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CROSSING THE LINE

RETHINKING THE ALPHA VICTIM

This workshop plan forms part of a suite of resources that includes:

- A short film about Alfie, a young man who is an 'alpha victim' of county lines
- A podcast episode in which the key themes of the film are unpacked further by a panel of child exploitation experts
- A list of practitioner-focussed learning materials

These resources were co-produced by researchers aligned to the Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre (VPRC), the National County Lines Coordination Centre, police officers, safeguarding and ASB specialists, third sector representatives, academics and a children's book author.



The Podcast

For further reflection on Alfie's story, please listen to the film's accompanying 15-minute podcast and consider the following questions:

- What broader political, social and economic factors underpin the emergence of county lines?
- How do these factors affect how 'alpha victims' of county lines are responded to by police and safeguarding agencies?
- How does the media influence public perceptions of county lines 'alpha victims'?

Further Reading & Practitioner Resources

[Global Centre for Contextual Safeguarding](#)

[County Lines – Crimestoppers](#)

[County Lines, Policing and Vulnerability Report – Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre](#)

[County Lines 'Slang' – Ivison Trust](#)

[County Lines & Criminal Exploitation Toolkit – The Children's Society](#)

[Criminal Exploitation of Children Framework for Practice – Children and Young People's Centre for Justice](#)

[From Exploited To Exploiter? – Alliance for Youth Justice](#)

[Preventing & Disrupting Cuckooing Victimisation: Professional Toolkit – University of Leeds](#)

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March 2026



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90 MINUTE WORKSHOP TRAINING PLAN

Dr Laura Bainbridge, Dr Amy Loughery and Dr Chris Devany

Part 1:

Workshop Introduction

(20 minutes)

Welcome and housekeeping

Learning objectives

By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:

- Articulate what an 'alpha victim' is
- Identify risk factors and protective factors for 'alpha victims'
- Understand county lines-related grooming and pathways to exploitation
- Identify signs that a child or young person may be an 'alpha victim'
- Critically evaluate multi-agency responses to 'alpha victims'

Watch the short film

'Crossing The Line'

Trigger Warning: The film contains strong/offensive language and scenes that indicate that abuse and violence may be occurring. Some viewers may find scenes distressing or triggering. The film is intended for professionals aged 18+ years, and viewer discretion is advised.

Part 2:

Initial thoughts and reactions

(10 minutes)

Based on your own knowledge and experience –

- Does Alfie's story reflect reality?
- Do the scenes set in a multi-agency meeting feel authentic?

Part 3:

Terminology

(10 minutes)

Is 'alpha victim' a term you were familiar with prior to watching the film?

Do you feel it is a helpful term? Suggested alternatives?

Are there any terms or practices referenced in the film that you would like to unpack further?

Examples:

- County lines
- Drug runner
- Cuckooing
- Debt bondage
- Plugging (internal concealment)
- Adultification
- Vulnerable/Vulnerability

Part 4:

Becoming an 'alpha victim'

(20 minutes)

Small group activity: **Worksheet 1**

Risk and protective factors

Recruitment and offending

- How does Alfie become involved with county lines operatives? What factors play a role in this?
- Do you feel that that it was Alfie's choice to become involved in county lines?

Part 5:

Multi-agency responses

(20 minutes)

- Do you feel that Alfie is a victim of county lines or a perpetrator?
 - At what point did he shift from being a victim to a perpetrator?
- Which agencies should be involved in deciding Alfie's fate?
- Should Alfie face criminal justice consequences for the crimes that he has committed?
- What contextual factors should be considered when safeguarding Alfie?

Small group activity: **Worksheet 2**

Safeguarding – contextual factors

- What role could educational and/or health interventions play in supporting Alfie?
- To what extent will the new Child Criminal Exploitation, Coerced Internal Concealment and Cuckooing laws impact young 'alpha victims'.



Part 6:

Workshop feedback and close

(10 minutes)

- Do you have any final comments or questions?
- Request that attendees complete a short online survey to provide feedback on the film and the workshop



Complete the survey by scanning this code

- Thank attendees for their attendance and contributions



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