

# GANGS, COUNTY LINES & SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE

PRESENTED BY SOS+



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# LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define the term county lines;
- Outline the operational procedures involved in setting up a county line;
- Explain the methods used to groom, recruit and exploit young people;
- Have an awareness of the push and pull factors that contribute to a young person becoming vulnerable and susceptible to county lines involvement;
- Recognise key signs and indicators that young people are being exploited or at risk of county lines involvement;
- Describe the relationship between county lines and other forms of criminal activity and exploitation (i.e. serious violence, human trafficking, debt bondage, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation);
- Understand the perspective of either a survivor or perpetrator after hearing from an expert witness, including a brief overview of how girls are used;
- Develop initial long-term and solution-based approaches to prevent and reduce the risks associated with each stage of the county lines process, inc. realistic exit strategies.



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## SOS Project



### SOS BEYOND LONDON

Our County Lines projects provide flexible support to young people and children to exit county lines drug dealing and transportation networks, reconnect with families and begin to build positive lifestyles away from drugs, crime, gang involvement and exploitation.

### RESCUE AND RESPONSE

MOPAC and St Giles Trust working with Abianda and Safe London to support Londoners aged 10-25 caught up in county lines.

### SOS - OT: KENT

Offering support to young people and children from London and Kent.

### WALES COUNTY LINES

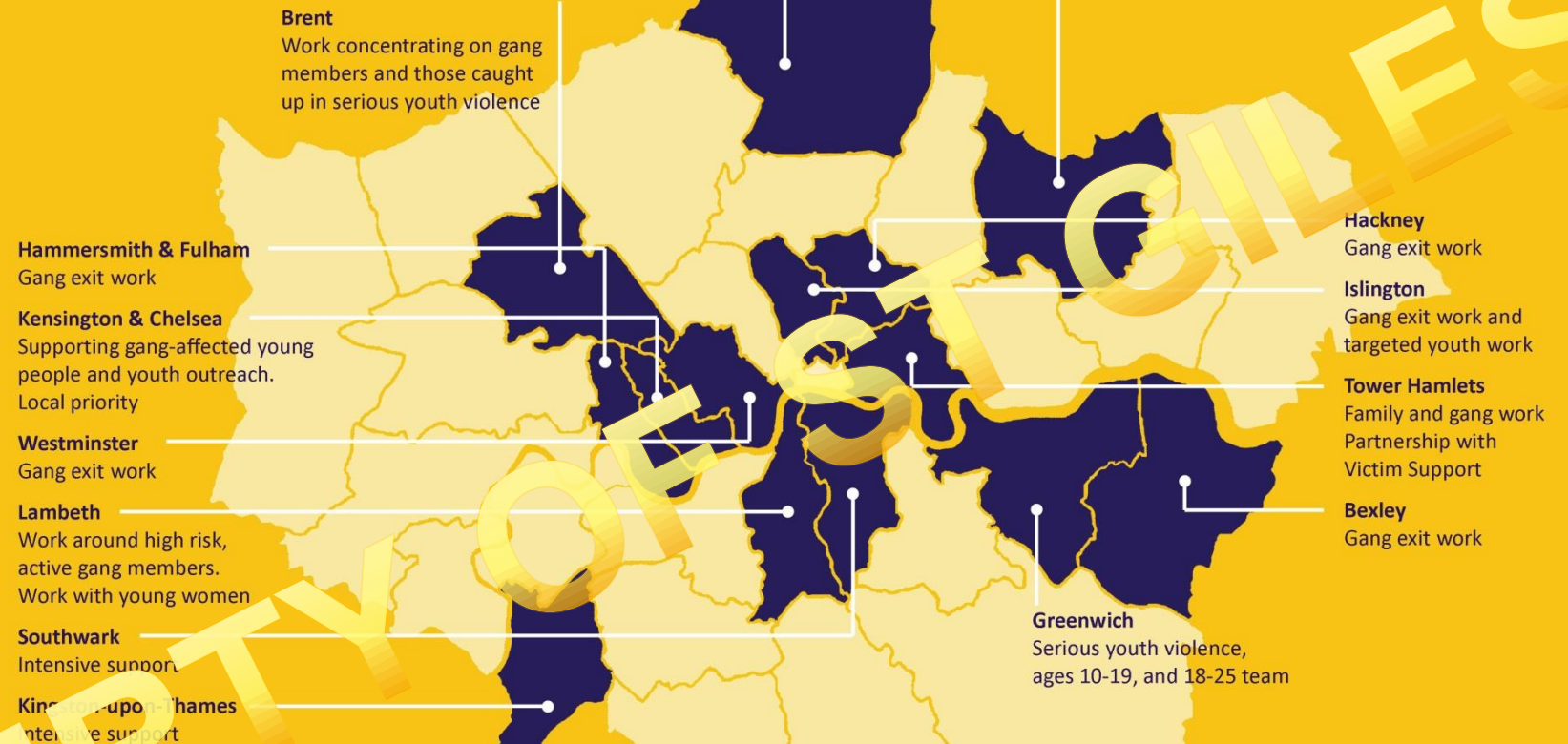
Workers across all Welsh PCC areas funded by Children in Need and the Early Intervention Youth Fund.

### SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE

The team also tackles serious youth violence (SYV) beyond the capital and intensively caseworks victims and perpetrators.

Services can be found in:  
**NEWPORT**  
**SWANSEA**  
**DYFED POWES**  
**LEEDS**  
**BROXBORNE**  
**IPSWICH**  
**SURREY**  
**BRIGHTON**

## WHERE SOS WORKS



### SOS+

The SOS Project Plus works preventatively with young people at risk of gang crime, to stop them getting caught in this lifestyle.

Ex-offenders trained by St Giles Trust work in schools to educate students on the dangers of gang crime and weapons. Delivered in Bexley, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets, Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Camden, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Brent, Redbridge, Camden, Hackney, Enfield, and Brighton, Broxbourne, Leeds and Ipswich.

### S.T.O.P.

The SOS Training Outreach Programme (S.T.O.P.) delivers increased understanding of gangs and associated issues for professionals and front-line practitioners.

Course elements include: gangs; girls at risk of sexual exploitation; non-violent resistance; reducing and managing conflict, amongst other topics.

### WITHIN THE NHS

**Royal London Trauma Centre**  
**New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton**  
**University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire**

Engaging with those admitted to hospital through Serious Youth Violence (SYV).

### WITH VICTIM SUPPORT

In partnership with Victim Support, St Giles delivers targeted support to families affected by gang related homicide and SYV.

### POLICY WORK AND LOBBYING

SOS representatives sit as part of :

- Serious Violence Task Force
- Trident IAG
- Social Media Action Group



## THE SOS+ SERVICE

The SOS+ Service delivers early intervention work in educational settings, through preventative sessions on violence, vulnerability and exploitation. Our award-winning approach uses trained professionals with lived experience of the criminal justice system to de-glamorise gang involvement and expose the harsh realities of crime and violence. As they know these issues first-hand, they can speak from their own experiences and have high levels of engagement from the young people.

## TESTIMONY

*"I understood myself only  
after I destroyed myself.  
And only in the process of  
fixing myself, did I know  
who I really was."*

