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County Lines & Criminal Exploitation of UK University Students

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**Centre for Criminal
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Partnerships**

RESOLVE

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**County Lines &
Criminal
Exploitation of
UK University
Students**



**County
Lines drug
gangs
'target
vulnerable
university
students
crippled by
debt'**

Mirror 30 MAR 2019

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HEADLINE FINDINGS

There is a distinct lack of evidence, knowledge and understanding about County Lines and criminal exploitation in UK university students. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that this is a significant and hidden problem that has been happening on campuses nationwide for several years. To address this evidence gap, Freedom of Information requests were sent to 127 UK universities, and an online questionnaire was advertised to current UK university students.

Key findings from 106 FOI responses*, and 140 questionnaire responses are summarised below:

- Of the 106 FOI responses received, 7 universities reported that there were between 43-109 university students believed to be involved in County Lines, as either a victim or perpetrator, since the academic year of 2016/17.
- Of this total number (N=43-109), between 7-13 were known to be international students, and between 21-27 were known to be permanent residents of the UK. Between 11-41 were reported to be victims of County Lines exploitation, and between 16-52 were reported to be perpetrators of County Lines exploitation.
- There was a total of 13,658-14,023 incidents of drug use, possession and distribution on university campuses (including accommodation), between the academic year of 2016/17 and March 2022. Between 1,538-1,638 of these were known to be related to drug possession, 3,100-3,200 related to drug use, and between 211-353 related to drug distribution.
- More student users take drugs at house/flat parties (87%) or student accommodation (56.5%) in comparison to nightclubs or bars (47.8%).
- Almost half of students had never heard of County Lines prior to completing the questionnaire for this study.

- Almost 1 in 5 students who had been provided with items (e.g., drugs, alcohol, accommodation, money, or other material goods) for “free”, say they had later been told that they must repay the costs of these.
- Just over 4 in every 10 (42.1%) reported that they had witnessed students selling illegal drugs to other students.
- High numbers of students have witnessed common indicators of County Lines exploitation during their time at university. This includes witnessing other students: owning multiple ‘burner’ phones (29.3%); carrying weapons on their person (10.7%); owing large amounts of money to unknown people (17.1%); and with unexplained injuries (25%).
- Approximately 6 in 10 students have seen illegal drugs being advertised for sale on Snapchat (60.7%), approximately one third (35.1%) have seen illegal drugs being advertised on Instagram, and almost 4 in 10 (38%) have seen them being advertised on other social media platforms.
- Students said they were most likely to seek support from friends or online help (e.g., websites) if they had concerns about their own drug use, another student's drug use, or another student selling drugs. Most students said they were unlikely (39.7% ‘very unlikely’ and 16.2% ‘unlikely’) to seek support from police if they were concerned about another student selling drugs.

*Responses from FOI requests are not exact figures due to some universities adopting a rounding methodology (e.g., reporting “<5” in cases where figures were so small, there was a risk of individuals being identified). Therefore, all figures from FOI requests are presented as a range of possible numbers.

INTRODUCTION

Recreational drug use in the student population has been well documented within the academic literature for several decades.^{1 2 3} However, previous research and subsequent interventions tend to focus on the direct harms of drug use, with little consideration of contextual harms.

This study focuses on a particular contextual harm to university students: County Lines and criminal exploitation. County Lines is a model of drug distribution that often involves the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, and is defined in the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy (2018)⁴ as:

“... a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.”

In 2020, as the world adjusted to COVID-19 lockdown restriction, so did County Lines perpetrators. As young people travelling across the country in trains and cars were more likely to be stopped and questioned by authorities, County Lines groups adapted their methods and began recruiting people more local to the target area to distribute their drugs, and using disguises (e.g. healthcare worker, delivery driver uniforms) to appear to have legitimate reasons for travel.⁵ Thus, it is unsurprising that during lockdown, most drug users did not find it any more difficult to find a supplier, than they did before COVID-19.⁶

News reports prior to the March 2020 lockdown suggest that warnings have been made for several years about County Lines groups targeting university students, as this provides a legitimate reason for why they have moved to a new particular area.^{7 8} University students can then be used as ‘runners’ to transport and sell drugs, to

recruit other students, and their student accommodation can be 'cuckooed' and used as a base to store, and sell drugs from.^{8 9}

Currently, there is very little known about County Lines and the criminal exploitation of students. However, in 2020, The Children's Society warned that the targeting and exploitation of university students increased during lockdown¹⁰, with students being both criminally and sexually exploited.

Furthermore, several cases of university students involved in County Lines have been reported in the news, in recent years. A summary of some of these cases, located by searching "county lines" and "students" on Google, are presented in Table 1.



Table 1. Selection of County Lines cases involving university students that have been published in news articles (2019-2021).

Year of news report	University	Details
2019	University of Leicester	21-year-old university student selling drugs in order to pay off a debt that was owed in London. ¹¹
2020	n/a	26-year-old man sentenced for County Lines related drug offences. The man falsely claimed to be a university student when he was stopped and questioned by police, in the vicinity of Bangor University. ¹²
2020	University of Central Lancashire Coventry University	22-year-old student sentenced for County Lines related drug offences. The student initially acted as a drugs runner for two other students at the University of Central Lancashire who were selling drugs from their halls of residence accommodation in 2017-2018. In 2018, the same student then progressed to running his own County Line network, supplying Class A drugs in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. During this period, he enrolled as a student at Coventry University, and was found to be running drug supply networks from his home there. ¹³
2021	University of Leicester	23-year-old man sentenced for supplying cannabis in 2019. The University of Leicester student was believed to have begun selling cannabis after accruing debts from his own cannabis use. ¹⁴
2021	Not stated	25-year-old university student sentenced for drug supply offences, after being arrested in 2019. The student was found to have made multiple trips between Exeter and Birmingham, as part of a County Lines network, and began selling heroin and crack cocaine to pay gambling debts. ¹⁵
2021	Swansea University	19-year-old man sentenced for possession of cocaine, ketamine, and cocaine with intent to supply. The student was caught by university security in 2019. He was found to be selling these drugs to other students, from his halls of residence accommodation, in order to fund his own drug addiction. ¹⁶
2021	Swansea University	24-year-old sentenced for possession of cannabis, ecstasy, ketamine, cocaine, alprazolam (Xanax) with intent to supply. The man was found to be selling these from his halls of residence accommodation at Swansea University, to other students, before being caught by a member of staff in 2019. ¹⁷
2021	Not stated	22-year-old university student sentenced for crimes including possession with intent to supply cannabis, MDMA, cocaine, and ketamine. The offences occurred in 2019. ¹⁸
2021	Northampton University	A woman was arrested at university halls of residence in Northampton as part of a larger County Lines operation. ¹⁹

Student Drug Market

One of the reasons why County Lines perpetrators may target students is that in the student population, there is a clear demand and market for illegal drugs.

