

Children and Families Networking Event

Tuesday 2nd July 2019



Keeping Children and Young People Safe

Welcome & Housekeeping



Chris Baird
Director
Children and Families

County Lines

Det Insp Ross JONES



July 2019



Warwickshire
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What is meant by county lines?

- **County lines** activity involves a gang from a **large urban** area travelling to smaller locations such as **county or coastal towns** to **sell class A drugs**, most predominantly crack cocaine and heroin
- Gangs function with a degree of **affiliation and loyalty**
- They may challenge, or compete with, groups from the local area or another county lines enterprise, which often causes incidents of violence.
- Gangs communicate with drug users via a **mobile telephone number** which is given a **brand name** and is referred to as the **line**. Some numbers have been active for years and are even sold between gangs, transferring customer bases.
- Traditionally, this line will remain within the large urban area and is kept away from the area where the drugs are being sold.
- A relay system is used to contact those acting as dealers in the county location.
- Gang members **travel** between urban and county locations on a regular basis to **collect drugs** and **deliver cash**.
- They frequently **use a local property**, generally **belonging to a vulnerable person**, as a base for their activity.
- This is often acquired by force or coercion, referred to as “**cuckooing**”.
- Gangs typically **exploit children** (under 18) to deliver drugs from the urban to the county location. This often involves **intimidation, violence, debt bondage and grooming**
- **Adult drug users** (often addicts) and **vulnerable females** are also **exploited** for their properties or to assist with dealing within the county market



Briefing note:

- This method of distribution and supply is nothing new.
- 95% of heroin originates in Afghanistan, cocaine is produced in Columbia, Peru and Bolivia.
- These markets have always had import and distribution centres which supply out to user markets.
- However, there is greater intelligence and evidence of coercive control of these markets

What's the risk?

- The term "**cuckooing**" first became widely used by the media following the introduction of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. This introduced legislation to close premises which were believed to be used for the unlawful use, production or supply of class A drugs. These were commonly referred to as "**crack house closures**"
- Greater co-operation with our partners, and increased awareness of the **vulnerability** of those who were being targeted by gangs for the use of their premises, has led to an increased focus on **protecting those vulnerable** from cuckooing in addition to tackling their criminality.



"After operational activity, things go quiet but then the group returns". Dyfed Powys Police

"Often they get into debt with the dealers by using what they are meant to be selling which leads to further exploitation and possible violence". Essex Police

"The team will make an approach to a vulnerable person and make a promise of free drugs or simply befriend them. Once entry has been gained they will then disregard the wishes of the occupier and simply use the address for their own criminal use. Some persons report having to knock their own front door to gain entry and/or being allowed to only use one room within their own property". Bedfordshire Police

"Networks will move from different addresses but that same address will be used by a different line once the other has moved on". Hampshire Police

"Other areas feel operational activity doesn't stop the flow, as there are so many nominals at the groups disposal, this has little impact". Bedfordshire Police.

- Debt bondage** is a common and widespread theme, as is the **use of force and coercion to exploit vulnerable adults**.
- In some instances, victims have chosen to become homeless, being forced to leave their address in fear of violence from gang members.
- Gangs typically also move between different addresses to evade detection.
- Vulnerable adults with premises are often exploited by different gangs, often within a short space of time.
- Children**, and other occupants at the address, are **vulnerable to violence, exploitation and drug abuse**.



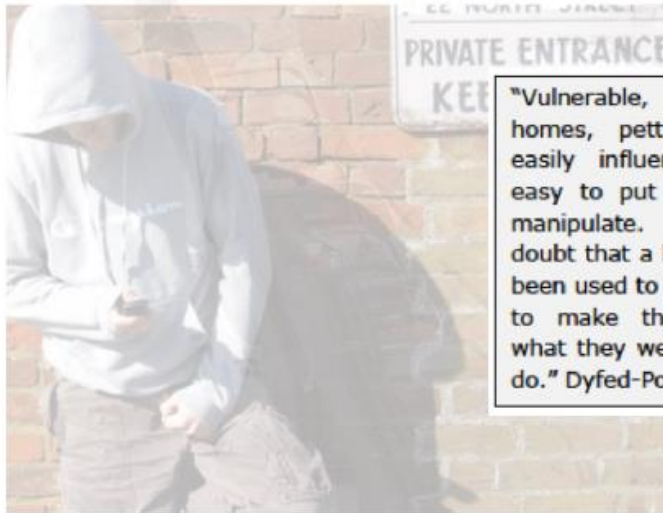
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Who's vulnerable?

