



APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults

Briefing report on the roundtable on children
who go missing and are criminally exploited
by gangs

March 2017

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Introduction

Children and young people who go missing from home or care are at serious risk of being targeted for involvement in gangs, trafficking, criminalisation, sexual exploitation and violence¹.

Recognising the risk at the time child is reported as missing and offering a child appropriate support on return may prevent the situation escalating and further exploitation of vulnerable children and young people.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Missing and Runaway Children and Adults decided to bring together experts in the field to discuss how these vulnerable children can be better protected.

The aim of the round table was to develop better understanding of this type of exploitation, the links with missing and the responses from professionals to this vulnerable group. The goal was to develop a number of recommendations for changes needed to improve those responses.

This APPG's Inquiry² into safeguarding of absent children, held in 2016, highlighted how risks of grooming for criminal exploitation by gangs are not routinely identified when a child is reported missing to the police and how children, particularly boys, get categorised as being at 'no apparent risk' and left without response until the risks escalate.

Worryingly, vulnerable children and young people who are trafficked and exploited by gangs to distribute drugs are still too often perceived to have 'made a choice' and are therefore criminalised rather than safeguarded and recognised as victims of the gangs who control them. The needs of children targeted by gangs and risks to their safety and wellbeing are not recognised by professionals responding to children who go missing.

Patterns of grooming of children for criminal exploitation are very similar to those of sexual exploitation. In the past, child sexual exploitation was often perceived amongst professionals as the victim's fault, or due to their risky behaviour³. We believe that in some areas of the UK a similar culture currently exists around criminal exploitation by gangs. It is important that professionals start seeing young people who are involved in gangs as potential victims of exploitation or trafficking and that all young people under 18 are considered children, are treated as such, and are safeguarded by society.

Building on learning around child sexual exploitation

At the roundtable it was broadly agreed that children who are being exploited in gangs deserve a similar response to those who are being sexually exploited (CSE).

Over the past five years, public and professional understanding of CSE has greatly improved and a number of safeguarding responses and checks have been put into place to intervene when a child is at risk or has been exploited.

¹ Running the Risks (2016)

² Inquiry into the safeguarding of 'absent' children (2016)

³ Child sexual exploitation and the response to localised grooming (2013)

Children who are exploited and groomed for criminal purposes are equally as deserving of support. The language of 'criminal exploitation' is rarely understood and therefore those affected are not offered the same response. All forms of exploitation should be considered in the same way, with an understanding of grooming and vulnerability.

The learning and best practice in place around CSE should be extended to include victims of all forms of exploitation.

Even where children are identified as vulnerable the response is often not appropriate to the situation and intervention is not successful. These issues are further compounded when involved agencies don't work together effectively, which undermines the efficacy of the intervention⁴. This leads to the child or young person continuing to be exploited and becoming further embedded within gang activity.

The roundtable took place on 16 March 2017 and was attended by:

- Ann Coffey MP – Chair of the APPG
- Sarah Newton MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism
- Baroness Sally Hamwee – APPG Member
- T/Superintendent Steve Cox – The National Police Chiefs Council
- Councillor Joe Caluori – Islington Council
- Commander Tim Champion – The National Police Chiefs Council
- Lisa Pascoe – Ofsted
- Rhiannon Sawyer – The Children's Society
- Dominic Clout – Camden Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Zoe Hilton – CEOP Command, National Crime Agency
- Andrew Mason – National Crime Agency
- Wayne Jones – Home Office
- Anna Strudwick – Home Office
- Iryna Pona – The Children's Society
- Lisa Witherden – Safer London
- Lucy Capron – The Children's Society
- Josie Allan – Missing People

The meeting was also attended by two mothers, whose sons have been exploited by gangs, and a young person, supported by The Children's Society, who has experienced criminal exploitation. Their names will not be given to protect their anonymity.

This report outlines the key issues that were highlighted in research, a literature review and by the participants at the round table. The content is structured around areas of recommendation.

⁴ Benefits and challenges in tackling gang and youth violence (2015)

Prevention and early response

Gang exploitation is not limited to London, or even just to the larger cities in the UK. Services across the country have been in contact with children who have gone missing and are involved in gangs⁵.