A 2018 report conducted by Release and the National Union of Students (NUS)²⁰, found that approximately 40% of students use illegal drugs, with the majority of student users using them at home/in their student accommodation, or at house parties. Furthermore, 62% of students do not see a problem with recreational drug use, and this rate increases to 94% for those students who use drugs.²⁰

The student drug market, in particular, appears to be a hybrid of both social supply (i.e., sharing drugs without cost amongst friends) and traditional drug markets (e.g., purchasing drugs from an established dealer).^{21 22} Evidence also suggests that not only are many UK students using drugs, but many are also selling drugs: a 2019 survey of over 7,000 university students in Wales found that 18% of student drug users sold drugs, and a further 32% gave drugs away for free as well as selling them.²¹ This suggests that students are not only consumers, but they also play an active role as suppliers, or dealers, within the drug market.

Social Media

Drugs sales can be facilitated by social media in a number of ways. Firstly, by advertising the dealers' products and allowing potential buyers to assess its legitimacy and quality before completing the transaction.²² Secondly, dealers can also use social media to send "dealer spam": multiple messages advertising their product, prices and any deals or "special offers" to existing customers. Thirdly, social media can also be used to recruit potential new customers by following them on social media, hoping to be followed back, and thus establishing an online connection. An online survey of recreational drug users found that Snapchat and Instagram are the most popular apps to buy drugs from with 76.1% and 21.6% of users saying they use them to facilitate the purchase drugs.²² Snapchat, in particular, has been reported by several practitioners working with young people to be a common tool used by County Lines perpetrators to advertise drugs in locations that they want to begin trading in.⁵

However, social media also provides an opportunity for County Lines perpetrators to advertise the lifestyle of drug dealing. Photos and videos of money and luxury goods are often uploaded to social media, as well as vague advertisements offering opportunities for their followers to make money, in attempts to recruit and exploit young people into 'working' for them.²⁴ Such offers may be particularly tempting to university students; in 2021 the National Student Money Survey found that 76% of students (increase from 71% in 2020) said they were struggling to make ends meet, and 2 in 5 (40%) students saying they earn extra money through a "small business" or "side hustle".²⁵ Unfortunately, these initially enticing offers are often the beginning of the criminal exploitation process.

Criminal Exploitation

There are numerous ways in which individuals can be targeted and exploited, which may include: being forced to repay debts (e.g., drug debts), offers of ways to make money, or through threats of violence.²⁸

The criminal exploitation process may begin while students are at university, with increased exposure to drug use and supply. However, some may already be victims of criminal exploitation, and the move to university could be a part of the exploitation process. For every year since 2017, the majority of National Referral Mechanism (NRM)* referrals for County Lines have been for males under the age of 18 years.²⁹ Evidence suggests that, although women and girls can also be victims, most County Lines victims are adolescent males.^{28 29}

Therefore, it should be anticipated that some university students may have been exploited prior to adulthood, and enrolling on their university course.

*The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework to identify and support victims of modern slavery. NRM referrals must be made when a child is believed to be a victim of modern slavery, under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. NRM referrals can also be made for adults, but they must consent for the referral to be made.

AIMS AND METHOD

Aims

Anecdotal evidence suggests that County Lines and criminal exploitation is a legitimate safety risk to UK university students. However, there is currently a distinct research and knowledge gap concerning this problem. Therefore, the aims of this study are as follows:

1. To explore the prevalence of County Lines exploitation in the UK student demographic.
2. To examine the experiences of, and attitudes of, students relating to drug use, in the context of County Lines.

Method

- *Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests*

The first phase of the study consisted of sending Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to 127 public universities in the UK, at the beginning of March 2022. Six UK universities were exempt from FOI requests due to being private institutions.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA 2000) and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA 2002), give members of the public have the right to request recorded information from public authorities. In line with the FOIA and FOISA, public authorities should respond to FOI requests within 20 working days. FOI requests were made by the authors of this study electronically: using pre-existing online forms, or designated email addresses.

- *Online Questionnaire*

For the second phase of the study, an online questionnaire was advertised to current UK university students via social media, internal systems at the University of Central Lancashire (e.g., email distribution, study advertisement system) and by relevant members of Resolve ASB (e.g., student accommodation providers). Student wellbeing services,

and Student Unions from 133 UK universities were also contacted and invited to distribute the questionnaire to their students. All data was collected in the months of March and April 2022.

To be eligible to participate in the questionnaire survey, participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and enrolled at a UK university at the time of completing the questionnaire. Students were asked not to disclose which university they attended.

FINDINGS

FOI Requests

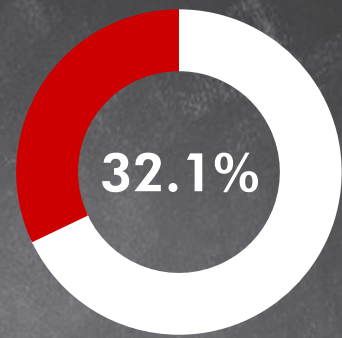
Of the 127 FOI requests sent, 113 universities responded, giving a response rate of 88.98%. Two universities did not provide any data due to not being a conventional campus-based university. Two universities did not provide a response to all questions. One university did not provide any data under Section 12 of the FOIA (exceeding time/cost limit). One university responded that no data was held for any of the questions asked. Finally, one university response could not be accessed due to a technical fault with the file, leaving a final dataset comprising of information from 106 UK universities. In some responses, rather than providing exact figures, universities have used a rounding method (e.g., values of “<5”) and therefore, a range of totals are presented throughout the findings.

- *County Lines Incidents*

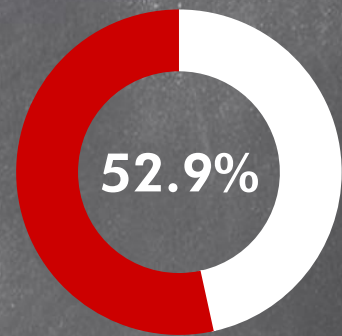
Almost half of FOI responses (n=50) stated that their institution did not hold any information relating to students being involved in County Lines as either a victim or perpetrator; a further 44 universities reported that there were no recorded cases of students being either a victim or perpetrator of County Lines. Two universities could not provide this information under Section 12 of the FOIA (exceeding time/cost limit).

However, 7 universities did have this information to share. Data from 6 UK universities suggests that in the years between 2017 and 2021, there were between 11-41 university students believed to be victims of County Lines exploitation, and between 16-52 university students believed to be perpetrators of County Lines exploitation. One other university also provided information from their institution but could not distinguish between victims and perpetrators. Thus, overall, there were between 43-109 university students involved in County Lines, as either a victim or perpetrator, between 2017 and 2021. Of this total number, between 7-13 of these were known to be international students, and between 21-27 permanent residents of the UK.