*Sade Andria Zabala*

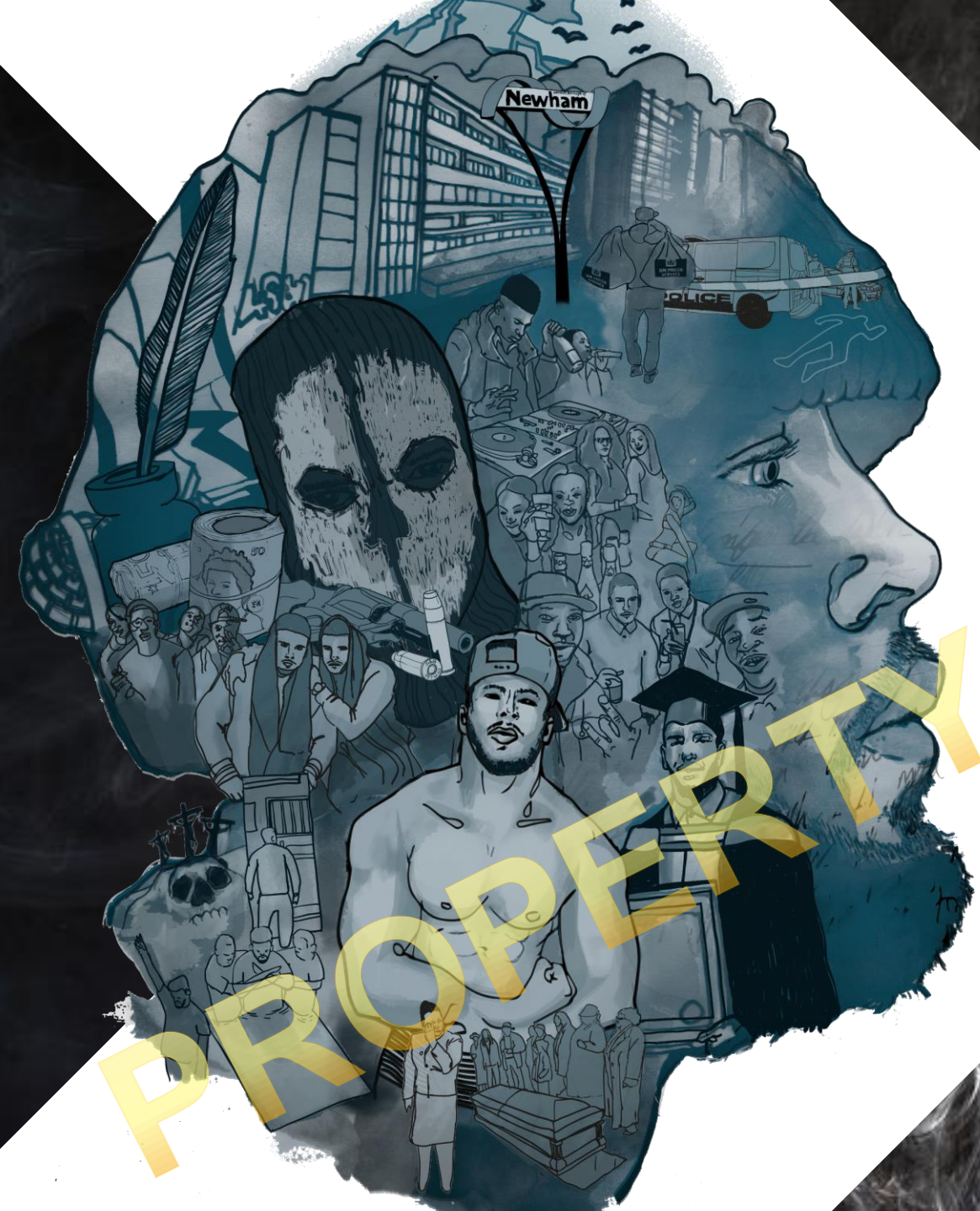
*Sade Andria Zabala*

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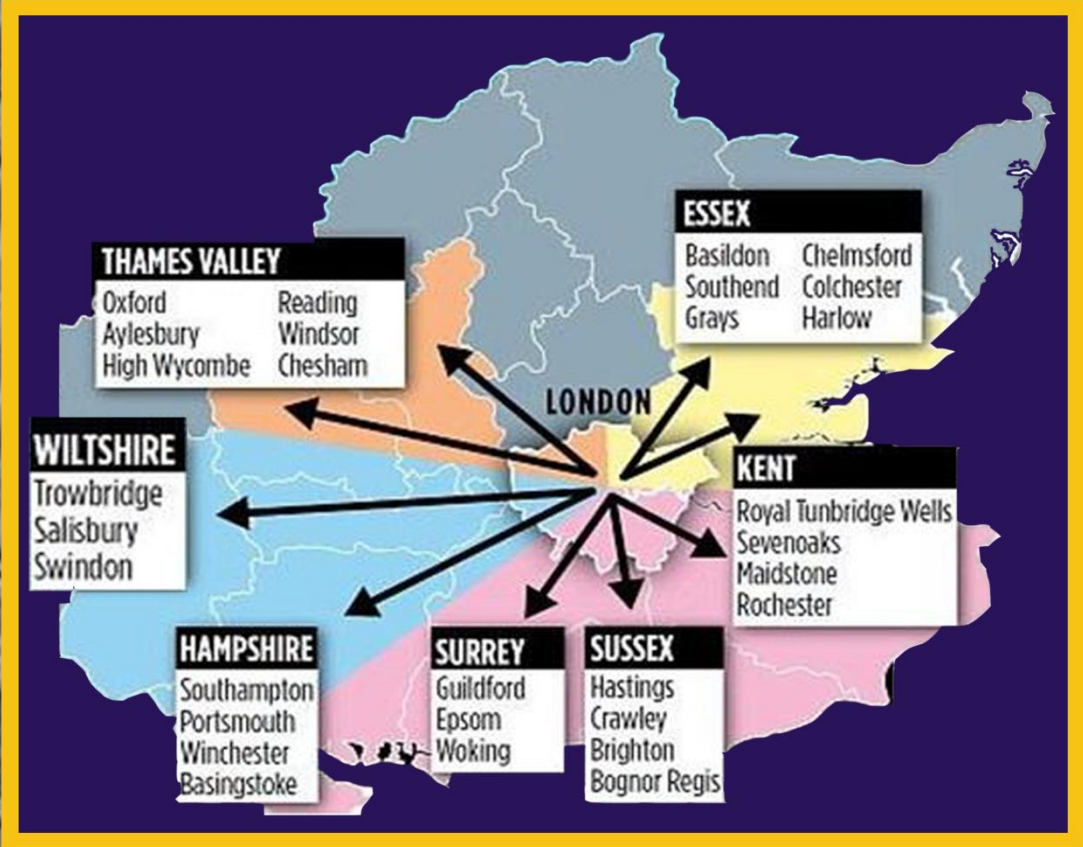
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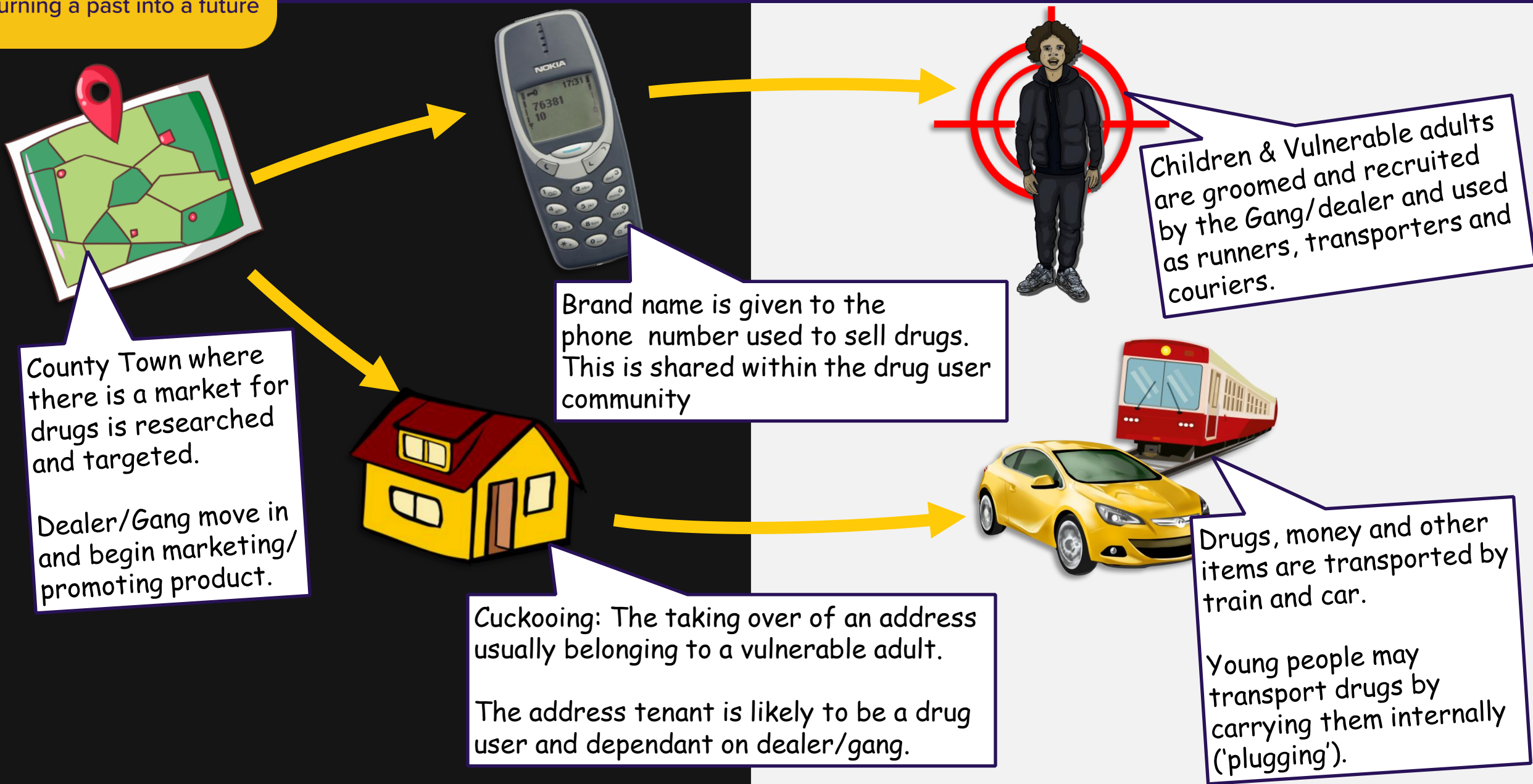


# WHAT IS COUNTY LINES?

“County lines” - In the criminal world ‘County Lines’ is referred to as; Country, Cunch, O.T, Out There, Out of Town, Upsuh and various other colloquialisms. Drug Operations/phone lines are set up in regional areas by Entities most commonly originating from major cities. Young people are being exploited as couriers, runners and taking up other functional roles.