- **Children** (those under 18) continue to be **exploited** by county lines gangs to courier **drugs** to, and **money** from, county locations, often by train but also in cars or on coaches.
- They can remain at a cuckooed address for **up to two weeks** before returning home.
- It is assessed that gangs utilise vulnerable children because they are a relatively inexpensive resource and are **easily controlled** or are **keen to impress** older gang members to become more prominent in the group.
- **15-16** is the most common age group for this activity



"Vulnerable, from broken homes, petty offending and easily influenced, they were easy to put pressure on and manipulate. There was no doubt that a lot of violence had been used to put fear into them to make them comply with what they were being asked to do." Dyfed-Powys Police

"Some gangs exploit young people, especially vulnerable MISPERs and looked after children...Some have been groomed, some abducted and others have been threatened with violence." Essex Police

"One runner from London stole drugs and money from a county line he worked for in Swansea. He was subsequently lured to a park in London by leading members of the gang where they repeatedly stabbed and beat him." South Wales Police

"A 17 year old male was kidnapped by a London based gang. It is believed that this was in response to him stealing drugs and a phone from the group. The young male was repeatedly assaulted, burnt and threatened by the gang. It is possible that he bought his freedom by showing the gang where a rival gang stored firearms." Surrey Police

"Young people traditionally from broken homes, in care or poor backgrounds with poor educational attendance are used as runners. Seduced by lifestyle and popular culture or peer influence." Norfolk Police

"A 16 year old male had been reported missing from London and was considered at risk due to his age and link to gangs. He had recently failed to appear at court for his alleged involvement in a stabbing. He was found in possession of a 6 inch kitchen knife and 30 wraps of drugs. Whilst in custody he was found to have significant burns to his body, on his stomach area, consistent with having been burnt by boiling liquid. He would not disclose further details however it was suspected this may have been caused by those responsible for placing him in Ipswich to deal class A drugs." Suffolk Police

- Pursuing county lines drug dealing networks has been ongoing, and sustained, for many years in Herefordshire.
- 548 drug related arrests were made in Herefordshire in 2018.
- Over 130 of these arrests were linked to county lines.
- New lines present a constant threat by seeking to replace disrupted networks, and exploiting the Herefordshire drugs market.
- This can often lead to escalation of violence between rival lines as they compete for profit and control.
- The pursuit of offenders continues, but a renewed focus on prevention and protection of our communities is needed to reduce this risk.

Case Study – P Line

An 11-and-a-half year jail term was secured against the head of a County Lines gang that supplied heroin and crack cocaine from Birmingham into Hereford - despite never finding him in possession of any drugs. Evidence from Rashid's phone showed that he'd supplied drugs valued at around **£150,000** between July 2017 and February 2018.

Kamran Rashid ran the 'P Line' network and admitted conspiracy to supply Class A drugs from his home in Aston into the city.

Rashid was frequently travelling between Birmingham and Hereford in various **hire cars** on suspected drug deliveries.

Drug runners Talat Mahmood and Lisa Fayers - who Rashid employed to deal on his behalf - were also handed prison sentences of four years ten months and three years nine months, respectively, at Worcester Crown Court. Another woman, Hayley Williams, was given a two-year suspended prison sentence and a drug rehabilitation order for playing a lesser role in the supply chain.

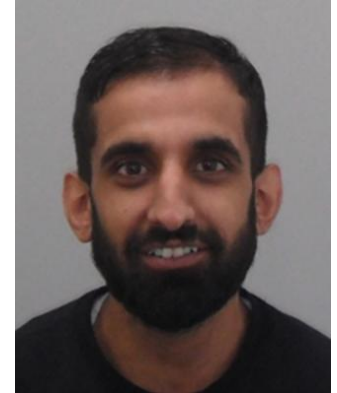
Officers intercepted Rashid on 31 August in Grandstand Road, Hereford, and arrested. No drugs were found in the car but £1,500 in cash and a phone used to run the P Line - which was contacting **around 50 customers a day** - was seized. He was bailed, but just eight hours after his release Rashid **sent a message out to P Line clients** telling them "brand new phone, old number gone, pls don't text it police have it".