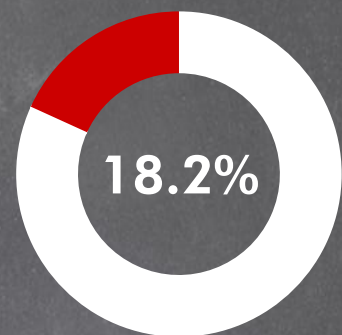
**DRUG SUPPLY
AND
INDICATORS
OF CRIMINAL
EXPLOITATION**



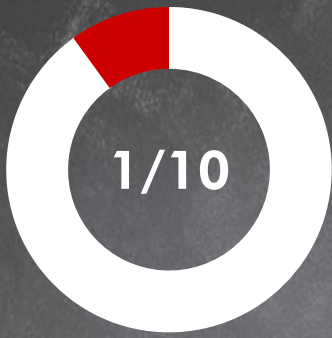
Students offered drugs for free by non-students



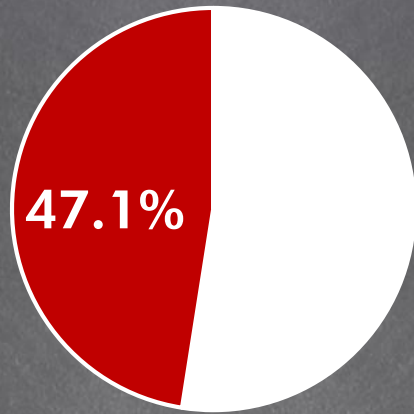
Students offered illegal drugs for free by other students



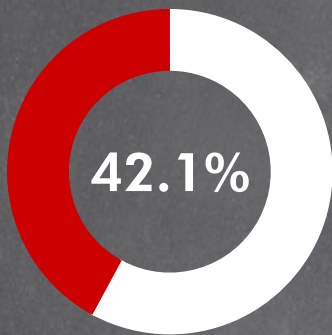
Students provided with items (e.g., drugs, alcohol, accommodation, money) for "free", had later been told that they must repay the costs of these



Students approached to sell illegal drugs



Almost half of all respondents reported that they had never heard of County Lines. Of the 52.9% who had heard of it, most knew very little



Witnessed students selling illegal drugs to other students



**Swansea
University
student ran
drug 'corner
shop' to pay
for tuition
fees**

WalesOnline 10 FEB 2021

- *Drug-related Incidents On Campus*

Responses to the FOI requests also revealed that between 2016 and 2022, there were between 1,538-1,638 incidents of drug possession, between 3,100-3,200 incidents of drug use, and between 211-353 incidents of drug distribution on university campuses. A full breakdown of these figures can be seen in Appendix 1. (Tables 2, 3 and 4, respectively). Data in the tables is presented in both calendar and academic years, depending on the format that each university provided this in.

Some universities were unable to breakdown drug related incidents into distinct categories either because data was recorded in this manner, or because this would exceed time and costs limits under Section 12 of the FOIA. However, they did provide overall figures for drug-related incidents (see Appendix 1. Table 5). Between 2016 and 2021 there were a further 8,809-8,832 drug-related incidents on university campuses.

Thus, there were a total of 13,658-14,023 incidents of drug use, possession or distribution on university campuses (including accommodation), since the academic year of 2016/17.

Questionnaire

- *Demographics*

The questionnaire received a total of 140 responses. Most respondents self-described as female (69.3%), while 26.4% identified as male, and 3.6% as non-binary. Ages ranged from 18-53, with a mean age of 22.63 years (SD=6.56). Most respondents identified as White British (65.7%), 7.1% identified as White European, 5% identified as Asian Pakistani, and all other ethnic backgrounds ranged between 0.7-3.6% each.

Just under 1 in 10 respondents reported that they were an international student (9.3%), with 87.1% stating that they were not. Most respondents resided in some form of shared accommodation: 28.6% said they lived in university halls of residence, 12.9% lived in a privately rented accommodation with friends/housemates, and 10.7% resided in privately owned halls of residence. Full percentages for each type of accommodation can be seen in Figure 1.

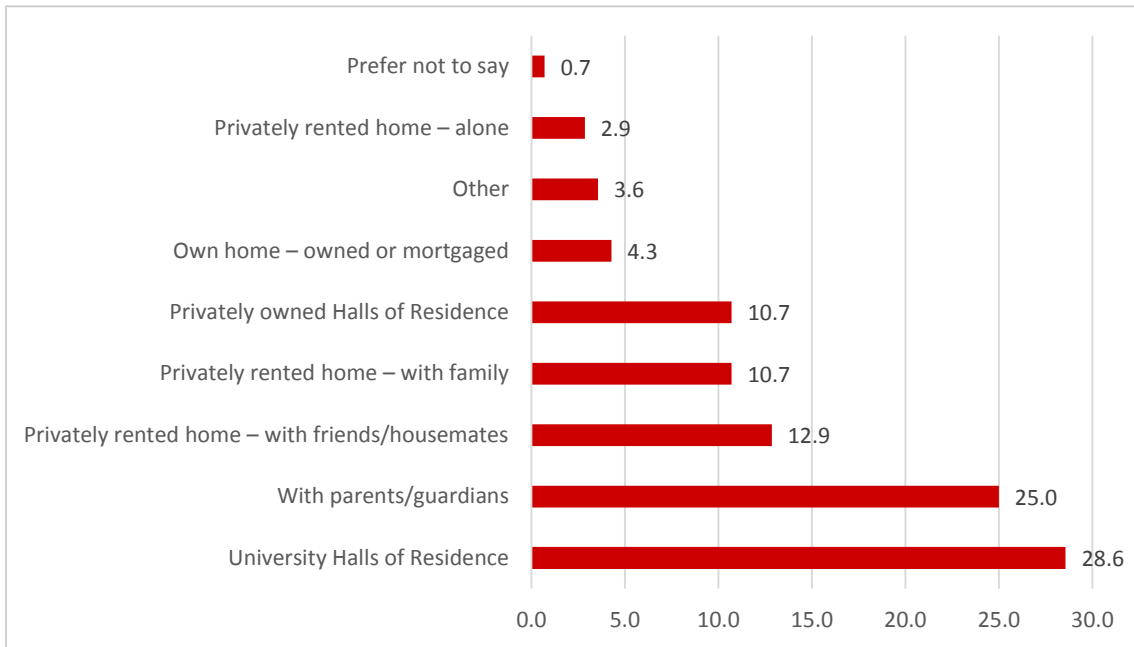


Figure 1. *Types of accommodation that respondents reside in shown as percentages.*

- *Drug Use*

Almost 1 in 5 students reported using recreational drugs during their time at university: 21.4% reported that they had previously but no longer used them, and 16.4% said they currently still use them. Cannabis was the most popular drug choice with 31.4% of all respondents saying that they had used them. The second most common drug choice was amphetamines (including cocaine and crack cocaine), with 17.9% of all students stating they had used these, followed by ecstasy (11.4%); hallucinogens (6.4%), and barbiturates/opiates (3.6%). Furthermore, 12.9% of all respondents said they had used prescription drugs for recreational use.

