



# Operation TOPAZ

## Child Exploitation Team

9478 Androulla (Andri) Nicolaou  
Prevention Officer

Twitter: [@Andri35254620](https://twitter.com/Andri35254620)

# Ground rules

---



Avon and Somerset Police  
**OPERATION**  
**TOPAZ**

1. Listening to each other.
2. Respecting each others' opinions.
3. Be honest but do not share in this session any personal stories of your own or of anyone you know.
4. You have the right to pass in discussion.

Disclosure to us- telling us about a crime or a concern about safety.

**If you tell us something that may put you or others at risk of harm we may share that information so that we can help and support you. We cannot keep it a secret.**

# Understanding Children Are Exploited

---



**Child Exploitation normally follows three stages.**

- **Recruitment.** This can take various forms but can be described as a grooming process. ...
- **Control.** This is an essential element in the process as it establishes the dominance of the perpetrator over the victim. ...
- **Exploitation.**



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



# Grooming process

## Target

- Observing children
- Finding out their vulnerabilities, needs and wants
- Gaining and developing trust
- Manipulating children to recruit them
- Glamorising their lifestyle
- Sharing information with others in the group

## Test

- Test out children's loyalty
- Offer them protection
- Give a sense of belonging
- Might create a dependency
- Introduce them to more established members
- Ask for favours
- Ask to recruit others

## Trap

- Experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence
- Trafficking
- Humiliation & control
- Reinforced dependency
- Blackmail
- Debt bondage
- Isolation from family, friends and society

**S**igns that a young or vulnerable person is being groomed:

- They have a new group of friends
- Using new language
- 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- Their behaviour changes, maybe they have become emotional, withdrawn, aggressive and they start staying out after and later not talking about where they go or who with
- Start to appear with unexplained injuries or you think they may have started carrying a weapon

# What is child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of Child Sexual Abuse. It occurs where an individual or a group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or a young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity.

This can mean someone saying you “Owe” them sexual favours because:

- They have given you “Free weed”
- They have given you “Free Alcohol”
- A lift home
- They “Protect” you
- Takes you to Parties
- Being your girlfriend / boyfriend
- They have bought you expensive things



*AFFECTION*



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

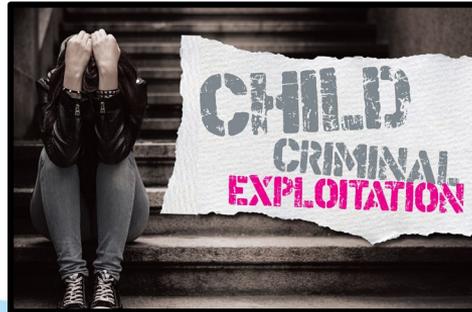
# Understand CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation)

---

Child criminal exploitation is the most common exploitation type within county lines offending, although child sexual exploitation is often present. Both male and females are groomed (recruited) within County Lines.

Controlling children, and very often vulnerable children, and having them at their disposal, gives Urban street gangs a continued work force.

More members of the urban street gang mean more opportunities to perform activities such as drug dealing. The marketplace that the gangs operate in can become overcrowded and saturated resulting in some children being sent away to continue the Gangs work elsewhere, which is referred to as county lines.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

**“Cunch”** is slang for **“country”** (as in **“countryside”**) but can refer to any distant – **often rural** – area where **dealers dispatch** their teenage subordinates to peddle drugs, **out of sight of the city police** and the general public.

‘running a line’,  
‘going OT/out there’  
‘going country’  
‘going cunch’.  
Trapping



CARING



COURAGEOUS



INCLUSIVE



LEARNING

# The truth about county lines...Shhhhhh

---

- People involved in county lines....Don't call it "County Lines"!
- If you are going into a major city you say you are "Going long".
- If you are coming from a major city into a place like Margate you are "Going country"
- "Going country" or "going long" CAN mean moving a phone line along. However, it can also be the movement of drugs, weapons and people.
- How much is your phone worth?
- Drug dealers will rob the people they have sent country to bond them.
- Going country is one of the most profitable jobs within gang culture.
- Almost all young people will have said that they will never "go country", due to how risky it is , before they do.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

