

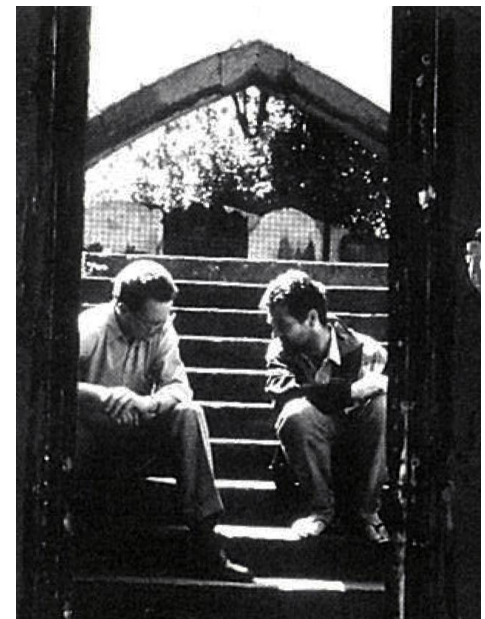
St Giles

Turning a past into a future

Rescues and county lines

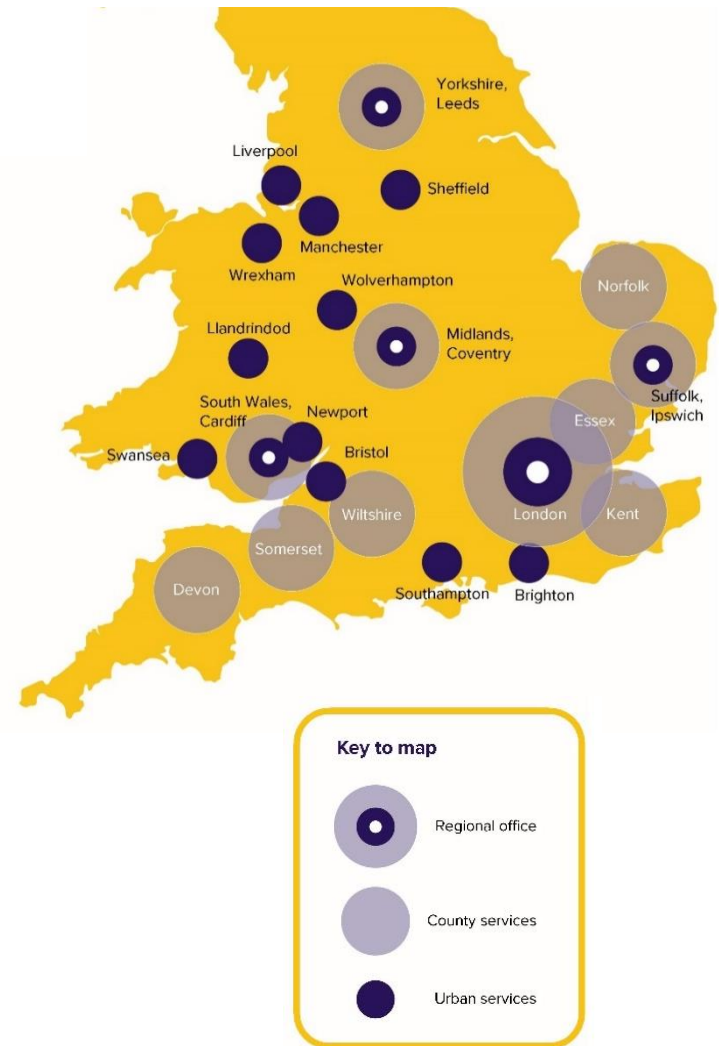
St Giles Trust

- Founded 1962 as a day centre in Southwark for homeless people
- Now working in prisons and communities across the UK
- Supporting offenders, those exploited through criminality and people and families with complex needs
- Now have clients of all ages
- Developing and employing staff with lived experience



St Giles' Criminal Exploitation Services

- Part of Gangs Units in London boroughs from 2006
- Schools projects since 2008
- Hospital based work since 2012
- County Lines services since 2016
- Support most males on Rescue and Response
- Run R&R's Rescue service
- Mental health specific services since 2022



County Lines

- Big city drug gangs taking over supply in smaller towns and cities
- Employing children and young people to transport and distribute drugs
- Substantial use of violence and coercion
- The model is more complex than this graphic suggests, and is evolving

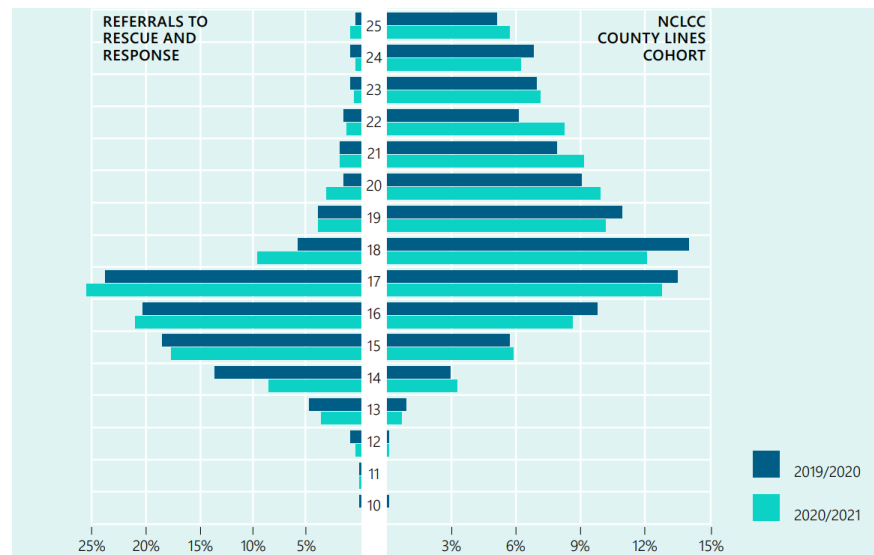
What is a Rescue?