Just over 4 in 10 students who currently use drugs, reported that this was mostly on special occasions (40.7%). However, over one third (33.3%) of current users said they used drugs a few times a week. Approximately 1 in 10 current users said this was once a week (11.1%), with slightly more saying they used them once a month (14.8%). For students who have previously, but no longer, used illegal drugs: 61.5% said this was on special occasions; 9.6% once a month; 15.4% once a week; 7.7% a few time times per week; and 5.8% of previous users reported everyday use.

All respondents, regardless of whether or not they used drugs, were asked where they believed that other students typically used illegal drugs. Nightclubs/bars and house/flat parties were the most common locations (both 74.3%), with student accommodation being the least chosen location (52.1%).

Half of previous student drug users reported that they would take drugs at house/flat parties (50%), 26.7% said they would use drugs in their student accommodation, and 26.7% said they would use them in nightclubs/bars. House/flat parties were also a popular location for students who currently use drugs (87%), followed by student accommodation (56.5%), and 47.8% reporting using drugs in nightclubs/bars. Both previous, and current users also offered other locations including at home, parks, remote woodland areas, or “outside” and “on the streets”.

- *Drug Supply and Indicators of Criminal Exploitation*

Almost half of all respondents reported that they had never heard of County Lines prior to completing the questionnaire (47.1%). Of the 52.9% who had heard of it: 31% said they knew ‘very little’; 23.8% said they knew ‘a little’; 28.6% knew ‘a moderate amount’; and 16.7% felt that they knew ‘a lot’.

Over half of students (52.9%) reported that they had been offered illegal drugs for free by other students. However, over a third of students have been approached to purchase drugs, and approximately 1 in 10 have been approached to sell illegal drugs (see Figure 2). This supports previous research that suggests that the student drug market is a hybrid: consisting of elements of both social supply and traditional drug markets.^{21 22}

Furthermore, 18.2% of all respondents who had been provided with items (e.g., drugs, alcohol, accommodation, money, or other material goods) for “free”, say they had later been told that they must repay the costs of these. Although it is possible that this may be for benign reasons amongst friends, it is also possible that this is due to debt bondage: a tactic used by County Lines exploiters to coerce victims into committing offences in order to repay any perceived debts.²⁶

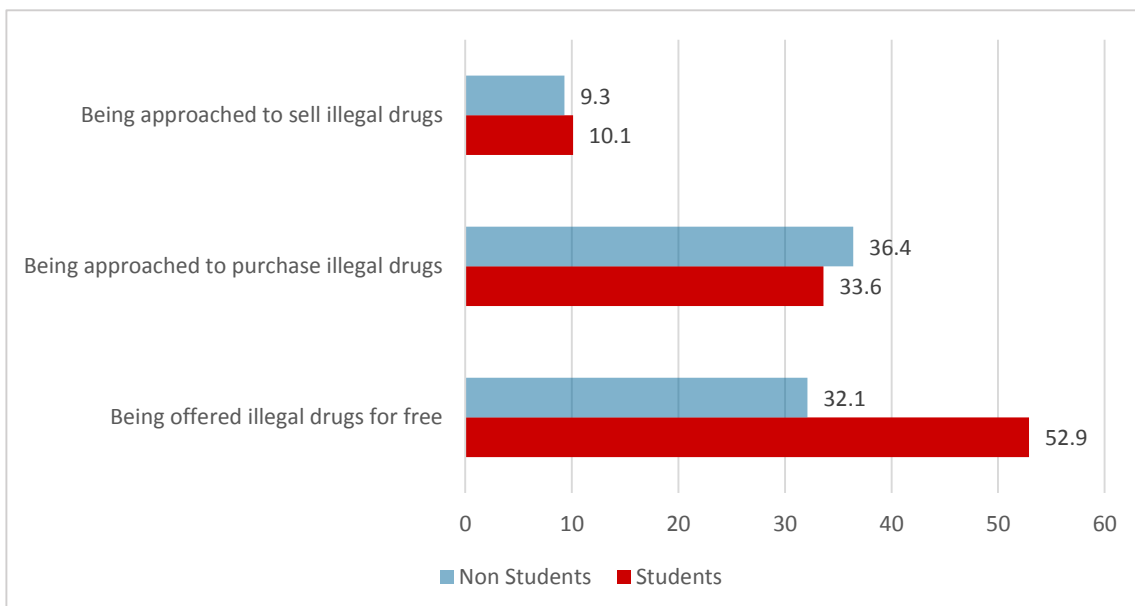


Figure 2. Percentages of respondents who have been approached to purchase or sell drugs, and offered drugs for free by students and non-students.

Only one respondent disclosed that they had sold drugs whilst at university but did not disclose to who they sold (e.g., students or non-students). However, 42.1% of all students reported that they had witnessed students selling illegal drugs to other students, with 7.8% saying this 'very often' or 'always'. The questionnaire also asked respondents if they had witnessed any other common indicators of possible County Lines exploitation (see Appendix 2, Table 6).

- *Social Media*

The vast majority of students reported that they use, or have used, social media while at university (95%). Over half of students said they had seen illegal drugs being advertised for sale on Snapchat (60.7%); 35.1% have seen illegal drugs being advertised on Instagram, and 38% have seen them being advertised on other social media platforms.

Just under a third of students (29.2%) said they have seen people who do not appear to be students joining and posting in student group chats (e.g., group chats for specific courses, year groups, or halls of residence); this is a common tactic used by County Lines perpetrators.⁵



**Drug
dealing
university
student
faces jail
term**

CornwallLive 9 FEB 2021



Nearly 7 in 10 student (69.3%) had seen people advertising ways to make money quickly, 58.7% had seen photos or videos of large sums of cash being posted on social media, and 47.1% reported seeing people offering to help students earn money by receiving bank transfers, and then transferring this elsewhere. The latter of which is a method of money laundering used by County Lines groups.²⁷

Accessing Support

- Own drug use

All respondents were asked how likely they would be to use different sources of support if they were concerned about their own drug use. Students were most likely to seek support from friends or online help. However, they were less likely to seek support from academic staff, family, or student services. Previous research suggests that only half of students (51%) feel confident that their universities would support them with their drug use appropriately, and 40% say fear of punishment is a barrier to disclosing drug use to their university.²⁰

