**From:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Sent:** 28 January 2021 01:16  
**To:** Kidd Aaron

**Cc:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Subject:** Re: Home Office

Dear Aaron,

I received absolutely nothing from Courtnee today.

So we will not be able to carry anything.

A deadline is a deadline.

And anything on background we can't quote from, so we won't be able to use that either.

[https://www.prweek.com/article/1697725/on-background-on-record-use-terms-journalists](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.prweek.com%2Farticle%2F1697725%2Fon-background-on-record-use-terms-journalists&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cfa5751114bfc47bc575808d8c5f5da78%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637477007006557491%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=c5TldFxJmn243iYrvt%2FYFV5nNovfcSPaXcmUKtnfI%2FM%3D&reserved=0)

The below confirms what I've been saying, the Home Office has no strategy for dealing with the rise in drug crime in the South Asian communities, but thank you anyway.

Best wishes,

Barnie

**From:** Kidd Aaron

**Sent:** 28 January 2021 00:51  
**To:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Cc:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Subject:** Home Office

Hi Barnie,

Understand you have already received our statement from Courtnee on this – but additional background information is below for inclusion.

In regards to the stats any further questions concerning these should be addressed to MOJ. We have already been clear, that if you do not reflect our response, or suggest in your copy that we haven’t responded – we will rebut this publicly.

Best,

**Background:**

* Rather than focussing on the specific ethnicity or nationality of an organised crime group, enforcement interventions are focused on high-harm organised crime groups, based on intelligence assessments produced by law enforcement, including the NCA.
* This approach ensures we are tackling the most harmful elements of the drugs trade, which reduces the harm the drugs trade causes to communities in the most effective manner. Furthermore, targeting groups based on ethnicity and national would contravene our obligations under the Equality Act.
* We are significantly increasing investment in specialist support for county lines victims this financial year.
* With investment of up to £860k, the St Giles Trust are delivering one-to-one support in London, Merseyside and the West Midlands (the three largest county lines exporting areas) which will help over 200 vulnerable children and young people who are criminally exploited by county lines gangs to exit their involvement.
* Additionally we are continuing to fund the Missing People’s SafeCall service. This 24/7 service provides specialist, confidential advice and support to young people and their families/carers who are affected by county lines exploitation.
* It is for operational partners to make a decision regarding the specific allocation of resources within communities based on their individual assessments of the threat, risks and harm within a specific area.

**Aaron Kidd  |  Press Officer**

Home Office Press Office  
News Desk | 020 7035 4952 | 07880058216

2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

***Please note that our Newsdesk number has changed: 0300 123 3535***

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*  
This email and any files transmitted with it are private and intended  
solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed.  
If you have received this email in error please return it to the address  
it came from telling them it is not for you and then delete it from your system.  
This email message has been swept for computer viruses.  
\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**From:** Barnie Choudhury **Sent:** 27 January 2021 22:56  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee

**Cc:** Chapman Chloe (Press Office)   
**Subject:** Re: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Courtnee,

I hope you are well.

This is to inform you that the deadline for comments has now passed, and we will be saying that the Home Office refused to comment on both matters detailed below and that it has no strategy to deal with the growing drug problem in the Asian communities.

We have been fair to you, and adhered to our policy to offer organisations a right to respond.

Best wishes,

Barnie

**From:** Catnott Courtnee

**Sent:** 26 January 2021 17:05  
**To:** Barnie Choudhury

**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury

; Chapman Chloe (Press Office)

**Subject:** RE: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Good morning Barnie,

Hope you are well.

Thank you for your email. We will look into your additional questions and see if we can provide you with some more information.

All the best,

Courtnee

**Courtnee Catnott | Press Officer**Newsdesk  
Home Office Press Office  
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF  
Newsdesk | 0300 123 3535

**From:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Sent:** 26 January 2021 09:19  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury; Dawson Hannah   
**Subject:** Re: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Courtnee,

I have heard nothing from you, so I await any statement the Home Office may wish to send regarding my other question.

Please note deadline.

Best wishes,

Barnie

**From:** Barnie Choudhury

**Sent:** 25 January 2021 00:03  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee    
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury; Dawson Hannah   
**Subject:** Re: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Courtnee,

Thank you for your email, and your offer to speak with me.

I'm happy to do so, but only if you have anything new to say. Like you, I'm incredibly busy, and I don't want to spend time in an unnecessary debate.