Due to limited intelligence, it is difficult to confirm the true scale of the problems between gangs and missing. In a 2016 National Crime Agency Briefing Report, 80% of areas asked reported exploitation of children by gangs. Ages ranged from 12-18 years, with 15-16 year olds being exploited most frequently. Males were most commonly exploited by gangs, but in 50% of responses females were also found to be exploited and groomed by criminal gangs⁶.

Children and young people are at risk of significant harm when exploited by gangs. Therefore, prevention of children being groomed and exploited in this context should be seen as the top priority for local and national decision makers. This prevention activity may focus on two key issues: educating children of the risks and therefore encouraging them to identify and not engage with potential groomers and exploiters; and identifying and providing timely support to children at risk to prevent their later exploitation or entrenchment within a gang.

Education

Currently children receive little or no education to help them understand criminal exploitation and the associated risks. Where some education is provided it mainly focusses on risks of sexual exploitation. This makes children ill equipped to identify when they are being groomed and exploited by gangs for criminal purposes. The recent introduction of mandatory relationship and sex education through the Children and Social Work bill offers a fantastic opportunity to ensure that children from primary through to secondary education are made aware of different types of grooming and exploitation.

The young person speaking at the meeting identified that children need to be informed of the risks of being criminally exploited.

Practitioner: *"What type of support could be given to young people under the age of 16?"*

Young person: *"Just knowledge."*

She explained that she would never have suspected that she could be vulnerable to predators in her peer group, who may themselves have been groomed, and therefore was not equipped to stay safe.

The young person later went on to explain that children as young as eight or nine are regularly being groomed and exploited by gangs. Although we acknowledge that all education should be age-appropriate, it is clearly important for information about these risks to be given to children at a young age, ensuring that prevention does not come too late.

The participants of the roundtable heard that any child can be groomed for criminal exploitation. It affects boys and girls, children from families that experience a range of issues as well those from stable and economically better off families. Some children are initially approached by their peers,

⁵ Running the Risks (2016)

⁶ County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply (2016)

who have also been groomed and exploited, which can make it even harder for them to identify the risks without prior education.

Grooming children into gangs relies on unhealthy, coercive relationships, so it is important that criminal exploitation, along with the risks of going missing, is included on the curriculum. It is important not only to help children identify when they themselves or their friends are being targeted but also to give them information how to seek help and what help may be available.

Return Interviews

Statutory guidance on children who runaway or go missing from home or care states that all children who go missing should be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘safe and well check’ by the police– either before they ran away or whilst missing;
- Identify underlying risks to the child, which may not previously have been disclosed, therefore ensuring that agencies can put the right support and safeguarding in place and improve future risk assessments;
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away;
- Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away;
- Provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

Return Interviews are one of the most appropriate tools to ensure that risks of criminal exploitation are identified and effective early intervention is made. They may also serve as an important source of intelligence on the risks to children in a geographical area and thereby allow the police and other safeguarding professionals to protect other children from exploitation. Although the potential for this preventative tool is great, there are currently significant issues with its implementation.

Currently, return interviews provision across the country is inconsistent. This APPG’s inquiry into safeguarding absent children showed that not all local authorities offer return interviews to all children who go missing. Children who are categorised by the police as absent and children missing from out of area care placements are particularly affected by poor return interviews provision.

In addition, a wide variety of professionals currently may deliver these interviews across the country, from in house provision by social workers to provision through independent voluntary sector organisations. There is little guidance and consistency around the necessary training and content of the interviews. Any organisation or service delivering return interviews should be aware of, and be able to effectively identify, the risks of criminal exploitation. There should then be a clear pathway for sharing this information and referring the child to appropriate support, therefore preventing them from becoming further entrenched in gang activity. These issues are currently not covered by the statutory guidance on missing children.

The roundtable heard that children who have been groomed to take part in criminal activity are unlikely to talk to the police about their exploitation due to mistrust, fear of the consequences for themselves or their families, or because they have been given instructions by adults who groom and threaten them not to share any information. There was a consensus about this amongst the mothers of gang-exploited boys, the young person and the frontline practitioners in attendance.

