



Winter 2021

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# Winter Newsletter

## Welcome to our Winter Newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Newsletter.

In this newsletter, we bring together information which we hope you will find useful and highlights how the Partnership continues to communicate and keep in touch with all our agencies, and provide guidance to support you in your role working with children and adults.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued dedication over the past year to ensure the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults in Darlington and wish you all a safe and healthy Christmas.



**Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer**

**James Stroyan, Interim Director of Children and Adult Services**

**Adrian Green, Detective Chief Superintendent**

**Jean Golightly, Director of Nursing and Quality**



# County Lines and Criminal Exploitation



## Definition of Child Criminal Exploitation *(as defined by the Home Office)*

"Child criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology."

## What is Child Criminal Exploitation?

Child Exploitation is not defined in law but is a term that has come to be associated with 'county lines'. Child Criminal Exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved.

Children and young people involved in criminal exploitation are often sent to differing locations within the United Kingdom to carry out tasks for gangs, such as supplying drugs to suburban areas, market and coastal towns; this is known as 'County Lines'.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas using dedicated mobile phones. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons. CCE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity.

## Context

Children who become exploited face huge risks to their physical, psychological and emotional health. There is estimated to be 46,000 children in England thought to be involved in gangs, there is likely to be more. Children as young as six are being forced to carry and sell drugs far away from their homes. 90% of English police forces have seen county lines in their area and the violence is getting worse. Criminal Exploitation has received considerable media coverage in the last year with a particular focus on the risks of county lines activity.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK system for identifying victims of trafficking and is increasingly being used to identify young people exploited through County Lines. In 2020, there were 4946 potential child victims, 47% of all referrals were for individuals who claimed to have been exploited as children.



## Spotting the Signs

Knowing the signs of criminal exploitation can help give a voice to children. A child may not know they are being groomed or exploited and might not speak out. Any child can be groomed into exploitation, though some children may be more at risk, for example children in care and children with disabilities.

Any sudden change in a young person's lifestyle should be discussed with them. It is important to remember the warning signs will be presented differently for each child or young person being exploited. Teens may also behave in a way which could be seen as 'normal teenage behaviour' often masking the exploitation.

Signs that a child or young person is being groomed or exploited into criminal activity or county lines include:

- Significant decline in school performance
- Persistently going missing from school/ home or being found out of area
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Leaving home/care without explanation
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls
- Spending more time online or on their devices
- Unexplained acquisition of money/ clothes/mobile phones and no explanation of how they came by them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Suspicion of self-harm or physical assault/unexplained injuries
- Significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- Relationships with older controlling individuals/ gang association
- Returning home unusually late or staying out all night
- Carrying weapons
- Becoming isolated from peers or social networks

If you are concerned a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you have a concern about a child's welfare, contact the Children's Initial Advice Team to have a conversation with a social worker about your worries on telephone **01325 406252**.

Further information and guidance on exploitation and county lines is available on the [DSP website](#).

Following a recent review under the auspices of County Lines, Criminal Exploitation and Organised Crime, the Partnership recognises there is a lot more to be done to tackle the growing threat of criminal exploitation in Darlington and strengthening partnership working to help protect and safeguard children at risk. This will include raising awareness and development of practice guidance to support those working with children and young people.

## National County Lines Intensification Week – 11 to 17 October 2021

The National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) reported during a national week-long operation on county lines drug dealing carried out by police forces in England and Wales, 2209 vulnerable children were engaged for safeguarding purposes and 139 drug lines were identified and seized.

Click here to read more: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/over-1-400-arrested-in-a-national-week-long-operation-on-county-lines-drug-dealing>

## Children's Themes

### Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care has published a summary of the more than 300 submissions received in response to its Case for Change, which set out the Review's early thinking about what needs to change in the children's social care system in England. The feedback summary shares the messages from answers to questions in each chapter of the Case for Change, highlighting where there is agreement and where views differ.

