

COLD CHIPS AND MONEY

an interactive digital story exploring child criminal exploitation



Evaluation Report: Phase Two

Tackling Child Criminal Exploitation: An Arts-Based Approach

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Executive Summary

Project Overview

Cold Chips and Money (CCM) is an interactive digital story designed for Years 7 & 8. CCM was designed to raise awareness around the growing issue of county lines, within the context of Child Criminal Exploitation. It uses interactive storytelling as a tool to engage students to meaningfully explore the issues surrounding exploitation, and how children can be manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.

CCM was originally created in 2020, in collaboration between the University of Portsmouth and Active Communities Network. The resource had input from the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership, Portsmouth Youth Offending Team, the Missing, Exploited & Trafficked Operational Service (Portsmouth City Council), the Willow Team (Hampshire County Council), Edge of Care Team PCC and Portsmouth Police (Hampshire Constabulary).

From 2020 – 2021, 1,451 young people aged 11-13 engaged with the resources. This took place within schools and youth settings in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This first phase of the project was funded by the Office of the Police & Crime Commission (Hampshire and the Isle of Wight).

In 2023 as a result of project lead, Professor Catherine McNamara, taking up a new role in 2022 the project transferred to the University of Surrey. Funding was secured to develop networks with schools and alternative provision settings around the county of Surrey. As part of this second phase of the project, forty-one schools were approached across Surrey. Of these, seven showed initial interest in the resource, and just one school went on to deliver sessions and took part in the evaluation.

Due to the low take-up from settings in Surrey, four schools were approached on the Isle of Wight, all of which showed interest. One school delivered the resource, one planned the work but had to postpone due to unforeseen circumstances. The other two schools planned to deliver the resource in the 2024/2025 school year (outside of the timeframe of the evaluation and this report report). In addition, a Portsmouth school that had taken part in the first phase of the project agreed to take part in this current phase as an example of ongoing delivery.

In total therefore, the resource was used with 250 young people in three settings in 2024.

Delivery settings, dates, and numbers of young people

- Springfield School, Portsmouth – February 2024: 150 young people
- Christ's College, Surrey – March 2024: 50 young people
- Bay CE School, Isle of Wight – May 2024: 50 young people

Delivery & Evaluation

- Evaluation methods: *pre and post-delivery interviews and surveys*
- Resource and evaluation delivery time: *60 minutes*
- Teacher feedback: *12 pre-delivery / 3 post-delivery surveys and interviews*
- Curriculum: *schools chose to deliver CCM within Personal, Social, Health and Economic education*

1. Context

County lines (also referred to as Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)) is the term used to describe criminal gangs that exploit and use young and highly vulnerable children as couriers to move illegal drugs, cash, and weapons between cities and smaller towns, to sell them via dedicated mobile phone lines. The NSPCC has produced an information video to explain the process of how children are enticed or threatened into illegal activities by criminal gangs. There are three stages of grooming: the NSPCC defines these stages as the targeting stage, the test stage, and the trapped stage ([Stages of Child Criminal Exploitation - YouTube](#)).

As part of the CCM project, project lead Professor Catherine McNamara published the journal article 'Tackling child criminal exploitation (CCE): an arts-based approach' in *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2024.2413192> (open access, published October 2024). In this piece, McNamara offers an overview of the growing prevalence of CCE:

This form of exploitation had been growing over recent years. The term 'County Lines' has been in use since 2015 (National Crime Agency, 2015) and become a national priority in the United Kingdom in 2018 (Serious Violence Strategy, HM Government, 2018). On the involvement of young people in Country Lines, or CCE, children who are coerced into criminal activity are often treated as criminals by statutory agencies rather than as victims of exploitation. A child might be given money, clothes, drugs, and other items they couldn't otherwise afford and they can appear to be benefitting from their involvement, and even choosing to earn money this way. However,

Some young peoples' appearance as consensual participants in the illegal drug supply contributes to inconsistencies in current criminal justice responses to child criminal exploitation, and official rhetoric about treating children that are identified as involved as victims often does not translate into practice. (Wedlock & Molina, 2020 p. 66)

The project builds on a growing field of research and interest in CCE which includes, for example, the recently published piece by Maxwell, N. (2024). 'Shove that. There's always hope': young people's lived experience of child criminal exploitation. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2024.2397025>. In this piece, Maxwell talks about the lived experiences of young people who have been involved in CCE.