In a bid to distance himself from the supply chain, Rashid recruited Mahmood and Fayers - a couple from Nelson Road, Aston - to carry out the cross-border drug runs on his behalf.

Rashid retained control of the main dealer phone **and acted as a 'switchboard'** directing Mahmood and Fayers to people who'd placed Class A orders.

They were stopped by police on 5 October in a vehicle on Belmont Road, Hereford, in possession of £1,300 in cash and a phone which analysis showed was in repeated contact with Rashid's Aston-based supply hotline.

He turned to Williams, aged 46 from Grandstand Road in Hereford, in a desperate bid to fulfil P Line orders but she along with Rashid and Fayers were arrested on 5 June and charged with conspiring to supply heroin and crack cocaine



Activity Overview

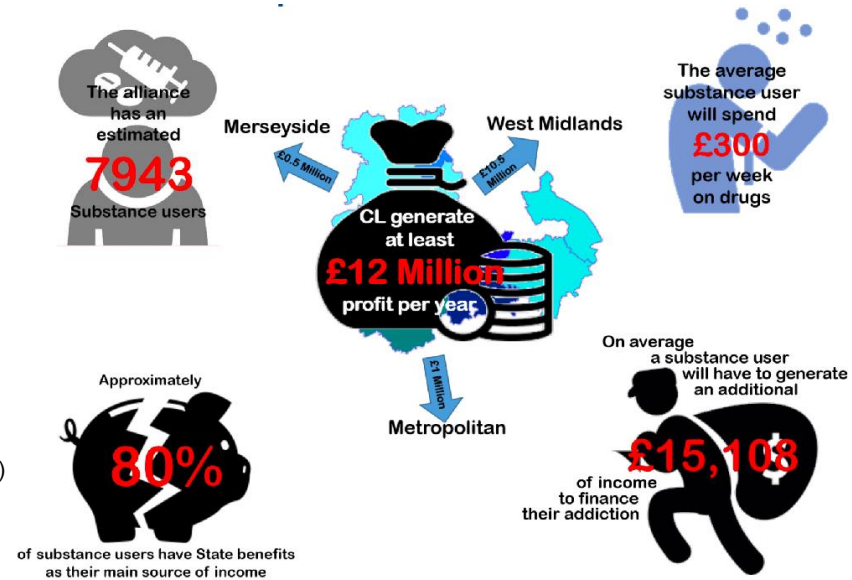
- More than 15 county lines are currently under investigation in Herefordshire.
- The final arrest phase of the most significant of these investigations; 'Operation Ballet', took place in Leominster and Birmingham.
- This was the largest operation of its kind ever carried out in the region and targeted 10 county lines supplying drugs into Herefordshire. All 10 were successfully closed down.
- This was a joint investigation by Herefordshire Intelligence and Pro-active teams, West Midlands ROCU and West Midlands Police.
- 7 of 10 lines sentenced so far
- 33 offenders sentenced to 160 years imprisonment



Operation Ballet – line origins

- The origin of the lines under investigation in operation ballet are indicative of where the recent supply threat comes from.

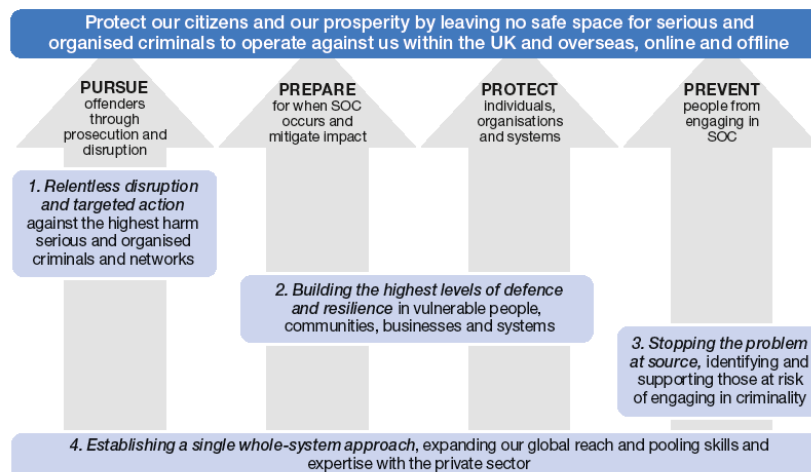
<u>Line</u>	<u>Arrest number</u>	<u>Origin</u>
Paco	4	Birmingham - Aston
P	4	Birmingham - Aston
Scooby	7	Tipton, Dudley, Walsall
Dee	13	London
Adam	10	Birmingham – Shard End
BG/AK	7	Birmingham – Balsall
Heath		
Millar	4	Birmingham - Smethwick
Uzi	6	Birmingham - Aston
Nathan	5	Birmingham - Bearwood
Z line	3	London
Misc	10	(8 Hereford, 2 Leominster)



