



ACTION ON



CUCKOOING

WHAT YOU NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT  
**CUCKOOING**

# WHAT IS CUCKOOING?

**Criminal gangs are targeting the homes of vulnerable people to be used for drug dealing - a process known as "cuckooing" (like the bird that invades other bird's nests) and victims are often left with little choice but to cooperate.**

Cuckooing is often seen as a part of County Lines criminality which involves drug gangs exploiting children and vulnerable adults.

## **Who is targeted?**

The following individuals are sometimes targeted for cuckooing:

- *Those who suffer from drug and/or alcohol addiction*
- *Those who are struggling financially*
- *The elderly*
- *People with mental health issues*
- *Individuals with learning disabilities*

## **How does it start?**

A gang member may begin by befriending the vulnerable adult – gangs will select members who are charming and manipulative in order for them to quickly build a rapport.

**They will then offer the vulnerable adult something of interest to them, this could be a relationship, friendship, drugs and/or alcohol, money or clothing.**

In exchange they may ask to 'borrow' a room, to store something or meet other 'friends' at the property. In some cases, the

gang may make it clear that this is for criminal purposes, i.e. drug supply, or they may use an excuse as to why they want to use the property.

Gradually the 'benefits' will reduce and may eventually come to an end, and more and more people will come and go from the address.

The gang members may threaten the vulnerable adult verbally or physically if they try to put a stop to their criminal activity. They will also discourage family/friends and support workers from visiting the vulnerable adult's address.

## **What are the risks of Cuckooing?**

If drugs are found at the property it is likely the vulnerable adult, being a resident at the address, will be interviewed and/or arrested by the Police.

If an occupier allows gang members to use their property for drug supply, they may face a prison sentence and/or a fine.

However, if there is evidence to suggest that the adult is vulnerable and has been

exploited by the gang, this will be considered when making charging decisions and safeguarding measures will be put in place.

Benefits could be lost and the housing provider may choose to evict the resident. Often, housing providers will begin by issuing a Closure Order on the address which can involve restricted access to others for up to six months. Usually, an agreement of who can attend the address will be put in place between the housing provider and the resident. These are a positive measure and can be used to help the resident gain control over their home again.

Does any of this sound familiar?

We would like to support anyone that is a victim of cuckooing by working with partners to safeguard victims and identify the criminals.

**It is extremely important that you keep us informed of any exploitation or criminality so that we can begin a multi-agency approach in tackling the issue.**

## If you are a victim, there are a variety of ways you can get in contact with us:

- Inform a local Police Officer
- Attend your nearest Police Station
- Report online via the 'Report' tab on the Essex Police website or speak to one of our colleagues via the 'livechat' online
- Call 101
- Or, if you don't want to speak to the police directly, you can call the anonymous Crimestoppers charity on 0800 555 111.

If you have a trusted worker from another agency such as the Local Authority, alcohol or drugs referral agency or Social Care you can inform them and ask them to speak to the Police

Please make sure when you make contact that you use the words 'Op Trespass' and 'Cuckooing' to make it clear what you are telling them.

**We want to help, we are here to help, we want to make sure you are safe and have many ways to ensure that you are so please, please do reach out for help if you need it.**



**CrimeStoppers.**