

Dear parents, carers and guardians,

I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of Staffordshire Police, to draw your attention to County Lines and the type of activity and behaviours often associated with it.

County Lines is the term used to describe the criminal activity involved in the exploitation of young and vulnerable people and the distribution of drugs within the county and beyond. Organised crime gangs (OCGs) and other criminal nominals who run the "drug lines", often target and manipulate young and vulnerable people into becoming "drugs runners" for them and ask them to store, move and sell drugs on, in return for gifts, money and friendship.

However, the reality is different. The reality is that these young and vulnerable people are being exploited and are getting involved in criminal activity. More often than not, OCGs will blackmail, intimidate and coerce people and use threats of violence.

We are committed to tackling this criminal activity and are working with partners up and down the county to tackle this issue. Our aim is to:

- Raise awareness of County Lines and the signs that may indicate that someone is involved in County Lines
- Identify those who may be at risk of criminality and divert them away in a timely manner before they become involved
- Arrest those linked to criminal gangs and involved in the exploitation of people and the criminal behaviour of drug distribution

Therefore, we are asking for education establishments as well as parents, carers and guardians to help identify anyone who may be at risk so they can get support.

There are a number of signs to look for that may indicate someone is being manipulated and exploited by OCGs and have become involved in County Lines. These include:

- Repeatedly going missing from school or home and being found in other areas
- Decline in school or work performance
- Having money, new clothes or expensive items and they can't explain how they paid for them
- Having a new or additional mobile phone(s) given to them by others
- Getting more texts or phone calls than usual and being secretive about who they're speaking to
- Significant changes in emotional or physical well-being
- Having injuries that they can't explain how they received them

There is no one school in the county that is more or less affected by this behaviour and we are aware that the overwhelming majority of young and vulnerable people will never be affected by this issue. However, it is important to have conversations about County Lines which will help us collectively make a difference.

By working together, we can identify and protect victims and potential victims and hold those responsible to account.

Support is available for those who may be involved in County Lines from us and from some of our partner agencies, who's details can be found on our website.

<https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/countylines>. You can also call us on 101 for advice or if it's an emergency, dial 999. Alternatively, you can contact us via LiveChat on our website.

There is also additional information on the Fearless website: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/more-info/crime-types-explained/county-lines>. Fearless is part of Crimestoppers and is a place for young and vulnerable people to make anonymous reports. They can call 0800 555 111 or go online: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/give-information-anonymously>

Thank you for your support.

Best wishes,



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Head of Major & Organised Crime, Staffordshire Police



Councillor David Williams
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Resilience



Councillor Desiree Elliott
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