2. Project Overview

Origins of the project

The original concept for CCM was conceived in February 2019. The initial plan was to use external facilitators to deliver workshops using the CCM digital interactive story in schools and other youth settings. These plans had to be postponed and later amended to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. All stakeholders worked in partnership to find a solution to delivering CCM during the unprecedented restrictions and measures brought in by the government. It was agreed that delivery could be achieved if teachers and other professionals were supported to deliver the resource to students as part of their PHSE curriculum. This decision proved to be fortuitous and a genuinely collaborative approach developed.

The project to create CCM and its accompanying resource pack was part of a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth and Active Communities Network. The resource also had input from the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership, Portsmouth Youth Offending Team, the Missing, Exploited & Trafficked Operational Service (Portsmouth City Council), Edge of Care Team PCC, the Willow Team (Hampshire County Council) and Portsmouth Police (Hampshire Constabulary).

CCM was funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (Hampshire & the Isle of Wight). There was structured stakeholder engagement that considered the target age group, character, gender, narrative and activities, and levels of criminality. These professionals were asked to trial the story and feedback, which provided useful suggestions for adapting elements of the resource. They also offered some general feedback that could prove useful when considering applying for further funding to support more schools to deliver CMM.

The project team led by Dr Catherine McNamara (University of Portsmouth) created a digital interactive story. The story is a catalyst for discussion with young people and families. The project was to complement the borough's ongoing multi-agency work on CCE, County Lines, gangs and youth violence. The story is for use as part of early intervention with groups of young people who generally do not yet have direct experience of CCE.

The story is called *Cold Chips and Money* (CCM). It is aimed at young people aged 11-13 (Years 7 & 8). It is possible to use the story with any age, if a professional felt it was suitable but it has been developed with Key Stage 3 in mind. The story has 3 parts and a young person is the protagonist (main character). The story builds from an ordinary morning, to first encounters with older people who are themselves involved in CCE through to scenes where the main character is feeling very pressured to carry out actions that would constitute criminal offences.

CCM is an interactive digital story designed for Years 7 & 8, with an estimated delivery time of 30 minutes to navigate through from start to finish (excluding discussion and evaluation). Covid 19 increased the predicted delivery time in some schools due to measures that required students to sanitise their desks at the start and end of every lesson. The story is accompanied by a resource pack, which includes a session plan to support teachers to facilitate a structured conversation alongside navigating the story.

CCM follows a young person through a variety of activities and scenarios to show him being subtly manipulated and then exploited by people who seem initially to be friendly. It highlights how small decisions can result in major consequences and how difficult it can be to see the manipulation. The story places students at the centre of the action, giving them autonomy over the main character.

Students answer multiple choice questions to navigate through the story which has multiple outcomes depending on the answers they choose.

The CCM resource aims to raise awareness around the growing issue of county lines and Child Criminal Exploitation. The resource utilises storytelling as a tool to engage students to meaningfully explore the issues surrounding exploitation and how children can be manipulated and coerced into committing crime. The following link takes teachers/facilitators to the CCM interactive resource, as well as to related supporting information on county lines: <https://coldchipsandmoney.uk/>

For more information on Phase One (Hampshire and the Isle of Wight) please see the Phase One Evaluation report at the above web link.

Development of support provided by the project team

During the second phase of the project, schools were again offered one to one support with set up and delivery logistics from the Project Evaluator (employed by the University of Surrey). This support helped to guide teachers from first contact, through to delivery and completion of the evaluation tools. Conversations took place via video calls and telephone calls.

The additional offer of a workshop facilitator was introduced mid-way through Phase Two when active take-up of the resources was low. We were concerned about teacher capacity and knowledge of CCE. Teachers facing pressures of time, seemed to be less inclined to take on the task of planning and delivering this workshop themselves. We offered for a facilitator to visit the setting and deliver the session for them. This option had a positive response.

Wider activity

During the 2023/2024 Phase Two of the project, we were seeking to build on the work done in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight when 1451 young people engaged with the resources and the workshop.

We planned to re-visit some of the stakeholders involved in the Hampshire phase (the multi-agency teams and the schools-based professionals & Youth Offending Team) and ask them about longer lasting impact they've observed/ experienced. We also aimed to engage with 5 - 7 new settings in Surrey and support the delivery the workshops and evaluation.

