

COUNTY LINES ADVICE FOR LANDLORDS AND LETTING AGENTS



FIRST PRINCIPLE

norfolk.police.uk/firstprinciple
suffolk.police.uk/firstprinciple

Top Tips

- Check on any tenants who you may feel are vulnerable
- Look out for the signs of 'Cuckooing'
- Choose your new Tenants carefully
- Look out for the obvious signs
- Check tenants carefully prior to agreeing new tenancies.
- Look out for signs of cuckooing (drug dealers taking over a vulnerable tenant's property to deal from).
- Ensure you make regular visits to check your premises.
- A sickly-sweet aroma and frequent visitors to the address are key indicators that drug activity may be occurring.
- Take action if your tenant repeatedly cancels visits and/or the neighbours report suspicious activity.

PREVENT CRIME

PROTECT COMMUNITIES



NORFOLK
CONSTABULARY
Our Priority is You



SUFFOLK
CONSTABULARY



Drug dealers, often from major cities such as London, will move into new areas like Norfolk and Suffolk to sell their products. The link from London to their new base in Norfolk and Suffolk is known as the 'county drug line'.

This mixture of exploitation and vulnerability is the key reason why we are working with our partners to get a grip on county lines and organised crime groups.

Cuckooing

Dealers take advantage of and exploit vulnerable tenants, taking over their home and using it as a base for their criminal operation. This is known as "cuckooing".

These gangs are often violent and extremely intimidating. Not only do they exploit vulnerable people for their base, but they also target children and recruit them into their criminal network. We know of children not even in their teens yet who have been targeted by older dealers to start dealing drugs.

These organised crime groups can often have links to other forms of exploitation such as human trafficking, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation.

While the county lines model is associated with major cities, we now know of gangs in Norfolk and Suffolk that have adopted this tactic, going to areas such as Berkshire, Norfolk and Bedfordshire and establishing their own supply lines.

How can you help?

As a landlord or letting agent you can contribute by being additional eyes and ears across the county and help us respond to the threats faced by children and vulnerable people and protect them from exploitation.

We can't stress enough the contribution you can make to helping us deal with this problem.

The signs of someone being cuckooed may not be obvious. It could be that you receive reports from neighbours that your tenant hasn't been seen for a long time, or you may get reports that there are more and more people coming and going than before.

It may be that you have tenants who have drug related problems. These people are particularly at risk as they may be offered free drugs in exchange for their premises.

You may be prevented from inspecting your property even with reasonable notice.

Signs to look for with existing tenants

- A powerful distinctive sweet, sickly aroma
- Frequent visitors throughout the day and night
- Blacked out windows
- Chinks of bright light throughout the night
- Birds gathering on the roof, particularly in cold weather
- In winter, snow melting unusually quickly on the roof
- High levels of condensation on windows
- Noise from fans
- Large amounts of rubbish, including compost bags
- Electricity meter being tampered with/changed and new cabling, sometimes leading to street lighting.

If you are able to enter the property, look out for:

- Lots of phones, particularly the older, cheaper handsets
- Expensive luxury items i.e. clothes, trainers, jewellery
- Items associated with drug dealing, such as bags, cling film, rubber bands, digital scales, Vaseline and baby wipes.
- There may also be large sums of cash

It is also worth listening to the language used; Slang words such as:

G-pack, traphouse, bando, nittys boodge

All are part of a county lines dealer's vocabulary.

If you are suspicious, speak to neighbours and ask them if they have any concerns about your tenants.

Agreeing New Tenancies

Be vigilant when agreeing new tenancies and keep an eye out for the following typical signs:

- Poor or no references from a previous Letting Agent
- Offering to pay several months in advance
- Preference to pay rent in cash without reasonable justification
- Appear affluent but want to rent an inexpensive property
- Wanting to keep the utility bills in the landlord's name
- Asking for complete privacy, requesting no periodic inspections or preventing the inspection of the property even when given reasonable notice
- Changing locks to keep agents and landlords away from the property

If you experience any of these signs, we want to know. It may be innocent but we still want to know.

Report It and know your responsibilities

We would urge all landlords and letting agents to report their suspicions to us.

You should be aware that if your premises are being used in connection with controlled drugs you could be committing an offence under section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which states:

A person commits an offence if, being the occupier or concerned in the management of any premises, he knowingly permits or suffers any of the following activities to take place on those premises, that is to say;

- *producing or attempting to produce a controlled drug in contravention of Section 4(1) of this Act;*
- *supplying or attempting to supply a controlled drug to another in contravention of section 4(1) of this Act, or offering to supply a controlled drug to another in contravention of section 4(1);*
- *preparing opium for smoking;*

- *smoking cannabis, cannabis resin or prepared opium.*

In cases where cannabis production is discovered, the property will become a crime scene and there is a prospect that the Letting Agent may be implicated.

Under these circumstances you could face prosecution if your property has been used for the production of cannabis. Under Section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 a person concerned with property management can receive a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or a fine if they knowingly allow the production of controlled drugs to take place in rented accommodation for which they are responsible. Letting Agents and landlords could also be prosecuted for proceeds of crime or money laundering offences or have assets seized and confiscated under the Proceeds of Crime Act in some cases.

It may also be considered necessary to share any information obtained with partner agencies such as the National Trading Standards – Estate and Letting Agency Team, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), who may consider further investigation or sanctions appropriate.

Should you have any suspicions or concerns

You can visit our online reporting centre or call us on 101. Always call 999 in an emergency.

However, if you would rather not report this information to police, then Crimestoppers can accept information anonymously. You can call them on 0800 555 111 or visit their website.

First Principle: Related links

Check out all of our Crime Prevention information using the following links or by using the QR code to take you to the First Principle Pages Alternatively go to our website at <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/> and look in the 1st Principle A-Z of Crime Prevention.

Anti-Social Behaviour

ATM Security

Beach Hut Security

Boat Security

Building Site Security

Business Security

Caravan Security

Card Security

Catalytic Converters

Church Security

Cold Callers

Commercial CCTV

Counterfeit Banknotes

County Lines Advice

for Landlords

Cyber Crime

Cycle Security

Dangerous Dogs

Dog Fouling

Dog Theft

Domestic CCTV

Domestic Violence

Farm Security

Fraud Prevention

Grooming

Hate Crime

Heating Oil

Home Improvements

Home Security

Horses and Stables

Keyless Vehicles

Key Safe Security

Lock Snapping

Neighbour Disputes

Occupiers Liability

Personal Security

Power Tool Security

Products Brochure

Rural Crime

Security Alarms

Sheds and Garages

Social Media

Social Media for

Parents

Suspicious Behaviour

Shoplifting

Vehicle Security

Windows and Doors



Other Links you might find helpful

Ask the Police
Secured by Design
Sold Secure

Crimestoppers
0800 555 111

Victim Care
0300 303 3705