# COUNTY LINES: THE PROCESS





# DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: PERSPECTIVE OF DRUG DEALER

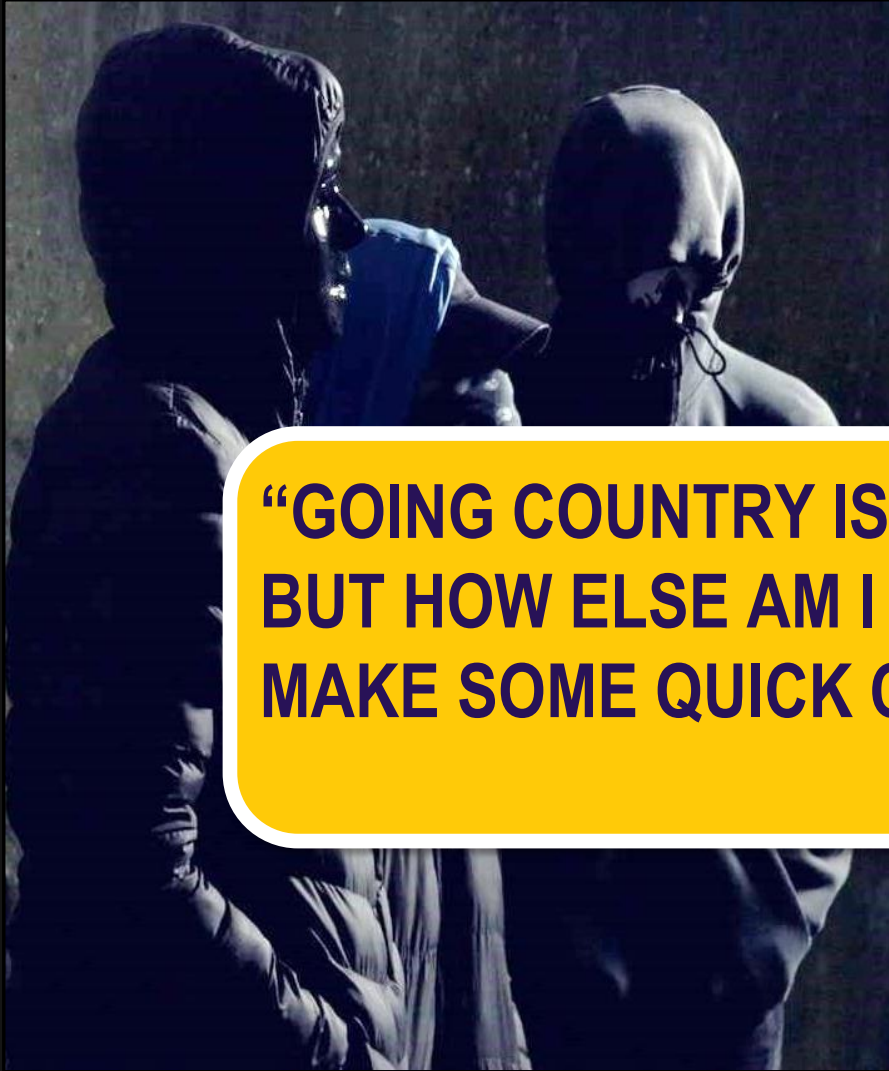


**“ALL I CARE ABOUT IS MY MONEY! THESE YOUNGERS ARE VULNERABLE, DISPOSABLE & REPLACEABLE”**



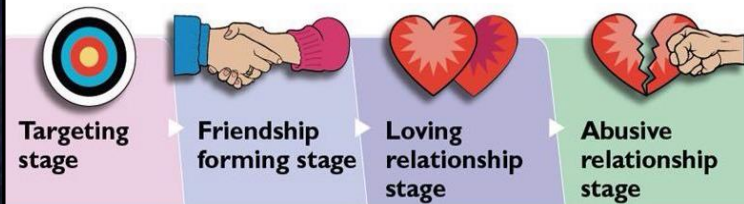


# DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: PERSPECTIVE OF A DRUG RUNNER



**“GOING COUNTRY IS LONG!  
BUT HOW ELSE AM I GONNA  
MAKE SOME QUICK CHANGE?”**

## The Grooming Line



### Exploitation

Many young people are groomed and exploited to supply/store drugs as runners and mules.



### Glamorised & Normalised

Not every young person is being groomed or exploited. Many young people are attracted to the idea of County Lines and willingly approach older drug dealers to recruit them.

TARGETING  
STAGE

FRIENDSHIP  
FORMING  
STAGE

LOVING  
RELATIONSHIP  
STAGE

ABUSIVE  
RELATIONSHIP  
STAGE



Target your vulnerabilities.  
Select you instead of others



Befriend you by offering protection, providing for your needs etc.



Make you trust them and think they care about you.



Abuse, violate and use you for their own selfish cause.



# CONDITION OF THE HEART: WHAT CAN MAKE SOMEONE VULNERABLE



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# KENT CASE STUDY

In 2017 St Giles Trust commissioned an SOS Case Worker to offer support & intervention to clients specifically involved in County Lines in Kent. The Case worker worked with 26 YP's who were exploited to work predominantly as runners and transporters for gangs and drug networks originating from Liverpool and London.

## KEY FACTORS

- 4 out of 26 clients were London based, 22 were local
- All locals were white
- Only 2 out of 26 had dads present in their life
- 1 girl to 25 boys
- All clients were in PRU's (Pupil Referral Units) and on a 'twilight timetable'
- High levels of Serious Youth Violence and CSE
- 5 clients in 6 months were supported back into mainstream schooling/employment



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# REALITIES & CONSEQUENCES



## NO SLEEP

Drug runners have no shift patterns and can go up to 72 hours with no sleep .