- Understanding the origin of lines enables risk assessment and informs operational activity
- Crime committed by substance users has a significant financial impact in West Mercia.

Current Threat – Children and county lines

- Drug use by children is not uncommon – Nationally 24% of school children (11-17yrs) report that they have taken drugs. 10% state they have used drugs in the last month. NHS report – Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people
- County lines exploitation of children in Herefordshire was not previously evident, but there have been 11 arrests of children since October 2018;
 - 15 year old male from Northfield, Birmingham
 - 16 year old male from Smethwick
 - 16 year old male from Wolverhampton
 - 16 year old male from Bilston
 - 16 year old male from Bilston
 - 15 year old male from Birmingham
 - 16 year old male from West Bromwich
 - 16 year old male from Wolverhampton
 - 16 year old male from Smethwick
 - 14 year old male from Birmingham
 - 17 year old male from Birmingham



HM Government Serious and Organised Crime Strategy
November 2018

Children and county lines



- 1 Trap
- 2 Bando
- 3 Cunch / OT
- 4 Flipping
- 5 Roadman
- 6 Blaze, burner
- 7 Wet
- 8 Pranging out
- 9 Sket
- 10 Beef tings



Current Threat – Children and county lines

What It's Really Like 'Going Country'

Max Daly

As commuters arrive into Britain's major cities from their homes in the shires, a different kind of commuter is travelling the opposite direction. They're more likely to be young and wearing trainers, tracksuits and puffer jackets. Most of them generate more cash each day than their city-bound counterparts. The tools of their trade are a cheap mobile phone, a bag of class A drugs and a knife.

Going country, going cunch or "OT" (out there), is not an entirely new phenomenon. Gangs from the big four UK drug hubs – London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool – have been sending dealers to sell in less crowded areas since the rise of the highly profitable crack selling business, and of mobile phones, in the 1990s.

What's more, the dealers are getting younger, with children as young as 11 being found selling drugs in areas a world away from the inner city zones they call home. Meanwhile, as the newcomers increasingly discard the old school criminal code of local drug markets, rivalry, enmity and violence intensifies.

People's desperation to escape poverty and pain meets head-on with the cold, hard economics of the drug trade.

Many kids are ruthlessly exploited, working long hours on little or low wages and subjected to punishment beatings for losing money or drugs. Some gangs have arranged for young runners to be "mugged" of drug stashes so they can become indebted to – and, therefore, totally under the control of – their paymasters.



Current Threat – Children and county lines

The MO is the same wherever the gangs send their teams: local drug buyers are tossed just enough class A drugs to enable the city gangs to operate behind the scenes while extracting maximum profits.

The gangs will provide dependent drug users with narcotic sweeteners in return for taking over their homes and turning them into off-pavement stash houses, crash pads and dealing dens.

"It's a dog-eat-dog world and they can smell vulnerability," says Debbie, a former sex worker who has "hosted" dealers from different London firms at her home in Southend, a respectable-looking resort town on the Essex coast, for several years.



"I needed them as much as they needed me," she admits. "I relied on them because the more addicted you are, the more vulnerable you are. If I complained they shut me up by giving me drugs. I was scared of losing my property, which was all I had. In the end I had a total break down."

"I did have empathy for these boys. Some were as young as 14. They were kids, but they never talked about normal teenage things. They were shutdown people, always silent. They were mentally drained," she says. "They used to lie on my settee and sleep with the phone by their head, working 22 hours a day, eating in McDonalds and sleeping on my sofa. A couple of times they would have a treat, like buying a new pair of trainers. They were putting on an act, trying to pretend they were the big boys, but they were young kids getting exploited."

