



## County Lines – information for parents and carers

The following information is being provided to help inform parents and carers about a current safeguarding concern and enable them to support their children as needed.

### What is county lines?

County lines is the name given to drug dealing where gangs and organised criminal groups (OCGs) supply illegal drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas, and deal those drugs locally using mobile phones or 'deal lines'. They often exploit vulnerable people, including children and those with mental health or addiction issues, by recruiting them to move and store illegal drugs and money, often using coercion and intimidation.

### Why is it important to be aware of county lines?

County lines is a national problem and Surrey is no exception. Across the county, Surrey Police has dismantled almost 60 county lines in the last year. Children (often teenagers, but sometimes younger) who are targeted by county lines often feel trapped, powerless to leave and unable to speak out to a trusted adult and can find themselves the victims of physical and sexual assault.

### How can I help to protect my child?

- Have open conversations with them and enable them to foster positive relationships with trusted adults, so they feel there is someone they could talk to, if needed.
- Make sure they are always supervised by a trusted adult.
- As they become more independent, speak to them about setting clear boundaries around who they socialise with, where they go, and when they should return home.
- Consider at what age your child should have a phone and/or access to social media. Criminal gangs frequently use social media to recruit and control children. Before getting your child a phone, we'd always encourage a discussion with them around any age-appropriate parental controls – if a teen were to find out afterwards that you were checking their messages, it could break their trust.
- Know the signs to look out for and where to seek help. By sharing your concerns, it is possible to find a way out.

### Where can I find out more?

Further useful information and advice can be found at - [What is county lines and child criminal exploitation? - Missing People](#)

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police via **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns. For further guidance see - [Criminal exploitation and gangs | NSPCC](#) and the [Surrey Police](#) website.

To report information anonymously, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.