- Frequently going missing from school, home, or care.
- Unwilling to explain their whereabouts.
- Suspicion of self-harm, physical assault, or unexplained injuries
- Acquiring money or gifts that can't account for.
- Being found out of area
- Sudden change in behaviour
- Unexplained mobile phone/s
- Excessive receipt of texts or calls

## Signs to look out for



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



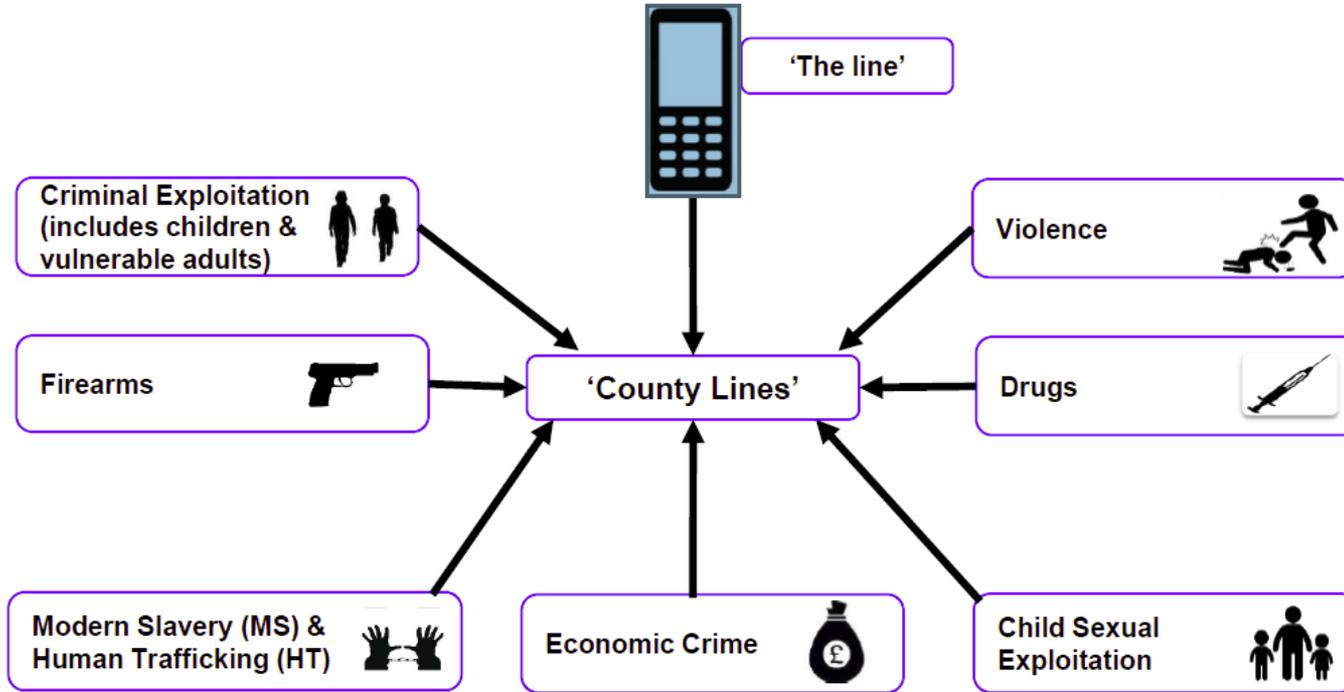
**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Features of 'County Lines'

'County Lines' is not solely a drugs issue as it cross cuts a number of other thematic areas and crime types, including:



# Social Media and County Lines

---

- Drug gangs have long used music videos on YouTube to present gang life as aspirational but in recent years individual gang members across the country have also amassed huge followings on Instagram and Snapchat, becoming social media influencers to young people in their area.
- “When an older gang member – who is often like a local celebrity in their area – is taking the time to like or comment on your photos on Snapchat or Instagram then this is a huge deal to kids. “It’s not hard to make them feel special and singled out. It’s all very public.”
- Snapchat is used heavily as a recruitment channel, with gangs posting clips of children in trap houses with new trainers, piles of money and weapons.
- Once children are recruited, social media is often used to coerce and blackmail them, and track their movements.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



or  
e  
legal  
d.