As the drive for profits in Britain's crowded drug economy gets cranked up, it's the young drug dealers who appear, despite the promises, to be caught between a rock and a hard place.



— What are the signs?

 <p>Persistently going missing from school or home, or being found out-of-area</p>	 <p>Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones</p>	 <p>excessive receipt of texts or phone calls</p>	 <p>Relationships with controlling, older individuals or gang association</p>	 <p>Leaving home or care without explanation</p>
 <p>Suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries</p>	 <p>Parental concerns</p>	 <p>Significant decline in school performance</p>	 <p>Significant changes in emotional well-being</p>	



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Resources



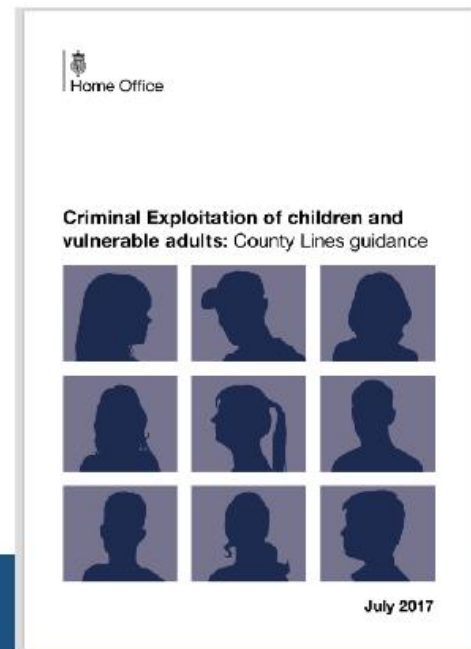
Are you concerned about a child?
Report it!



- About HSCB
- For children and young people
- For parents, guardians and carers
- For professionals
- News and events



Home > Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board



Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

Cath Thomas, Head of Safeguarding

Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

- National and local context
- Who is at risk, from what?
- Vulnerability factors and what to look out for
- What do young people need from us?
- Contextual safeguarding
- Workshop

National context

- *Time to listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children* (Ofsted, 2016)
 - “Prevention and raising awareness in local communities was seen as a real strength (and)...was most effective when...informed by a good understanding of the local risks and patterns of offending and young people were involved in developing prevention and awareness resources”
- *Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines* (Home Office Guidance, July 2017, updated Sept 2018)
- *Contextual safeguarding* (Firmin, Nov 2017) – University of Bedfordshire, Contextual Safeguarding Network)
- Serious Case Review Chris (August 2018) shot at close range and died age 14 – gang involvement, weapons, pressurised into running drugs – Special Education Needs, not in mainstream school, exclusions – ‘non engagement’ in support
- *Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery* (Ofsted, 2018)
 - “Agencies locally and nationally do not yet fully understand the scale or level of risk to children”
 - “Family-focused services are not always appropriate for dealing with the exploitation of children outside of a family setting”

National context

- Children's Commissioner report *Keeping kids safe: improving safeguarding responses to gang violence and criminal exploitation* (Feb 2019)
 - “If we are to turn around their life chances and tackle the scourge of serious violence, county lines drug running and gang activity, we need to know more about who these children are and why they are members of gangs – and how we can keep them safe”
 - “Draw parallels with CSE a decade ago – before children being sexually exploited were recognised as victims and not perpetrators”
 - Estimated 27,000 children in England who identify as a gang member, only a fraction of whom are known to children's services”
 - “Many...feel they have no choice or no better options”
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: first national review will be on adolescents and exploitation, March – August 2019
- DfE Tackling Child Exploitation programme (announced May 2019)
 - Bespoke support and advice for eligible local authorities
 - Open access ‘what works’ resources

Local context

- SCR Katie (2018)
 - Contextualised safeguarding
- Exploitation delivery group: strategy, profiling and delivery plan
- Prevention and Disruption multi-agency group
- Virtual Exploitation team: children's social care and police
- Close working between agencies: WMRASASC (Branch and Selfie projects), Addaction, YOS, Solutions4Health, schools, No Wrong Door

Who is at risk, from what?