Each child's experiences and opinions will vary so it is important that they are offered a return interview with someone that they trust and feel comfortable with, whether this is a trained professional from an independent organisation, a social worker or a police officer. Ensuring the interview is provided by a suitably trained professional that the child trusts offers an opportunity for them to disclose important information that can help with early identification of exploitation and offers of support.

At the meeting it was acknowledged that even when a child is offered a return interview, the realities of grooming may mean that they don't feel they need help; that they can't talk to anyone; or they may be afraid to talk about what is happening to them. The roundtable participants discussed that more thinking needs to be done around how to engage with this vulnerable and often disengaged group. Further research on this topic would be hugely valuable.

Risk Assessments

Going missing may be an early warning sign of gang exploitation. Ineffective risk assessments for early missing episodes can lead to delays in finding a child safely and prevent the provision of appropriate help to them and their family. There is very little research available into what makes an effective risk assessment at the time a child is reported as missing, which was acknowledged in the APPG inquiry into safeguarding absent children.

New Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on responding to missing persons has discontinued the use of a separate absent category and instead introduced a new 'no apparent risk category'. This new category is very similar in its definition to 'absent' which, as the latest NCA data analysis on missing persons shows, was disproportionately applied to cases of missing boys⁷, likely including those who were criminally exploited. Children are often perceived to be at lower risk or 'no apparent risk' because the risks to them are not known when the police are making the assessment. The use of the 'no apparent risk' category can contribute to a failure in identifying exploitation. It is therefore vital that these children still receive an active response, including a return interview to explore what happened and whether they were in fact at risk of harm.

Effective risk assessments are not only the responsibility of the police. Care givers, schools and any other agencies involved should provide relevant information wherever possible. This APPG has previously recommended that for any risk assessment to be effective it needs to be done jointly by the police and children's services. This roundtable has further supported the importance of this.

⁷ Missing Persons Data Report 2015/16

Recommendations:

- The Department for Education should ensure the risks of grooming and exploitation for criminality should be included on the curriculum for healthy relationships and taught in both primary and secondary schools. The government consultation on the Relationships and Sex curriculum must take this into account.
- The Home Office should develop educational resources for children and young people on the risks of criminal exploitation and county lines. Resources for parents and carers should also be made available.
- Local authorities should ensure that high quality return interviews are being offered to every child after every missing incident. The child should be offered a choice of professionals undertaking that interview and everyone who delivers them should have a good understanding of criminal exploitation.
- The Department for Education should consult on and revise the relevant statutory guidance on young runaways and children missing from home and care to include information about the links between criminal and gang exploitation and missing. The revised guidance should also take into account the new 'no apparent risk' definition, to ensure that children at all risk levels receive a return interview, to ensure the risks they face are fully understood.
- The Home Office and the Department for Education should write to all local authorities and police forces to clarify that all agencies involved with an at-risk child should have effective information sharing protocols on missing children in place to inform effective risk assessments and ensure appropriate referrals.
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care should be updated to include more detailed guidance on looked after children placed out of area due to the risks of gang involvement, to ensure that appropriate care planning and notifications are taking place. Care plans for these children should include multi-agency planning of what needs to happen if they go missing. All agencies should agree a minimum response and how they will coordinate.
- When a looked after child is being moved to an out of area placement because of gang exploitation the responsible local authority should notify the police in the host authority area of the risks to the child and their vulnerability.
- The College of Policing should include further information in its Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on responding to missing persons to ensure that the risk of criminal exploitation is included in risk assessment questions when a child goes missing. The APP also needs to provide guidance on responses to 'absent' or 'no apparent risk' categories. The guidance should state that where risk of criminal exploitation is assessed the case should always be categorised as high risk.
- The Home Office should work with the police, local authorities and the voluntary sector to develop a risk assessment tool for county lines which can be made available to all police and local authorities.

Problem profiling

There is currently little consistency in the collection of information relating to missing episodes linked to gang exploitation. Improvements in this practice would have the dual benefit of increasing understanding of the issue which can inform strategic approach, as well as supporting investigative work into individuals and gang activity at the local level, thereby safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.

These mapping exercises could feed into the preventative work mentioned above by informing where targeted education could make the most impact.

At the roundtable meeting we heard about the recent mapping work being done by Islington Council:

In response to the National Crime Agency report on County Lines they undertook to understand the issue in their area and assess the risks for children and young people living there.

