



STAFFORDSHIRE  
**POLICE**



Dear parents, carers and guardians,

On behalf of Staffordshire Police and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, we wanted to draw your attention to the illegal drug dealing activity involving the exploitation of young and/or vulnerable people, often referred to as County Lines.

County Lines is the criminal activity involving the production, supply and distribution of drugs across locations in which young and/or vulnerable people are targeted and manipulated into delivering such drugs on behalf of organised crime gangs (OCGs) and high harm criminal individuals or groups.

OCGs and those involved in Serious and Organised drug crime run 'drug lines' and will regularly manipulate young and/or vulnerable people into becoming 'drug runners', asking them to store, move and sell drugs in return for items such as money, gifts, clothing and friendship. However, the reality is much different as these gangs are often encouraging and exploiting people into criminal activity and sometimes use blackmail and threats of violence to then keep them involved.

Together, we are committed to tackling this criminality and exploitation and seeking to protect vulnerable people. We aim to continue raising awareness of what County Lines is, highlight some of the signs that may indicate someone is being exploited. This will help identify those who may be at risk to enable them to be diverted from crime and exploitation.

Therefore, we are asking for education establishments as well as parents, carers and guardians to help raise awareness and identify anyone who may be at risk so that they can be supported and protected from harm.

There are a number of signs to look for that may indicate someone is involved in organised criminality or County Lines which may include:

- Repeatedly going missing from school or home and being found in other areas
- Decline in school or work performance
- Having money, new clothes or expensive items and they can't explain how they paid for them or where they came from
- Having a new or additional mobile phone(s) given to them by others
- Getting more texts, phone calls or being on social media more than usual and being secretive about who they're speaking to
- Significant changes in emotional or physical well-being
- Being withdrawn from usual activities/routine
- Having injuries that they can't explain how they received them

We are also committed to pursuing and arresting criminals who engage in this activity, so we will always encourage you to report any information on drug or other organised criminality/exploitation, suspicious activity or concerns to us.

There is no one school or education premises in Stoke-on-Trent that is more or less affected by this behaviour and we know that the majority of young and vulnerable people will never be affected by this issue. But, by working together and having these conversations, we can make a real difference, we can protect victims, help potential victims, as well as holding those responsible to account and bringing them to justice.

There are a number of agencies who offer support to those who may be involved in County Lines and their details can be found on our website:

<https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/countylines>. You can also call us on 101 for advice or if it's an emergency, dial 999. Alternatively, you can contact us via LiveChat on our website.

More information can also be found on the Fearless website: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/more-info/crime-types-explained/county-lines>. Fearless is part of Crimestoppers and is a place for young and vulnerable people to make anonymous reports. They can call 0800 555 111 or go online: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless/give-information-anonymously>

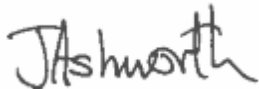
Thank you for your support.

Best wishes,



**Detective Superintendent Nicki Addison**

Head of Major & Organised Crime, Staffordshire Police



**Councillor Jane Ashworth**

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Leader



**Councillor Sarah Jane Colclough**

Cabinet Member for Education and Anti-poverty  
Stoke-on-Trent City Council