

## What Parents & Carers Need to Know About

# CUNCH-LINE CHRONICLES



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Cunch-Line Chronicles is a 2D side-scrolling mobile game in which players control a criminal running from a police officer, collecting bags of (what are heavily implied to be) drugs while avoiding obstacles. The game has caused some controversy due to its perceived glamourisation of gang culture. There are also concerns that titles like this carry the potential to attract young people to low-level crime.

### Questionable theme

Cunch-line (slang for county lines) refers to inner-city dealers sending young teens into more rural areas to sell drugs. While the game is marketed as a "light-hearted, satirical take on the darker side of urban UK culture", it deals with subject matter that could impact the lives of young adults. Some might argue it's thematically similar to games like Grand Theft Auto, but county lines drug running is a much more realistic issue for young people in Britain.



### Addictive Gameplay

Gameplay is basic in the extreme: you simply tap the screen to jump over obstacles and avoid arrest from the pursuing police officer. It is designed to be repetitive and addictive. Aside from Cunch-Line Chronicles' problematic themes, children may quickly become addicted to the game, shirking other activities in favour of playing.



### In-Game Purchases

Although the initial download is free from mobile and tablet app stores, you can buy new characters for real money in the game (ranging from £1.99 to £20.99). Players can use the in-game currency of Kilos (as in kilos of drugs) to purchase additional characters or items to enhance their gaming experience. If you're caught by the police, you can either pay a bribe (if you've collected enough currency) to continue or elect to watch an advert. These ads are tailored towards the app's adult audience, too.



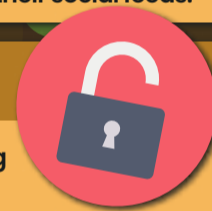
### No Chat Feature (Yet)

The game (in its current form) does not have a chat feature, but this may change in future iterations. That would represent an opportunity for children to be groomed into gang membership while playing. Games often add new features like this over time via upgrades and patches. Currently, players are encouraged to share their progress online through social media. This could also be damaging, as young people may want to try the game out themselves having seen it on their social feeds.



### Easy to Access

The game is rated 17+ in the App Store and Google Play, but can be downloaded with relative ease by anybody with access to a mobile device. From purchasing the app to playing the game, there are warnings about the nature of the game – but to young, curious minds, these warnings can easily go unheeded.



## Advice for Parents & Carers

### Activate Parental Controls

Make sure that you set up parental controls on your child's device that will block the ability to download games from the app store either entirely, or only allow it with parental permission. On Android and Apple devices, the option is located in the phone's settings.



### Learn the Game's Themes

Playing any game yourself is often the best way to understand it. In this case, knowing what things like a "trap house" and a "cunch line" are – and how they relate to crime – is essential information for parents and carers. Knowing not only that something is harmful, but knowing why it is dangerous, could be the difference between an awkward conversation and a genuine interaction.



### Discuss the Subject Matter

Talk to your children about what happens in the game, and why it's important they understand it. It's likely that most young people who play Cunch-Line Chronicles will understand it's just a game, but impressionable ones might want to re-enact what they're seeing. In either case, it's still valuable to prepare children with information on how people can be coerced into the drug trade, and about the dangers of drugs in general.



### Contact Other Parents/Carers

It's quite possible that the practice of county lines drug running has so far flown under a lot of adults' radars (even though it's made national news several times). If you suspect that the game is being played within your children's friendship groups, you might want to contact their friends' parents or carers so they can also be aware of the game and the themes it explores.



### Be Watchful

If you think there might be an issue related to county lines in your community, do not hesitate to speak to the police or the local authorities. The likelihood is that most young people who play the game will be unaffected by it and see it as no more than a popular app. But there may also be impressionable players who need to be looked out for to prevent them straying into darker territory.



### Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for five years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

