

missing people

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419)
and in Scotland (SC047419)

Are you worried
that something
isn't right with
your child?

Have you heard
about County Lines*
exploitation and
wondered if your child
might be involved?

* County Lines, where criminals groom and exploit children to transport and sell drugs in areas away from home.

Have you had
extra concerns
about your child
because of COVID-19?

CALL
0208
392
5710

Guidance for families on staying safe in light of COVID-19 and County Lines for England and Wales



We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a worrying time for families, especially those who think or know that their child is involved in County Lines, where criminals groom and exploit children to transport and sell drugs in areas away from home. County Lines exploitation has not stopped during the pandemic. In fact, parents and carers may have extra worries about a child's safety because of support services not being available at the moment, or because they think their child has recently got caught up in County Lines.



The SafeCall team provides a free and confidential, national service for families affected by County Lines and have put together this guide to offer our support at this difficult time.

Could my child be involved in County Lines?

Parents have told us that there are lots of possible warning signs that a child may be involved in County Lines including:

- A noticeable and often sudden change in personality, behaviour and moods such as becoming hostile, aggressive, secretive, unsettled, anxious, scared, depressed or controlling
- Disengaging from education, family and/ or their normal social life
- Excessive use of their phone and having multiple phones
- Being absent or missing from school or home or being seen in a different area
- Poor hygiene and well-being
- Having new friends that you are never allowed to meet
- Acquiring money, new clothes, or expensive items that you don't think they could afford
- Unexplained injuries
- Coming to the attention of police

Many of these behaviours may feel or look like signs of adolescence, but if there has been a noticeable or sudden change in behaviour or you just have concerns, trust your instincts. If you are reading this and thinking *"this could be my child"* help is available for you and for your child.

SafeCall – here to help you

If you are worried that your child could be caught up in County Lines, and you don't know what to do or who to turn to for help - **please contact the SafeCall service**. SafeCall is a confidential, non-judgemental specialist service available across England and Wales which supports young people and their families with concerns surrounding county lines and gang exploitation. It's free to access and available to anyone affected by County Lines.

You can call us on **020 8392 5710** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, or if you prefer, fill in our web referral form at www.missingpeople.org.uk/safecall and we will call you back.

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A member of the SafeCall team will be able to talk through your concerns, and help you work out your next steps. We can provide advice, emotional support and advocacy to ensure you're getting the help you need from all agencies. We can also just be there as a listening ear if you don't feel able to talk about your worries with friends or family.

SafeCall is run by the national charity Missing People. If you need to speak to someone urgently, outside of SafeCall's hours, call or text **116000** for free. Missing People's expert family helpline team will be available 24/7 to provide confidential help or arrange for someone from SafeCall to text or phone at a time that's convenient for you. Please note that your child does not need to be missing to use the SafeCall service.

“ Thank you for helping me and my son, you have helped my heart ”

“ Having SafeCall work on my behalf made such a difference, I was able to concentrate on my well-being, everything took a toll on me. Thank you so much ”

Useful tips if you are worried about a young person who may be exploited and is missing

- When your young person is going out, ask for details of who they are going to meet and where. We understand that it may not be possible to ask this or that you may not get a response but if you can, this information could be useful should you have to report them missing.
- Agree on a time that you would like your child to be home by saying **“I would like you home by...”** as opposed to **“You need to be home by”**. This approach should help to avoid escalation of any conflict and mean you are both clear on expectations. Make it clear to your child what will happen if they do not return by that time.
- Take note of what your child is wearing as you may be asked to list their items of clothing and any particular jewellery, hair style etc should you have to report your child as missing to police

- If the young person does not return when agreed, they are not contactable and you are worried about them, you should report them missing straight away to the police by calling **101**. You do not need to wait 24 hours before reporting someone as missing, and you can report them as missing as often as you need to as they are not where you expect them to be and you are worried about them.
- Record any concerns you have about what your child is doing and note down any names, addresses or contact details of people of concern to you, as well as car registration numbers or bus and train ticket destinations.
- If you need advice about whether an appeal to help find your missing child is a good idea, and what your options (including public and discrete/ non-public options), please talk to SafeCall staff who will be able to talk you through this.

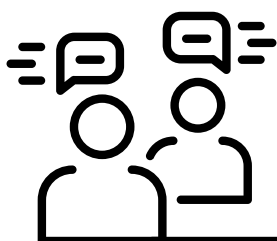
“ I handled his latest missing episode so much better thanks to our chat ”
A parent's response to SafeCall

Other sources of support

- **The See, Hear, Respond service** online or by phone on **0800 157 7015** is run by Barnardo's and can support children, young people and families in England who are struggling to cope with the impacts of coronavirus
- **The NSPCC helpline** online or by phone on **0808 800 5000** provides support and advice if you have any concerns about your own or another child's safety
- For other advice and details of other independent helplines that can support you to keep your child safe, [visit this government webpage](#)

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SAFECALL
It's your call.

