County Lines

Crest

My background

- Councillor in LB Islington since 2010
- Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families (2013-2019)
  - Campaigning for national strategy to tackle CCE and County Lines since 2015 with a group of third sector organisations
- Member of the consortium operating the DfE Tackling Child Exploitation support programme (also includes Children' Society, University of Central Beds, Research in Practise)
- RSA Catalyst Award winner 2018 for County Lines research
- Head of Policy, Crest Advisory
  - Conducting research into Looked After Children and County Lines funded by the Hadley Trust.

Recap: What do we know?

- **Existing data** on the involvement of looked after children and children in unregulated accommodation is **extremely limited**. Between 15% - 25% of CCE cohorts are care experienced.
- Young people in care **placed at distance in residential accommodation are believed to be at particular risk of exploitation** due to their limited access to services. This risk is amplified in regulated settings.
- **CCE and CSE are highly gendered categories**. This leads to under recording of young men as victims of CSE and young women who are victims of CCE.
- **Children outside mainstream education** are at particular risk.
- **Cannabis debt** is a key recruiting tool
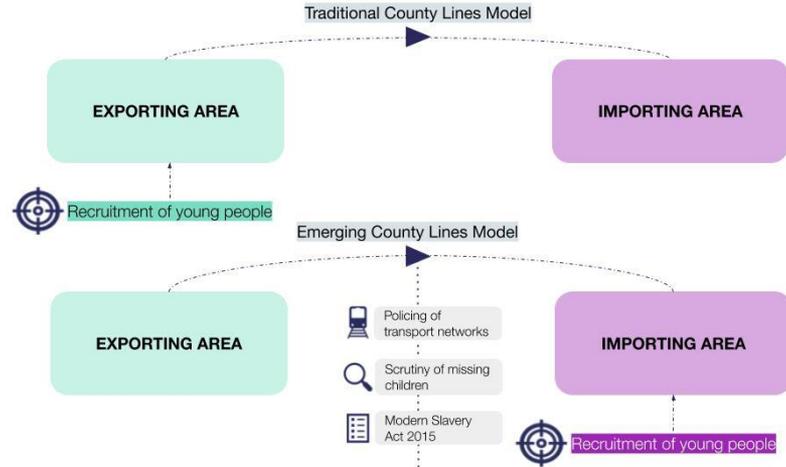
Five challenges in relation to County Lines

1. **It generates lots of heat but little light.** Awareness has increased and a huge amount is said and written about County Lines following media interest, but it remains a 'data desert'.
2. **It is a 'wicked issue'.** County Lines touches on law enforcement, children's social care, public health, mental health, youth offending, social housing and homelessness …
3. **The official response is disjointed.** There is not a commonly used CCE approach across borders and between agencies. A patchwork of reponses.
4. **Failure to recognise children as victims.** The victim / perpetrator continuum causes confusion and leads to inconsistent approaches.
5. **It is constantly evolving.** As the business model adapts to changes in demand and police tactics, so do the patterns of exploitation.

County Lines and COVID-19

The major impact of COVID on CCE has been an acceleration of existing trends

- Move towards 'local' recruitment of children and YP
- Peer recruitment in care settings
- Technology as a tool for recruitment, management and distribution
- Higher risk dealing scenarios (liminal spaces, stacking)