Read the Report: [The Case for Change: your feedback](#)

### Children and Young People's views

The Children's Commissioner for England has published its findings from The Big Ask survey of children and young people aged 4-17 in England. Responses from 557,077 children and young people show that: 71% of 9-17 year olds and 94% of 6-8 year olds said they were happy with their life overall; 80% of children aged 9-17 were happy or okay with their mental health, but 20% were unhappy, making it the top issue for children; and 80% of 9-17 year olds said they are happy with their family life with 62.5% of children in care or with a social worker in this age group saying they were happy with their family life.

Read the Report: [The big ask: the big answer](#)



### Babies Harmed by Male Carers

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has published a review of the circumstances involved in cases where babies under-one-year-old have been harmed or killed by their fathers or other males in a caring role. Findings include: a range of risk factors were common in many of the cases, a lack of information sharing was a key factor that prevented practitioners from responding to risk to babies, and many services aimed at new parents are predominantly focused on the mother.

Read the report: [Safeguarding children under 1 year old from non-accidental injury](#)

Read the CASPAR briefing: [Summary of "The myth of invisible men": safeguarding children under one from non-accidental injury caused by male carers](#)

### Relationship-Based Practice – CAF/CASS

Cafcass has launched a new practice framework for working with children and their families in court proceedings. The Together with Children and Families framework is based on: looking for strengths and risks, respectful relationships, clear and reasoned decision-making, being child and family centred and listening to and understanding what's important to each child.

Read the Report: Practice [Framework for with children and families in public and private law proceedings](#)

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*"We hope you will find some useful resources for keeping children, young people and adults with needs for care and support safe."*

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## Home Education Survey

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has published their annual elective home education (EHE) survey for England for 2021. The survey aims to capture the number and characteristics of children and young people who are known to be home educated, as well as how local authorities are supporting families who home educate their children. 126 local authorities responded to the survey. Findings include: an estimated 81,196 children and young people were being home educated on the first school census day, 7 October 2021, an increase of 7% from the same school census day in 2020.

Read the Report: [Elective home education survey report 2021](#)

## Modern Slavery

The Home Office has published its 2021 annual report on modern slavery, providing a summary of key developments across the UK in modern slavery in the period from October 2020 to September 2021. The report focuses on work under the five areas of: law enforcement and operational response, prevention, transparency in supply chains, victim support and identification and international engagement and upstream prevention.

Read the Report: [2021 UK annual report on modern slavery](#)

## Coronavirus: Impact on Children

Ofsted has published its annual report, looking at education and children's social care in England in 2020/21. Findings include: disruption caused by the pandemic led some children to develop physical and mental health problems; children were not routinely being seen by teachers, resulting in lower levels of referrals to social care; and some children in care felt less safe due to lockdown restrictions and disrupted relationships with staff. Recommendations include: the lack of capacity in the care system and variability in support for care leavers must be addressed; and support for children at risk of abuse or neglect and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) must quickly return to pre-Covid levels.

Read the Report: [Ofsted annual report 2020/21](#)

## Child Marriage – Change in the Law

In November, MP's voted to ban child marriage in England and Wales at the second reading of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill. The Bill has won government support and once in force, will be a historic change to outdated law that has been in place since before the second world war.

The new law will mean that the minimum age that a marriage can be registered will be 18 years old, with no exceptions and that child marriage (including both civil and religious child marriages) involving under 18 year olds, will be illegal in England and Wales.

Follow it's progress [here](#)



## Adult Themes

### The Health and Care Bill 2021-22

The Health and Care Bill as introduced in July proposes changes to the NHS, CQC gaining regulatory oversight of local authority social care, replacing of CCG's with Integrated Care Boards, and the creation of new NHS body of Health Services Safety Investigation Body (HSSIB).

The Bill has recently completed its passage through the House of Commons and moved to the House of Lords on 7 December, where it is expected to receive great scrutiny. Further updates will be provided once the Bill progresses. Further details on its progress are available on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

### Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)

It is expected there will be 42 statutory ICSs fully operational by April 2022. ICSs bring together NHS, local authority and third sector bodies to take on responsibility for the resources and health of an area or 'system'. Their aim is to deliver better, more integrated care for patients. ICSs will absorb all current CCG's and is expected most CCG staff will transfer to and be employed by the ICS NHS body. There will be one ICB for the North East and North Cumbria region. Further information is available on the [NHS England Website](https://www.nhs.uk).