We carried out interviews with three professionals from Portsmouth Youth Justice, Safeguarding, and Edge of Care teams. These conversations asserted the ongoing relevance and importance of developing resources to meaningfully engage young people and raise awareness of CCE:

“A professional in the adolescent service talked about there being a greater awareness of CL and CCE among professionals, coupled with an increase in the numbers of children being drawn into CL and CCE. She felt that ‘the situation that we’re in now is probably worse in terms of the level of risk and the number of children it touches, but better in that our responses and the professional network offer like social care, police, all of the health professionals, everyone involved is better at responding.’ (Interview with author, 21/07/2023)”

The publication of the journal article McNamara, C. (2024). Tackling child criminal exploitation (CCE): an arts-based approach. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 1–19.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2024.2413192> (open access, published October 2024) builds on a growing awareness and need for developing resources to help protect young people from the complex dangers of CCE:

“A professional with the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership talked about the ways the resources could be developed to reach a wider range of young people, focussing for example, on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). She stated that they do not currently have resources that are ‘visually based’ and advocated for a similar interactive tool with an adaptive function.

One further point that the same professional made was related to the idea of making this resource, or similar arts-based resources available to younger children. The story has multiple plot pathways, which depend on the choices that people make along the way. These plot pathways lead to different endings to the story. The point she made was that all of these variations are linked to the protagonist having been drawn in to problematic situations, with varying degrees of seriousness, illegality and so on. Her suggestion was that younger children would benefit from seeing the best-case scenario, and the results of good decisions at the earliest point. She said:

the only thing that was missing for me was that option of, ‘OK, so if I had done this, I wouldn’t have ended up in that situation’. So I can learn that at the earliest point. This is my out ... I think there’s some scope, particularly with the younger children, to let them see how they avoid it [being drawn in to anything] in the first place. (Interview with the author, 21/07/2023)

In the preparatory conversations with the project facilitator and evaluator before delivering the CCM lesson, professionals are invited to prepare these kinds of conversations as part of their session, but the point that story could have additional plot pathways of this nature is valuable for future projects”

Follow-up conversations with professionals based in youth settings were hindered by changes in staff. One school engaged in further dialogue about the resource and in fact, invited us to return to the school and deliver the workshops to a new Year 10 cohort. The new PHSE lead stated that the resource had continued to be delivered to successive years since the first phase of the project. They agreed to take part in the evaluation and provided useful insights into the ongoing implementation of the resource.

Professor McNamara was invited to speak at the Improving National Efforts to Tackle Gang Crime and County Lines conference (2025) to stimulate a knowledge exchange between professionals looking to develop their understanding of CCE and how to effectively engage young people. She has also been interviewed to contribute evidence to research carried out by Youth UK (July 2024). This research was to contribute to the development of a digital campaign and training materials to reduce the criminal exploitation of young people.

3. Post Covid 19 engagement

The pilot project in Portsmouth yielded a high response rate from schools. Much of the feedback suggested that COVID-19 had increased school's need for external support to deliver engaging content to students on CCE. Covid restrictions meant that it was more difficult for external visitors to go into schools during this period. Teachers were prepared and willing to deliver the CCM resource themselves with guidance from the project team and the teacher's pack. In-house delivery allowed for a more sustainable approach in that once professionals had planned, delivered, and evaluated the work, they would be in a position to use the resources with other groups of students in their settings, if they chose to.

The second phase of the project in 2024, post-Covid, presented a different landscape of interest and engagement. Some teachers asked if an external facilitator could come into their setting and deliver the workshops. Some feedback highlighted issues around limited capacity and knowledge of CCE that impacted confidence to deliver the resource.

4. Learning objectives and learning outcomes

CCM is designed to help students understand, recognise and manage external influence and pressure, and how they can keep themselves safe, as well as supporting one another to resist unwanted attention that might lead to exploitation. It aims to challenge misconceptions students may have about how criminal gangs seek to exploit young people. It therefore enhances work on personal safety and risk management. Use of the resource can build on lessons which have introduced topics related to forming and maintaining respectful relationships. It responds to PSHE Association Key Stage 3 Core Theme Relationships: Social Influence section R42-47.

The Learning Outcomes detailed in the Teachers Pack:

- I understand what child criminal exploitation is and who is at risk of it.
- I can explain and challenge the reasons why some young people might succumb to the unwanted social pressure and influences which lead to exploitation.
- I can talk about a range of options to manage unwanted social pressure and influence.

