

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS SAFE

What should I do if I'm worried?

It might seem scary, but it's important to tell someone if you're worried about yourself or a friend. Talk to a trusted adult, whether this be a parent, family member, carer or youth worker.

- Tell a trusted adult, your parents, a family member or carer
- Report any concerns using Fearless, a non-judgmental service for young people. Visit www.fearless.org/give-info
- Speak to Childline, you can contact them in a number of ways, using the 1-2-1 counsellor chat, emailing or calling their switchboard on 0800 1111 free of charge. Visit www.childline.org.uk

Remember that what you tell them may be passed onto other people if they feel you or anyone else is at risk. If you or your friend are at immediate risk, call **999**.



CLUE UP ON COUNTY LINES

FORTRESS
Shielding your community from drug-related harm

KEEPING YOU SAFE

What is county lines?

County lines is used to describe criminal gangs grooming and exploiting young people or vulnerable adults to carry and sell drugs from borough to borough and across county boundaries, using dedicated phone lines with minimal risk of detection.

Exploitation can happen to any young person and they often don't realise they are being exploited.

How does this affect me?

Criminal gangs exploit young people because they are easier to manipulate and draw into the gang lifestyle.

It's not always easy to spot exploitation, so it's important that you clue up on county lines and can protect yourself and your friends.

County boundaries is a tactic used by gangs to sell drugs without increasing their risk of detection.



What's grooming?

Criminal gangs form relationships with young people, like you. They want you to think they are a friend, boyfriend or girlfriend, earning your trust with gifts like clothes, money, alcohol or drugs. They will test your trustworthiness by paying you to store and hide drugs or other items.

You might feel special and important, but once they have your trust they will start asking you to take part in serious criminal activities, like selling drugs across county borders. If you refuse they will become aggressive, threatening violence against you or your family, so you feel like you have no choice but to do what they ask.

As a result, you carry on working for them, becoming indebted and unable to leave the criminal lifestyle.



Signs of grooming

- Has an unexplained amount of money and clothes
- Has multiple phones and receives an excessive amount of texts or calls
- Talks about new relationships or friendships with older individuals
- Frequent missing episodes from school or your usual hangouts
- Looking messy or untidy on return from missing episodes
- Mention of going to parties, people's houses, hotels with unfamiliar people
- Signs of injuries from either self-harm or physical assault
- Show you drugs or weapons they are stashing
- Changes in behaviour, becoming more hostile, aggressive or secretive and withdrawn.

It's important to take note of any changes in your friend's behaviour and tell a responsible, trusted adult.