

## CUCKOOING

You may have come across the term 'cuckooing'? This is a crime where criminal gangs exploit vulnerable people by taking over their home and using it for the criminals' own purposes. Some examples of why they may do this are - to financially abuse the person who lives there, or it can be to use the property to deal, store or take drugs, or for sex work. The most common form of cuckooing is where drug dealers take over a person's home and use it to store or distribute drugs. It takes its name from cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds.

The victims of cuckooing are usually the most vulnerable people in society, such as elderly people, people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, or physical disabilities, people who are socially isolated, people struggling financially or people with an addiction such as drug users or alcoholics.

A gang member may begin by befriending the vulnerable person to gain access to their home. They may offer the vulnerable person something of interest to them - such as friendship, drugs, alcohol, money or something else they want. In exchange they may ask to 'borrow' a room to store something in or to meet other 'friends' at the property. Gradually the 'benefits' will reduce and come to an end and more and more people will come and go from the address. Once they gain control, gangs move in with the threat of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence. They will discourage family, friends and support workers from visiting the vulnerable adult's address. Some vulnerable adults may be forced to leave their homes, making themselves homeless.

### Signs that cuckooing may be going on are:

- Changes in behavior of the person
- Lots of different people visiting, often at odd times of the day or night
- An increase in cars or bikes, often there for short periods
- An increase in anti-social behavior near the property
- Curtains or blinds closed all the time.
- Increased litter around the property
- Signs of drug use
- Lack of their usual visitors, like friends, family, healthcare and support workers

#### Support Networks and useful websites:

['Cuckooing' victim reveals how drug dealers took over her flat](#)

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines>



**WHAT IS CUCKOOING?**  
ARE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW AT RISK?