

# County Lines

What is it, and what does it mean to your family?



The term 'county lines' is being used increasingly in the world of safeguarding and by governments. But what does it mean, and what are the implications for young people?

County lines is the developing method for drug distribution across the UK. Drugs are increasingly being moved from large city 'hubs' into and through more rural areas. Children and young people are vulnerable to being exploited and involved in this process, putting themselves at risk of harm in this criminal activity. The government estimates that there are around 1,000 'lines' nationally in operation, with some moving up to £3,000 per day of drugs and money.

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## KNOW THE FACTS

What does this mean in our local area?

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## KNOW THE SIGNS

Practical advice on how to open a discussion with your child and help.

3

## KNOW WHERE THE FIND HELP

Including national and local agencies.



### Talk to us...

Your child's Head of House or the school's safeguarding lead, Mr Bayliss.



### Family Lives

For advice on all aspects of parenting, 24/7.

**0808 800 2222**

The Children's Society

### The Children's Society

For advice on county lines and parent resources.

[childrenssociety.org.uk](http://childrenssociety.org.uk)

## Know the Facts:

Thames Valley police data shows the cases of drug trafficking in Oxfordshire have risen by 51% in two years and includes an increasing number of young people.

- Oxford, being centrally located and connected to many large cities, has developed as a target for the drugs trade.
- Gangs moving drugs from London, Birmingham and Bristol have been identified in Oxford.
- Competition between these rival gangs can lead to violence and antisocial behaviours in the community.
- Oxford can be attractive to these gangs due to the higher prices that can be gained for drugs and the high number of students in the population.

In Oxford, this has often been linked to an increase in violent crime, with the number of people found in possession of weapons and blades doubling in the past 5 years.



## Know the Signs:

- Going out early morning or late at night, and being secretive about where they are going.
- Intimidation by other adults or peer group.
- Receiving excessive text messages or phone calls, or having a second phone.
- Changes in behaviour, including becoming aggressive or violent.
- Unexplained injuries or new possessions or sums of money.

This may apply to both girls and boys, but the signs can be harder to spot and there is vulnerability to other forms of abuse.

## KNOW THE LAW:

The law focuses on the criminal behaviour. If an offender is part of a group or gang, this can lead to a longer sentence.

- If your child's actions or encouragement lead to a crime, they can be charged with the same offence as the main offender. This is called 'joint enterprise'.
- It is illegal to carry a knife in a public place (including pocket knives with blades over 3 inches). **The sentence: up to 4 years.**
- 'Possession with intent to supply' can carry a maximum sentence of **14 years in prison.**
- Both police and school staff have a right to search young people for drugs and weapons at school.