## POOR LIVING CONDITIONS

As the trap house is most commonly 'Cuckooed' electricity and water bills are unpaid resulting in poor living conditions. Runners have poor nutrition and bad hygiene.



## CSE & AUXILLARY HEALTH RISKS

Trap Houses/Drug dens can be harmful environments infested with used syringes, excrement and blood. Many under 18's are used for sexual favours to pay off debts etc.



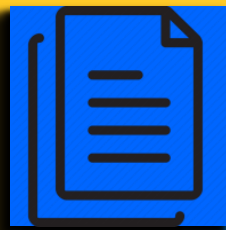


# REALITIES & CONSEQUENCES



## PRISON

Prison sentences for intent to supply Class A drugs can be severe depending on the role you play and the amount you possess.



## CRIMINAL RECORD

If you have a criminal record you might not be accepted into a college or university, get a job, or travel to some countries, like the USA, Canada or Australia.



## DEBT BONDAGE & MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Modern Day Slavery Act (2015) is valid when a young person is trafficked for the purposes of exploitation.





# REALITIES & CONSEQUENCES



## RIVAL GANGS & DRUG USERS

Drug runners are most vulnerable as they're at the bottom of the food chain and are susceptible to being targeted and violently attacked by rival gangs/drug users.



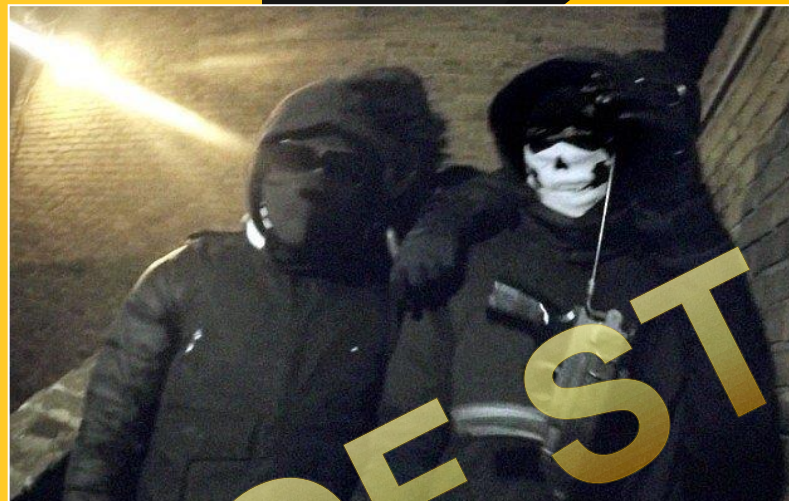
## FAMILY MEMBERS TARGETED

OCG's and Gangs can target family members to threaten or retaliate on drug runners as an exploitation tactic.



## SERIOUS INJURY

Violence is a central theme in County Line cases leading to serious injuries involving kidnaping, gun & knife crimes, acid attacks etc.

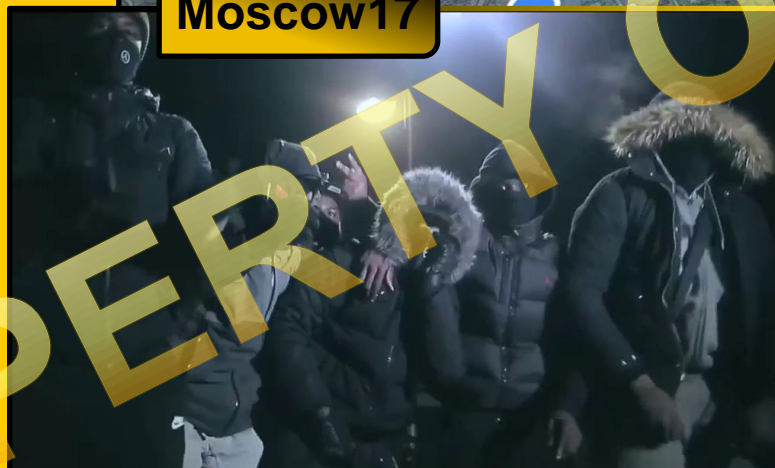




### POST CODE WARS

Rival gangs from two or more different post codes, engaging in 'beef' consisting of serious violence because of indifferences or a specific incident/series of Incidents e.g. 'member being killed or drug deal Going wrong' resulting In all-out gang warfare.

