

**BFI Distribution announces**  
**COUNTY LINES**  
will open in cinemas UK-wide and in Ireland on  
**17 April 2020**

***"An important and ferociously powerful film" Vice***



**Conrad Khan as Tyler in COUNTY LINES**

London – 17 January 2020. BFI Distribution announces the release of the highly topical new British feature film **COUNTY LINES** at cinemas in the UK and Ireland on **17 April 2020**. **COUNTY LINES**, the debut feature from director **Henry Blake**, premiered at the 2019 BFI London Film Festival and went on to win *Best Film – Young People’s Jury Award* at the 39<sup>th</sup> Cambridge Film Festival.

Inspired by true events, **COUNTY LINES** is a vivid and moving coming-of-age film about a young single mum and her 14-year old son who is groomed into involvement in county lines, the lethal nationwide drug dealing networks which exploit vulnerable children into trafficking drugs, mainly heroin and crack cocaine, from urban areas to rural or market towns or coastal locations.

The film introduces **Conrad Khan** (*Black Mirror*) who, in his first lead film role, gives a compelling performance as unhappy teenager Tyler. There are equally strong performances from the London-born and now Hollywood-based actor **Ashley Madekwe** (*Secret Diary of a Call Girl, Revenge*) as Tyler’s mother Toni, and rising star **Harris Dickinson** (*Beach Rats, Postcards from London, The King’s Man*) who is Simon, a ruthless county lines operator. The cast includes **Marcus Rutherford** whose screen debut in *Obey* won him a Most Promising Newcomer nomination at the 2018 BIFAs.

Writer/director Henry Blake based the film on his own experience; he has been a youth worker for 11 years and was first exposed to county lines back in 2015 while working in an East London PRU (a Pupil Referral Unit for children excluded from attending mainstream school). His first-hand knowledge from working with young people already taking part or at real risk of county lines exploitation, has enabled him to create an

authentic film that beautifully captures the harsh reality so many vulnerable young people are going through all over the UK.

County lines criminal networks have increasingly been in the news over the last two years as the recruitment of children has grown at a worryingly fast rate. The National Crime Agency (NCA) estimates that up to 10,000 children in the UK are now exploited by or forced to work for drugs gangs and that there are now more than 2,000 individual deal line numbers in operation. Police forces, the government, charities and academia are working to combat and disrupt the threat, which can have traumatic and long-lasting consequences for those exploited.

Press screenings of COUNTY LINES will begin in early February.

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**For more information, interview and screening enquiries please contact:**

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**About the BFI**

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

**About BFI Distribution**

BFI Distribution brings a wide range of films into cinemas, taking newly-restored classics, important world cinema titles, past gems worthy of reappraisal and contemporary British arthouse films to audiences UK-wide.

From major movies like A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, world cinema classics such as LA DOLCE VITA and ORPHÉE and British films from the past like DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES and MAURICE, to contemporary independent new releases, such as the recent hit BAIT, BFI Distribution regularly provides programmers and audiences with an eclectic and engaging slate of releases.

Our films frequently include restored masterpieces (many by the BFI National Archive) previously unavailable for theatrical screenings, such as NAPOLEON and SHIRAZ: A ROMANCE OF INDIA, and touring packages, enabling regional venues to programme director-focussed seasons themselves.