

Build-a-Future

Main Road, West Ashby, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 5PT 01507 524015

County Lines & Criminal Exploitation Policy



Policy Version – 1

Policy created – March 2019

Review date – March 2021

This Policy works in accordance with BAF Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy 2019

What does County Lines mean?

County lines exploitation is the process by which gangs, usually from large urban areas, supply drugs to suburban and rural locations using vulnerable learners and young people to courier drugs and money.

It is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County Lines is a Safeguarding and Child Protection issue that requires the input of police, health, local authority safeguarding and Government departments.

The UK Government defines county lines as:

“A term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.”

Who can be involved?

Learners can be vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation for a wide range of factor from living in poverty to a desire to earn “street cred” amongst their peers.

Typically, gangs use mobile phone lines to facilitate drug orders and supply to users. They also use local property as a base; these often belong to a vulnerable adult and are obtained through force or coercion (known as ‘cuckooing’).

The County Lines process is now understood as a driving causal factor in youth violence and, in some cases, includes elements of child trafficking. An updated report by the National Crime Agency (NCA) has found that the use of ‘county lines’ by gangs, is a growing issue, and is exploiting ever-younger victims.

Signs and signals of County Lines or other forms of criminal exploitation include:

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going

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- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- Having a second, old phone (i.e. not a smart phone)
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

Reporting to the police

When it is considered that the Police need to be involved, issues will be referred to the schools Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and then passed on to the Police.

Build-a-Future notes that when a report is made to the Police, they are not able to offer general advice on incidents. If the learners involved are named or specifics are provided, they are duty-bound to record and investigate all criminal activity reported.

What should you do if you suspect a girl or boy is involved in County Lines or other gang activities?

Members of staff should report this as a child protection issue to the DSL. Staff should use the safeguarding reporting form and send through concerns the same day. If the DSL is unavailable on the day and the concerns are deemed serious then the Headteacher should be contacted as soon as possible.

Parents/ carers should raise concerns with the relevant year team/s who can take advice on what next steps to take. Alternatively, parents/ carers, members of the public can report concerns directly to the Police.

Centre Leads should update glossary and keep in main office.