6. Delivery models

Looking across both phases of the project, and the ways these resources have been used with 1700 young people, CCM appears to be most effectively delivered within a single lesson, as stopping, and starting again at a different time results in losing your place in the story. The overwhelming preference of participating schools was to find capacity within their PHSE curriculum.

During Phase Two, the resource was facilitated by a teacher and an external (project team) facilitator with students in a whole class setting. Typically, this was 30 young people per session. The workshop consisted of a class discussion to establish some baseline levels of knowledge and understanding, use of the digital interactive story, with short discussions at specific points in the story and a wider class discussion to close the workshop. This allowed students the opportunity to analyse their decision-making processes in relation to the choices they made throughout and after completion of the story.

Participating schools used three delivery models:

1. Whole class participation, where teachers facilitated the story with input from all students on how to answer multiple choice questions. This approach resulted in one outcome at the end of the story that was reached by the whole class.
2. Cluster groups of students played the story within the whole class lesson. This approach required collective decision-making between students in their small groups that generated numerous different outcomes within a whole class setting.
3. Individual students played the story, producing a variety of outcomes across the whole class.

7. Delivery settings & dates

The resource was successfully delivered at one school in Surrey by a teacher at Christ's College. A facilitator delivered the resource at Bay CE School (Isle of Wight) and Springfield School (Portsmouth). Delivery had been planned at The Island Learning Centre but staff illness at the centre meant the workshop was cancelled.

Esher Church of England High School was highly invested in delivering the resource. Various meetings between the project evaluator and the PHSE lead at the school were carried out. It was felt the resource fitted well within the curriculum as a tool for raising awareness and allowing students to engage in real-world scenarios. Unfortunately, the planned delivery was postponed due to IT issues culminating from firewalls that prevented teachers from accessing the resource on school servers.

Two further schools on the Isle of Wight were planning to deliver the resource at the end of the summer term 2023/2024, which was outside of the project timeframe.

- Springfield School – February 2024
- Christ's College – March 2024
- Bay CE School – May 2024

8. Student Engagement

Although student feedback was not directly sought by the project team, the teacher and the facilitator cited positive responses from students. They reported high levels of engagement from students and productive group discussions around key issues and key narrative features of the story. Some of the key positives include:

- the use of multi-choice answers
- learning about CCE through storytelling
- scenarios that were easy to relate to
- being able to take part in pairs and small groups, as opposed to individually
- having someone from outside the school leading the lesson (where relevant)
- developed awareness of how to notice potential exploitation

Additionally, teachers highlighted some areas that students mentioned could be improved. Some of these include:

- an avatar that can be chosen to reflect the player
- the option of different genders
- being able to pause/stop and restart the story
- more sophisticated graphics
- an audio option to hear the story narrated
- the workshop to include role-play or other participatory drama exercises

9. Ethics & Safeguarding

- Phase Two of this project received favourable ethical opinion from the Ethics Committee and the Research Integrity and Governance Office. EGA ref: FASS 22-23 065, Project Title: Tackling Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE): a multi-agency, arts-based approach
- Informed consent was gained via verbal approval from teachers for their participation in all aspects of the evaluation methods.
- Data collected from teachers was anonymised, excluding information on delivery setting.
- Teachers were asked to review their school's safeguarding policy prior to delivery.
- Prior notice was given to inclusion leads prior to delivery.
- Ground rules were established prior to delivery that emphasised students should not disclose personal stories or make assumptions about others.
- A trauma-informed approach ensured time for discussion pre and post-delivery, allowing time to reflect on perceptions, feelings, and thoughts around county lines.
- Students were signposted to internal and external support sources.

10. Evaluation Methods

The following methods were employed to obtain reflections and testimonies from the teachers:

- Pre-delivery informal interview
- Pre-delivery survey
- Post-delivery informal interview
- Post-delivery survey

11. Key findings in Phase Two

Two significant factors that achieved high engagement in the first phase were key stakeholders supporting the introduction to schools through pre-established networks. Active Communities Network (Hampshire) was integral to the Phase One project, as they had pre-established relationships with schools that enable us to contact the right people together and build on the trust and reputation generated from previous engagements. This direct line to schools and other settings resulted in swift responses to communications and most importantly, a belief that they could trust the validity and quality of the resource by extension to their relationships.

The project team began by trying to identify equivalent community-based organisations or individuals who could act as partners in this way. There was no clear equivalent. Conversations were had with a number of role holders in various settings, but nobody was in a position to work with us to enable or facilitate access to youth settings.