They cross referenced data concerning out of borough arrests, missing incidents and information from youth and social workers to build a partial picture of the problem.

Now working with nineteen other boroughs to extend mapping and encourage a more consistent approach to policing any 'County Lines' which can be uncovered by mapping.

The introduction of the national missing persons register in 2018 could have a significant impact on how information about missing people is shared and accessed. How the register will be used is still unconfirmed but there would be significant value in including exploitation or trafficking markers which would flag concerns to the responding police officer, thereby improving the effectiveness of the risk assessment and response.

Recommendations:

- Police forces and local authorities should work together to effectively map missing episodes relating to gang exploitation, including county lines in their area. Islington Council's report (included at the end of this report) can be used as a model.
- The Home Office should ensure that the planned national register for missing persons should include a number of functions to enable earlier and better response to children who go missing because of gang exploitation. This should include markers for potential exploitation/internal trafficking.

Disruption and Intervention

Child Abduction Warning Notices

There are currently few tools available to the police to disrupt exploitation by gangs, which in turn means that they are often unable to prevent repeat missing episodes.

One suggestion at the meeting was the increased understanding and use of Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs). These notices can be issued against individuals who are suspected of grooming children by stating that they have no permission to associate with the named child and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act 1989. They have largely been used when sexual exploitation is suspected, however, their use is not limited to sexual exploitation cases and they can be used to disrupt grooming for criminality. Attendees at the roundtable meeting stated that there is inconsistent use and awareness of CAWNs. It has also been highlighted that CAWNs cannot be applied in cases of 16 and 17 year olds who go missing.

The argument against using CAWNs in this situation was also voiced at the meeting. The issues stem from the fact that breaching the conditions of the notice does not automatically mean an offence has been committed. Therefore, if used regularly in situations where prosecution is unlikely, it could dilute the impact of such notices.

The roundtable discussion focussed on the need to build on positive elements of CAWNs, such as speed at which they can be issued, ability to issue CAWNs on information supplied by parents or those with safeguarding responsibilities and the ability to use that information later as evidence in court. Yet it was mentioned that any future CAWNs or recommended alternative notices should include a pathway of escalation to other statutory instruments such as SRO or Modern Slavery injunctions, breach of which can result in a person being prosecuted for grooming or trafficking. The development of a list of alternative civil orders which could help in disrupting grooming for criminality was suggested as a better alternative.

National Referral Mechanism

There was concerted agreement from everyone around the table that children who are criminally exploited should not be seen and treated as criminals. There was also an acknowledgement that, although the important national policies and legislative provisions have been put in place to deal with people who exploit others through trafficking or modern slavery, the knowledge and implementation of national policies on the ground remain very patchy.

One particular mechanism that can be used to identify and protect children from criminal exploitation mentioned in the meeting is the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The NRM is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

Children who have been missing and exploited to take part in criminal activity, for example carrying and dealing drugs across different areas, are victims of trafficking.

Practitioners at the roundtable meeting highlighted that many professionals working with vulnerable young people do not know about the NRM, and even less are likely to understand that it can be used in the context of gang or criminal exploitation.

One attendee felt that, when NRM referrals were made, there was often an atmosphere of victim blaming and therefore children's vulnerable, exploited status was not taken seriously.

NRM referrals sometimes come too late and therefore the victims of exploitation and trafficking do not get the support they deserve, but instead are criminalised.

Ofsted's Role

Ofsted inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

As part of existing inspections of services and schools they could play a role in ensuring that they are delivering an effective and joined-up response for children who have been missing and are suspected to be victims of criminal trafficking.

The 2016 'Time to Listen' Joint Targeted Area Inspections found significant improvements in the multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation in many areas, including mapping the issue, education and support. The spotlight of these joint inspections encourages Local Authorities and all the other services involved to fulfil statutory guidance commitments and work innovatively to combat an issue.

Ofsted include 'deep dive' investigations in their targeted inspections. This is an evaluation of the experiences of children and young people at risk of a specific type (or types) of harm. A 'deep dive' investigation focussing on gangs and criminal exploitation could be invaluable in better understanding the issue and the response of Local Authorities and services. This could also encourage a national conversation about the wider forms of grooming and exploitation, beyond CSE.

