



North Worcestershire **Community Safety Partnership**

County Lines Drug Activity An update on Prevention Strategies

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Introduction - What is County Lines?

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK, is against the law and is a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, street gang activity and knife crime. County lines gangs are highly organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police. Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs (*National Crime agency, 2019*). Young people do most of the work and take the most risk.

Dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines” are used to help facilitate county lines drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned and they are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police. Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs. This may be to a local dealer or drug user, or a dealer or drug user in another county.

Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

- ‘running a line’,
- ‘going OT/out there’
- ‘going country’
- ‘going cunch’.

County Lines - Actions and Interventions

The National Crime Agency - [County Lines - National Crime Agency](#)

Nationally, tackling county lines and the gangs responsible for high levels of violence, exploitation and abuse of vulnerable adults and children is a priority for all UK law enforcement. Collectively law enforcement has been stepping up its response, working to identify and take effective action in areas of the country with the most significant problems. To enhance the law enforcement response further, a multi-agency county lines coordination centre has been established, bringing together officers from the National Crime Agency (NCA), the police and regional organised crime units. Together, they develop the national intelligence picture, prioritise action against the most serious offenders and engage with partners across government including in the health, welfare and education spheres to tackle wider societal issues.

West Mercia Police - County Lines Teams

More locally tackling county line drug activity is led by the West Mercia Police County Lines Teams (CLT). The CLTs lead on the Pursue aspect of a Four-P Plan to **Pursue** offenders, **Prevent** victimisation, **Prepare** agencies and organisations for action and **Protect** communities and neighbourhoods. The CLTs main function is to obtain, submit, receive and review intelligence to target individual drug lines. Their aim is to target the line holders and remove them at the earliest opportunity, whilst causing maximum disruption to the gangs. The information the team receives allows action to be taken, such as executing warrants. Each known County Line Gang is mapped and recorded as an active line. The line will have its own individual plan which contains the actions and disruptions against it.

West Mercia Police - County Lines Team

Each line is allocated to an officer on the CLT to manage and the team then works together to tackle the gangs and yield results. The CLT have a weekly meeting where the lines are assessed and reviewed, and a plan is put in place to target the most high-risk gangs. When targeting these lines, the team aims to bring all associated offenders to justice, close down the county line drug gang and remove class A drugs from the streets of our communities. The team will target not only a traditional county line gangs, but they will also be involved in any significant drugs case, if necessary or be available to offer advice.

Once a line holder is arrested and the phone taken out of circulation a message will go out to all the drug users in the phone to notify them and provide them with drug support agencies for them to contact. This is a new system that is still a work in progress but is steadily improving.

Where children are involved in CL gangs then necessary referrals are made to the National Referral Mechanism, the Police Child Exploitation team and GetSafe. Fortunately, this has not been required in our area to date.

The CLT also work alongside county lines teams from other forces, particularly West Midlands Police, as many county lines in North Worcestershire originate from the West Midlands area.

Neighbourhood Crime Fighting Team (NCFT)

West Mercia Police has launched a new Neighbourhood Crime Fighting Team (NCFT) that went live on 1st October 2023. The team works alongside the CLTs and Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and they are able to get involved and tackle local drugs issues that might not meet the threshold of the county lines team.

County Lines - Weeks of Action

Each year there are two county lines intensification weeks, which usually happen in February and in October. Police intensification weeks are national events and are co-ordinated weeks of focused activity where enforcement and prevention work is completed to address various areas of crime. During county lines intensification week there are multiple joint policing operations with West Midlands Neighbourhood Policing teams and British Transport Police.

[More than 1,600 arrests in week-long crackdown on county lines gangs | Redditch Advertiser](#)

County Lines - Protect, Prevent and Prepare Strands

The Protect, Prevent and Prepare areas of the Four-P plan are generally owned by the local Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) and the Problem-Solving Hubs who will work with partners and schools to raise awareness and provide information about county lines activity. The teams will be involved in partnership work with children and young people to deliver messages around the dangers of drugs and involvement in gangs. The CLT will also get involved in this preventative work using their expertise and experiences in the field, as required. Going forward, they will be able to attend multi-agency forums and provide presentations to give an insight into the work they do, which is often largely unpublished.

Get Safe – Worcestershire's response to Child Exploitation

Get Safe is the name for the multi-agency support and protection for children and young people at risk of Criminal Exploitation in Worcestershire.

Get Safe is a forum of professionals who share information and work together in a coordinated and focused way to tackle these challenging and ever-changing forms of harm and abuse to children.