Look, I'm incredibly disappointed by the way the Home Office has, yet again, handled enquiries by my newspaper. It is always a big hassle to get government departments to understand our agenda and whom we serve. It's as if you guys think we're an ethnic paper so aren't to be taken seriously. Do me a favour and look up my profile on LinkedIn, as I have yours.

Throughout I've been professional. Unfortunately, and forgive me, I don't think that level of professionalism has been reciprocated.

Let me explain why I'm put out.

* First you did not acknowlege my email.
* Second you asked for my sources - which was simply bizarre.
* Third you clearly did not read my email, otherwise you would not have spelt my name incorrectly, and you would have understood the nature of my enquiry. The email trail shows precisely what we asked for.

On another matter, we will be saying:

**What our figures show is that more Asian children are getting involved in the drugs trade, in so-called county line gangs.**

**Although a child is defined as anyone under 18, children under-10 cannot be arrested.**

**Criminal Justice statistics supplied by the government show that for children there was a 29 per cent increase in the number of Asian arrests during 2018 and 2019, from 31 to 40.**

**But these figures may not be accurate because one force which did breakdown ethnicity and age revealed a surprising statistic.**

**In Greater Manchester, our FOI data showed for Asians aged between 11 and 17 police arrested 28 and 30 during 2018 and 2019 respectively.**

**That is a seven per cent year-on-year rise, and the arrest figures are almost the total figure for all of England and Wales.**

The government stats can be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2019](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fstatistics%2Fcriminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2019&data=04%7C01%7C%7Cf31f316add3b438d6d9308d8c2e8d70c%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637473652589872543%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=cGlutqD9Obx3bzgjS0dffBSkmFCZFyDDX%2Bh7lVExtP8%3D&reserved=0)

Your analysts will, like me, have to separate out all drug offences and create a pivot table.

Please would you account for the discrepancy in government figures and those given to us by GMP under FOI rules?

**I have to give you droit de response. Please respond by 5pm on Wednesday, or we'll be saying you refused to explain.**

The London DDI number in the auto-signature right at the bottom of every email should divert to my number. If you have problems, please let me know.

**I am not free until Tuesday 26 Jan. Please do not call me on Monday. If you would like to discuss your statement or your response to the second part of my email, please would you kindly confirm that you'll be calling me at 1pm on Tuesday?**

Best wishes,

Barnie

**From:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Sent:** 22 January 2021 01:03  
**To:** Barnie Choudhury <barnie.choudhury@amg.biz>  
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury <barniechoudhury@hotmail.com>; Dawson Hannah <Hannah.Dawson@homeoffice.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Hi Barnie,

Do you have a mobile number that I could reach you on?

All the best,

Courtnee

**Courtnee Catnott | Press Officer**Newsdesk  
Home Office Press Office  
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF  
Newsdesk | 0300 123 3535

**From:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Sent:** 21 January 2021 19:21  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee

**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Subject:** Re: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Catnott,

Thank you for your email.

We will not be able to carry this comment.

I specifically asked for:

This is not a generic comment I am seeking, but a specific one:

1. What is the Home Office's **specific strategy** to tackle drug crime and county line gangs in **south Asian communities**?
2. What are the home secretary and police minister actively doing to tackle criminal drug gangs in **south Asian communities**?
3. Please also see this as a bid for an interview with the home secretary or police minister.

At the moment no-one has shown me evidence of a strategic approach to deal with organised criminal drug gangs in the south Asian communities, and that is what we will be saying.

You have not done so, which means that we will be saying that the Home Office refused to comment on our specific points, and that it appears to have no strategy to deal with drug problems in south Asian communities.

We will also be Tweeting this as well.

Happy to discuss with the minister.

Best wishes,

Barnie

**From:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Sent:** 22 January 2021 00:35  
**To:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Subject:** RE: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Hi Barnie,

Hope you are well.

Unfortunately, we are unable to facilitate an interview on this occasion. However, please see below a statement from the Policing Minister in response to your query.

All the best,

Courtnee

==

**Minister for Policing, Kit Malthouse said:**

“The drugs trade is a poison in our society, devastating lives and destroying communities.

“We have invested £148 million to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs, including £40 million to tackle county lines and drugs supply.

“We are determined to confront the issue of drugs across the UK and deliver for the public by making our streets safer and protecting those most vulnerable.”

**Background:**

·       We recognise that gangs can use debt to threaten families and coerce vulnerable people and children into committing crime, and we provide advice on dealing with this issue in our safeguarding guidance for the police and those working with victims.

·       This year we are continuing to invest in support for county lines victims, including continuing to fund the Missing People’s SafeCall service. This 24/7 service provides specialist, confidential advice and support to young people and their families/carers who are affected by county lines exploitation.