When a child or young person returns from a missing episode and has been identified as at risk, or as a victim, of exploitation there should be a robust and specialist response. Further discussion and recommendations can be found later in this report.

The roundtable heard how children in out of area care placements are also affected by being targeted for criminal exploitation. There is a need to consider how the risk of going missing because of criminal exploitation is addressed by local authorities placing children out of area.

Recommendations

- The College of Policing should update the guidance on Child Abduction Warning Notices to ensure it is clear in what context they can and should be used and to clarify what should happen in the case that a CAWN is breached.
- The Crown Prosecution Service should produce a list of civil orders which can be used for disruption purposes, this should be disseminated with clear guidance. Any future instruments should protect all children up to the age of 18.
- The Home Office should update the guidance on the National Referral Mechanism to include clear information on referrals of children targeted for criminal exploitation. Any reviews of the NRM should include understanding of gang-associated trafficking.
- The Home Office and the DFE Ministers should consider writing a joint communication to local authorities and police chiefs to raise awareness of the NRM as a mechanism to identify and protect vulnerable children, and the importance of referring children who are targeted for criminal exploitation
- Ofsted should routinely include the response to missing episodes related to gang or criminal exploitation as a category of need in future inspections. This should include reviewing the multi-agency response.
- Ofsted jointly with other inspectorates should consider a joint targeted area inspection into wider forms of exploitation, including criminal exploitation by gangs.

Specialist support and guidance

Statutory Guidance

Statutory guidance on children who go missing from home or care was last updated in 2014.

Although it does mention the risks associated with gang exploitation, it does not go far enough to represent the significant links between missing and gangs, or outline effective responses to this issue.

Specialist Support

Victims of any type of grooming and exploitation are likely to need specialist intervention and support. At the roundtable we heard from the mothers of two boys who had been exploited, both agreed that their children had become unresponsive to offers of support from a wide variety of different professionals. The young person added that it had been a negative experience to have multiple professionals involved, none of which she felt really cared about her.

Youth Support Services were triggered by the missing episode, but this failed as my son refused to engage with them, as was to be expected. Yet this was read as a complete failure by him to accept help or support by all those involved. The service was inevitably withdrawn so the YSS resource could be directed elsewhere.

Mother of an exploited young man

When a child has been missing and criminal exploitation is suspected there should be a clear pathway for referral to specialised services. These services should focus on engaging the child, building relationships and trust and supporting them to make safe choices for themselves, this in turn could prevent them from going missing again in the future.

Children who have been exploited by gangs are likely to have specific needs. Support for this group needs to not only address the emotional and practical impact of grooming and exploitation, but also provide appropriate advice and help for safely exiting gangs.

"We don't need different professionals... we don't need loads of people... it's not even about quantity, it's about the quality of work that you deliver to young people."

Young person

Coordinated Response

As mentioned above, where possible young people should be referred to specialist services who can provide intensive support. However, it is likely that a number of different professionals will be involved when a young person is being exploited. In this case it is vital that those services work together and coordinate their activity.

By working in partnership services can ensure that effective risk assessments are made when a child goes missing; that information which could help with them being found quickly and safely is shared; and that the resulting intervention is as effective as possible.

"It became so frustrating as all services that were assigned to working with my son in this period... were all working as separate entities – with this came, on many occasions, lack of communication, oversight or duplication of what was meant to be done or not take place, this caused me great distress."

Mother of an exploited young man

Training

There have been great improvements in the response to child sexual exploitation, both in the services available and the attitudes of police officers and professionals. This work should be extended to include all forms of grooming and exploitation.

Guidance on how to recognise and support children who have been missing and are victims of exploitation in gangs should be included in police Authorised Professional Practice. There should be a particular focus on preventing further exploitation and criminalisation.

Training around CSE which is currently available for practitioners coming into contact with vulnerable children should be further developed for this purpose.

"Outside London, there appears to be a serious lack of awareness of gang exploitation as well as County Lines. Police forces with no exposure to gangs and therefore no gang units are not equipped to spot the warning signs and when they do, they are still failing to adequately respond. This then influences the responses of other agencies and the burden on the parents becomes even greater to prove the grooming."