Traditional County Lines Model

EXPORTING AREA

IMPORTING AREA

Recruitment of young people

Emerging County Lines Model

EXPORTING AREA

Policing of transport networks

Scrutiny of missing children

Modern Slavery Act 2015

IMPORTING AREA

Recruitment of young people

County Lines After COVID - a new threat? (19 May)
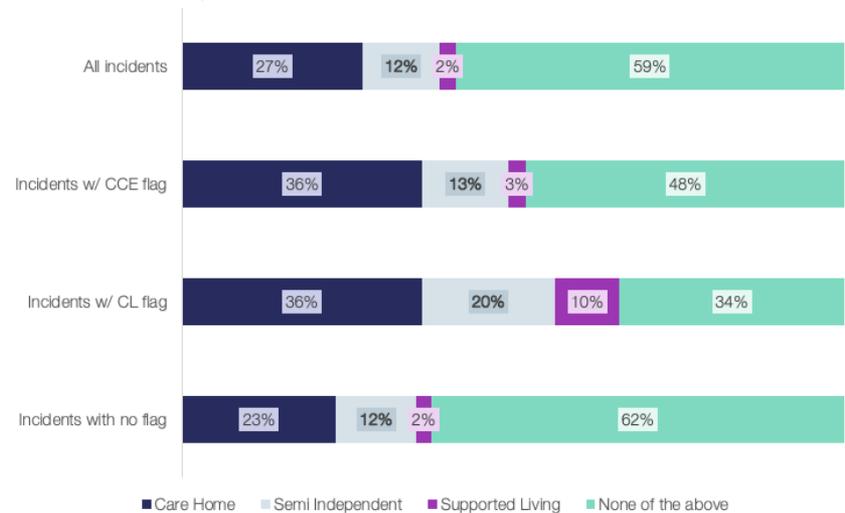https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/county-lines-after-covid-a-new-threat

Looked after children and county lines

As part of Phase 2 of our research for the Hadley Trust, we have carried out preliminary analysis of:

- **missing data with CCE flags from North Wales**, covering the period from April 2018 to March 2020
- a dataset of **CCE-flagged children in North Wales**, covering the period from September 2018 to April 2020
- **missing data with CCE, CL and CSE flags from Merseyside**, covering the period from April 2018 to March 2020

We have found that **17% of CCE-flagged children in North Wales, and 37% of CCE-flagged children in Merseyside, are in residential care, or unregulated care settings**.

Reported Missing Incidents in Merseyside, broken down by flag and accommodation type (April 2018-March 2020)

	Care Home	Semi Independent	Supported Living	None of the above
All incidents	27%	12%	2%	59%
Incidents w/ CCE flag	36%	13%	3%	48%
Incidents w/ CL flag	36%	20%	10%	34%
Incidents with no flag	23%	12%	2%	62%

What can we do locally?

- **Develop a multi agency risk profile.** Use CCE flag data and the County Lines marker (with the new looked after children flag) to identify your cohort and the key risk factors including contextual risks.
    - **Importing areas:** where do your lines originate from? Where are the dealing hotspots and where are vulnerable locations (care homes, schools, semi-independent settings).
    - **Exporting areas:** where do your lines run to? Do you cross reference missing info and PWITS arrest data with gang affiliation?
- **Scrutiny of fixed term and permanent exclusions**, 'off-rolling' and elective home education.
- **Positioning CCE within children's services**, not out on a limb in standalone public protection departments
- **Take action to safeguard looked after children.** Use the corporate parenting function to scrutinise placements of vulnerable adolescents, especially those placed at distance or in unregulated settings. How do you work with host local authorities, or the placing local authorities to manage risk?
- **Early intervention** - preventative approach to vulnerable young people. Give them the skills to guard against grooming from an early age.

What can be done at national level?

- **A national CCE strategy** with local CCE risk management profiles, reflecting the safeguarding approach taken to CSE
- **Specialist adolescent risk teams** within local authority children's social care
- A **successor to the National Referral Mechanism** for criminally exploited children with enhanced support, especially in terms of housing and education
- **Investment in innovative new models of intensive fostering** as an alternative placement option for adolescents
- **Consistent use of a common CCE vulnerability marker** across geographic and administrative boundaries
- **Safeguarding and disruption** that reflects the use of technology by gangs

Thank you

I can help if:

- Your area have an interest in accessing bespoke (free!) support from the Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme
- Your area are interested in speaking to Crest about research support in relation to CCE or other parts of the CJS

For more information please contact
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