Dear Parents and Carers, welcome to May’s Safeguarding letter

**County Lines**

**What is county lines**? A child is ‘groomed’ by a criminal gang, then exploited to transport drugs and money from one area ‘county’ to another – usually from an urban location to a rural or coastal one. Grooming can happen in person, or online on social media apps like Snapchat The child may be trafficked to the gang’s ‘trap houses’ or ‘bandos’ miles away from home, to find ‘customers’, deal with rival gangs and sell drugs To the gang, the child is an expendable commodity.

The ‘line’ refers to the phone line that the gang uses for selling drugs.

Should you be worried? Hopefully not. However, any child is vulnerable to exploitation. Criminal gangs are known to target:

Children with vulnerabilities, such as poverty, family breakdown, exclusion from school – because they’re susceptible to manipulation and coercion .

Children from stable or affluent families – because they’re less likely to be known to the police and may blend in better in the town the gang sends them to

Girls and young children as young as 7 are being groomed by gangs, and girls are often groomed into relationships with gang members or used to transport drugs as they’re less likely to be stopped by the police

What are the signs I should be looking out for? If your child is affected by county lines exploitation, there may be some signs. Here are some key indicators that you should look out for. Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing? Receiving unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery? Being found in areas away from home? Increasingly disruptive or aggressive, being found to have large amounts of drugs on them? Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn’t expect them to know? Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going? Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled? Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places?.

If your child is missing, remember you do not have to wait 24 hours before making a report Contact organisations such as: Crimestoppers 0800 555 111 The NSPCC 0808 800 5000 or Family Lives 0808 800 2222 If you believe your child is in immediate danger, or a threat is made against you or another family member, **call 999 immediately.**

**Please don’t forget that we are here to help with advice you can speak to Mr. Grant**

**01695-721487**

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Regards Andrew Grant -DSL