Mother of an exploited young man

Recommendations:

- The Department for Education should update statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care to highlight the links between missing and gangs or exploitation for criminality.
- The Department for Education should update statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care to include guidelines on how to respond to children who go missing as a result of being coerced into criminal exploitation, taking into account the unique difficulties related to this issue.
- Local authorities should ensure that all children who are being exploited have access to specialist support. Existing practice for working with victims of sexual exploitation should be extended to include awareness of criminal exploitation; or specialist gang exit and support services should be available.
- Local Authorities should ensure that all professionals who work with children and young people are trained to understand gang and criminal exploitation. The training should cover referral pathways to appropriate support and protection for those children most at risk.
- The College of Policing training on vulnerability should include information about missing and exploitations in gangs.

“My son became involved in a gang where he was exploited to sell class A drugs at the age of 14 in 2012, I didn't know what to do or who to call.”

Mother of an exploited young man

Young people who are groomed into drug running by adults are being exploited in the same way as those who are enticed into sexual activity. They too are vulnerable and need our support.

We need a greater understanding and awareness of this kind of criminal exploitation of children and better training to ensure it is recognised and prevented at an early stage. Once a child is criminalised it is very hard to get them back to the other side of the law.

Ann Coffey MP

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults is chaired by Ann Coffey MP. Missing People and The Children's Society jointly act as the group's secretariat.

If you have any queries about this report please don't hesitate to contact:

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County Lines Analysis for Islington

April 2017

Farah Dadabhoy, Gangs and Child Sexual Exploitation Analyst.

Islington County Lines Profile

Introduction & Purpose

County lines are now a national issue, and is one of the priorities for the Home Office funded Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) programme. The purpose of this report is to provide information on how Islington collates and analyses information relating to the county line problem. In this profile I have also provided key findings on the county lines problem.

Definition

The National Crime Agency define a 'county lines' as a situation where an individual, or more frequently a group, establishes and operates a telephone number in an area outside of their normal locality in order to sell drugs directly to users at street level. This generally involves a group from an urban area expanding their operations by crossing one or more police force boundaries to more rural areas, setting up a secure base and using runners to conduct day to day dealing.

A more simplified definition used by Safer London is as follows: **County lines, or 'going country' means groups or gangs using young people or vulnerable adults to carry and sell drugs from borough to borough, and across county boundaries. It is a tactic used by groups or gangs to facilitate the selling of drugs in an area outside of the area they live, reducing their risk of detection.**

Data Sources

Information for those individuals involved in county lines has been identified from the following sources:

- Arrests in county police force areas
- Stops of gang matrix subject in other police force areas – if a matrix subject is cross checked on the Police National Computer (PNC), it prompts the officer to email Islington Gangs Unit.
- Merlin reports
- Police intelligence systems
- Missing persons debriefs and strategy meeting minutes

Data Collation and analysis

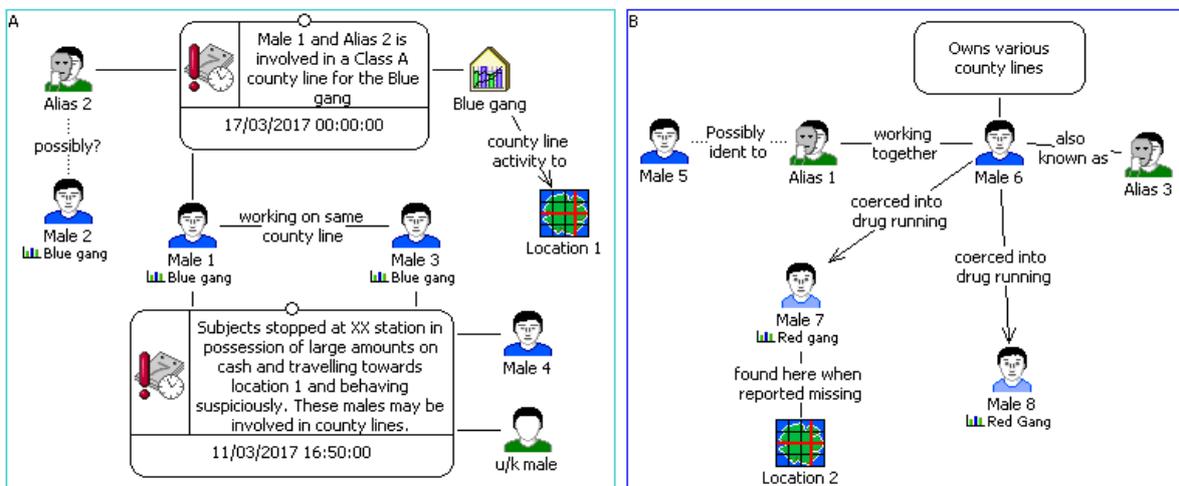
Data from all these sources are collated onto a spreadsheet, with the following information:

