Working in partnership against county lines + “Cuckooing”

Presented by Chief Inspector Steve O’Keeffe
Safeguarding Command.
Today's session

- County Lines exploitation
- What is a gang
- Gang dynamics
- Cuckooing – vulnerable adult focus - methods of recruitment
- Police initiatives, responses and successes
- What part do you play?
Fentanyl drug deaths rise by nearly a third in England and Wales. Fentanyl has been found mixed with street heroin, causing accidental overdose in users. The drug can be up to 100 times stronger than heroin and is sometimes prescribed as a painkiller for the terminally ill.

Cocaine deaths have reached their highest numbers since records began.

Almost one in three drugs overdoses in Europe are recorded in the UK.

Knife crime incidents in Hertfordshire increased 150 per cent from 2014 to 2017.
What is County Lines Exploitation

“County Lines” is the police term for urban gangs that have expanded their areas of influence by supplying drugs to suburban and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines”, thereby expanding their market share.

It involves Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.

Gangs establish a base in the market location; typically using force or coercion to take over the homes of local vulnerable adults. This practice is referred to as ‘cuckooing’.

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons.

What is a Gang

A gang is defined as consisting of at least 3 individuals, which are predominantly street based young people. The gang will have one or more collective characteristics that enable its members to be defined as a group. The gang will engage in a range of criminal activity, will often be violent, lay claim to territory and will engage in conflict with other gangs. They will exploit vulnerable individuals to support their criminal goals.
• Gangs will exploit vulnerable individuals to support their criminal goals often “cuckooing” the addresses of the vulnerable.

**What is Cuckooing”?**
• Cuckooing is the term used when gangs establish a base in the location they are targeting, often taking over the homes of vulnerable adults by force or coercion.

**How to spot the signs that cuckooing might be happening in your neighbourhood:**
• Lots of different people coming and going from an address during the day and at night.
• Suspicious smells coming from the property.
• Windows covered or curtains closed all of the time.
• Cars pulling up to or near to the house for a short period of time.
• An increase in anti-social behaviour around the property.
• Unwillingness to allow professional to complete home visits
  - Full or Part disclosure
  - Fear / unaccounted injuries
  - Poor state of presentation /hygiene
  - Sudden expansion of associates
  - Scared or self harming

**Vulnerabilities may include:**
• Age
• Physical disability
• Mental disability
• Loneliness
• Alcohol dependency
• Drug dependency
• Exclusion
What does a cuckooed property look like?
Structure of a Gang

A gang is defined as consisting of at least 3 individuals, which are predominantly street based young people.

- **Teenies** – Generally those under 10 who are used to carry drugs & weapons.
- **Runners/ Shooters** – Generally aged between 12 & 15. They move drugs for older members, conduct street deals and stay in ‘trap’ houses.
- **Youngers** – Generally under 18. They have some authority over teenies & shooters. They deal drugs, set up trap houses and recruit shooters.
  - **Elders** – Generally over 18. They run street operations and deal in larger amounts of class A drugs & facilitate the purchase of firearms.
  - **Faces** – Those at the higher end of the chain who have limited contact with street level operations.
The National Crime Agency threat update for County Lines (Nov 2018) estimated there were at least **720** County Lines operational across the U.K.

In January 2019 the estimate increased to **2,000** County Lines.

Young people aged between **15-17** years make up the bulk of the vulnerable people involved in county lines. **118** matrixed lines were reported as having links to firearms.

Heroin and crack cocaine (**69%**) remain the drugs most commonly supplied through county lines.

High vulnerability factors for children include poverty, family breakdown, social care intervention, looked after children, frequent missing episodes, behavioural and developmental disorders and exclusion from mainstream schooling.