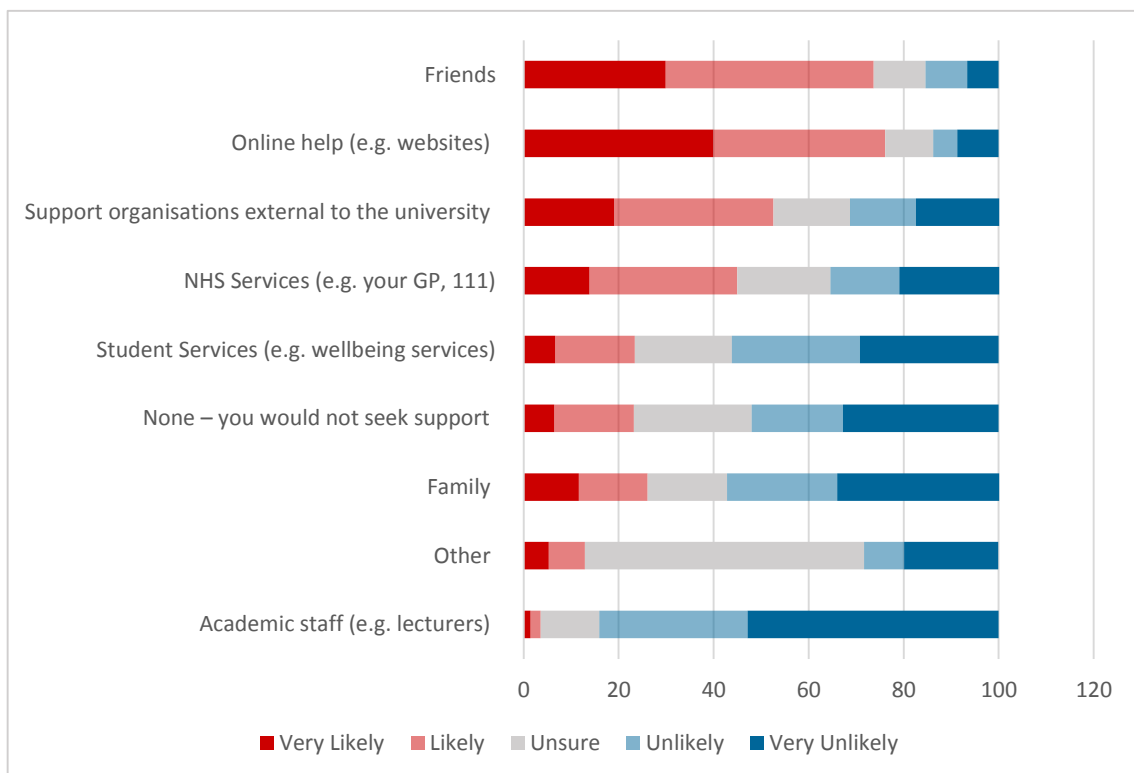


Figure 3. Stacked bar chart to show likelihood of students seeking support for their own drug use.

- *Other students drug use*

Respondents were also asked how likely they would be to seek support from different sources, if they were concerned about another student’s drug use. Students were more likely to seek support from their friends, the other student’s friends, or online help. Students were less likely to seek support from police, academic staff, or campus security.

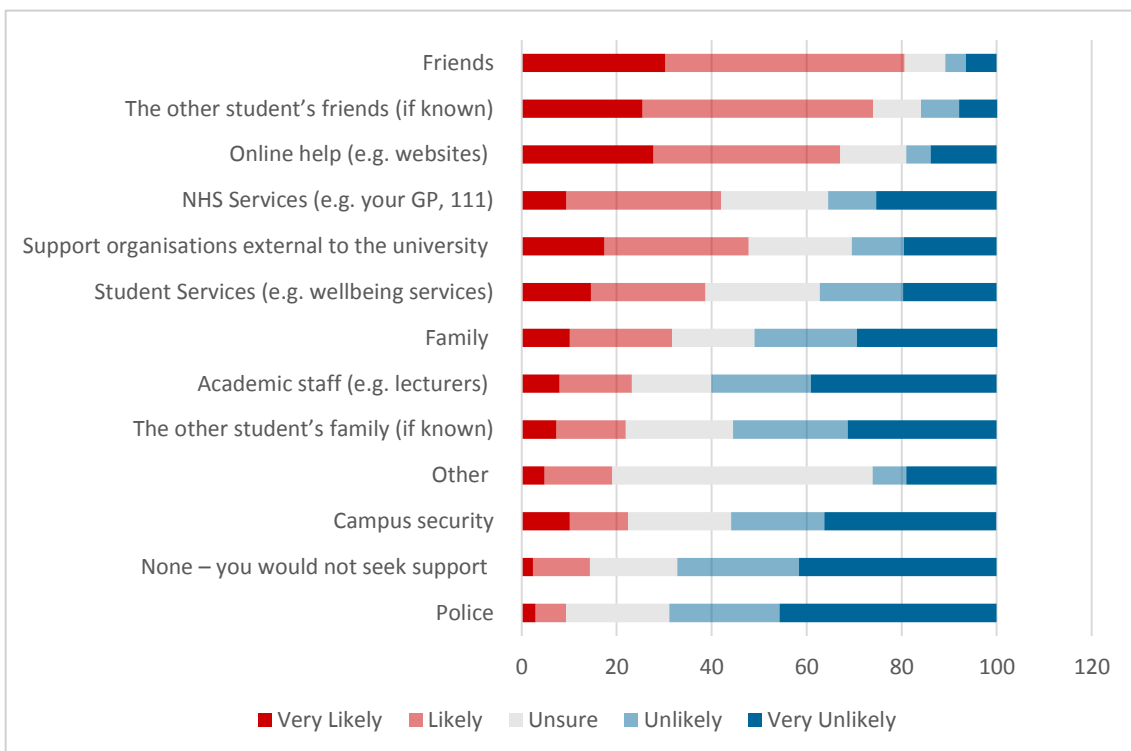


Figure 4. Stacked bar chart to show likelihood of students seeking support for another students’ drug use.

- *Other students selling drugs*

Finally, respondents were asked how likely they would be to seek support from the same organisations if they were concerned about another student selling illegal drugs. Similar to previous responses, students were more likely to seek support from friends, the other student’s friends, or online help. Students were less likely to seek support from the other students’ family, academic staff, or police.