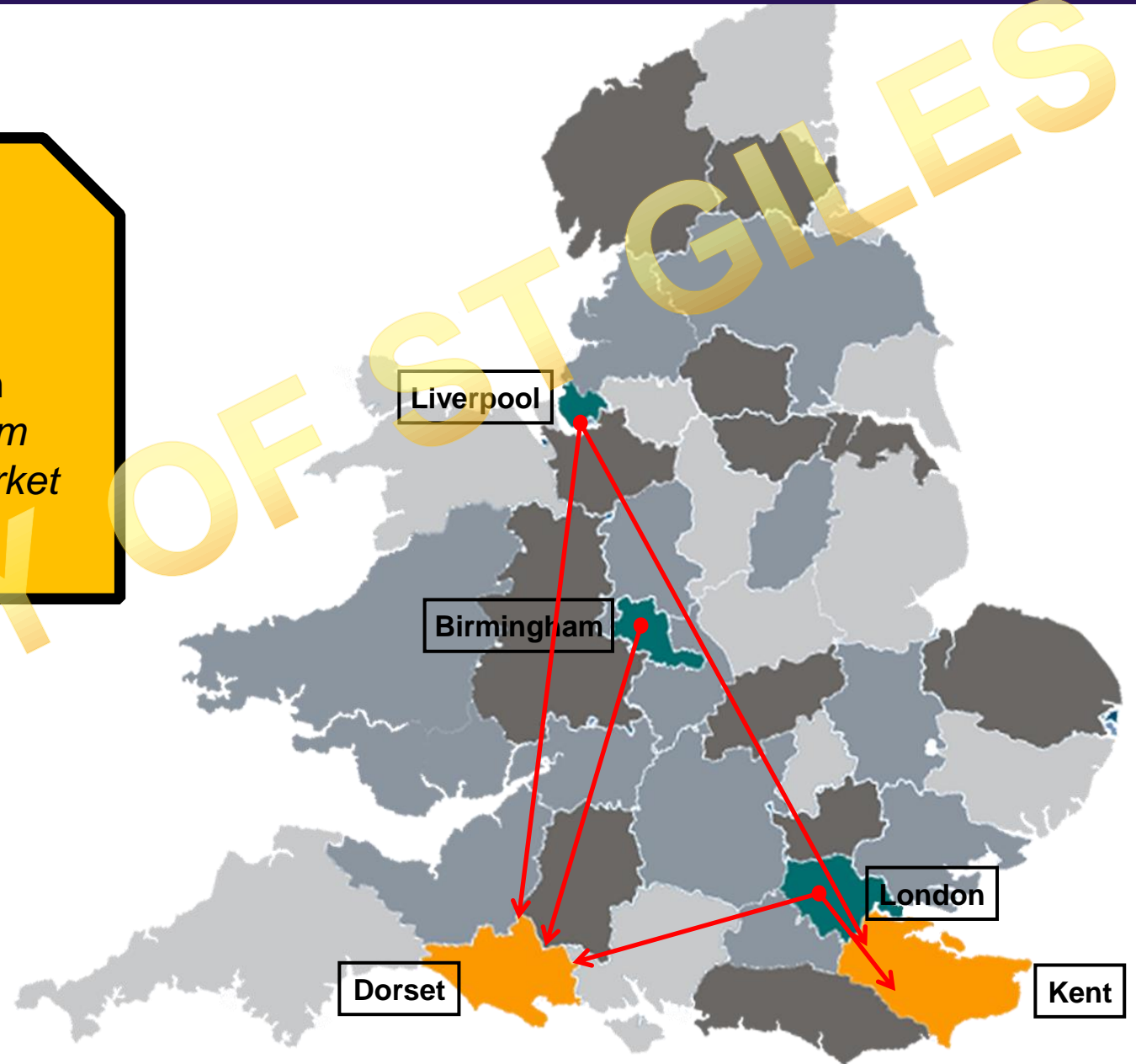
A post code war is mostly Concerning personal Disputes/disagreements Between two opposing sides. The two sides are not trying to take possession Of each others territory like a turf-war.





### TURF WARS

When gangs/OCG's are fighting over a specific location in order to possess territory and obtain power and control. Example: *Various gangs from Major cities fighting to control County Lines market within regional areas.*



## SIGNS & INDICATORS:

- Going missing/Truancy. 87% of missing children in the UK are attributed to CCE & County Lines
- Disposable Phone also known as: Trap phone/line, blowa, tech, tizzy, mash, brick, encro.
- Large amounts of cash
- New expensive belongings e.g. Clothes, watch, jewellery, gadgets
- Increased staying out and sleep overs at “friends houses”
- Unexplained absences at school
- Paraphernalia – bags, cling film, rubber bands, digital scales, Vaseline, baby wipes.
- Presence of unexplained items; Knife / mobile chargers / dongles / cash / mobile data/credit (Lycamobile), Train tickets, Scrunched up cling film & foil,
- Slang words used in conversations such as; G-pack, pack, traphouse, trap, bando, feds, nitty(s), crackhead(s), cat(s), boodge, Q's, Z's, 2 in a shoe, ounce, rack, score, pinky.
- Change in friends and affiliations. Are friends connected to gang involvement/criminal activity.
- Becoming withdrawn and secretive e.g. Withdrawal to bedroom all day; suspiciously keen on door being closed.





## WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

### **Early Intervention for YP's at risk:**

Comprehensive, intensive help for young people already involved. This should not be time bound due to the complex nature of county line involvement

### **Education:**

Young people are making misinformed decisions based on a false narrative that glamorises and incentivises county lines involvement. Prevention sessions within educational settings as well as further education embedded within the PHSE curriculum will help to dispel common misconceptions, raise awareness of the harsh realities and guide YP's on how they can safeguard themselves from the dangers.

### **Lived Experience:**

Both of the above should ideally be delivered by people with direct, first hand experience of the issue – people who have been there and done it themselves – as they have a real understanding of the issues, can engage the young people more effectively and also identify potential safeguarding risks as they know the way the gangs work

### **Multi Agency Approach:**

Housing, mental health, safeguarding, education, early intervention, family support, early help and other services are all vital to offering a care package that addresses all the factors that increase the risk of a YP. Enforcement should be coupled with intervention and prevention e.g. Gwent Police model.

## WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

### Digital & Social Media:

Social media, the music industry, film, arts & entertainment as well as key influencers within popular youth culture are all key platforms where county lines and criminal activity in general is glamorised. It's important to use these same influential platforms to de-glamourise, build awareness and offer support by creating credible and engaging digital content, interactive apps and campaigns supported by key influencers to raise awareness.

### Realistic ETE:

Now, more than ever young people are eager to make money, however from our interactions with service users it is clear that their options are limited. With this in mind it's important to sign post YP's to career advisors, make them aware of the job/career opportunities available to them, encourage enterprise, insight days, professional-mentors etc.

### Debt recovery:

Debt bondage is one of the biggest factors that obstruct a safe exit from county lines involvement. Our R&R team have helped many YP's clear debt legitimately without compromising safeguarding.

### Final Thought:

*You cannot expect someone to change unless they want the change for themselves.*

*You cannot expect someone to change unless you give them something to change to.*

*You cannot expect someone to change without someone to walk with them through their journey of change.*



**The current COVID-19 crisis has impacted the young people we support in the following ways:**

**Increased Poverty:** There are no financial safety nets for our clients. Job losses can mean that they will not be able to afford to eat for days. Their gas and electric is being cut off as they don't have the funds to top up their meters. Our young clients are still taking risks in order to financially provide for the family during this time of crisis.

**New dangers for Criminal Exploitation and Grooming:** School is a space where our young clients are kept safe for 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. This is literally a lifeline. Without this, the young people we work with are at increased risks of criminal exploitation and grooming.

**Increased mental health concerns:** Social distancing is particularly hard on these clients who often have significant mental health difficulties and are dealing with a range of issues from substance misuse to domestic violence.

**Increased educational divisions:** Families cannot afford to buy or get access to educational resources. They live in cramped conditions not conducive to home schooling. Lack of Wifi and technology means there are rarely enough devices for all children in a household to access online teaching resources.

**Criminal Activity & Serious Youth Violence:** Our younger clients are still putting themselves at risk travelling across the country to supply drugs. With increased poverty and the demand for drugs set to increase and supply predicted to drop we anticipate that serious youth violence and criminal activity to escalate.

A new Home Office-funded service to support vulnerable children and young people under 25 criminally exploited through county lines in the West Midlands. This new service will help 100 young people exit or reduce their county line activity over the next 7 months across region.

Working closely with local partners in these areas, caseworkers with lived experience will offer intensive one-to-one support for each young person and the wider family if needed. In addition to this service we can offer a 'rescue' collection of a YP from an out of area police custody suite.

Our work addresses continued concerns around the grooming and exploitation of young people into county lines and will help young people and their families take back control of their lives.

Our service is now open for direct referrals of young people that you believe are victims of exploitation and still involved in county lines.

To make a referral for this project please email [CountyLinesVSS@StGilesTrust.org.uk](mailto:CountyLinesVSS@StGilesTrust.org.uk)



- Involved in county lines as a victim or at risk of exploitation into county lines
- Under 25 years old
- West Midlands Young Person or linked to the region
- Arrested out of area – Rescue element
- Consent based -Voluntary not enforcement
- Unexplained missing episodes
- Open to both male and females
- Family & sibling support
- Girl specific support/worker

To make a referral email [CountyLinesVSS@stgilestrust.org.uk](mailto:CountyLinesVSS@stgilestrust.org.uk)

**A dedicated phone line is being activated.**

## CONTACT DETAILS | Q&A

**Thank you for your participation:**

If you would like to have SOS+ sessions delivered in your School please express your interest in the **post webinar survey**.

Please also let us know If there was any information you feel we did not cover or would like more information on in the post webinar survey.

For more information please contact:

[Steve.Clarke@stgilestrust.org.uk](mailto:Steve.Clarke@stgilestrust.org.uk)

**St Giles Midlands Contract Manager**

To make a referral email [CountyLinesVSS@stgilestrust.org.uk](mailto:CountyLinesVSS@stgilestrust.org.uk)



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