- Source/Reference of the intelligence/report,
- Month & year of intelligence/report,
- Name of subject
- Date of birth of subject,
- Current age of subject,
- Age of subject at intelligence/report date,

- Gender of subject,
- If subject has been reported missing (usually applies to under 18s)
- Which county police force the county line activity has been linked to
- Exact address/town subject has been linked to/found,
- Easting & Northing of town (to enable mapping),
- Gang name (if affiliated to any)
- Details of county line activity (e.g. subject was arrested with..., intelligence states that subject owns a county line to... etc.).

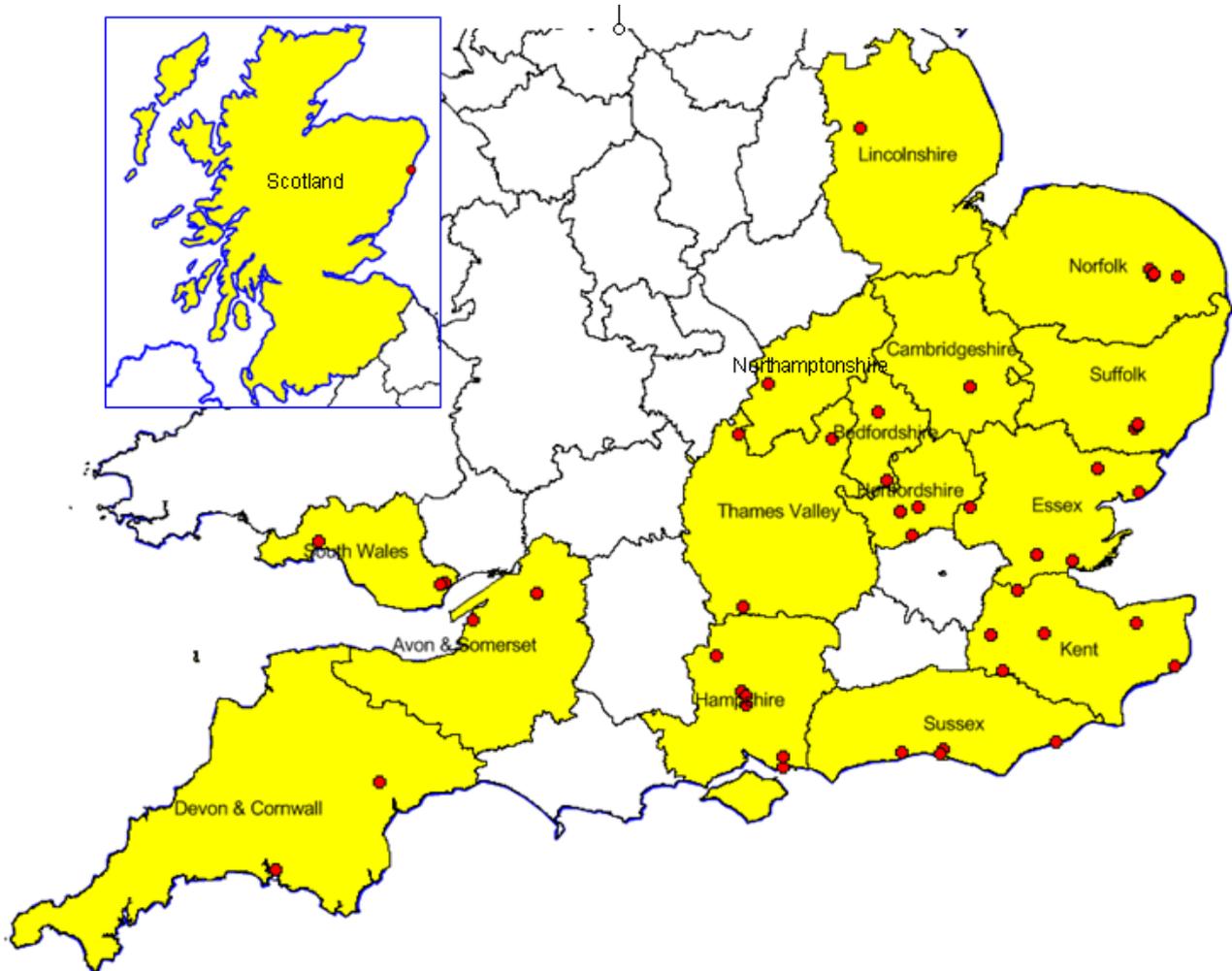
In addition to this spreadsheet, the data from the reports are used to create link charts as this provides an easier to understand picture of the complex nature of county lines.