Without this, we set about approaching the schools as relative outsiders. This resulted in a lower response rate and comparatively poorer uptake when we compare to Phase One. The project team made initial contact with schools through 'general enquiries' email addresses, as opposed to making direct contact with key teachers. This delay resulted in significant challenges with establishing contact with the most relevant professional in each setting.

When we were in touch with specific individuals, teachers expressed difficulties with incorporating the resource within an already busy curriculum and felt that delivery would need to take place outside of the timeframe of the project (e.g. they suggested they could use it the next academic year). There was interest, but activity would take place outside of the parameters of Phase Two of the project.

The digital interactive story and the Teachers Pack are freely available online. It is possible to use the resources, without taking part in our evaluation process. It is possible that some people have accessed the resource, used it, but we do not know about their experience.

In total, thirty-six settings were approached across Surrey, including mainstream secondary schools, specialist needs schools, pupil referral units, and youth offending teams. Each setting was contacted directly by the evaluation team to explain the resource and offer support with delivery. We received statements of interest from seven settings in Surrey and began a dialogue with PSHE leads to plan delivery and provide support for teachers. From these settings, one school in Surrey delivered the resource to students within the timeframe of the project. It is difficult to say why those schools that showed initial interest in the resource ceased any further communication with the project. The feedback from some of the schools suggested that a lack of take-up could be due to schools feeling unable to fit it within the curriculum, teachers not feeling confident in the subject matter to deliver it, schools believing county lines is not an issue that affects their students, or they planned delivery in the new academic year.

For those settings that participated fully in the second phase, the data garnered from the evaluation process produced fascinating and impactful insights into the efficacy of the resource. Teachers and practitioners displayed preexisting knowledge of child criminal exploitation and described a clear vision for where the resource could fit within the PHSE curriculum.

“This will fit perfectly into a law module I’m delivering as part of PHSE. I always like including some new material that is more interesting than just showing a video, having a conversation on reading stuff.” (Teacher feedback)

Teachers cited the general lack of free resources available to schools and appreciated the existence of CCM.

Surrey Youth Offending Team showed interest in the resource to support children and young people at risk of exploitation. The lead evaluator met with various managers to discuss the resource and explain the support offered by the project team. This led to an invitation to the project evaluator to present at the youth offending team managers' monthly meeting to present the resource. Although there was some general interest shown during this meeting, follow-up communication did not lead to further engagement.

The benefits of the interactive format

Teachers commented on the value and importance of the interactive format of CCM. They described how it kept the attention and interest of young people high. They stated that the subject matter could be potentially intimidating and overwhelming for some students and that the interactive format allowed students to move beyond conceptualising the dangers of county lines and thinking in an abstract or hypothetical way, and gave them agency to explore the consequences of different actions. Engaging in the decision-making and interactive nature of this story gave students the opportunity to make it their story.

Decision-making

Teacher feedback stated that the resource encouraged students to consider the choices they could make on behalf of the protagonist in each scenario by giving them control over the development of the story. The use of multiple-choice questions allowed students to assess their decision-making processes and discuss these with peers. Teachers were impressed with students' capacity to articulate their thinking and rationale for making specific decisions in the story, and how these were challenged/supported by their peers.

Function of the character to facilitate conversations

The delivery models included students working in pairs, in small groups and as a whole class. Teachers stated that students were able to use the characters in the story to take a 'one step removed' approach that meant they were not expected to disclose personal experiences but could discuss scenarios in a broader and safer way.

"One of the main things I like about it is that students aren't asked directly about their experiences of being controlled and used by others. They get to stay separate from it by using someone else's story." (teacher feedback).

Teachers recognise the value of a creative approach underpinned by a trauma-informed model when exploring a sensitive and difficult issue. The function of the character was a key tool.

"I've personally had a few students that have disclosed some very disturbing experiences around being bribed to do things they didn't want to do but felt they had no choice. I like the fact that they can be part of the story, but it is one step removed to help protect them from triggering past trauma." (Teacher feedback)

Degrees of Engagement

Teacher feedback cited positive engagement from students, although some students found the story too long or were frustrated that the gender of the character could not be changed for example. However, all students did engage in the activity and completed the story and professionals report that students engaged well in post-delivery discussions.