- 14 – 17 year olds, male and female
- May 2019 77 young people were assessed as being at medium or high risk of exploitation with 15 new assessments being undertaken (>10% of all Level 4 children's social care intervention)
- Young males *tend* to be more at risk of criminal exploitation
- Young females *tend* to be more at risk of sexual exploitation
- Over half are care leavers or young people in care, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)
- Children placed from other areas
- Sexual exploitation less notable currently
- County Lines – *organised criminal distribution of drugs from big cities into smaller cities, towns and rural areas using children and vulnerable people*

Vulnerability factors

- ALL young people may be at risk of exploitation, regardless of their background or circumstances
- Additional factors may make young people more susceptible to exploitation:
- Not in education, training or employment / excluded from mainstream school
- Being in care (particularly residential) or a care leaver
- Peers involved in exploitation or criminality
- Difficulties at home (domestic abuse, parental substance or alcohol misuse, parental mental health or criminality)
- History of abuse or neglect – long term impact of trauma and low self worth
- Mental wellbeing, recent bereavement or loss, substance or alcohol misuse
- Homelessness, economic deprivation, social isolation
- Physical and learning disabilities, Special Educational Needs

What to look out for

- Exclusion or frequent unexplained absences from school or college
- Significant decline in educational attainment
- Leaving home / care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late
- Frequent unknown callers to their home
- Under the influence of alcohol or substances having gone missing / returned late
- Evidenced or suspected physical or sexual assault
- Increased secretiveness
- Carrying weapons
- Unexplained expensive items such as clothes, phones, money
- Having more than one mobile phone and / or social media profiles
- Excessive texts, calls, use of social media / very late at night
- Deterioration in emotional wellbeing, self harm
- Change in / isolation from usual peer group

What do young people need from us?

- Professional curiosity – be aware of indicators, follow your instincts and ask questions
- Early Help – Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool
- One trusted professional – build relationships and trust
- ‘Staying with’ young people who find it harder to engage
- Professionals to understand their world and how they communicate
- Not to be judged or blamed – use of language (Appropriate Language Guide)
- Not to be seen as ‘taking risks’ or ‘making lifestyle choices’
- Easy access to sexual health, healthy relationships and substance misuse services
- Information to help keep themselves safe and strategies to exit unsafe situations
- A mobile phone charged and with credit and key contacts saved
- Effective multi-agency working – use established safeguarding procedures
- Be clear and transparent about what you can keep confidential and what you must share (safeguarding and offences)
- Alternative ways to use their free time
- Understanding their communities and involving them to make or keep them safe

Contextual safeguarding – what is it?

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families.

It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.

Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships

(Contextual Safeguarding Network)

So what does this mean for us?

- Agencies and providers, including those not traditionally engaged in 'child protection', need to work together to influence extra-familial contexts
 - Night time economy; police (licensing and enforcement, borders, intel, Safer Neighbourhood Teams; business and taxi licensing; CCTV; fire service; housing and private landlords (inc. HMOs); public transport bodies; voluntary sector; care homes; highways, public spaces and businesses
- As well as 'traditional' safeguarding agencies:
 - Health services and sexual health; Branch and SELFIE projects (WMRASASC); Women's Aid; Addaction; YOS; children's social care; education (inc PSHE); police
- Prevention & Disruption group
 - Co-chaired police and children's social care
 - Takes direct action: Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue
 - Reports to CE Delivery group and SOCJAG on patterns (perpetrators, victims, locations)

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Workshop

10 minutes

- Consider your role / setting working with children or young adults
 - What opportunities do you have to recognise the signs of exploitation?
 - What opportunities do you have to respond?

20 minutes

- What opportunities do you have to contribute to a contextualised safeguarding approach?
- What are the barriers for you / other agencies?
- What are the solutions?

