

What is 'County Lines'? September 2017



Headlines



North West Regional Organised Crime Unit

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26 August 2016 | Lancashire

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19 April 2017 at 9:00pm

Mother describes agony of watching her child, 14, being groomed by drug dealers

Children 'Trafficked' Around UK By Drug Dealers

Sky News speaks to one ex-gang member who admits sending up to 10 vulnerable young people a year into small towns across Britain.

21:25, UK
Wednesday 14 January 2015

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29 September 2016 at 5:02pm

'Going country': ITV News reveals scale of children being exploited and sent around Britain to carry drugs

ALLEGRA STRATTON NATIONAL EDITOR

Reconstruction

Drugs gang jailed for 27 years after class A drugs trafficked into South Cumbria

PUBLISHED: August 10, 2016 07:00 LAST UPDATED: August 10, 2016 08:04

Shrewsbury murder: Mystery surrounds why Liverpool boy stabbed to death was in the town

Mystery surrounds why a 16-year-old boy from Liverpool was in Shrewsbury, where he was stabbed to death.

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Drug gangs 'extending out of cities', report warns

12 August 2015 | UK

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THINKSTOCK

What is 'County Lines' ?



North West Regional Organised Crime Unit

County Lines is the term used by police and law enforcement to commonly describe the approach taken by gangs and criminal networks originating from urban areas, who travel to locations such as county or coastal towns to sell class A drugs. Gangs typically use children and vulnerable people to deliver drugs to customers and this often involves deception, intimidation, violence, debt bondage and/or grooming. The County Lines business model is linked by a marketed mobile phone line, known as the 'line', through which users phone for specific drugs to be supplied.

Traditionally the 'line' is kept away from the area where the drugs are sold and a relay system is used to contact those acting as dealers in the county location. Gang members travel between the urban and county locations on a regular basis to deliver drugs and collect cash.

The use of a local property which is commonly occupied by a vulnerable person is used as a base for the group's activities. The acquisition of the property is usually undertaken by force or coercion and is known as 'cuckooing'. Adult drug users (often addicts) and vulnerable females are also exploited for their properties or to assist with dealing in the county market.

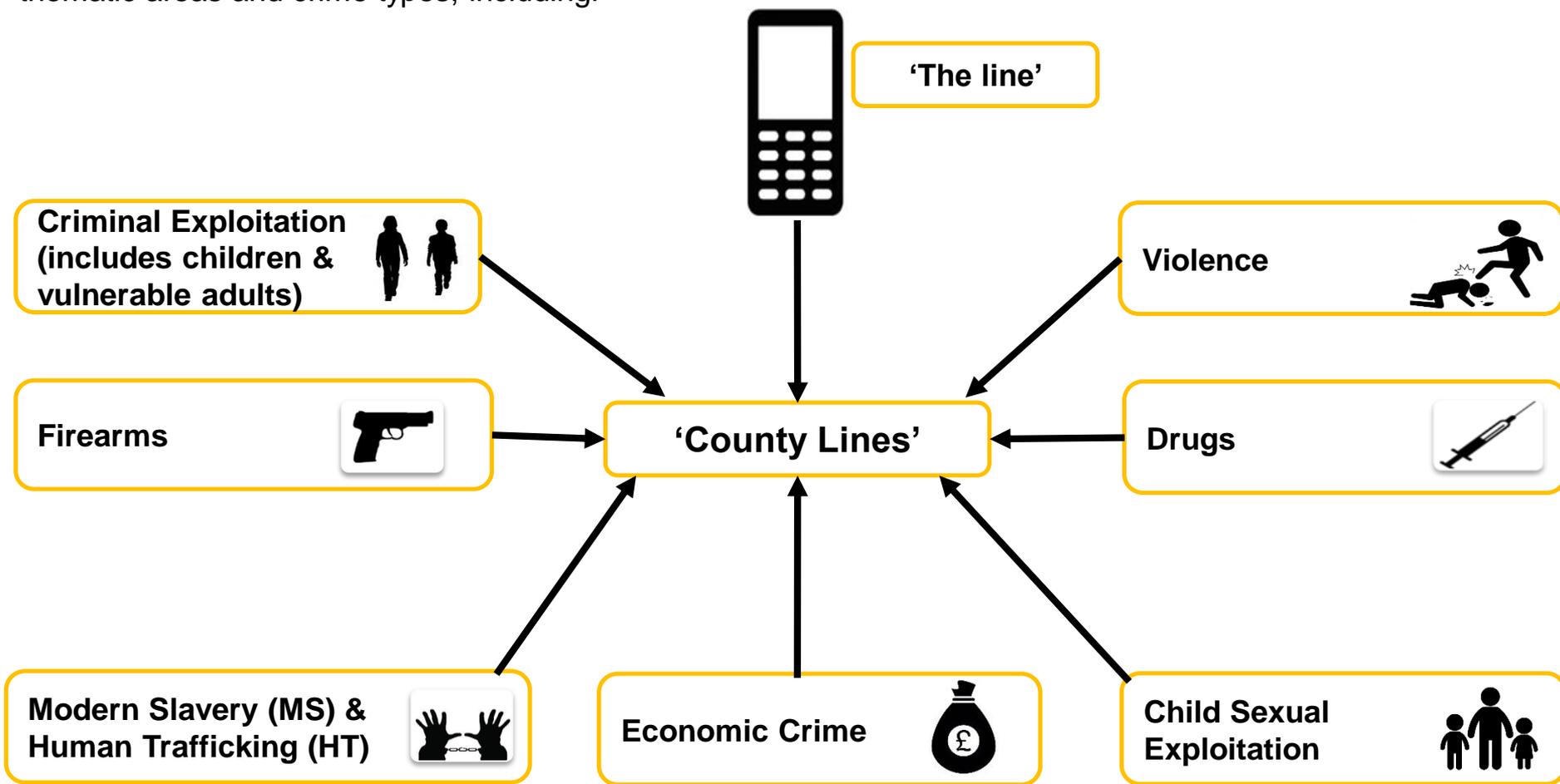
Typically children are exploited to deliver drugs from the urban location to the identified area using intimidation, violence, debt bondage and or grooming. This is commonly conducted by the child or vulnerable adult using rail networks, taxis, hire vehicles or vehicle owned by vulnerable adults.

Groups and OCG's 'recruit' and exploit children and teenagers to deal on their behalf in areas where there is little or no intelligence known on them and this may/ would not draw attention to Police. Children may be seen as easily controlled and a relatively inexpensive resource. Commonly, the children, fall into some form of debt bondage by the group and this can lead to violence and assaults committed on them.



Features of 'County Lines'

'County Lines' is not solely a drugs issue as it cross cuts a number of other thematic areas and crime types, including:



Criminal Exploitation



Some of the factors attributable to Criminal Exploitation include:



**Vulnerable adults
(males & females)**

Debt owed

Drug user

Mental Health

Female relationship with gang member may lead to some form of domestic violence

'Cuckooing'

Alcohol issues

Children & teenagers

Mispers

Truancy

Deprived background

Looked after children

Difficulties at home

Debt Bondage

No or limited offending/
intelligence history

Under care of Social Services