12. Teacher feedback

Pre-delivery questions

Twelve settings responded to these questions

Questions	Percentage response
Does the resource fit with your school's safeguarding policy?	Yes: 80% Not sure: 20%
Has the resource been shared with other relevant staff beyond PHSE?	Yes: 74% Not yet: 26%
How long did it take you to go through/play the resource?	40 minutes: 40% 50 minutes: 60%
Did you find the supporting workshop information clear and helpful?	Yes: 100%
How long do you anticipate it will take to deliver in a teaching setting?	The whole lesson (60 minutes): 100%
Do you think the resource supports your current PSHE curriculum?	Yes: 100%
What skills do you think students will gain from playing the resource?	Confidence, awareness, ideas for keeping themselves safe.
Do you think this resource will help students develop a clearer awareness of CCE - recognising manipulative behaviours? And why?	Yes: 100% Group discussions will help students share ideas and thoughts about keeping themselves safe.
What aspects of the resource do you think students will enjoy?	The multi-choice questions, the fact it is told through a story, they may be able to relate to the characters.
What aspects of the resource do you think students might struggle with?	There is only one gender which might alienate the girls. They might struggle with the length of time it takes to play without taking a break. Some might find it triggering if they or someone they know has already experienced county lines.

Post-delivery questions

(Three settings responded to these questions)

Questions	Answers
Were ground rules established relevant to this lesson, such as not disclosing personal stories and not making judgments about others?	Yes: 100%
Did any students disclose personal stories of lived trauma surrounding CCE?	Yes: 5% No: 95%
Were students signposted to access internal/external sources of information and support?	Yes: 100%
How long did it take to deliver the resource in a group/individual setting?	45 minutes: 10% 60 minutes: 90%
How engaged were students during delivery of the resource (on a scale of 0-10)?	Completely: 100%

Did all students willingly participate in the role-play section of the resource?	Yes: (with facilitated sessions): 100%
Would you make any improvements to the resource?	It could be shorter, allow you to pause and return to story at a later date, mixed gender characters, include some time for role play and more time for group discussions.
Do you think students have an improved understanding of CCE?	Yes: 100%

Teacher interviews

Seven settings participated

Pre-delivery
<i>"I think it is a really good approach at getting students thinking about how to protect themselves from being taken advantage of by others"</i>
<i>"I like the way the story lets students chose what should happen next. I can see how it fits into school's work around exploitation. The only thing that worries me is the story only has a male character which may make some of the girls feel a bit alienated"</i>
<i>"We haven't come across many cases of child criminal exploitation, but I recognise the importance of tackling the issues with students. I think having a facilitator is really useful as young people always respond positively to having someone outside of the school coming in to tackle hard topics"</i>
<i>"I've become more aware of county lines with it being in the news more. I can see how some of our students might be vulnerable to being taken advantage of by older people. I think my class has a mix of students that do, and do not, have awareness about it. It might be tricky to manage these differing levels of awareness in a class setting"</i>
<i>"One of the main things I like about it is that students aren't asked directly about their experiences of being controlled and used by others. They get to stay separate from it by using someone else's story. My only real concern is around timings, as some students will move through the story faster than others"</i>
<i>"I think it would be better is this could be part of a wider strategy that includes other resources. I also think students should be able to build their own character to help them better engage with the story. The graphics are also a bit old fashioned for kids that play fortnight – they're used to something that looks a bit more sophisticated"</i>
<i>"I'm impressed with the overall look of the resource – plus the fact it is free! We don't come across much like this that is fully accessible and free to use. I can't see our students responding too well to an outside teacher coming in to lead the class. I think this is partly due to us only having small class sizes and our kids being quite vulnerable. I can definitely see us using this multiple times if it goes well!"</i>
<i>"I think the teachers pack does have interesting information that would be helpful to us. Perhaps there could be a bit more about localised issues that students can relate to, opposed to a general overview that might not fit their experiences. I think the overall look, and the multiple choice questions is an interesting approach that allows them to have agency and autonomy"</i>
<i>"I'm not 100% convinced that my class will get much out of this [resource] as I think they might feel it looks a bit babyish. I can see that it may help to get some conversations going about key issues. If you could stop and start it, it might allow for more time for group discussions"</i>
<i>"I'd like students to play it one their own instead of in pairs or as a group. I think they'd get too distracted by other conversations. It might be helpful to provide schools with chrome books to</i>

reduce demands on our resources. I also think having a facilitator is a really helpful addition to helping the school deliver more interesting content to students”

“This is a very welcome addition to our provision. I think these resources are really important because county lines is an issue that every school faces, even if they don’t like to admit it. It might be an interesting idea to provide someone to deliver the lesson and include some role play and drama to let students explore issues after playing the game”

