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Background

Cuckooing is the term that is used to describe how criminal networks take over a property of a vulnerable person and then use the property as a base for criminal activity such as dealing and preparing drugs.

Cuckooing is a form of exploitation and is often associated with County Lines. People involved in cuckooing will use coercion, manipulation or outright force to threaten and intimidate a vulnerable person.

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Why it matters

Victims are often vulnerable people - most often adults, who will be groomed and deceived into viewing the offenders as potential benefactors, friends or even romantic partners

Cuckooing is under consultation for becoming a specific criminal offence in the UK, introduced under the Crime and Policing Bill 2025. It will criminalise the act of taking over someone's home without consent to use it for illegal activities.

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Information

Types of cuckooing include:

- using the property to grow, deal, store or take drugs;
- using the property to store cash, weapons, valuables or other items;
- using the property for sex work;
- taking over the property as a place for the exploiters to sleep or live; and
- taking over the property to financially abuse the tenant.

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Who is at risk of cuckooing?

Perpetrators of cuckooing target victims with vulnerabilities. This can include people who:

- Use, or are former users, of drugs and/or alcohol;
- have a history of being in care;
- are vulnerable due to mental or physical health conditions;
- have learning disabilities;

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- are experiencing economic difficulties;
- are socially isolated/lonely;
- are elderly;
- have a history of being homeless.

Signs of Cuckooing often include:

- An increase in people entering and leaving the home
- An increase in vehicles at a property, including taxis and bikes
- An increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increase in litter outside the property
- Signs of drug use

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What to do

If you suspect someone is a victim of cuckooing, you should report to the Police on 101, or 999 IN AN EMERGENCY.

If you have safeguarding concerns, you should contact [Adult Social Care](#) on 01253 477800, or [Children's Social Care](#) on 01253 477600.

[Think 'INTRUSION'](#) to help recognise and address cuckooing effectively.

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Questions to consider

Am I familiar with *current* legislation linked to exploitation and cuckooing?

- > [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)
- > [Serious Crime Act 2015](#)
- > [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

Am I familiar with [civil tools and powers](#) that are used to address cuckooing?

Am I familiar with local guidance for identifying and [responding to safeguarding concerns](#)?

[Click here](#) to find out more.

