

St Giles

Turning a past into a future

The Thanet County Lines Pilot

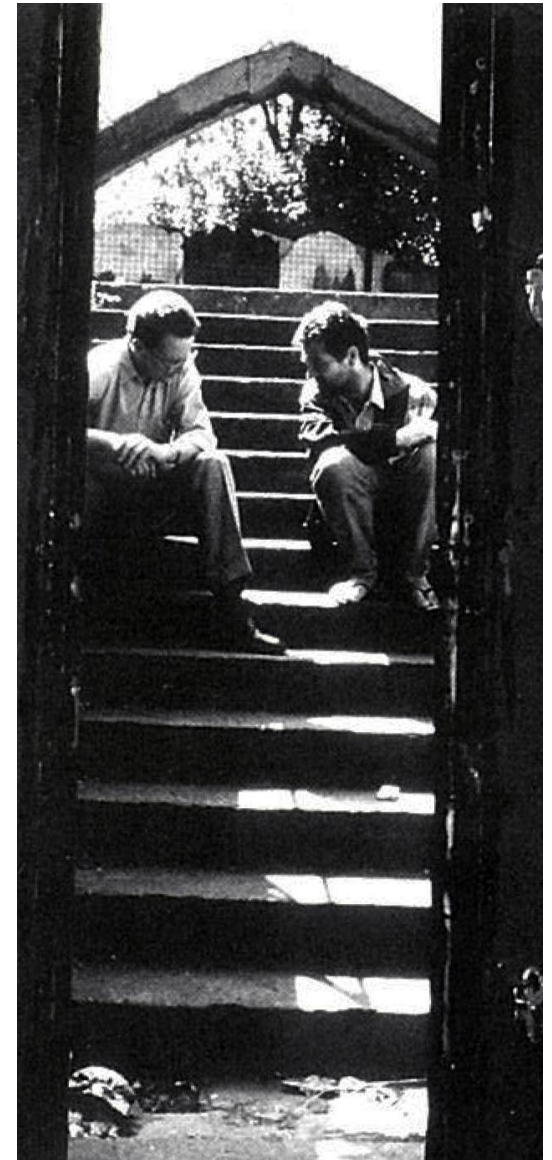
Supporting Vulnerable Children To Get Out Of
Exploitative Relationships

I'll cover

- St Giles
- The issues we are responding to – ‘County Lines’
- The Thanet Pilot
- Learning from a number of projects
- A bit of Covid

In the beginning...

- Founded 1962
- Day centre in Southwark for homeless
- First prison project 2000
- Peer Advisor programme 2001
- First prison out of London 2005
- SOS Gangs project 2006
- Set up community hubs from 2010
- First Peer Hub 2016
- First County Lines service 2017



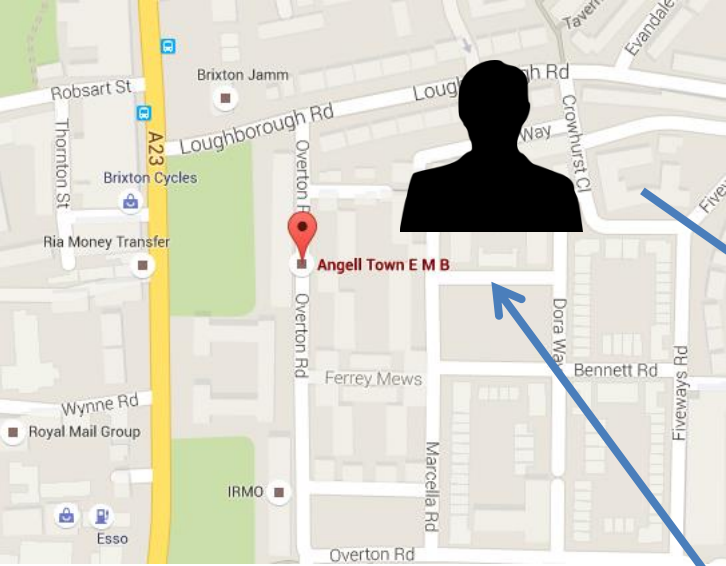
St Giles Peer Model and Youth Violence

- The Peer Advisor model developed in 2001
- We found that people with lived experience often got further, and quicker with our clients
- The Peer Advisor model found a natural home in the SOS project- around 90% of our staff and managers have lived experience
- The shared understanding and cultural competence helps overcome resistance to engagement
- Resistance is highest when its not just you that needs to change, its when others have a vested interest in you staying the same- we need all the help we can get...