“I’ve personally had a few students that have disclosed some very disturbing experiences around being bribed to do things they didn’t want to do but felt they had no choice. I like the fact that they can be part of the story, but it is one step removed to help protect them from triggering past trauma. Some more support information around safeguarding, signposting and follow up materials would be very useful”

“This will fit perfectly into a law module I’m delivering as part of PHSE. I always like including some new material that is more interesting than just showing a video, having a conversation on reading stuff. I think it might help if the story didn’t take so long to play – this would give me a bit of flexibility around some additional discussions”

“Due to issues surrounding firewalls used by the school IT network, Unfortunately, I’ve been informed that the reason the website has been blocked is due to security reasons. The service we use to regulate students’ use of the internet and as a firewall is blocking it and for whatever reason, it’s not like a personal firewall where you can simply add the website and it be allowed to be accessed. Because it would compromise school security, we won’t be able to use the website as a resource, unfortunately. Which is a shame because the way I had hoped to implement it was very interactive, due to the democratic nature of the engagement. This could be part of the feedback, especially if it could be converted into a PowerPoint type resource which would improve up-take and remove security concerns”

“I definitely think we would be interested in finding out more information. The resource pack looks really good. I lead the 6th form though and this project is not aimed at my learners' age category, so I don't want to agree on behalf of my colleague. I will contact our Key Stage 3 lead and ask whether she thinks it would be of use to her learners. Due to the SEN of our learners, the majority are more socially delayed, so many of our Key Stage 3 may lack the understanding to access the programme as many of them do not go out independently until they move to Key Stage 4. We are also expanding our school and in September will have a satellite provision for 11-13 year olds in the first instance, who have SEMH as their presenting need, so this may also be really appropriate for these learners”

Teacher Post delivery

“I delivered [CCM] to 10 of my students as part of our PHSE provision. I found it really easy to use and plan to use it again with other classes. We have a lot of young people that need support with avoiding some of the dangers of exploitation. I think raising awareness through creative approaches is much better suited for young people. Some of my students spoke to me afterwards about some of their concerns for friends that were getting led astray. A good conversation starter.”

“[Claire] was full of energy and stamina! She delivered back-to-back lessons to 150 students. I spoke with many of the students afterwards and it was received positively by the majority. It would be great to have her back and maybe do some drama type of work as an extension to delivering the story”

“One of the best resources we’ve used at our school. I think having [Claire] come in and deliver it was massively appreciated. I believe the students related well to her as she is closer in age to them than me! She brought a lot of energy and fun to the lesson and got the class talking and engaged in the resource”

Facilitator post-delivery

Springfield School:

“The workshop was conducted five times, with consecutive sessions for Year 10 students. Overall, the resource was found to be easy to navigate and engaging. However, I observed that participants completed the resource in 25-30 minutes, rather than the initially estimated 50-60 minutes. This timeframe also included my interactions with the various pairs as I moved around the room. Additionally, I noticed that the quality of discussions decreased during larger classroom conversations, while smaller group discussions were much more effective. Therefore, incorporating an activity that leverages the success of focus group discussions between the resource and the Q&A would be beneficial for future facilitated sessions.

Bay CE School:

“The workshop was conducted twice with two Year 3 classes, and overall, the resource was easy to access and implement. The students were highly engaged and became deeply immersed in the story. They showed strong empathy for the characters and were able to critically analyze the characters' actions, predicting the potential consequences of their choices.

At the end of the session, I facilitated a forum theatre activity where students acted out key scenes from the resource. They took turns stepping into the roles of the characters, exploring different directions the story could take and reflecting on how their actions might influence the outcomes for each character”

Reflections from the project team facilitator:

Overall, I found the resource to be highly effective in illustrating how Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) develops and how grooming relationships begin. It clearly demonstrated how quickly these situations can escalate, prompting valuable discussions on preventive measures to protect ourselves. Most students found the resource engaging and easy to use, with many becoming emotionally invested in the story and its characters. Following the resource, the classes demonstrated a good understanding of the techniques used to manipulate a young person. In smaller conversions, students began to consider strategies they would use if they or a friend were involved in a county line.

The introduction of the forum theatre activity was particularly beneficial in deepening participants' engagement with the story. By immersing themselves in the drama, students were able to grasp the complexities of the situations and successfully identify the emotions involved. For future sessions using the CCM resource, I would recommend including a forum theatre activity to reinforce the message and ensure it fully resonates with the participants.