An example of such a link chart is below:



Scale of County Lines

The maps below show where there was county lines activity with individuals linked to Islington across the United Kingdom. A total of 14 county police forces have had Islington subjects linked to county lines activity.



Of note, all these locations are not county lines all originating from Islington, but ones that Islington subjects have been involved in.

One main finding is that Islington subjects have been found/arrested with other subjects that are from other London boroughs. Due to this, it is difficult to say there is a defined county line 'owned' by individuals from Islington. This profile includes all individuals linked to Islington or Islington gangs regardless of who the line is 'owned' by.

Individuals who have been arrested for drug supply related offences are often found in "bandos". This refers to a vulnerable drug users address in the county, which have been taken over and is used as a base for the drug dealing operation locally.

Individuals Profile

Age range of subjects ranges from 14 years to 32 years with a peak around 15 - 17 years. Forty-five percent of individuals were aged under 18 when they were identified as linked to county lines.

The majority of individuals identified are males. There has been an increase in the number of females who have been identified, but these numbers are very small in comparison to the number of males.

Links to missing episodes

Catch 22 have investigated the link between gang involvement and young people going missing.¹ They state that exploitation and coercion are overarching themes linking all the factors pushing or pulling gang-involved children and young people to run away. Overt coercion affects young people at the same time as far more subtle exploitation through the 'pull' factors of money, affection and status.

There has been a number of incidences where individuals have been arrested/found in a county and it transpires that the young person's family have not reported them missing.

Recruitment

Through intelligence, three methods of recruiting have been identified in Islington:

- Offer of cash for one / two weeks work. This lifestyle appears to be glamorous to many young people on the borough.
- Young people are forced into drug running with threats of kidnap and violence.
- Young people are working to pay back a debt owed to the gang / gang member.

Travel

There are three main modes of transport documented:

- Travelling on trains
- Over 18s using rental cars
- Young people being picked up and driven by adults to the county locations.

Anecdotal evidence

Whilst researching county lines, information was gathered following conversations with St. Giles Workers and officers from county police forces that have seen Islington subjects operating in their area. Key highlights include:

- Thames Valley Police noticed that when one of the county line gangs is involved in a violent incident (due to them taking over the drug market from other dealers), they will move out of the area and set up in another town until the focus on them calms down before returning a few months later. Due to this adaptable nature of county lines, the analysis of this can very easily become very complicated.

¹ <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Catch22-Dawes-Unit-Running-The-Risks-full-report.pdf>

- Kent police stated that gangs gain access to bank accounts of young people associated with the gang to transfer money earned in the counties to London, sending smaller amounts through the accounts.
- The gangs sometimes recruit local young people or drug users from the county to work for them
- There is sometimes the promise of money to individuals recruited in the home borough but they are not always paid. It is unknown how common this is.

Further research

- More information and research on this issue can be found on: County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply 2016

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/753-county-lines-gang-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2016/file>

- NCA Intelligence Assessment: County Lines, Gangs, and Safeguarding

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/620-NCA-Intelligence-Assessment-County-Lines-Gangs-and-Safeguarding/file>

- County Lines: what do I need to know?

<http://saferlondon.org.uk/2016/09/county-lines-i-need-know/>

Contact details for further information and feedback.

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