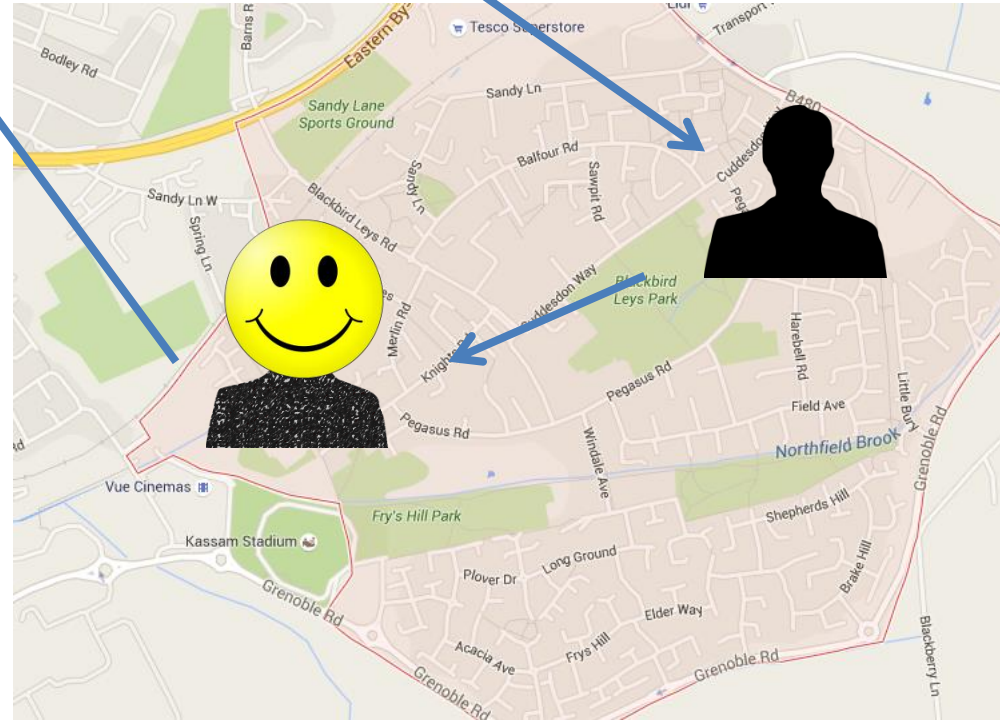
County Lines - Background

- Historic drug distribution networks from London
- Identified as 'county lines' around 2012 – but were there a lot longer- back to the arrival of cheap mobile phones
- Recognition that existing services not getting through
- Age dropping
- Drug wholesale prices dropping, purity rising
- High (growing?) demand, new markets
- Understanding of exploitation vs criminality has grown, but adversarial system makes it hard

London



Buying Drugs



Oxford

What are we up against?

County Lines dealers compete on:

- Price
- Quality
- Customer Service

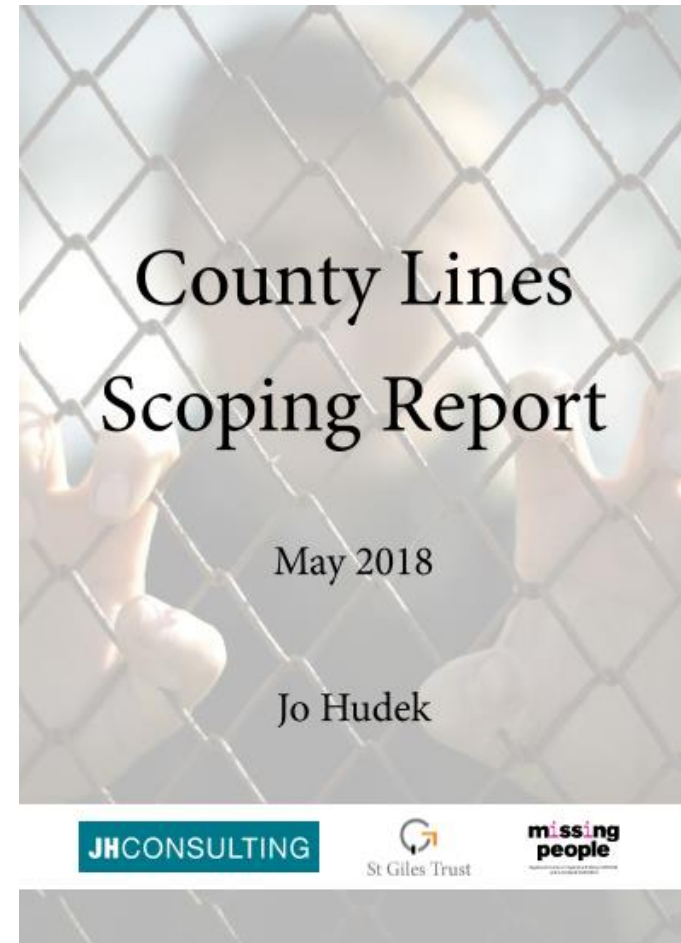
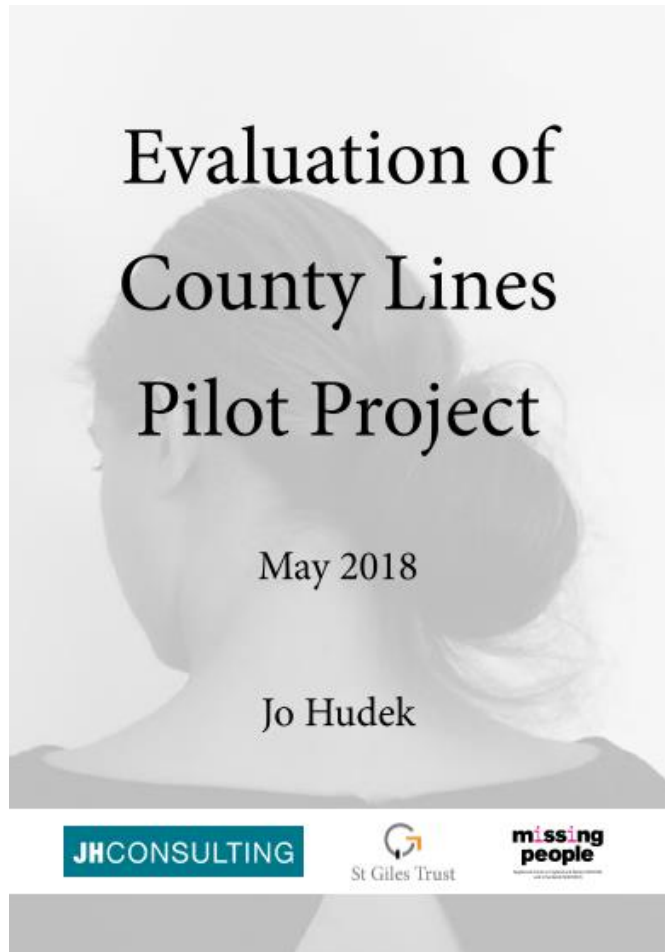
Backed up by the very real threat of extreme violence

And they don't worry about:

- Silos
- Administrative boundaries
- GDPR/ Confidentiality/ using social media

Home Office County Lines pilot in Kent

- 1.6 FTE, one London, one Margate, both with cultural competence – able to explain and deconstruct the gang offer
- Built on good police links
- Worked with local agencies
- Used London exit model
- Expected lots of London clients



Highlights - Evaluation

- Children and parents value one to one support from staff with cultural competence
- Bringing in specialists helps local services
- Link with school exclusion – 100% initially
- Recruitment is changing – not Londoners
- Good outcomes are possible – but hard work
- Update – 1 year on 33% doing really well, 50% doing better than they were

They said...