- Young people who are employed on county lines get arrested out of area
- Nowadays many are recognised as victims/ exploited
- If the police decide to take no further action they then don't want them, but are still responsible
- If they are under 18 they can't just let them go
- So, a Rescue is going to collect a youngster from a police station, bringing them home or to a safe place, and using the time to build a relationship

Who is referred?

- Mainly 15 to 17
- 90% male
- Disproportionately black

The referred group doesn't represent the age of the overall county lines cohort as it is much younger, so is likely based on assessment of victim status.



Alternatives to a Rescue

Various things can happen if a Rescue service isn't available or appropriate:

- Parents collect their children
- Social Workers/ YOS workers do the collection
- Police take the youngsters home
- Taxis take them home – usually funded by Children's Services
- Youngsters given a coach ticket
- 18+ can walk

What are the issues?

Is not just about safe transport home:

- Being arrested increases risk- have they snitched?
- Loss of drugs and money – creating debt bondage
- Need to understand the risks- and who they extend to
- Need to inform all involved agencies, make safeguarding referrals, share specialist knowledge to inform risk assessments, ensure the episode is not minimised

Why it works

- Credible staff, with time to talk
- Opportunities to do normal things- stopping for food, choosing some music
- A safe space- no eye contact while driving!
- Staff who can gently challenge, push back and re-frame – no one wants to admit they've been exploited

A Complex Rescue



- Arrests made in Aberdeen
- Police Scotland get in touch
- Police drive the youngsters to Gretna Green – arriving 6.30pm
- Merseyside Rescue team do Gretna to a service station on the M5
- Midlands Rescue team do M5 to Northampton
- London Rescue team do the last leg – home at 4.30am

Is it worth it?

It'll cost anyway:

- Local authority estimates £1,700 for long distance collections.
- Missing episodes cost the police around £2,000 each

The potential savings are substantial if a youngster can be diverted from county lines:

- £35k to £80k p/a savings for those that successful engage in county lines exit and support

And that's just the cash saving!

Experiences

Worker:

“they told him they would pay him £700 a week. He obviously did believe that and I continued to chat to him to explain how that wasn’t going to happen.”

Rescued client:

“(SGT Worker) was nice and polite when he came to get me (from Devon). I felt easy with him. His personality makes it easier to talk to him. He understands where I’m coming from. We chat about school and if it’s OK and stuff. It would be good to carry on seeing him.”

The client continues to engage with the support after the rescue, missing episodes have stopped, but school attendance isn’t there yet.

Recommendations

- Rescue services need to be the start of an intervention- so longer-term casework services are also needed – a ‘reachable moment’ is a great way to get engagement but substantial change takes longer
- Rescue services need to join up – a national network would be fantastic
- We need more, and more flexible, Rescue services, recognising that county lines is no longer just about big city kids travelling out. What about a child from Newport who is arrested in Ipswich selling drugs for a London gang?
- The approach could be used within force areas rather than just for those arrested out of area- an adaptation of the custody diversion model

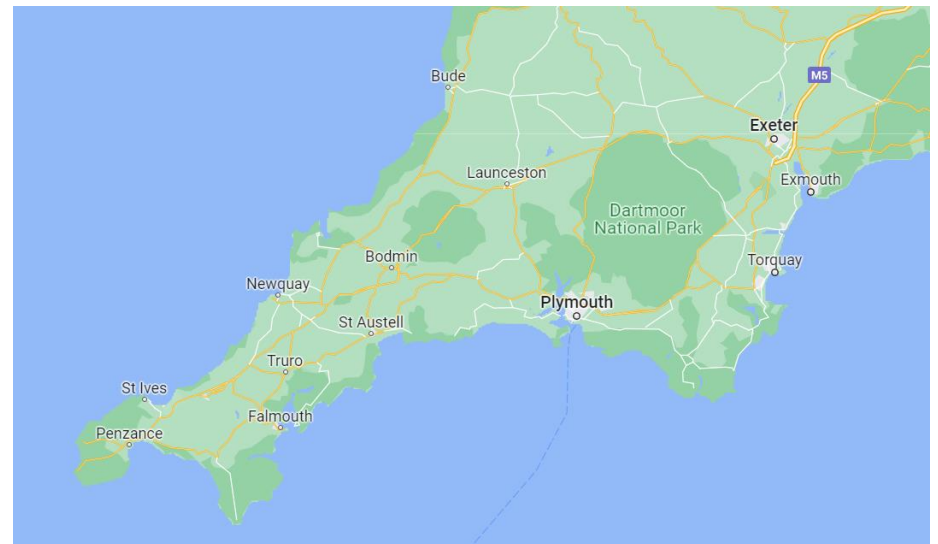
Available Rescue Services

So far the commissioning of rescue services has focused on county lines export areas, rather than import areas.

Services are available for under 25s from these areas:

- London – St Giles
- West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester – Catch 22

More needed...



Contact Details

Evan Jones

Director of CE Development

St Giles Trust

Evan.jones@stgilestrust.org.uk