

# COUNTY LINES

## Trafficking, Exploitation and Serious Offending



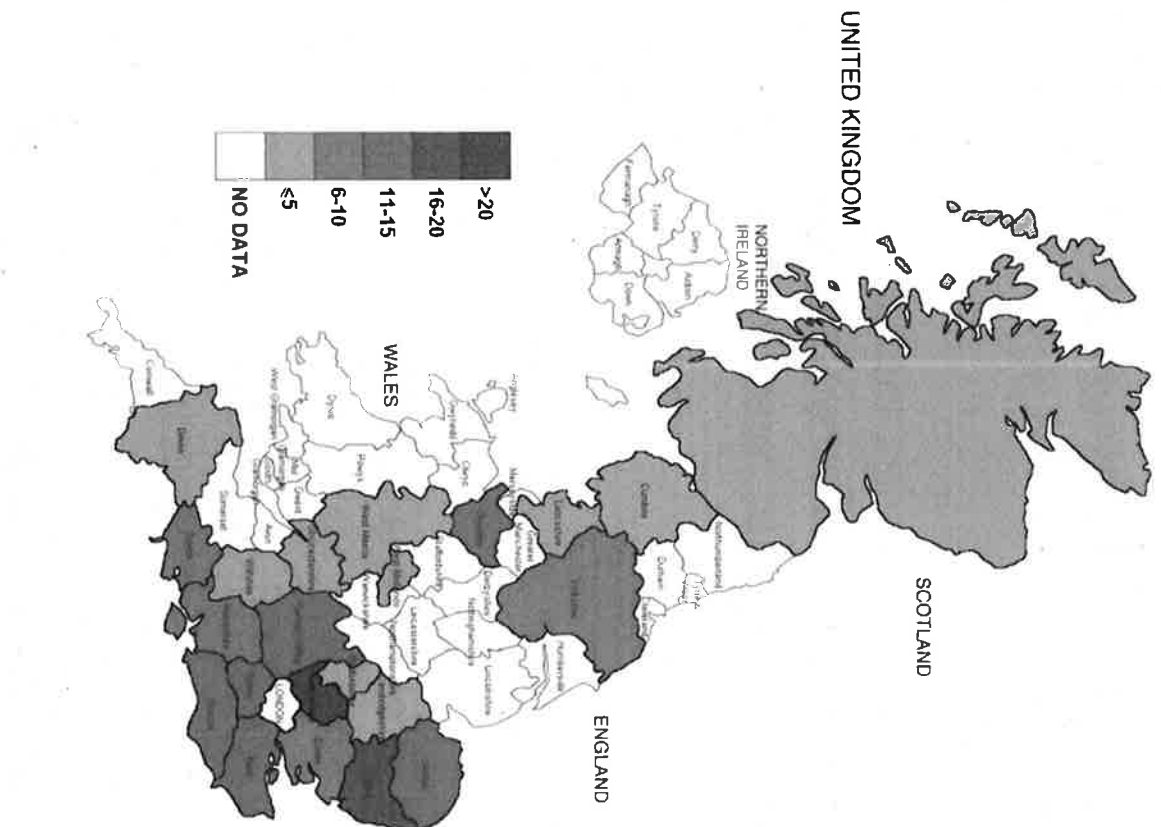
Striving for excellence



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- 'County lines' is the term used to describe a person, or more frequently, a group from an urban area crossing one or more police force boundaries to a more rural or county force, setting up a secure base to conduct day to day drug dealing.
- The 'County Lines' issue largely relates to the supply of heroin and crack cocaine. Other drugs such as cocaine, MDMA, amphetamine and cannabis are also mentioned but in smaller numbers.
- Site Selection is based on ease of establishing a new market and potential familial links.
- Establishment of a county line is achieved through exploitation of both vulnerable people and drug addicts in the local area.



- Most home areas for groups, (London, Liverpool, Manchester) do not suffer from an influx of any other groups.
- It is the surrounding areas where most 'County Lines' activity is recorded, with groups establishing the lines in directly neighbouring counties.
- Hertfordshire (23), Suffolk (19), Kent (14) and Thames Valley (14) were impacted by the largest number of groups. In almost all of these cases the groups were London-based.
- The British Transport Police experienced the most groups across the UK, recording 39 in their findings.

# Method

- Once established junior members (Younger's) are encouraged to run local county lines.
- The 'younger's' are male or female aged 14 -17.
- Younger's are 'promised' around £50 per day to operate a phone line 24hrs.
- Rail, hire cars, taxis and local users vehicles are main transportation methods. Most recently evidence of these are found on their smartphone i.e. Uber.
- Violence is used in establishing the county line, securing the county line and removing competition.
- Fluid and cost effective structure with a succession plan.

