

Regional Focus Week - County Lines

This week West Mercia's regional focus is on County Lines in company with West Midlands Police. This letter is designed to make professionals, parents/guardians aware of possible signs of a child being exploited.

County Lines is the term used to describe Organised Crime Gangs (OCG'S) who are based in more urban areas such as London, Birmingham and have criminal networks involved in transporting illegal drugs to smaller counties such as Worcestershire.

The gangs involved will heavily rely on young people, the vulnerable and those with addictions to run their lines which has a devastating impact on those involved and within the community.

County lines takes its name from the phone lines used by OCG'S. The phone line is very valuable to the gang as it's a way of communicating between towns. The activity itself is highly associated with violence, exploitation and organised crime.

As you may already know young people don't always realise or understand that they are a victim of crime, which is why it's really important we understand what county lines is and the sign's to look out for.

What are the signs?

The key signs to look out for in a young person who maybe being exploited may include;

- Persistently going missing/truancy, exclusion, disengagement from school
- Decline in school results and performance
- Isolation from peers
- Having more clothes, mobile phones, or cash than normal
- Frequently going missing from home
- Using nicknames to refer to other people
- Speaking of gang names in the area
- A new boyfriend or girlfriend who may coerce or control the individual
- Changes in the way young people you might know dress
- Unexplained injuries
- Receiving a high volume of text messages/phone calls and being discrete
- Suspicious smell coming from the property
- Windows covered and curtains closed all the time

You can report any suspicious activity or concerns online

<https://www.westmercia.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/> alternatively you can contact 101.

If you wish to report anonymously you can do this by contacting Crime stoppers 0800 555 111 or <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously> your personal information will not be shared with the police and you will be kept anonymous.

Please don't hesitate to contact PCSO Libby HORTON or PCSO Iain SWEATMAN your Local Safer School Officers should you need any further advice.

saferschoolssw@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

