



COUNTY LINES

Lesson Package



YOUTH & POLICING
EDUCATION HUB

Lesson Package

COUNTY LINES

SYNOPSIS

'County lines' involves drugs, violence, gangs, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons.

Although it has been in existence for some time, we are only just beginning to understand the extent of the problem. It is estimated that 46,000 children in England are involved in gang activity today, with around 4000 teenagers in London alone being exploited through county lines. County lines represents a significant threat to young people, who make up a large proportion of those involved. In the past these young people have been treated as offenders – a part of the problem. Only recently has it been recognised that many of these young people enter this world of criminality as victims.

In 2017, the Home Office, National Crime Agency, the National Police Chief's Council, the Children's Society and Victim Support, as well as a number of smaller, individual organisations have all released new guidance on approaching the county lines problem as awareness around the issue continues to grow. Recognising young people at risk and intervening early is a key part of the strategy. This resource package is aimed at raising awareness about the county lines problem and helping young people to maintain resilience against becoming involved in it.

OFSTED CRITERIA

The PSHE programme of study is divided into three core themes:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Relationships
- Living in the Wider World.

This lesson plan on COUNTY LINES encompasses the following:

- Theme 1 (Health and Wellbeing): KS2: H4, H5, H17. KS3: H2, H26, H27,
- Theme 2 (Relationships): KS3: R31, R33, R34.
- Theme 3 (Living in the Wider World): KS2: L6,

AIMED AT

Ages 11-15

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS PACKAGE

- Downloadable lesson plan
- Activity supporting materials (downloadable printout)
- Links to videos

OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness about County Lines
- To build resilience against becoming involved in county lines operations
- To recognise the signs that someone may be involved in county lines
- To know how to get help
- To learn about what the police will do.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Computer with projector
- Internet access
- Whiteboard and pens
- A3 paper and pens.

LESSON TIME

Approximately 60 minutes.

PREPARATION TIME

Approximately 30-45 minutes (allow time for familiarisation and printing).

FURTHER INFORMATION

National Crime Agency: County Lines Violence, Exploitation and Drug Supply (National Briefing Report November 2017). Available online:
<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/832-county-lines-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2017/file>

Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in relation to County Lines: A Toolkit for Professionals. (Joint report by the National Police Chief's Council, The Children's Society and Victim Support). Available online:
<https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/Exploitation%20Toolkit.pdf>

Home Office Publication: Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines Guidance (July 2017). Available online:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626770/6_3505_HO_Child_exploitation_FINAL_web_2_.pdf

Lesson plan

Written by Youth Project Co-ordinator, Kate Blackburn.

INTRODUCTION (2-3 minutes)

SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Cover the rules which normally apply in your educational setting, which should include:

- Let other people talk and listen without interrupting
- Be respectful
- Do not use bad language and try to use language that won't offend or upset anyone
- Comment on what was said, not who said it
- Avoid sharing your own experiences
- Never share your friends' personal experiences
- Don't ask personal questions
- Try not to judge others
- Explain to students that if they are affected by anything talked about today, please speak with the class teacher.

DISCLOSURE OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Any information shared will remain confidential unless any person has been highlighted as at risk and action needs to be taken.

EXPLAIN THE OBJECTIVES

Explain the objectives and encourage participation from the students present.

- To raise awareness about County Lines
- To build resilience against becoming involved in county lines operations
- To recognise the signs that someone may be involved in county lines
- To know how to get help
- To learn about what the police will do.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GANGS ALREADY? (2-3 minutes)

Ask the class what they understand already about 'county lines' and organised crime groups (write this on a whiteboard).

Tell the class that gangs have been part of our history for more than 2000 years. Back in the ancient Roman world, politician Marcus Cicero (who was born around 100 years BC) complained about gangs on the streets of Rome. They are nothing new!

Ask the class (via a show of hands) what historic gangs they are aware of. The following may be included:

- 1873-1950s: The Forty Elephants. This was a notorious all-female shoplifting gang based in London but operating all over the country. They wore specially modified clothes to conceal valuable items.
- Late 1800s to 1930s – Peaky Blinders (now well-known following the hit TV series). This gang waged street warfare with other gangs. Originally it started as disorganised street crime (eg robbery) but eventually became properly organised and progressed to gangs seizing land and running protection rackets and large-scale frauds/smuggling/bookmaking operations. Their name is believed to come from the practice of sewing razor blades into the peaks of their caps and using them as weapons (causing blindness either by slashing the eyes or through blood from facial slashes running into the eyes). However, this has not been proven and may come from the Birmingham slang of 'blinder' simply meaning looking fantastic (a certain type of peaked cap was highly fashionable).

No one really knows, but it's estimated that 46,000 children in England are involved in gang activity today, with around 4000 teenagers in London alone being exploited through county lines.