# Identifying the Signs

## Safeguarding points to look for:

- Exploitation of vulnerable children
- Missing persons
- Exploitation of local drug users
- The use of a "Trap House"/'Cuckooing' within a local community
- Exploitation of vulnerable people male/females who own/rent a property. i.e drug users, people with mental health issues or O.A.P's
- One of the key features of a county line is the **unrelenting** recruitment, coercion and exploitation of young and vulnerable person

# Enfield – Key Issues

## **Gangs**

- ❖ Four main Enfield based identifiable “gangs” with close allegiances with 4 other Haringey based gangs. 104 young people have been discussed at the Gangs Partnership Group (GPG) since January 2017, 23 were new referrals and 11 have been removed due to risk being minimised

## **Missing**

- ❖ Between January – September 2017, 100 young people in Enfield have been reported missing.

## **County Lines:**

- ❖ 70 recorded missing episodes regarding 32 young people and of the 100 young people reported missing only 13 out of the 100 could be cross referenced.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention [CSEEP]:**

- ❖ Since April there have been 30 cases that have been assessed as Category 2 and above, that have been referred to the CSEP team. Of the 30, 15 of the young people have been discussed at MASE meetings are known to the Youth Offending Unit (YOU). Screenings in the YOU have been amended so that any young person believed to be involved with County Lines is also now being screened using the CSE Tool.

# Multi-Agency Response

This is a complex issue and requires a sophisticated response, no one agency has the solution, partnership is key.

## **Strategic Meetings:**

- London Safeguarding Board
- Enfield Safeguarding Children's Board [ESCB]
- Safer Stronger Communities Board [SSCB]
- Enfield Targeted Youth Engagement Board [ETYE]
- Operational Management Group (OMG)
- Vulnerable Young People Group [VYPG - ESCB subcommittee] which focuses on all issues/challenges for VYP
- Members Vulnerable Young People Group [MVYPG]. Elected members group focussing on all areas of vulnerability.

## **Operational Meetings:**

- Gang Partnership Group [GPG]
- Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation [MASE]
- Missing Children Risk Management Group [MCRMG]
- YOU lead Multi Agency meeting regarding County Lines

## **Specialist Response**

- Police
- Multi-agency Youth Offending Unit [Specialist workers within this].
- St Christopher's Young Runaways Service
- Compass -Substance Misuse Team
- Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention [CSEP] Team
- St Giles Gangs exit programme;
- Child Vulnerability, Risk and Exploitation Prevention Co-Ordinator
- Empower - Girls and Gangs

# Diversionsary Activity

- Community Safety Unit [CSU] targeted Police and Youth Work in and around local parks known for drugs/gangs and CSE issues.
- Creation of specialist posts at YOU e.g. the Child Vulnerability and Exploitation Worker co-located with CSU
- Information for parents
- Workshops with young people and their parents facilitated by the YOU, Pupil Referral Unit and Police Gangs Unit.
- A 'Police Purchase Test' operation with local hotels with regards to CSE – Training Workshop provided to hotel staff
- Hospital Youth work based in North Mid Hospital
- Half day YOU/Police/ESCB conference regarding trafficking/Modern slavery
- Social Work Conference focussed on vulnerable adolescents
- Centralisation of intelligence sharing pathways
- St Giles Gangs exit programme
- Monthly cross border gangs information sharing and response meetings with Haringey
- Targeted work around music videos inciting violence
- Chelsea's Choice Theatre Company
- YOU and Fair Access Panel
- E-cins system
- YOU clients developing assessment and intervention packages for YOU staff to use with other young people.
- Exploratory work regarding the development of an enhanced MISPEERS service
- Partnership Against Child Trafficking (PACT) Project. Home Office Funded Project focusing on helping Enfield to improve response to Trafficking and Exploitation.



# Measuring the Impact

- YOU multi-agency county lines meeting - Increased awareness amongst key agencies and has identified more effective working collaborations and information sharing pathways
- YOU Data, especially re offending tracker – helping to target and work with those most at risk.
- Summer Holiday Workshop – Excellent attendance by young people and parents, very positive feedback, all felt information was educative and very useful. PRU head teacher very pleased with the outcome.
- Targeted Police Community Safety and Youth Work – Led to several arrests and increased intelligence. Ongoing monitoring and information sharing to agencies involved with these particular young people.
- Hospital Youth Work – Over 600 referrals in last 3 years with a 100% contact rate and a 15% engagement rate – this is the most hard to reach client group
- Multi-agency training - Agencies are now more aware of signs of potential county lines involvement and other exploitation and the YOU Child Vulnerability, Risk Exploitation Prevention Co-ordinator has had an increase in intel requests as a result. Partners now keen to identify links to County Lines or exploitation.
- YOU and Fair access – YOU now have a named contact in each school, improved information sharing re monitoring regular truancies; risky behaviours, attainment; associates and needs etc.
- Music Videos – Gangs unit have carried out home visits to all young people identified in the videos. Significant drop in the amount of videos being created.
- MCMRG – Previously the focus was on Missing from education but now an increase in referrals to discuss young people involved in County Lines
- YOU – Revised referral guidance requires all young people involved in County Links or having missing episodes to carry out the CSE SCREENING tool.
- There have been 10 referrals made to the National Referral Mechanism [NRM]
- GPG – Discusses all young people at risk from Criminality; Gangs; Serious Violence and Exploitation. Nominals discussed and action plan created. Nominals discussed until the risk has reduced significantly. Out of 23 referrals, 11 have come off the list due to the risk being minimised.
- Information sharing with Police leading to operations, arrests and disruption e.g. those in and around a large estate in Haringey and a School in Barnet.

