



Dear parent/carer,

During the recent nationwide 'County Lines Awareness' week, Warwickshire Police attended a number of school assemblies in the county aimed at increasing students' knowledge and awareness of issues which can affect them, their friends, and the local community.

Following on from this, the Head Teacher, Mr Lowdell has agreed that we can write to all parents/carers to draw your attention to some local trends which have become apparent, with the aim of preventing even more children becoming involved in this dangerous criminal activity.

The county lines networks are run by highly organised criminal gangs, and they rely on the recruitment of children and young people in the area to transfer drugs from one area/person to another, to hold onto money, and to sell drugs. Children can be recruited by their peers or older teenagers, and recently we have seen teenagers 'giving away free spliffs' at the school gates. It will be friendly at first but this will change. Those who are drawn in, then 'owe' a debt to the line, and can be controlled by threats, violence and abuse, to undertake tasks needed to maintain the county lines. Children and young people who need to protect their stash of drugs may be tempted to carry a knife, and there has been an increase in knife crime countrywide.

Teenagers aged between 14 and 17 are most likely to be exploited by the gangs but children of all ages are at risk.

We would like you to be aware so that you can be vigilant for this kind of activity in your area. If you are concerned about your child or anyone you know, please do contact the Safeguarding Leads at school who can offer support and put you in contact with local social workers and police staff who would be able to help. Children who become involved in county lines are seen as victims and will be supported as such. You can also report to 101, or Crimestoppers anonymously if you prefer.

Please continue reading this letter to find out about things to look out for and to read some common concerns regarding information/intelligence sharing which is invaluable to us in tackling County Lines and exploitation.

Things to look out for:

- Young people talking of being offered food, going out for meals, clothing, or drugs.
- Suspicious activities in open spaces.
- Increase in people entering in leaving local properties which young people may also be seen to frequent.
- Young people using phrases such 'Going Country' or 'OT', going to 'Bando's' or trap house'.
- 'Holding Food' (phrase used for drugs that are to be sold)
- Young people who are using threatening behaviours, making threatening suggestions, carrying or using weapons.



- Young people referring to or associating with a named gang.
- Discussions around people visiting the area, or young people who are travelling to out-of-town areas. This could include young people going on shopping trips to more urbanised areas and having lavish spending, and using money that can't be accounted for.
- An increase in cars or bikes outside.
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour.
- Increasing litter outside.
- Signs of drug use.

'I am not 100%... it was just a gut feeling, I may be wrong...' That's all that's needed. You will not be expected to provide evidence or stand up in court. Intelligence can be a fleeting glance, a suspicion or information that has come third hand.

'I am worried about putting myself or my family at risk of repercussions' When intelligence is uploaded on to the police system the information is sanitised, this means that the source of the information cannot be identified. Your identity will never be revealed. It can be completely anonymous – you can even pass intelligence via Crimestoppers if you do not feel comfortable speaking to the police directly. Crimestoppers will then pass the information to the police.

'What's the point in passing intelligence, the police never do anything about it' You may not see a result from the information you have shared but this does not mean that it is not acted on. It may form part of a wider picture and action may be taken elsewhere. It may add weight to a warrant application and enable the police to take positive action against an address, vehicle or individual. No matter how small or irrelevant it appears it could be essential in the investigation and detection of crime. You do not have to be certain – this is intelligence, not evidence. If you have a suspicion, this is enough.

Thank you for your time,

E. King

S. Underwood

PCSO Ed King and PCSO Sharron Underwood

Warwick Rural East Safer Neighbourhood Team