Historically, gangs have had territories they protect, but county lines are based on a market with a customer base. City-based gangs supply drugs to areas outside the cities using dedicated mobile phone lines (this is known as the county line). This is usually heroin and cocaine but can also include amphetamines and cannabis. County lines is not a single-issue problem. It involves drugs, violence, gangs, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons;

ACTIVITY 1 (10 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups and give each group a sheet of A3 paper and a copy of the downloadable 'Activity 1 Printouts' sheet. Ask each group to divide their sheet into three columns with the following headings:

- Drug Activities
- Gang Type/Structure
- Street Violence.

Tell the class you want them to place the printouts where they think they should go under each heading as you talk them through the following points. Try to get the class to offer their thoughts before giving them the answers below.

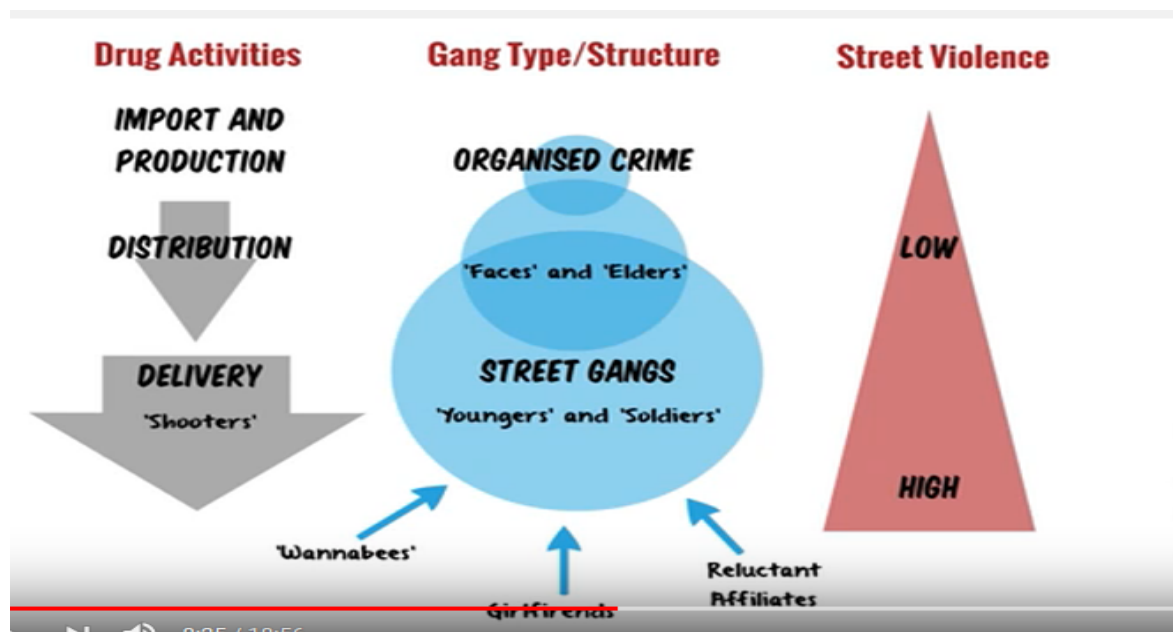
DRUG ACTIVITIES

- **Import and production:** Manufacturing the drugs or importing them from abroad. This is typically done by organised gangs.
- **Distribution:** Those at the centre of the organised gang will divide up the drugs and send them out to those at the top of each local supply chain, who in turn direct them down to street level.
- **Delivery:** The passing of drugs from those lower down in the supply chain to the end user.

GANG TYPE/STRUCTURE

- **Organised Crime:** A gang that has a structure (a hierarchy) and a purpose. It will be organised like a business, but one that operates outside the law. Those at the top often have access to significant amounts of money and have a lot of power over those below them.
- **Faces and Elders:** These are middle-ranking gang members. They are the buffer between those at the top and those on the street and could be disposed off if required. Those lower down in the gang will often look up to and be intimidated by the elders. They often use violence.
- **Street gangs:** These are the people at the bottom of the gang structure, on the street, although there may be a hierarchy here too. Soldiers and Youngers are recruited and controlled to sell drugs. Wannabes may have aspirations to climb up higher in the gang. They may want what they see as the glamour or sense of belonging that comes with being in a gang or they may believe that this is the only way they can earn money or gain the drugs they need. Others may be forced/coerced (so-called reluctant affiliates) or become involved because their boyfriend/girlfriend is.

The end result should look similar to below:



VIDEO 'TRAPPED' (12 MINUTES)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLhGpS1f-F0> (8 minutes, 28 seconds).

This video shows how Jake, a teenager, gets caught up in a county lines operation after becoming financially desperate. His experience ends up affecting the whole family and shows how involvement can spiral out of control.

- Stop the video at 1.54 minutes in, and ask the group:
Is this something you think could happen to you?

The purpose of this question is to challenge social norms and encourage empathy. The circumstances within the clip so far suggest that only those who are experiencing financial difficulties are vulnerable to county lines. Make the point that people can join gangs for all sorts of reasons, e.g. 'street cred' or wanting to belong to something.

- Now play the rest of the video

After the video ask the class for their initial thoughts. Also point out that while the film is set at a boxing club to start with, this doesn't mean boxing clubs are associated with county lines and they can be very positive places.

