



## Crimestoppers campaign highlights the dangers of grooming and County Lines drugs gangs in Lincolnshire

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*Information sent on behalf of **Lincolnshire Police***

Speak out ANONYMOUSLY about criminal gangs exploiting young and vulnerable people in your community.

County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across county boundaries and usually, although not exclusively, by children or vulnerable people who have been coerced by criminal gangs.

The 'County Line' refers to the phone line that is used to take orders for drugs.

A common feature in County Lines drug supply is the use of young and vulnerable people who have been targeted for recruitment and for their ease of exploitation. These young people are often used as drug runners or to move cash, so that they can stay under the radar of law enforcement. Sometimes, these young people are sent to set up a local dealing point, taking over a property of another vulnerable person.

This is referred to as 'Cuckooing'. The person who has had their home cuckooed also becomes exploited and controlled by the criminal gang. They will often be exposed to violence, physical, mental and sexual abuse in order for the drug dealers to use their property to store, cut and sell the drugs.

A vertical poster for Crimestoppers. It features a woman in a black hoodie covering her face with her hands. The text on the poster reads: "Help stop young and vulnerable people being exploited by criminals." followed by "Violence, weapons, drugs, grooming for sex, and modern slavery." and "You can speak up and remain 100% anonymous. Always." At the bottom, it says "crimestoppers-uk.org" and "Crimestoppers. 0800 555111 100% anonymous. Always." The bottom right corner has a purple diagonal graphic.

The young people who are exploited by these gangs often do not realise that they are victims or realise that they have been groomed. They often feel as though they are a part of a 'family' and are being well looked after with gifts of money, clothes and food and payment for jobs they are carrying out. However, it becomes apparent that they are trapped into their new life and leaving seems impossible.

Signs that a young or vulnerable person is being groomed:

- They have a new group of friends
- They start using new language
- They appear to have new clothes, shoes, phones and cash
- They start to skip school
- They become secretive
- Their behaviour changes, maybe they have become emotional, withdrawn, aggressive and they start staying out later, not saying where they go or who with
- They start to appear with unexplained injuries or you think they may have started carrying a weapon

It is only by raising awareness of County Lines and the 3 stages of grooming, Target, Test and Trap, that we are able to help identify those that are in need of help and support to escape a criminal lifestyle or organised criminal group.

Signs that a property may be cuckooed:

- The resident becomes withdrawn and you see them less and less
- There is an increase in traffic to the house, people on foot or cars of people coming to the property all the time
- Increase in rubbish and maybe take away containers
- Increase in anti-social behaviour, more noise
- New people in the area who you have not seen before, maybe they have an accent or are not familiar with the local area.

Some of these signs may lead to someone young and/or vulnerable who is being exploited for criminal gains. Young and vulnerable people are enslaved, trafficked, controlled and coerced into carrying out illegal activities to ensure that others cannot be caught. They have been groomed. They were targeted, they have been tested and now they are trapped.

You CAN help.

Call the police to report information on 101.

If you wish to report information 100% anonymously call the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or complete a simple and secure form at [Crimestoppers-uk.org](http://Crimestoppers-uk.org) or [Fearless.org](http://Fearless.org) for young people

If you or your organisation would like to access further training with regards to the exploitation of young and vulnerable people, please email: [\*\*safeguarding\\_training@lincolnshire.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:safeguarding_training@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

*Message sent by*

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