

County Lines and Criminal Exploitation Policy & Procedure

North London Grammar School

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Policy is based on the Home Office 'Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance' 2019, HM Government document 'Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation 2016 and HM Government Serious Violence Strategy 2018.

2 POLICY AIMS

The Policy aims to safeguard and prevent those from being exploited within criminal activity and to prevent any further risks to those already victim of Child Exploitation.

3 COUNTY LINES

County lines 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."

Across the country, young people and vulnerable adults are being exploited by gangs to move and sell drugs on their behalf in suburban areas, market towns and coastal regions. This criminal activity is known as 'County Lines', as young people travel to different regions where they're unknown to the police and can therefore operate undetected. These young people can be as young as ten and are often subjected to threats, violence, and sexual abuse by the gangs.

To safeguard vulnerable young people from being exploited by county line gangs, the Home Office is working to increase awareness of the signs to spot potential victims among professionals, including teachers and school staff who work with children and young people. These professionals are best placed to spot potential victims, and are encouraged to report their concerns to their safeguarding lead. The Home Office has updated its County Lines [guidance booklet](#) and produced resources to help teachers and school staff better understand the issues of county lines. The guidance is designed to supplement a school's existing safeguarding policies.

4 CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

Child Criminal Exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved, and is defined as: Child Criminal Exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Who is vulnerable to county lines exploitation?

- The national picture on county lines continues to develop but there are recorded cases of:
- Children as young as 12 years old being exploited or moved by gangs to courier drugs out of their local area; 14-17 years is the most common age range

- Looked After Children and those children known to children’s social care or youth offending teams are at risk of being exploited and used by gangs. Children not known to services are, however, also used by gangs in an effort to evade detection.
- There is evidence that residential children’s care homes and pupil referral units are being targeted.
- White British children being targeted because gangs perceive they are more likely to evade police detection but a person of any ethnicity or nationality may be exploited
- The use of social media to make initial contact with children and young people
- Class A drug users, people with mental health, the elderly and ex-prisoners are being targeted so that gangs can take over their homes (known as ‘cuckooing’)

North London Grammar School is aware that any child or young person could potentially be victim of this so it is important not to focus on certain children and young people. We need to accept that it could be any child from any background and staff must therefore be constantly vigilant in their approach’.

Signs to lookout for

A young person’s involvement in county lines activity often leaves signs. A person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member or as an associate of a gang dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a person’s lifestyle should be discussed with them.

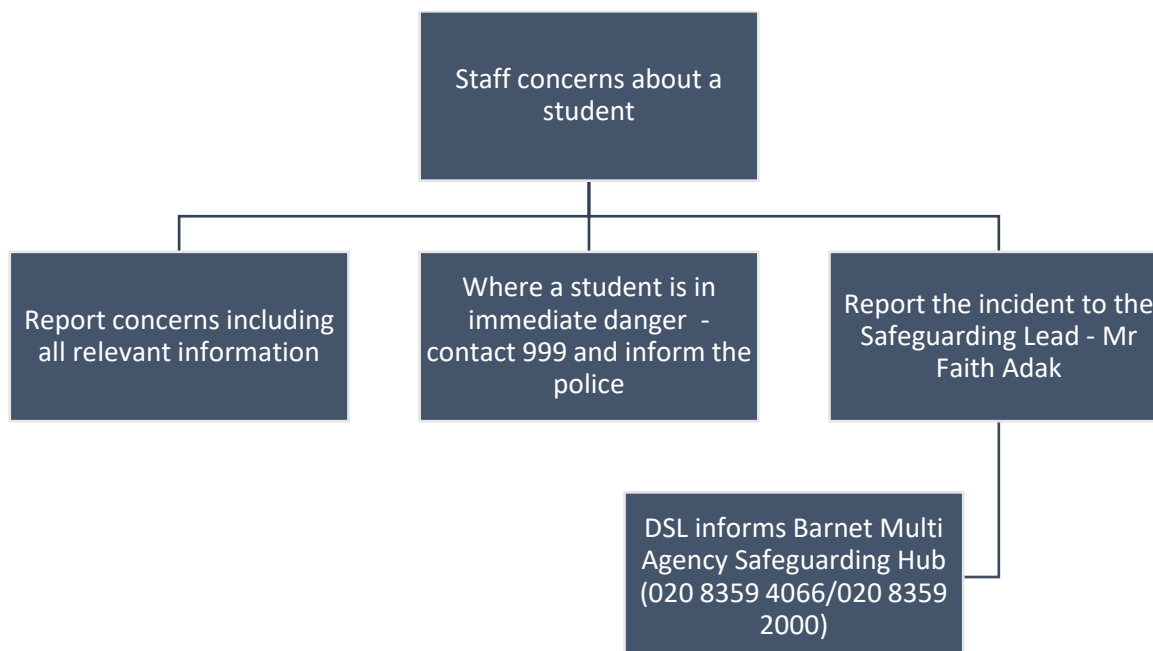
Some potential indicators of county lines involvement and exploitation are listed below, with those at the top of particular concern:

- persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones excessive receipt of texts / phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- leaving home / care without explanation
- suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results / performance
- gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being
- reference to post codes
- gang symbols and drawings
- use of phrases and terminology – Please see appendix one

Procedure following concerns for a child

Staff working with a student who they think may be at risk of county lines exploitation should follow the safeguarding guidance and local guidance and share this information with local authority social services. If you believe a person is in **immediate risk** of harm, you should **contact the police**.

Staff should:



Information sharing

A Multi Agency approach is necessary to address this threat. Agencies such as Police, [Housing](#), [Youth Offending Service](#), Probation, [Adult](#) and [Children's Services](#), [Trading Standards](#), [Addaction](#), etc. Are key in identifying concerns before they escalate into safeguarding referrals.

'Information sharing is key and prevention is preferable to intervention'

The DSL will notify the police should they have any information concerning County Lines such as a change in their behaviour that may be linked to a County Line being run. This is not a process that replaces safeguarding referrals; these will continue to be submitted in line with North London Grammar Schools; [Safeguarding and Child Protection current policies and procedures](#).

Monitoring

As part of any reports of safeguarding, North London Grammar staff will continually monitor these concerns, the student's behaviour and updates from external agencies. This will take part through the schools safeguarding policy and procedures, but shall be discussed further during the biweekly safeguarding audit.

Appendix 1 – Terminology

- **Cuckooing** - The gangs tend to use a property belonging to a vulnerable person or Class A drug user as a base for their supply. This is often acquired through force, threat or coercion by supplying the home owner with drugs to initiate a relationship
- **OT** - Out There – Across county on a job
- **Burner** - Gun or disposable mobile phone
- **Clapped** - Shot
- **Bando** - Abandoned Building
- **Jakes** – Police
- **Drill** - Local gang music – for example p110 and area
- **Strapped** - Carrying a gun/knife/weapon
- **Trappin** - Selling drugs from a trap house
- **Juggin** - Sale of drugs to feed family
- **Dotty** - Shotgun
- **Chinged** - Stabbed
- **Dipped** - Stabbed