ACTIVITY 2: WORKSHEETS AND FILM DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Split the class into groups and assign them a character from the film (if there is a bigger class double up the characters):

- Mum
- Jake
- Girlfriend

Give each group a Character Worksheet, which contains the questions below in relation to their character. Ask them to answer the questions.

- Using the diagram from Activity 1, what is this character's association to the gang?
- What were the reasons they became involved?
- What are the consequences of their actions? (including the emotional consequences)
- Who can protect them?
- What crimes have they committed?
- Could they be of interest to the police?

There is a 'Teacher's Copy' of each character's worksheet which contains guidance for each answer.

Once each group has completed their worksheet, discuss the answers as a class. Reiterate that the risks for runners, soldiers and reluctant affiliates like Jake, Katelin and Julie is very high, while those at the top make all the money. However, point out that while runners are being recruited (through appeal rather than through force), they may be offered phones, clothing or other valuable items to draw them in and make them feel they belong to the gang. This will then be considered a 'debt' they owe, which keeps them where they are.

CUCKOOING AND HOTELS (2 minutes)

Tell the class that although we don't see this in the film, sometimes drugs may be sold from the homes of vulnerable people or stored at their houses. This is called 'cuckooing'.

Ask the class who they think might be vulnerable to this (show of hands or shouted out comments)

Vulnerable people might include adults with learning difficulties, older teenagers or adults who live alone and have no family/social support structure, particularly if they have financial difficulties or are drug/alcohol abusers. Someone who ends up being cuckooed, or who allows their house to be used to sell drugs, could find themselves being made homeless if the police close the premise or they are evicted. The local authority would have no obligation to rehouse them if they become homeless as a result of criminal activity.

Now inform the class that police have got much better at recognising when cuckooing is taking place. As a result, some gangs now use hotel rooms/suites booked for short stays. A runner may be forced to stay in a hotel with a quantity of drugs and buyers will attend over a few days until the drugs are all sold. Only then will the young person be allowed to leave the hotel.

THE LAW (3 minutes)

Give a quick overview to the class about the following:

- Possessing or selling drugs is a crime under the Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971. Selling (referred to as supply) carries harsher penalties and can result in imprisonment.
- Some gang members, or those worried about gang pressures, end up carrying weapons to protect themselves. Getting caught with a knife or weapon is also an offence under the Criminal Justice Act of 1988 and the Prevention of Crime Act of 1953. Criminal proceedings can vary from a locally agreed low-level resolution agreed out of court, which doesn't result in a formal criminal record, right up to imprisonment. Knife crimes generally carry higher sentences and usually result in a charge to court. Police and prosecutors will make decisions depending on the age of the person carrying the weapon and the circumstances.
- Police have recognised that many young people drawn into gang association are very vulnerable and should be treated as victims. Sometimes those victims will have committed an offence that needs dealing with as well, but the police focus has now changed to try to unwilling victims caught up in gang membership.
- One of laws used to prosecute those who exploit young people in his way is the Modern Slavery Act of 2015. Anyone forced into selling drugs, whether locally or by being transported to other areas, is a victim of slavery and trafficking. They can be supported through a process called the National Referral Mechanism, which many public authorities (e.g. police and local authorities) and charitable organisations (e.g. Barnados) can refer into. This gives the victim a legally protected period during which they can receive advice about what to do next. For anyone particularly vulnerable, such as teenagers, additional help may be available. The criminal penalties for those convicted of offences under the Modern Slavery Act are severe.
- Criminal convictions can result in you being prevented from carrying out certain types of jobs or visiting certain countries.

RECOGNISING RISK (7 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and give them a sheet of A3 paper each. Based on what the class have seen in the video and learned from their discussion, give them five minutes in their groups to make a list of things they think might be a sign that someone is being used in this way. At the end of the 5 minutes, compare the charts. Try to ensure the following are covered:

- Going missing/unexplained absences from home/school etc
- Being found in areas away from home
- Being found with drugs/using more drugs themselves
- Being secretive about who they are talking to/where they are going
- Unexplained money or goods (e.g. phones, clothes, jewellery)
- Unexplained injuries
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

GETTING HELP & FINDING OUT MORE (2 minutes)

Ask the class who they could turn to for help and ensure you cover the following:

- Police – the police have a duty to protect young people and while they have to investigate and deal with crime, safeguarding is always the top priority. They can refer young people caught up in gangs to other sources of help and support.
- Local councils can also refer into the National Referral Mechanism.
- A number of other authorities can help and some charities, such as Barnardos
- You can also look at Fearless <https://www.fearless.org/en> (Crimestoppers Youth version). Fearless provides non-judgemental advice and is anonymous. It is aimed at ages 11 to under 24 years. Specific information on County Lines at: <https://www.fearless.org/en/campaigns/county-lines> this contains an explanation of how county lines work, definitions and how to get help.

FINISH (2 minutes)

- Ask if there are any questions
- Ask for a show of hands if students feel confident that understand the various ways that people may end up becoming associated with gangs
- Remind students that if they've been affected by anything they heard or want to discuss further, they can see you after the lesson or talk to another trusted adult.