101**. Call **999 in an emergency**.