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Man Charged With Child Abduction in Sussex as Police Crack Down on County Lines Crime

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— Categories: Crime



A man has been charged with child abduction during a major national police operation aimed at tackling County Lines drug networks and protecting vulnerable individuals across Sussex and the wider UK.

The British Transport Police (BTP), leading the week-long campaign, revealed that more than 30 victims were safeguarded, 69 arrests were made, and drugs and weapons were seized from train stations and homes across the country. The operation, known as County Lines Intensification Week, ran from June 23 to June 29.

At Brighton railway station, officers from BTP's County Lines Taskforce noticed a young girl traveling with an older man. According to a spokesperson, both appeared unkempt and were carrying large bags. Concerned by their appearance, officers approached and spoke to them. The man was arrested and later charged with child abduction, while the girl was taken into care, spoken to by a social worker and Catch-22 outreach staff, and safely returned home.

County Lines is a term used to describe how drug gangs use children and vulnerable people to move illegal substances across the country, often using threats, coercion, or manipulation. The rail network is a common route for this exploitation, making it a key focus of BTP's efforts.

At Worthing station, police arrested another man found with cannabis and a knife, while a second man was taken into custody for an unrelated stalking offense. Intelligence also led officers to a "cuckooed" home, where criminals take over the residence of a vulnerable person to store or sell drugs. Inside, police found cannabis, mobile phones, SIM cards, and a firearm. A woman at the address was arrested for firearm possession and intent to supply Class A and Class B drugs, while two other men were also arrested for related offenses.

In total, the week's operations led to the seizure of 101 drug items, including heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, and ketamine. Police also removed 25 dangerous weapons from the railway, such as knives, an axe, and a working firearm.

Detective Superintendent David Udomhiaye praised the task force's work, saying their sharp focus not only disrupted criminal activity but also helped rescue victims from dangerous situations.

"We've safeguarded many adults and children, removed deadly weapons, and stopped drugs from entering our communities," he said. "Thanks to the dedication of our officers, we've struck a significant blow to these harmful gangs."