The Worcestershire partnership includes West Mercia Police, Worcestershire Children First, a range of NHS health services, Education, Youth Justice, Housing, Probation and Early help services and our voluntary sector all working together with district councils and other support agencies.

The Get Safe Partnership is committed to tackling Child Exploitation and supporting victims and their families.

Get Safe stands for

Gangs

Sexual **E**xploitation

Trafficking

Modern Day **S**lavery

Absent or **M**issing

Forced **M**arriage

Criminal **E**xploitation

[Get Safe | Worcestershire County Council](#)

County Lines – Recent Actions and Interventions

Below is a snapshot of the activity that the North Worcestershire county lines team have completed recently. The team is made up of one Detective Sergeant and four Detective Constables. The team work hard to gather intelligence and evidence to secure charges and remand in custody people arrested for offences relating to county lines drug gangs or those involved in significant drugs cases. For example:-

An arrest of a female and the recovery of a significant amount of drugs seized with an estimated value of between £19,000 - £34,000 is currently in court.

EMZ County Line Drugs Gang: The CLT has been successfully pursuing and targeting the EMZ county line drug gang. As a result of their efforts a related vehicle was stopped and the current line holder, was arrested. The next day the line holder was charged with several serious offences including;

- Fail To Stop
- Possession Of Criminal Property – with £1200 cash seized
- Concerned In The Supply Of Heroin and Crack Cocaine
- Possession Of Offensive Weapon – following the machete found in the car

The line holder was remanded in custody by the Court, ensuring he is removed from the streets and disrupting his criminal activities.

County Lines – Recent Actions and Interventions

ENZO County Line Drug Gang - The CLT had another great result in the arrest and Remand in Custody of the Enzo county line holder. He was charged with being Concerned In The Supply of Heroin, Concerned In The Supply of Crack and Concerned In The Supply of Cannabis.

The Neighbourhood Crime Fighting Team (NCFT) stop checked two males in Kidderminster - One male arrested for possession of an offensive weapon – Charged.

Second male arrested for Possession with Intent to Supply (PWITS) – Class A 10 wraps – Released Under Investigation (RUI)

The NCFT arrested male with an outstanding warrant at an address in Redditch. He was linked to a local county line gang and the arrest was because of a scheduled check on a cuckooing address. This evidences the importance of these follow up visits to high-risk addresses and for thorough safety checks to be completed. The arrest resulted in a significant disruption of one of the main CL lines in the area and sends out a clear message to the community that people who take over the addresses of vulnerable people to deal drugs, are being identified and dealt with.

Another arrest of a female who was stop searched in an area of Redditch. The female was linked to a Redditch county line and was charged with Possession of Class A. 5 x Wraps of Crack Cocaine £50.00 and 1 x wrap Heroin £10.00 – RUI and another great disruption to an active county line.

County Lines – Recent Actions and Interventions

The NCFT arrested a male for Possession with intent to supply (PWITS) and Theft from motor vehicle (TFMV) and he was charged with TFMV. The male is a known vehicle crime offender resulting in a good outcome for reducing both drug and vehicle crime.

An arrest by SNT officers after they observed two males in a VW Scirocco counting cash in an area of Redditch. When approached the offenders rammed the Police vehicle and a member of the public's vehicle and made off on foot. The driver was arrested for Possession with intent to supply (PWITS), Dangerous Driving, Fail to Stop and Driving Under the influence drugs. The males are potentially linked to county line drug gang activity as the vehicle was searched and approximately £3,000 Class A drugs Heroin and Crack were recovered.

A stop and search of suspect was conducted after a drug deal in Black Lexus had been observed – a negative result but linked to county lines activity

Cuckooing address checks continue, working in partnership with the local Redditch Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT)

Cross border operations are regularly carried out with Redditch SNTs, South Birmingham SNTs and British Transport Police (BTP) officers.

Press releases have been sent out for the majority of the above, for example :-

[Redditch man charged with County Lines drugs offence | Redditch Advertiser](#)

County Lines - If you have a concern

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should always share your concerns. You can:-

- Contact the police.
- Contact Worcestershire Children First, local child protection services. Their contact details are : -
Family Front Door
Tel: 01905 822 666
Mon – Thurs 9.00am to 5.00pm and Fri 9.00am to 4.30pm
Out of Hours Assistance – Tel: 01905 768 020
- Contact the NSPCC Helpline on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.

When a child at risk of county lines is identified The local authority of the area the child comes from is responsible for the child's welfare, but it is also good practice for agencies to contact the local authority in the area where the child is found. They may need to be a part of the multi-agency response and there may be other children or vulnerable adults at risk.

For more information - [What Is County Lines? | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines/)