·       On 20 January we announced a £148 million package to tackle the problem of illegal drugs. It gives extra resources to law enforcement to dismantle organised criminal gangs and tackle the supply of drugs.

·       At the same time, it delivers more money for drug treatment and recovery to help cut drug-related crime and the cycle of misuse and reoffending.

**Courtnee Catnott | Press Officer**Newsdesk  
Home Office Press Office  
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF  
Newsdesk | 0300 123 3535

**From:** Barnie Choudhury

**Sent:** 21 January 2021 12:13  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee

**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Subject:** Re: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Courtnee,

Shadow front bench spokespeople and back benchers, so a variety.

Bar**nie**

**From:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Sent:** 21 January 2021 17:23  
**To:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Subject:** RE: Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Hi Barney,

Hope you are well.

What Labour MPs have you spoken with?

All the best,

Courtnee

**Courtnee Catnott | Press Officer**Newsdesk  
Home Office Press Office  
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF  
Newsdesk | 0300 123 3535

**From:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Sent:** 12 January 2021 11:48  
**To:** Catnott Courtnee   
**Cc:** Barnie Choudhury   
**Subject:** Drug offences and county line gangs in South Asian communities

Dear Courtnee,

Happy 2021. Lovely to speak with you moments ago.

I'm investigating a story about drug dealing and drug offences in the Asian communities.

This story, which I've been investigating since February 2020, is a follow up to what I did in 2003 and 2004 - a generation if you will - for two BBC's File on 4 programmes. You can find the articles online at the BBC website.

On the w/b 25 January Eastern Eye will be running a series of stories along the lines that south Asian dealers, former dealers and former coppers have told us that:

1. where once Asians stuck to heroin, they have branched out.
2. the use of familial links is the original county line gang - Bradford to Manchester to Birmingham to Derby/Nottingham to Leicester to Bristol to Slough to London, and they are more prevalent among Asian communities.
3. where once Asian children and women were kept away, Asian children as young as 7 are being groomed for drug running.
4. Asian women are being deliberately hooked on heroin and crystal meths, and forced into prostitution.
5. Sometimes as the young kids go on public transport or to a city they don't know, they will be targeted by their own gang thinking it is someone else and their stash will be stolen. That way they're in debt.
6. Asians are the kingpins who control empires - like a business organisation or armed forces they have a structure where they use black people and white people to do the dirty while they stay respectable. Businessmen and women as well as Imams and religious leaders are involved.
7. Asians are no longer to be messed with - as two independent sources told me, black and white dealers would, 20 years ago, rob Asian dealers. Not anymore. Asian dealers are tooled up to expect trouble.
8. So called "community leaders" continue to brush the problem under the carpet. Everyone knows it happens, but the communities are helping the trade by hiding the problem and not working with the authorities to take on the criminals making lives a misery.
9. **FOI data shows from six police forced which I contacted suggests that year-on-year more Asians are being arrested for drug offences.**
10. Sadly, it is clear that some forces are not collecting or analysing the stats to see which communities are being targeted. The Met are an exemplar because they do breakdown the figures in the way that is potentially intelligence-led. **But the national police chiefs' council won't explain how they are specifically addressing the problems of county line gangs in Asian communities, thinking one size fits all.** My sources of drug dealers and former drug dealers tell me that Asians use cultural pressures to make sure you do as they say. Indeed, a couple of drug dealers laughed when I suggested it was a matter of time before the police caught on. "Listen, bruv, we've been getting away with it for 20 years, they just don't get it. We Asians create families, we are families. The five are useless."

The police raids in September 2020 and the home secretary's comments, while impressive, fail to address the main thesis: the police are failing to see, turning a blind eye if you will, that some communities are vulnerable.

We have spoken to Labour MPs who tell us, "This government is cheap on talk and flashy headlines, but it is not tackling a serious and growing problem among south Asian communities."

This is not a generic comment I am seeking, but a specific one:

1. What is the Home Office's **specific strategy** to tackle drug crime and county line gangs in **south Asian communities**?
2. What are the home secretary and police minister actively doing to tackle criminal drug gangs in **south Asian communities**?
3. Please also see this as a bid for an interview with the home secretary or police minister.

At the moment no-one has shown me evidence of a strategic approach to deal with organised criminal drug gangs in the south Asian communities, and that is what we will be saying.

**Please would you kindly acknowledge this email.**

**My deadline for comment and interview is 11 am on 22 January 2021**.

I hope you will be able to help me.

Best wishes,

Barnie