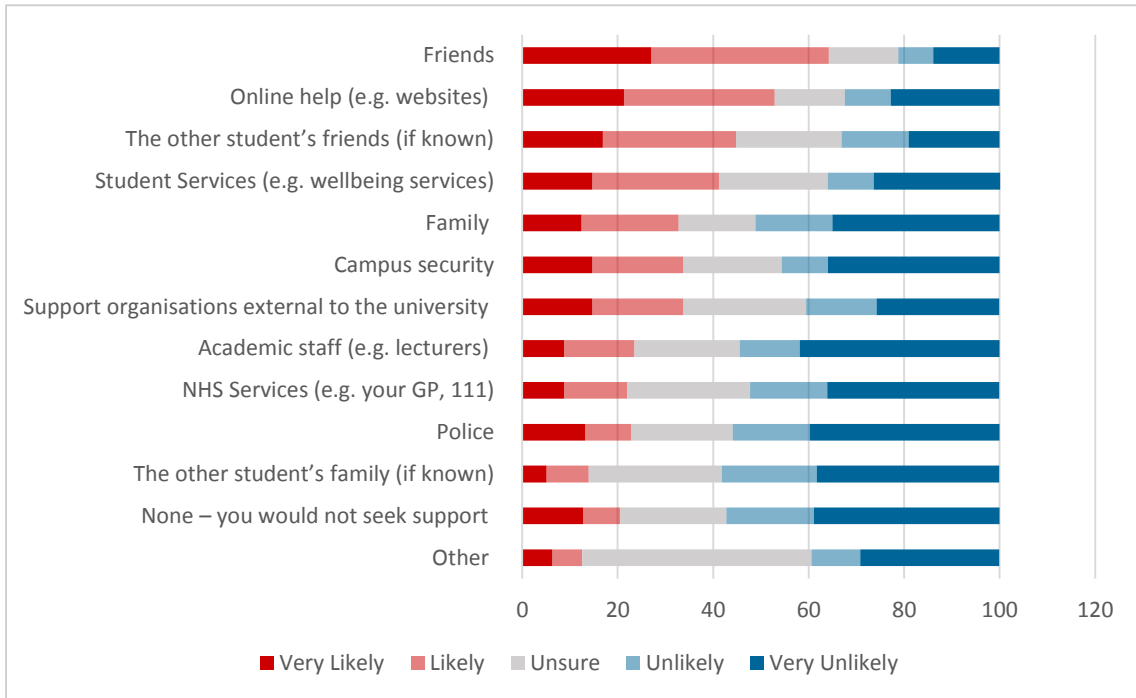


Figure 5. *Stacked bar chart to show likelihood of students seeking support if they were concerned about another student selling drugs..*





**Drugs
kingpin, 22,
who was
trained by
students in
university
halls of
residence, is
jailed for
running
Britain's
biggest
'county
lines'
operation**

MailOnline 13 NOV 2020

CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that County Lines exploitation has been, and is still currently happening, in the university student population, regardless of whether or not this is documented in data held by universities.

While 7 universities held records of between 43-109 students who have been involved in County Lines as a victim or perpetrator, based on questionnaires responses from students, and lack of data held by 50 other universities, it is likely that the real number is much higher.

Students who live in student accommodation, as opposed to non-student accommodation types, appear to be more exposed to general drug use and potential exploitation.

Furthermore, social media (particularly Snapchat) poses a risk to students: exposing them to drug dealers and therefore there are increased opportunities to purchase illegal drugs, and to be targeted and exploited by County Lines groups.

Due to the hybrid nature of the student drug market, there may be difficulties in distinguishing between lower-risk social supply of the drugs, and the much higher-risk County Lines supply of drugs (for both students and staff).

Further research is needed to investigate the nuances of supply with the student drug market, in much greater detail, and to explore the barriers preventing students from seeking support from their universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** UK universities must acknowledge that County Lines and criminal exploitation is a legitimate risk and take proactive measures to safeguard students and other individuals at universities
- 2** Research / interventions for student drug use need to focus on both the direct harms of using drugs, as well as the contextual harms of drug supply
- 3** University-held data for drug-related incidents on campus and in student accommodation should be stored in an easily accessible manner, distinguishing between 'use', 'possession', and 'supply' to effectively monitor trends of use and supply on their campus
- 4** Monitor known, or suspected, victims or perpetrators of County Lines exploitation, as this poses a safeguarding risk to themselves, and others in universities.
Where criminal exploitation is suspected, the appropriate safeguarding procedure should be followed, and students should be offered support from relevant student services
- 5** Universities should take a harm reduction approach to tackling drug supply, educating students on the signs and risks of County Lines and criminal exploitation, in a similar manner to drug use is often tackled with a harm reduction focus
- 6** Student-facing university staff should receive training on County Lines and criminal exploitation, particularly those who are more likely to interact with students in vulnerable circumstances (e.g., wellbeing services, financial services, campus security, student retention)
- 7** University webpages, and social media platforms should convey information relating to County Lines and criminal exploitation, as this is where students say they are more likely to seek support

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Appendix 1

Table 2. Reported incidents of drug possession on university campuses (including student accommodation).

University	2016/17	2017	2017/18	2018	2018/19	2019	2019/20	2020	2020/21	2021	2021/22
University of Aberdeen	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-
Abertay University	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
Aberystwyth University	12	-	12	-	19	-	5	-	11	-	-
Anglia Ruskin University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Aston University	-	7	-	14	-	7	-	6	-	4	-
Bangor University	-	-	3	-	5	-	2	-	1	-	-
University of Bedfordshire	-	11	-	5	-	14	-	1	-	3	-
Birmingham City University	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	-
University College Birmingham	-	5	-	4	-	0	-	2	-	0	-
Bishop Grosseteste University	-	-	-	<5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Arts University Bournemouth	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-
Bournemouth University	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of Bradford	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
University of Cambridge	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Chester	-	13	-	10	-	4	-	5	-	6	-
University of Chichester	-	7	-	7	-	7	-	8	-	5	-
Coventry University	-	11	-	28	-	10	-	18	-	7	-
Cranfield University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Cumbria	-	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	0
De Montfort University, Leicester	-	-	-	-	-	-	<6	-	<6	-	-
University of Dundee	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
University of East Anglia	-	-	1	-	1	-	5	-	8	-	1
University of East London	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	17	-	-
Edge Hill University	-	-	11	-	11	-	10	-	5	-	-
University of Edinburgh	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
Edinburgh Napier University	-	11	-	<6	-	<6	-	<6	-	0	-
University of Essex	-	-	6	-	18	-	19	-	19	-	-
Falmouth University	-	11	-	36	-	10	-	7	-	6	-
University of Glasgow	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	0	-
Glasgow Caledonian University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Greenwich	-	1	-	1	-	0	-	1	-	1	-
Heriot-Watt University	-	<5	-	6	-	7	-	8	-	9	-
University of Huddersfield	<5 between 2017-2021										
Keele University	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH
University of Central Lancashire	-	-	0	-	6	-	0	-	2	-	0
Lancaster University	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH
Leeds Arts University	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
Leeds Trinity University	-	0	-	1	-	1	-	0	-	2	-
University of Leicester	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Liverpool	-	<5	-	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-
Liverpool Hope University	-	-	4	-	5	-	7	-	1	-	1
University of London	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
London Metropolitan University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Nottingham Trent University	-	-	15	-	2	-	3	-	14	-	-
Plymouth Marjon University	-	0	-	1	-	3	-	3	-	5	-
Queen Margaret University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

Ravensbourne University London	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
The Robert Gordon University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Royal Agricultural University	-	3	-	5	-	4	-	1	-	2	-
University of Salford	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sheffield	-	6	-	20	-	22	-	14	-	5	-
University of South Wales	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Solent University	-	<5	-	<5	-	8	-	<5	-	<5	-
University of Suffolk	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sunderland	-	0	-	0	-	6	-	0	-	0	-
University of Surrey, Guildford	-	-	63	-	89	-	90	-	78	-	52
University of the Arts London	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Ulster University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Warwick	-	54	-	50	-	54	-	32	-	15	-
University of the West of Scotland	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of West London	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Westminster	2	-	0	-	1	-	2	-	0	-	0
University of Winchester	-	-	9	-	23	-	52	-	37	-	14
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
York St John University	-	0	-	<5	-	7	-	17	-	10	-

NH= "Not held"

Table 3. Reported incidents of drug use on university campuses (including student accommodation).