### Safeguarding Adults COVID-19 Insight Report

Darlington took part in the COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight Project which was developed to create a national picture of adult safeguarding activity during the Pandemic. The final report has now been published and is available [online](#).

### Stop Loan Sharks

Families are being warned not to turn to predatory loan sharks charging excessive amounts of interest if they are facing financial hardship over Christmas. Research shows that Christmas is the second highest reason that people borrow money from loan sharks. The [England Illegal Money Lending Team \(IMLT\)](#) have launched their Christmas campaign which aims to raise awareness of the dangers of using loan sharks and promote the support available to victims and their families.



## Virtual Training

### **Are you aware of all of the safeguarding training on offer by Darlington Safeguarding Partnership?**

The Partnership has a wide range of safeguarding training available, designed to improve your safeguarding knowledge and understanding and ultimately improve your practice in keeping both children and adults safe.

All training offered is set out on the DSP website, which has recently been improved to enable easier access and availability of courses. Sessions are available up until the end of June 2022 and in line with current guidance will continue to be delivered virtually.

E-learning continues to form an important element of the training offer and you can access a number of courses including Level 1 child and adult safeguarding awareness, Prevent Strategy, Mental Capacity Act (for 16 & 17 Year olds) and MAPPA awareness. There are also a number of alternative free training resources available.

A multi-agency partnership briefing on Domestic Abuse has been developed which sets out the new protections under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, you can watch the briefing via YouTube video.

The Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) training delivered by RESPECT has been extended into January 2022. The one day session is aimed at professionals who have contact with children, young people and families in a range of settings to increase their ability to recognise CAPVA, to understand the dynamic involved and provide the confidence to approach the subject of CAPVA with families.

More training courses and podcasts will be added throughout the year including video podcasts which will be designed to share key messages from case reviews. To view all our training on offer, including details of how to book, visit the [DSP website](#).

## Partnership Working Behind the Scenes

The Partnership has finalised its governance arrangements which have been accepted by the Statutory Safeguarding Partners. The new arrangements will see two strategic sub groups the Learning and Development (L&D) and Quality Assurance and Performance Management Groups (QAPM) and two Operational Groups feeding into them, one for children and one for adults. This will enable the strategic groups to take a coordinated view and identify opportunities for learning and improve and embed the quality of multi-agency practice as well as monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of partner agencies by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of safeguarding arrangements. The two operational groups will focus on operational and practice issues and escalate any concerns to the QAPM or L&D groups.

New terms of reference have been developed for each of the groups and membership is currently being reviewed to ensure the right people are sitting on the right groups and the business unit has been approaching partner agencies for confirmation of membership. The new arrangements will become effective from January 2022 and will be published on the DSP website in due course

## Lessons Learnt Research Digest

Every quarter, the DSP produce a Lessons Learnt Research Digest bulletin to share messages from recently published Serious Case Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and local lessons learnt. The cases identify lessons to be learnt to improve learning and develop practice across multi-agencies to safeguard children and young people, and adults with need for care and support.

Read the latest issue here; [DSP Learning Research Digest issue 4](#)



Goodbye and farewell to Joyce Bowler, the Safeguarding Partnership's Business Support Officer, who is retiring at the end of December. We wish Joyce all the very best for her retirement in this new chapter of her life.

If you have any questions or queries on any items in the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Business Unit staff;

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### Here for You

On behalf of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners, a huge thank you to each and every person who will spend the festive period away from their loved ones, by keeping some of the most vulnerable people in our own communities safe.

We would love to hear how we can continually improve our communications and engagement with our partners. If you wish to share any articles or good news stories or have any comments or suggestions for the next publication, please drop the Business Unit an email; [DSP@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:DSP@darlington.gov.uk)

The Partnership is committed to publishing a Newsletter 4 times a year. The next publication will be issued in Spring 2022.

**Are you concerned about a child?**

Contact the Children's Initial Advice Team

Professionals on 01325 406252, Public on 01325 406222 or Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team on 01642 524552.

**Are you concerned about an adult?**

Contact the First Point of Contact Team

on 01325 406111 or the Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team on 01642 524552.