Facilitating a session with the CCM resource provided a clear and effective structure for the participants to follow. It was interesting to observe how the discussions shifted before and after using the resource. Initially, participants had only a basic understanding of CCE, with some students knowing more about the concept of county lines. However, after engaging with the resource, the conversations became more focused on the emotional complexity of the characters

Following the resource, the classes demonstrated a good understanding of the techniques used to manipulate a young person. In smaller conversions, students began to consider strategies they would use if they or a friend were involved in a county line.

Overall, I believe the resource was very effective in communicating the journey of how CCE can develop and how a grooming relationship can begin. It was effective in demonstrating how quickly

these situations can escalate, which sparked many discussions about what preventative measures we can take to protect ourselves. The majority of students found the resource easy to use and engaging; a large portion of the students became invested in the story and cared about the character. However, there was a portion of students who showed a very non-empathic view and wanted to get to the 'bad ending' as soon as possible.

For future facilitated sessions, I believe an activity that brings the drama into the room would be beneficial, as these scenarios would be able to come to life and students could try out options that were not available in the resource. I believe this would be useful in expanding the thinking and making the scenarios more personable.

14. Recommendations

Time frame for set up & delivery

- Teachers cited the benefits of a longer lead in time from making first contact with schools and delivery (within the time frame of the evaluation). This would afford schools to embed the resource within the curriculum well ahead of time – reducing strain on teachers' capacity to find somewhere to put it.

Partnerships & collaboration

- The second phase of the project struggled to make meaningful networks with local stakeholders to assist with introductions to schools and additional settings.
- Building a network of local decision-makers, community organisations, and other relevant bodies could improve access and effective routes of communication.

Sustainable delivery models

- Akin to the first phase of delivery, a variety of delivery models were used by schools to respond to the needs of students. However, schools seemed to be more in favour of students working in pairs to help stimulate discussion and ensure that every student was having their voice heard.

Evaluation

- Schools stated that the evaluation framework tools (i.e. pre and post-survey questions and interviews) were useful in gathering robust feedback.
- Google forms should be created and made available for teacher pre and post-delivery surveys.
- The ability to gather data on metrics for how many people access the digital interactive story and Teacher Pack would be an improvement in tracking reach.

Curriculum

- CCM was designed for Year 8 students, and the feedback from teachers states that this tends to be the appropriate age group for the resource though Years 7-10 have all used it.
- CCM appears to be best suited to being embedded within the PHSE curriculum.

- CCM should form part of a school’s broader approach to raising awareness of county lines and Child Criminal Exploitation.

Inclusivity & accessibility

- Some feedback suggested consideration of including audio narration and video clips to support students with additional learning needs.

Future funding

- Continued funding for set up, delivery, and evaluation of CCM would enable more schools to engage with the resource in supported ways.
- Future funding should support the development of new resources (digital and interactive) that are more visual, and vary in duration and style to increase accessibility and widen the potential use for young people with learning needs.

Development of the CCM design

- Some schools initially shared concerns about whether students would like the illustrations, as well as suggesting that they might take issue with the character being a boy, and the activity in the story being football.
- It would be possible to develop a more technologically sophisticated resource more akin to a computer game, though these kinds of products have significantly higher costs.

15. Conclusion

The second phase of the project resulted in 250 young people accessing the CCM resource. The feedback from these settings provided convincing evidence that the resource offers a useful and engaging tool to raise awareness of county lines with students, while also supporting teachers to tackle the complexities of the issues faced by young people. Some of the challenges around contact and retention may be resolved by access to established networks in Surrey to support the rollout of the resource to schools and beyond. It is important to note that teacher feedback in phase two is significantly similar to phase one feedback. The value of CCM appears to cross geographical boundaries, and its appeal is consistent with diverse student populations. Schools have also consistently stated that access to free resources that tackle CCE is limited but much needed. As county lines continue to put young people at risk of harm, this resource is a valuable tool to raise awareness of the issues and help young people avoid exploitation.

16. The Project Team

Project Manager:	Professor Catherine McNamara (University of Surrey, formerly the University of Portsmouth)
Project Partner:	Julian Wadsworth (Active Communities Network during Phase One, consultant during Phase Two)

Lead Practitioner: Ian Nicholson
Game Developer & Illustrator: Amy Godliman
Evaluator: Alexandra Russell
Facilitator: Alice Bee