Feedback

Networking and coffee break



Begin again at 11:40am

WRAP

Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent

Neville Meredith

Prevent Coordinator & Channel Chair,
Herefordshire Council

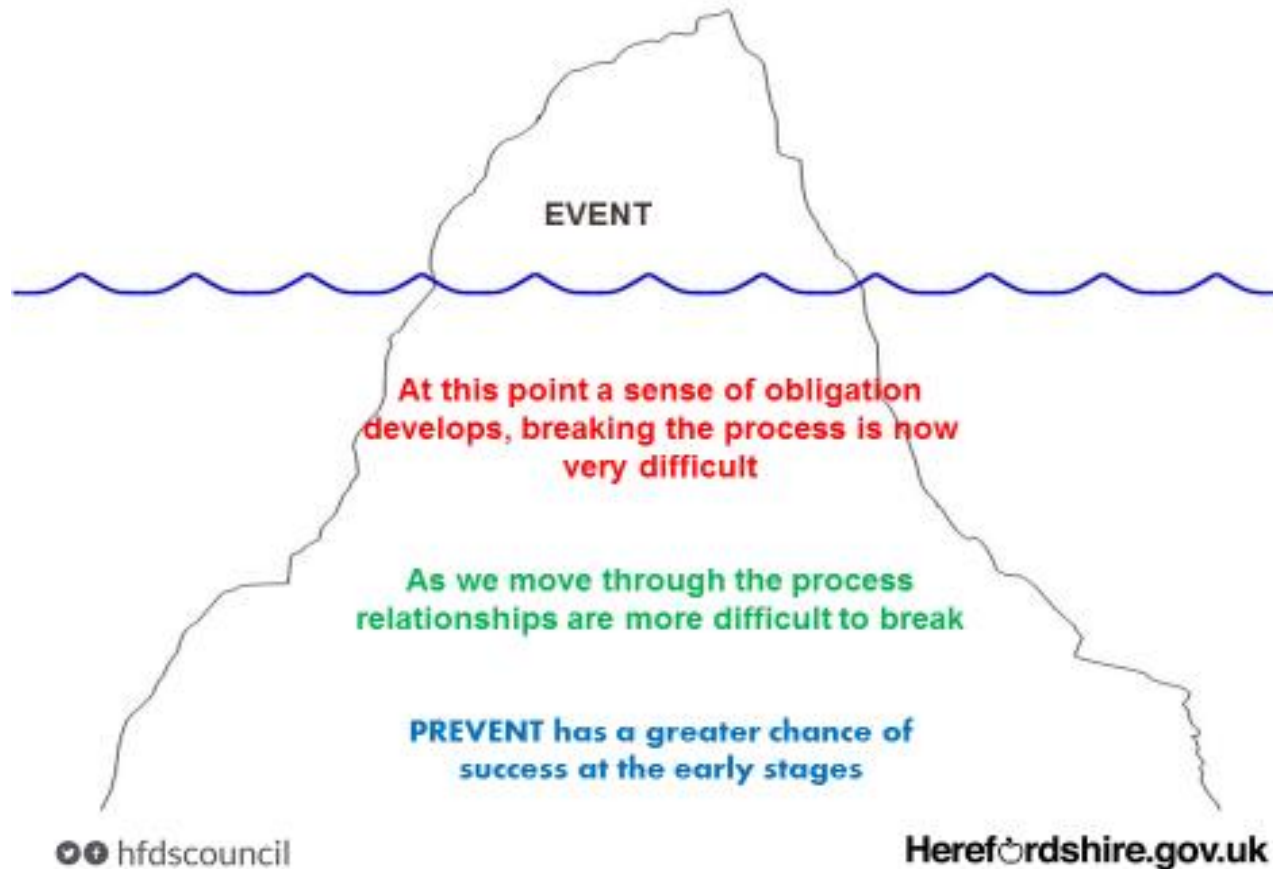
nmeredith@herefordshire.gov.uk

Home Office accreditation number 9732888

Notice-Check-Share

The “business end” of Prevent

The Iceberg Analogy



Notice

Changes in behaviour fall into four kinds

1. Insignificant behaviour

2. Troubling behaviour

3. Worrisome behaviour

4. Alarming behaviour

We are working at the base - middle of the iceberg

Notice

Insignificant behaviour will include;

1. Arguing aggressively with family & friends to support/defend a new found conviction
2. Adopting visible signs of memberships of a new group
3. Involved in, often peaceful, campaigns
4. Increasing interest in national and international events

Notice

Troubling behaviour

1. Expressing views as absolute truth
2. Behaviour that is damaging normal way of life
3. Even more withdrawn from existing social circle
4. Dramatic changes in habits
5. Refusing, even minimal contact, with those who have a different social identity
6. Attempts to dominate/control those around
7. Totally single issue focused

Check

Share

Workshop

Exploring vulnerabilities

Round-up & Close

Thank you for coming today.

Before you go...

Please complete an evaluation form, we want to know what you liked, what you didn't like and what topics are of interest to you.

Please contact us if you have any questions:
childrenscommissioning@herefordshire.gov.uk