



# BISHOP CHALLONER CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Dear Parent/Carer

## County Lines –information taken from <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines>

Children as young as 12 are being put in danger by criminals who are taking advantage of how vulnerable these young people are.

Criminal exploitation is also known as 'county lines' and is when gangs and organised crime networks exploit children to sell drugs. Often these children are made to travel across counties, and they use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs.

### How many young people are affected by 'county lines'?

No one really knows how many young people across the country are being forced to take part, but The Children's Commissioner estimates there are at least 46,000 children in England who are involved in gang activity. It is estimated that around 4,000 teenagers in London alone are being exploited through child criminal exploitation, or 'county lines'.

Tragically the young people exploited through 'county lines' are often seen by professionals such as police and social workers as criminals.

However, we want these vulnerable children to be recognised as victims of trafficking and exploitation. We want them to receive the support they need to deal with the trauma they have been through.

### How are children being exploited?

Gangs are deliberately targeting vulnerable children – those who are homeless, living in care homes or trapped in poverty. These children are unsafe, unloved, or unable to cope, and the gangs take advantage of this.

These gangs groom, threaten or trick children into trafficking their drugs for them. They might threaten a young person physically, or they might threaten the young person's family members. The gangs might also offer something in return for the young person's cooperation – it could be money, food, alcohol, clothes and jewellery, or improved status – but the giving of these gifts will usually be manipulated so that the child feels they are in debt to their exploiter.

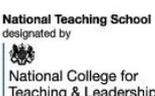
However they become trapped in county lines, the young people involved feel as if they have no choice but to continue doing what the gangs want.

Principal - Mr K.McEvoy

Institute Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7EG

Tel: 0121 444 4161 • Fax: 0121 441 1552

[www.bishopchalloner.org.uk](http://www.bishopchalloner.org.uk) • email: [enquiry@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk](mailto:enquiry@bishopchalloner.bham.sch.uk)





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## **What are the signs of criminal exploitation and county lines?**

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  
Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work  
Unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery  
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.

## **No child should feel alone**

If you think a young person you know could be in danger call 999, or if you have non-urgent information to share with the police, contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If you are concerned about a child's welfare, contact your local social care department. We also have a guide for parents who may be concerned about their child.

Because no child should feel alone.