# Case Studies

## **Gang Partnership Group:**

- KB -12 year old male exploited by other [Enfield] males, receiving gifts in exchange for holding drugs and weapons for them.
- The family had been placed in Enfield by another local authority and were living in private rented accommodation
- He was NEET and placed in alternative schooling provision
- Friends were all older and known to gangs. His mother knew of these friends and accepted his association with them. Clear intelligence that he was holding illicit items for these "friends".
- KB clearly stating he was not in a gang [believing that you have to actually kill someone to be in a gang].
- He was regularly missing and stating that he goes missing as he does not want to be poor.
- KB referred to social care due to the arrests and risks around him and potentially his younger siblings from further exploitation and gang involvement.
- At the CP case conference it was established that Enfield was too risky for the family to remain in. It was further agreed at GPG that St Giles trust SOS project would work with JA and the family to provide further support, mentoring and guidance. The support worker worked alongside the social worker. Enfield made the assessment to place the family in accommodation in X Town.
- Information shared with services in X Town to stop JA from returning to Enfield e.g. his picture was provided at the train, bus stations and local police so that all staff knew to alert social care and police should they see KB.
- KB is now back in education within X Town. He is accompanied by an adult at all times when in public and the support is still being provided to St Giles to help to sustain the changes.

# Case Studies

## **Youth Offending Unit:**

DP - 15 Year old has previous arrests for PWITS Class A to which he received an NFA or case has been discontinued.

All indications are that DP is involved in county lines and is being trafficked and exploited.

NRM completed, police concluded the DP was a victim of trafficking and criminal case was discontinued.

DP has had little involvement with statutory services and it has been difficult to engage him voluntarily.

Debriefs have been unsuccessful as DP has been reluctant to speak with professionals.

DP has now got new outstanding matters for PWITS in Z Town, the Court have adjourned for an NRM update

# Case Studies

## YOU and Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention (CSEP) Team

- OC's mother found sexually explicit pictures that OC had been sending to others on her Mobile phone in July 2013
- Shortly after her behaviour deteriorated and she began frequently going missing.
- November 2013 – Child protection conference held in Haringey. Due to OCs impulsive behaviours, regular missing episodes; mental health and disclosures around CSE she became subject to a CP Plan.
- January 2014 OC and her mother moved to live in X Country – due to several reasons including mothers concerns.
- October 2015 both returned to UK. There was no social care involvement until January 2016 due to mother reporting OC having suicidal thoughts to Haringey Social Care.
- Mother was housed in Enfield in May 2016 and OC became involved with Enfield Social Care
- Missing episodes started again and due to serious concerns Enfield began care proceedings
- An Interim care Order and Recovery Order was granted in November 2016, OC was placed in a residential unit in W Town. OC however assaulted a member of staff and went missing.
- End of November 2016 a Secure and Recovery Order were granted and OC was placed in another secure unit and released February 2017.
- On returning to her mothers care OC did not settle and began going missing again
- OC had 10 missing episodes this year totalling over 65 days
- Strong concerns that OC was being exploited by gang members, drug dealer and involved in County Lines
- A second Secure and Recovery Order was granted in July 2017 and OC was placed in another secure unit and was discharged in September 2017. Mother was moved to Y Town and OC joined her on discharge

### UPDATE:

- OC has not gone missing since she moved to Y Town and is engaged in the local college and studying Maths, English and Health and Social Care
- OC is engaging with Health agencies and working with ENGAGE – (CSE support worker)
- OC has complied with her statutory YRO including tag and agreed to work with CAMHS

# Future Developments

- All county lines cases referred to the MCRMG for discussion
- Further improve information sharing with Police, especially regarding outside of the Met area
- Development of more and better intervention programmes
- Further improve parental engagement and awareness
- Further improve data sharing, recording and use of data amongst all agencies. Currently variable recording amongst agencies which needs to be improved to give more reliable data.
- Further improve liaison and information sharing with schools/colleges
- Improve contingency planning by agencies regarding young people returning/being found
- Awareness raising regarding which agencies can provide support to those YPs not known to Statutory Services
- More and better use of the National Referral Mechanism in relation to county lines
- Develop a mandatory multi-agency assessment/screening system for all professionals engaging high risk young people (This is a work in progress with YOU Staff and Clients developing the draft tool currently)
- Improved clarity regarding NRM referral pathway and decision making.
- Further develop the YOU lead multi agency county lines meeting
- Development of protocols that provide a framework to address exploitation
- Revision 'debrief' process ensuring more timely response and with improved response by key professionals.