University	2016 /17	2017	2017 /18	2018	2018 /19	2019	2019 /20	2020	2020 /21	2021	2021 /22
University of Aberdeen		NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-
Abertay University		NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
Aberystwyth University		-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-
Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Aston University, Birmingham		18	-	24	-	25	-	18	-	5	-
Bangor University		-	37	-	10	-	8	-	6	-	-
University of Bedfordshire		17	-	26	-	21	-	1	-	5	-
Birmingham City University	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	-
University College Birmingham		5	-	4	-	0	-	2	-	0	-
Bishop Grosseteste University		0	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-
The Arts University Bournemouth		<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-
Bournemouth University	4	-	4	-	3	-	2	-	2	-	-
University of Bradford		NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
University of Cambridge		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Chester		13	-	4	-	11	-	3	-	5	-
University of Chichester		7	-	7	-	7	-	8	-	5	-
Coventry University		5	-	14	-	5	-	12	-	14	-
Cranfield University		0	-	0	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-
University of Cumbria		-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	0
De Montfort University		-	-	-	-	-	<6	-	<6	-	-
University of Dundee		NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
University of East Anglia		-	6	-	27	-	17	-	22	-	6
University of East London		-	-	-	-	-	21	-	10	-	-
Edge Hill University		-	12	-	18	-	8	-	4	-	-
University of Edinburgh	57	-	114	-	72	-	33	-	28	-	-

Edinburgh Napier University		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Essex		-	78	-	51	-	52	-	57	-	-
Falmouth University		16	-	26	-	18	-	10	-	9	-
University of Glasgow		4	-	1	-	4	-	2	-	5	-
Glasgow Caledonian University		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Greenwich		2	-	11	-	30	-	9	-	3	-
Harper Adams University	<5 between 2017-2021										
Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh and Galashiels		19	-	9	-	13	-	16	-	27	-
University of Huddersfield	<5 between 2017-2021										
Keele University		-	15	-	18	-	2	-	7	-	-
University of Central Lancashire		-	13	-	3	-	6	-	5	-	2
Lancaster University		-	22	-	34	-	10	-	5	-	10
Leeds Arts University		-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
Leeds Trinity University		5	-	7	-	10	-	4	-	3	-
University of Leicester	1 between 2017-2021										
University of Liverpool		54	-	85	-	94	-	67	-	83	-
Liverpool Hope University		-	4	-	5	-	7	-	1	-	1
University of London		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
London Metropolitan University		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Manchester Metropolitan University	NH	-	NH	-	7	-	3	-	4	-	-
Nottingham Trent University		-	56	-	94	-	46	-	41	-	-
Plymouth Marjon University		0	-	1	-	3	-	5	-	5	-
Queen Margaret University		6	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Ravensbourne University London	NH	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	1
The Robert Gordon University		15	-	<5	-	5	-	<5	-	0	-
Royal Agricultural University		3	-	5	-	4	-	1	-	2	-
University of Salford	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sheffield		6	-	20	-	22	-	14	-	5	-
University of South Wales		0	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-
Solent University		23	-	10	-	37	-	15	-	13	-
University of Suffolk	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sunderland		<6	-	<6	-	6	-	<6	-	0	-
University of Surrey, Guildford		-	63	-	89	-	90	-	78	-	52
University of Sussex		51	-	53	-	69	-	33	-	-	16
University of the Arts London	2 between 2017-2021										
Ulster University		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)		0	-	0	-	0	-	2	-	1	-
University of Warwick		9	-	<5	-	14	-	12	-	5	-
University of the West of Scotland		0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of West London		5	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Westminster	0	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	0	-	0
University of Winchester		-	3	-	4	-	8	-	3	-	6
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of York		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
York St John University		0	-	<5	-	7	-	17	-	10	-

NH= "Not held"

Table 4. Reported incidents of drug distribution on university campuses (including student accommodation).

University	2016 /17	2017	2017 /18	2018	2018 /19	2019	2019 /20	2020	2020 /21	2021	2021 /22
University of Aberdeen	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-
Abertay University	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
Aberystwyth University	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
Anglia Ruskin University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Aston University	-	4	-	7	-	17	-	3	-	1	-
Bangor University	-	-	3	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-
University of Bath	-	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-
Bath Spa University	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of Bedfordshire	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Birmingham City University	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	-
University College Birmingham	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Bishop Grosseteste University	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
The Arts University Bournemouth	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-
Bournemouth University	0	-	0	-	4	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of Bradford	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
Buckinghamshire New University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Cambridge	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Chester, Chester and Warrington	-	2	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-
University of Chichester	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Coventry University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	5	-	0	-
Cranfield University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Cumbria	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
De Montfort University	-	-	-	-	-	-	<6	-	<6	-	-
University of Dundee	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-	NH	-
Durham University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of East Anglia	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	2	-	1
University of East London	-	-	-	-	-	-	<6	-	<6	-	-
Edge Hill University	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of Edinburgh	<5 between 2016/17-2020/21										
Edinburgh Napier University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Essex	-	-	2	-	1	-	0	-	9	-	-
University of Exeter	-	-	2	-	0	-	3	-	1	-	-
Falmouth University	-	0	-	0	-	2	-	0	-	3	-
University of Glasgow	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Glasgow Caledonian University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Greenwich	-	1	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Harper Adams University	<5 between 2017-2021										
Heriot-Watt University	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-
University of Huddersfield	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Hull	5 between 2017-2021										
Imperial College London	<5 between 2016/17-2020/21										
Keele University	-	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	1	-	-
Kingston University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
University of Central Lancashire	-	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	4	-	0
Lancaster University	-	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0
Leeds Arts University	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
Leeds Beckett University	-	-	3	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-

