



CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION
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SAFETY PLANNING

How does the County Lines model work?

- 1** CL operate multiple lines at any one time. This allows the business model to be flexible and gives resilience to the gang or OCN, as when they have a line taken out by law enforcement, they have other lines operating and generating profits. They can also move 'workers' between lines.
- 2** 'Cryptocurrency' has emerged for moving criminal proceeds in a less traceable method by some county lines. This is then used for trading and other illicit purposes (i.e. Bitcoins). This is increasingly being seen in CL activity.
- 3** More recently, local 'hubs' seem to be being established, recruiting more local children and adults to distribute drugs that are supplied either by a runner from the export area or, increasingly, by an experienced child from the local area being sent on a day trip for re-supply ("re-load").
- 4** This approach appears to be positive for the line owner as supply can be achieved in a day which avoids the potential trigger of children going missing overnight.
- 5** Children could be missing for just a few hours at a time by being 'absent' without obvious cause for concern. It is important that parent/carers are alert to where their children are when they are outside of the home.
- 6** It is important to note that many adults are also exploited as part of this model, not just children.
- 7** One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (for example, carrying drugs in return for something). Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible rewards (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).



PRINCIPLES AND SKILLS

**What is needed to work directly with an
Individual who is at risk or is being exploited**

Principles & Skills Needed

What issues do your staff need to hold in mind?

- 1** All of this work is based on strong and supportive relationships
- 2** When undertaking safety planning, consider the age and maturity of the individual. Remember all those under 18 years old are children first and foremost and they should not be treated as mini adults. You'll also need to consider issues of diversity (such as neurodiversity, cognitive disabilities, speech and language, race and culture).
- 3** Hold trauma and trauma responses in mind.
- 4** Keep in regular contact - home visits, text messages, calls - be persistent and consistent in your approach, even if you do not get a response.
- 4** Be mindful the initial account may not be accurate or be missing important detail. This may be due to a number of reasons (including trauma) but forming a trusting relationship with the person is likely to be helpful for them.
- 5** Research suggests that children who are 15-17 years old start to disengage with statutory services due to the way they can be seen - 'your lifestyle choices' and 'you knew the risks' etc. We would never use this language when talking about victims of domestic or sexual abuse, nor should we with criminal exploitation.
- 6** If someone is in the initial stages of recruitment, explain the process of what may happen. Help them think through the risks and consequences (including different methods that could be used to exploit them, such as control or affection).
- 7** It is important to validate what someone says. Don't dismiss it. Listen to understand.
- 8** Risk constantly changes, it is not fixed, and a good assessment and plan will constantly review this.
- 9** Those involved will fluctuate from being willing to wanting to leave - Reachable, Teachable Moments are key points for intervention. These are the moments that can spur someone on to get out of CL activity. Fear and pain generally motivate people at this time - for example, being arrested, threats made to their family, exposure to violence and debt are all times that someone may think about leaving. We need to be persistent around these times, offering emotional and practical support.

- 10** Gangs and Organised Crime Networks generally will follow the path of least resistance - effective agency attention on a person or area can lead to them moving on. The earlier this is achieved, the greater likelihood of success.
- 11** School exclusions, bereavement, and family problems are all times when a person is additionally vulnerable to an exploiter trying to recruit them. Be extra vigilant around these times.
- 12** Help the person to keep busy and occupied. If someone has something to do, they are less likely to be available for exploitation. We need to create safe, strong safety nets around our vulnerable members of society.
- 13** Healthy relationship work is crucial all the way through your intervention.
- 14** Help victims to connect with others who are not involved in CLN. This is important in terms of shifting their identity and creating safety.
- 15** It is important to not to overlook the mental health and wellbeing of the exploited person. This can sometimes happen if we are seeing concerning behaviours. For example, aggression, weapon carrying.

“Teach children to safeguard themselves first and then contact the police (999) if they are in imminent danger”

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DR KATE BUDGE

TRAUMA AND CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

SAFETY PLANNING