Mother: *“It’s so good to talk to someone who gets it all. He can explain to me why my son is like he is. He gives me validation from someone who really knows. To have someone who knows and who can help us to move forward is invaluable”*

Child: *“She (caseworker) understands me because she’s been through it too. That makes it different from the others (statutory services). It’s easier to talk to her and you can trust her.”*

Youth Offending Service: *“She (caseworker) is phenomenal, exceptional. We work as a team, joint visits, information sharing. She can engage when I can’t, but I’m seeing that the young people are now engaging more with me too – because they see that she trusts me.”*

Barriers to effective working in CCE

- Info sharing, both too much and too little
- 'No snitching' culture
- Professional silos
- Blind eyes
- Administrative boundaries
- 18 year cliff edge – being re introduced
- Attitudes – pro/ anti NRM, CSE like CCE?
- Politics of criminal justice

Learning 1

- Risk levels not appreciated – contextual safeguarding (Firmin)
- Children not ‘motivated’ – they are teenagers!
- Professionals need help too
- Gap around drug services – the supply side
- Gangs developing new lines: universities, ‘softer’ drugs, sex trafficking, cannabis cultivation

Learning 2

- More young women and girls are visible with CCE
- Social media – no guidance on safe practice, ethics, ‘Gang Fans’ (Harding)
- Local kick back – learning the London tricks
- Debt bondage – how to work with it

Learning 3

- Lack of parental knowledge, and the need for family support – parents feel excluded
- Territorial gangs are in the minority, the violence is more about drugs and money
- We need to help with mental health, but how?
- Cuckooing – raises challenges for regional services – need muscular housing support

Learning 4

- Children go missing who are not formally reported – due to parental anxiety
- Services at ‘reachable’ moments work
- How far do you have to travel for it to be CCE?

Who is at risk?

- 10 – 25 years, 14 most common
- Mainly male, but females becoming more visible
- From a range of locations and backgrounds
- Locals as well as big city kids
- Issues around belonging, identity
- Use cannabis and drink alcohol but rarely the Class As
- Exposed to violence, MH issues
- Links with school exclusion
- Aspirational, but got the wrong message
- **But most children do say no**

During Covid

- Fewer young people making longer journeys
- The most entrenched are stuck, others used the opportunity for exit
- Drug purity and supply are down
- Networks disrupted, many shifted to local dealing
- Possibly greater use of children from export areas to service lines
- Additional family pressures – lack of income
- Staff learning to work with PPE and social distancing
- Stop and search yielding results, BTP also increased activity
- More use of cars

Little evidence of dressing as keyworkers...

How can this type of service be replicated?

- You need local, trained workers with lived experience, who are credible to both clients and partner agencies
- A partnership culture where such workers are accepted – the VRU model
- A range of other services
- Leadership, determination and a willingness to think differently

Summary

- Its difficult
- The young people are resistant
- They are exploited and vulnerable and want help- but don't know who to trust
- The risks are great
- Some agencies don't get it
- There isn't the specialist support in some areas

Summary

But

- Change is possible
- People do exit this lifestyle
- Most professionals are great
- Agencies know most of this already
- These issues can't be ignored



**Any
Questions?**

Contact

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Additional information

Safecall – Phone support around county lines for young people, parents and professionals: <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/how-we-can-help/173-safecall.html>

BeSpaceAware – Lobbying and support group around CCE: <http://www.bespaceaware.co.uk/>

Rescue and Response – support for Londoners up to 25 involved in county lines, includes a ‘rescue’ service for those arrested/ detained outside London: <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/page/rescue-and-response>

Rescue and Response Year 2 Strategic Assessment - https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rescue_recovery_year_2_s_a_-_sept_2020.pdf

St Giles Evaluations - <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/our-impact/evaluations-into-our-work>