Leeds Trinity University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	1	-
University of Leicester	1 between 2017-2021										
University of Liverpool	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Liverpool Hope University	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of London	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
London Metropolitan University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
London South Bank University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	1	-	1	-
Manchester Metropolitan University	3 cases between 2018/19 and 2020/21										
University of Northampton	-	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
Northumbria University	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	9	-	<5	-	-
University of Nottingham	<5 between 2017-2021										
Nottingham Trent University	-	-	2	-	4	-	1	-	5	-	-
Plymouth Marjon University	-	0	-	0	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
University of Portsmouth	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Queen Margaret University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Queen's University Belfast	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Ravensbourne University London	-	NH	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Reading	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	-
The Robert Gordon University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Royal Agricultural University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Salford	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sheffield	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	<5	-	<5	-
Sheffield Hallam University	2 cases between 2017-2021										
University of South Wales	-	0	-	0	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-
Solent University	-	0	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-
University of St Andrews	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Stirling	0	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-	0
University of Strathclyde	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Suffolk	<5 between 2017-2021										
University of Sunderland	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Surrey	-	-	1	-	0	-	4	-	1	-	1
University of Sussex	5	-	4	-	1	-	0	-	-	-	2
Swansea University	-	0	-	3	-	6	-	4	-	2	-
Teesside University	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of the Arts London	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Ulster University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)	-	0	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	0	-
University of Warwick	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	0	-	<5	-
University of the West of Scotland	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of West London	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Westminster	0	-	0	-	1	-	1	-	0	-	0
University of Winchester	-	-	0	-	0	-	1	-	0	-	0
University of Wolverhampton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	-
University of York	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
York St John University	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-	0	-

Table 5. Reported incidents of drug offences on university campuses (including student accommodation), not separated by category.

University	2016/17	2017	2017/18	2018	2018/19	2019	2019/20	2020	2020/21	2021	2021/22
University of Bath	-	66	-	46	-	74	-	63	-	51	-
Bath Spa University	NH	-	NH	-	22	-	18	-	12	-	-
University of Brighton	-	NH	52	NH	36	NH	47	1	17	21	6
Buckinghamshire New University, High Wycombe	23	-	28	-	14	-	25	-	15	-	-
Canterbury Christ Church University	216 between 2017-2021										
Cardiff Metropolitan University	-	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	<5	-	-
University of Derby	-	0	-	<5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
University of Exeter	-	-	29	-	54	-	63	-	49	-	-
University of the Highlands & Islands	-	0	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	13	-
University of Hull	61 between 2017-2021										
Imperial College London	21	-	16	-	21	-	0	-	6	-	-
University of Kent	-	55	-	140	-	157	-	73	-	87	-
Kingston University	165	-	80	-	90	-	62	-	61	-	26
Leeds Beckett University	-	-	9	-	8	-	1	-	3	-	-
London South Bank University	-	13	-	35	-	25	-	32	-	29	-
Loughborough University	-	-	58	-	57	-	62	-	35	-	-
University of Manchester	202	-	126	-	137	-	81	-	47	-	-
University of Northampton	-	-	245	-	749	-	841	-	384	-	-
Northumbria University	-	-	82	-	115	-	71	-	61	-	-
University of Nottingham	-	-	92	-	60	-	61	-	45	-	-
University of Portsmouth	-	0	-	<3	-	<3	-	0	-	0	-
Queen's University Belfast	2	-	8	-	7	-	3	-	7	-	0
University of Reading	31	-	35	-	71	-	43	-	18	-	-
Roehampton University	-	-	22	-	20	-	35	-	8	-	2
University of Sheffield	53	-	31	-	135	-	36	-	56	-	9
University of St Andrews	-	4	-	11	-	9	-	3	-	0	-
University of Stirling	42	-	30	-	52	-	52	-	36	-	-
University of Strathclyde	-	0	-	5	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Swansea University	-	-	36	-	NH	-	38	-	58	-	44
University of the West of England	-	-	315	-	392	-	298	-	338	-	314
University of Worcester	-	-	25	-	25	-	31	-	20	-	-
University of York	-	-	<5	-	<5	-	35	-	-	-	-

Appendix 2

Table 6. Percentages of respondents who have witnessed indicators of possible County Lines exploitation.

	Student/Shared Accommodation*	Non-Student Accommodation**	Overall Total
Drugs or drug paraphernalia (i.e., items used to prepare or take illegal drugs) in the homes of students	74.0	36.7	57.1
Students selling illegal drugs to other students	46.6	35.0	42.1
Students using illegal drugs recreationally	87.7	48.3	69.3
Students appearing to be misusing, or having a dependency on illegal drugs	67.1	45.0	57.9
An increase in new, unknown visitors or vehicles to the homes of students	41.1	25.0	34.3
Students not engaging with their studies for unclear reasons	68.5	50.0	62.1
A new, unknown person unofficially moving into student homes (i.e. not a registered tenant)	23.3	16.7	22.1
Students suddenly having new luxury goods with no clear explanation of where they came from	21.9	23.3	23.6
Students suddenly having an increased amount of money with no clear explanation of where it came from	24.7	26.7	27.1
Housemates disappearing for long periods of time without explanation	35.6	25.0	32.1
People who are not students frequently visiting student accommodation, particularly at unsociable hours	37.0	21.7	32.1
People who are not students staying at student accommodation for long periods of time	27.4	20.0	26.4
Students with unexplained injuries	20.5	25.0	25.0
Students keeping weapons within their home (including student accommodation)	12.3	8.3	12.1
Student carrying weapons on their person	6.8	11.7	10.7
Students owning multiple mobile phones (particularly cheap, pay-as-you-go phones)	20.5	36.7	29.3
Students appearing to be scared of, or intimidated by particular people	24.7	18.3	22.1
Students owing large amounts of money to unknown people	12.3	18.3	17.1
Students appearing to be controlling of other students	11.0	20.0	16.4

*Shared/Student Accommodation consists of the students who reside in University Halls of Residence, privately owned Halls of Residence, or a privately rented home with friends/housemates.

** Non-Student Accommodation consists of students who reside in privately rented home alone or with family, in their own home (owned or mortgaged, or with parents/guardians).

Get support

The logo for Release, featuring the word "Release" in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a dark grey rectangular box.

release.org.uk An independent charity that provides advice on drug use, harm reduction, and drug laws.

The logo for THE MIX, featuring the words "THE MIX" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The "X" is stylized with a diagonal slash through it.

themix.org.uk/drink-and-drugs Information on the dealing with drug dealers, drugs and the law, drugs first aid, dealing with comedowns.

The logo for CrimeStoppers, featuring the text "CrimeStoppers." in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

0800 555 111

100% anonymous. Always.

crimestoppers-uk.org Information on County Lines and money mule scams.

The logo for St Giles, featuring the text "St Giles" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Turning a past into a future

stgilestrust.org.uk/ For support if you or you someone you know is being criminally exploited.

Further reading

[Crimestoppers](#) Information about crimes that affect university students, including County Lines and Money Mule Scams

[National Crime Agency](#) Further information about County Lines

[Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance](#) Guidance by the Home Office for any staff who work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults.

[Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance for England and Wales](#) Guidance on identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery

[Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)





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