**CARING**



Trap house in Gloucestershire where teenagers were found by police. Pic credit: Gloucestershire Police

# Money Mules (also known as Squaring)

A money mule is a person who transfers stolen money on behalf of others, usually through their bank account.

Criminals contact people and offer them cash to receive money into their bank account and transfer it to another account.

This person is known as a 'money mule'.

- **Be wary of strangers contacting you on Social Media.**
- **Do not give out your bank account details to anyone. Unless you know and trust them.**
- **Be wary of offers of easy money**



**Banks have systems in place to detect suspicious activity, authorities are then notified.**



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

---

# Criminals need money mules to launder the profits of their crimes.

---



## The Repercussions:

- Your bank account will be closed.
- You will have problems applying for credit
- You will find it hard to access further student loans
- You will find it difficult to get a phone contract
- **YOU COULD GO TO PRISON FOR UP TO 14 YEARS**



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Who is committing these crimes?



## Perpetrators of Child Exploitation may be:

- ❖ An adult or another young person
- ❖ Male or female
- ❖ Any ethnicity
- ❖ Visible in everyday life
- ❖ Articulate, plausible and 'savvy'
- ❖ Gangs
- ❖ It is important to note that not all perpetrators of child sexual exploitation will involve money or gifts when they exploit young people.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

### **MYTH**

Perpetrators of child sexual exploitation are usually older men.

### **FACT**

There is no typical perpetrator, and CSE is often committed by another young person.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

---

Stop County Lines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsN196FjCB4&t=201s>

# Why we don't tell

---

- ❖ We have felt ashamed or embarrassed.
- ❖ We weren't sure how to talk about it or couldn't find a space to.
- ❖ We were worried about how other people might respond and what was going to happen.

***Behaviours should be our disclosures...***

## They may have thought:

- 'I might be seen as *different*.'
- 'This is going to cause problems in my family/community/school.'
- 'I may be taken away from home.'
- 'I don't want the police or social services involved in my life.'
- 'I don't want the abuser to get in trouble' (because of feelings of loyalty, love, fear etc).
- 'I'm going to be blamed.'
- 'Images will be found which I'm embarrassed about.'
- 'I won't be believed.'
- 'I won't be taken seriously.'
- 'He/she is going to hurt or embarrass me or my family or someone else.'



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**

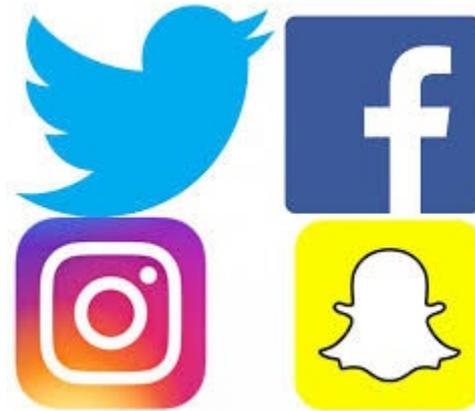


**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Social Media Apps



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# What is Online Exploitation & Grooming

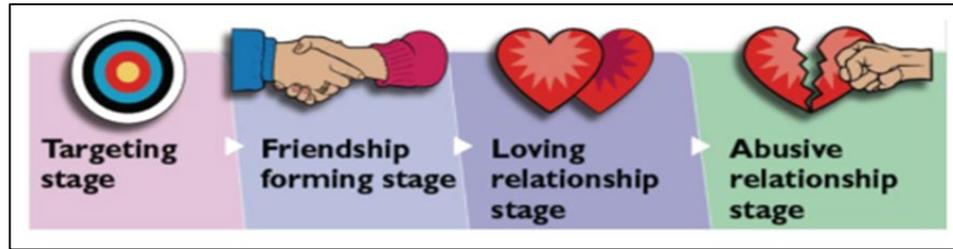


Online Exploitation is when:-

an individual or group using online platforms to take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual and/or criminal activity that can occur both online and offline.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**

Online Grooming – The act of developing a relationship with a child to enable their abuse and exploitation both online and offline.

Online platforms, such as online gaming, social media, messaging and live streaming, can be used to do this.



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



# Drill music - Source or symptom of violence?

"Drill" is a genre of music which originated in the USA in around 2010.