Children without a criminal footprint are also targeted in an attempt to reduce attention from law enforcement.
Members of 27 London Gangs have been identified as active across Hertfordshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>300 Blok</td>
<td>410/ Myatts Field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghan Gang</td>
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<tr>
<td>N16 Gang</td>
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<td>Beckton Boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cathall Boys / Leytonstone Soldiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get Money Gangsters</td>
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<td>Crs - Church Road Soldiers</td>
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<td>Ctm - Church Town Massive</td>
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<td>EC Easy Cash</td>
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<td>Da - Dem Africans</td>
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<td>Dockyard</td>
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<td>Dm - Drive Marlowe / Dangerous Minds</td>
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<td>AP Gang</td>
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<td>Gp - Grahame Park</td>
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<td>Smalley Bois</td>
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<td>Grahame Park Estate</td>
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<td>Grey Set</td>
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<td>Shooting Starz</td>
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<td>Lgm - Lisson Green Men</td>
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<td>New Finchley Gang</td>
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<td>Npk - Northumberland Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Killers</td>
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<td>Oliver Close</td>
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<td>Pembury Boys</td>
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<td>QUEENS CRESCENT</td>
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<td>Red Gang / Piru / Ida Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocblock 150/Angel Town</td>
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There is also evidence of gangs from Essex and Luton actively running County Lines in Hertfordshire but precise data is not as yet available.
County Lines activity has been identified in Watford, St Albans, Hatfield, Stevenage, Broxbourne, Letchworth, Borehamwood, Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted all of which have direct access routes from London by train or road.
WHAT ARE THE POLICE DOING ABOUT GANGS, DRUG DEALING AND KNIFE CRIME IN HERTFORDSHIRE.
Child focus- Victim or perpetrator?

- Police Gangs and Schools team
  - CYP + TYS
  - District level activity
Operation Mantis is an operational team dedicated to the disruption and dismantling of urban gangs and county lines in Hertfordshire.

They are tasked based upon threat assessment being high to community or victim.

MANTIS provides a focal point for the Constabulary and it’s partners to join together and share information in order to build an accurate intelligence picture that will allow *disruption of gang activity* and provide *support for victims* at the earliest opportunity utilising the 4 P’s.

- Pursue
- Prevent
- Protect
- Prepare
Safer Neighbourhood teams are utilising Owl Messaging to inform local residents of indicators, advise them how and encourage them to, notify police of gang/drug activity in their communities

Spot the Signs Posters highlighting signs of possible gang involvement and cuckooing to parents, teachers, partners and public.

Delivering awareness presentations to police, partners, schools and parents highlighting the indicators of grooming and involvement.

Operation Mantis set up as County wide unit to pursue Gangs and County Lines.

CYP unit went live on January 3rd 2019 dedicated to Gangs and County Lines prevent initiative, formulating and coordinating a County wide partnership response to the prevent initiative .

Operation EDGE invited Hertfordshire schools of enter a film competition about knife crime, won by Marriotts school.
Op Tectonics

Based on intelligence received, Op Mantis recently opened an investigation into the Gato Line. The Gato Line was a County Line running drugs into Hatfield by the N16 gang out of Hackney. The intelligence received indicated an address in Hatfield Town believed to have been “cuckooed” by members of the N16 gang.

A section 8 warrant was granted and an early morning raid executed at the address. A 16 year old N16 gang member was identified, with a quantity of class A controlled drugs on his person, and arrested at the address.

Further enquiries identified the gang member in control of the “Line” phone. A further warrant was executed at his address in Hackney which led to the recovery of the “Line” phone and a significant sum of cash.

Case papers are currently with CPS.
Op Morgan

A young male reported that he was being forced to run drugs for a County Line in Hatfield. The gang kidnapped him and took him to an address in Peterborough where he was forced him to run drugs for a number of days before they returned him back to Hatfield.

CPS would not support a Human Trafficking/ kidnap charge, however Op Mantis enquiries led to them executing 4 search warrants.

A significant amount of class A drugs and cash were seized as well as four suspects being arrested. The case is with CPS awaiting charging advice.
Hertfordshire strategic response

“Serious Violence Strategy” – and combined “six strategy boards” action plan.

• Community Safety Board
• Domestic Abuse Board
• Drug and Alcohol Board
• Integrated Offender Management Board
• Safeguarding Children’s partnership Board
• Safeguarding Adults Board.
How can you play your part?

Accept that no single organisation will solve the County Lines issue, a partnership including everyone pooling resources supporting and listening to each other with ideas, intelligence, legislation and powers is the only successful way forward.

These are your communities, your streets, your schools, your children.

Help your Police to protect them by reporting your concerns.

DONT IGNORE THE ISSUE, HELP CREATE THE SOLUTION YOU WANT.
Need support? Want to report?

0300 011 5555 (option 3)
info@hertfordshirebeacon.org

Hertfordshire Beacon services are co-designed with commissioners and partner agencies to meet the local needs of victims, ensuring they receive emotional and practical support by phone and face-to-face meetings in the home and in the community, alongside practical support and crime prevention advice.

For professionals.
Safeguarding referrals.
Urgent – Police.

childline.org.uk
0800 1111
What will the response look like?

Safeguarding before evidence capture

The fine balance of lawful action – likely rejection by victims – future victims

Covert approach and onward protection
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION