

7 minute briefing: Cuckooing

- 1. What is cuckooing?** Cuckooing is a form of exploitation and modern day slavery. It is where a criminal befriends an individual who lives on their own. The criminal then moves in and uses the property to operate unlawful activity. Victims are often lonely, isolated and vulnerable.
- 2. Who are the victims?** Victims are vulnerable adults, often drug users but can include people who are older, living with a mental or physical health condition, living with a learning disability, sex workers, single parents, isolated, or living with forms of addiction such as alcoholism.
- 3. Controlling the victim.** The crime is named for the cuckoo's practice of taking over the other bird's nest for its young. Dealers often approach the victim offering free drugs to use their home for dealing. Once they gain control, gangs move in with the risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence. Children are more commonly moved in as drug runners, manning the drugs line, though adults are also used. Once residency is established drug dealers then have a discreet location out of sight of police of which to conduct their criminal activity. An example of controlling activity could be pacifying victims using drugs. Once the high wears off and the victim wants the criminals to leave, intimidation levels can escalate to the use of threats and violence. They can use the premises to deal and manufacture drugs in an environment under the police radar.
- 4. Spotting the signs.** There will be an increase of vehicles stopping at the property, often for short periods, an increase of anti-social behaviour around the property, open drug dealing near the property, not seeing the resident of the property as often, an increase of the number of people coming and going at various times of the day or night.
- 5. More signs – the vulnerable person.** They might have stopped engaging with support services, or present with unexplained injuries. They may have paid off debts in full and in cash, and can appear withdrawn and fearful of disclosing information. Their appearance may have changed to be either unkempt, or they may wear more expensive clothing.
- 6. Cuckooing legality.** Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 landlords or property managers can receive up to 14 years imprisonment or a substantial fine for having drugs at their property. The property may be seized or forfeited as well as prosecuted for money laundering. The premises may be 'closed down' and boarded up under the terms of a Premises Closure Order (Section 76 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014).
- 7. What to do.** In an emergency call 999, for non-emergencies contact 101. You should also contact Adult Social Care on 0191 217 60129 or via the [portal](#). Cuckooing is being tackled in Greater Manchester via [Programme Challenger](#) Greater Manchester Police offer this [resource of organisations](#) that can help tackle cuckooing alongside information on elder abuse. Multi-agency guidance is available here [Cuckooing \(Forced Home Invasion\)](#)