

Police engage with 29 vulnerable people during targeted 'County Lines' operation

Police Scotland officers across the country took part in a UK-wide week of activity targeting County Lines drugs dealers – who exploit the most vulnerable people in the communities, including children and young adults.

County Lines refers to criminals from larger cities who expand their operations into smaller towns. They endeavour to exploit young and vulnerable people to sell drugs, carry cash and weapons – bringing violence, coercion and abuse. They may also take over a vulnerable person's house, or cuckooing.



Police Scotland's Assistant Chief Constable Pat Campbell, said: "County Lines gangs are not welcome in Scotland. They groom and exploit the most vulnerable people in our communities including children and young people. People are intimidated, coerced, threatened and force into storing or selling drugs."

During the national intensification week between Monday 17 and Sunday 23 May 2021 – co-ordinated by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) – proactive action by officers in Scotland saw engagement with 29 vulnerable people and 64 addresses, believed to be used for the purposes of cuckooing, visited.

20 people were arrested and controlled drugs – heroin, cocaine, crack cocaine and cannabis with an estimated street value of £40,000 – were seized.

Over £20,000 in cash was recovered. Offensive weapons, including a Taser, two machetes and two large knives, a number of mobile phones, a laptop and almost £500 of counterfeit cash, were seized.

County Lines gangs are known to use the postal system to transport drugs, and during the week of activity a number of post offices in Police Scotland's Highlands and Islands Division were visited by the Dog Unit.

A package containing high-purity cocaine, with a street value of more than £25,000, was intercepted and a subsequent search of a property in Simpson Place in Dingwall saw cannabis worth around £40,000 being recovered. A 32-year-old man was arrested and enquiries are ongoing.

Assistant Chief Constable Campbell added: "Our officers remain absolutely committed to working with our partners to reduce the exploitation of vulnerable people and safeguard individuals who may be at risk, and pursue offenders.

"Together we will provide support to those targeted by unscrupulous criminals, to reduce ongoing risk and enable recovery; and we will continue to make Scotland a hostile environment to those who seek to engage in criminal activity. The positive results during the day of action are an example of this work which will continue in support of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy and the Drug Harm Reduction Strategy.

"As ever, I would urge anyone with concerns to report them to Police Scotland or alternatively to Crime stoppers anonymously."