It began to get a mainstream following around 2012.

Drill is characterised by dark, violent lyrical content which some argue promotes violence and criminality.

Therefore it is perhaps unsurprising, given Drills young fan base, that it has been linked to increases in youth violence and gang rivalry.



Many artists wear balaclavas or masks in their videos, and the lyrics often refer to drugs, guns and knives. So the mainstream media and police link the genre with violence and gang rivalry.

Steps have been taken to censor drill in a step to quell youth violence and gang activity. Drill videos are often removed from platforms such as YouTube.

Artists have even received suspended prison sentences for continuing to create and promote material which is deemed to incite violence.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



Exploitation in focus

Drugs

This article is more than 2 years old

## 'County lines' drug gangs tracking children via social media

Warnings on coercion and blackmailing over smartphones went unheeded, say experts, as child exploitation spirals

## NEWS

## Snapchat grooming: Colchester man jailed for sex offences

24 September 2021

Our network



The Sydney Morning Herald

SUBSCRIBE

National Child abuse

This was published 8 months ago

## Aged 10, he was found on Fortnite and groomed on Snapchat, and he's not alone

**The victim is made to feel that they are constantly under surveillance and their every move is being tracked**



## NEWS

Home | Coronavirus | Climate | UK | World | Business | Politics | Tech | Science | Health | Family & Education

England | Local News | Regions | Kent

### News ▸ Liverpool News ▸ Courts

# Dangerous paedophile groomed boy on Snapchat before abuse

John Smith was jailed in 2019 for sending pictures of his penis to three boys on Snapchat



# County lines gang 'recruited teen in 80 minutes via Snapchat'

By Colin Campbell  
BBC South East Special Correspondent

14 April 2021



# Predator said child 'deserved to be raped' after grooming her on Snapchat and WhatsApp

Alexander Dyson has been sentenced to 18 years after a judge said he was dangerous and exploitative



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Self Generated Images

# What is Sexting:

---

**Sexting is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos, primarily between mobile phones, of oneself to others.**

**It may also include the use of a computer or any digital device.**



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# 'self-generated' child sexual abuse material

---



It is illegal for a person under 18 to send explicit images or films of themselves, or of another young person. By sending an explicit image, a young person is producing and distributing child abuse images and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with their permission.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

## The Law:

---

It is an offence for a person to take, distribute, possess, or publish indecent photographs of a child under 18.

This law was created to **protect** young people.



The police work under clear guidance that young people should not be criminalised for sending nude images of **themselves**.

However, it's always wrong to share nude images of another young person without their consent and in cases like this, there is the possibility that the police may get involved.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

A decorative footer consisting of several overlapping blue shapes in various shades, creating a wave-like pattern at the bottom of the page.



If it's an emergency and the crime is still taking place, call **999** and ask for the **police**.



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Reporting a sexual image or video:

---



Child Exploitation and Online Protection  
Command (CEOP)



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**

Working to stop child sexual abuse online  
Anonymously and Confidentially Report  
Child Sexual Abuse Content Online.



**IWF**  
Internet  
Watch  
Foundation



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Reporting a sexual image or video:



Avon and Somerset Police  
**OPERATION  
TOPAZ**

**Child Exploitation and Online Protection  
Command (CEOP)**



**Working to stop child sexual abuse online  
Anonymously and Confidentially Report  
Child Sexual Abuse Content Online.**



**CARING**



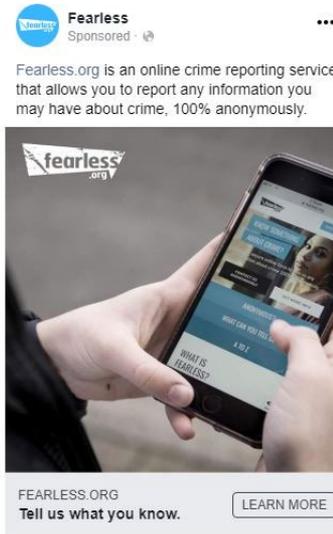
**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# [For more information on the Police, the Law and keeping safe.](#)

Follow our Instagram account.



Avon and Somerset Police  
**OPERATION  
TOPAZ**

