

Cuckooing – 7 Minute Briefing

1. What is Cuckooing?

Cuckooing is a form of exploitation whereby criminals, typically drug dealers, take over a person's home and use it for criminal purposes. The term comes from cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds. Cuckooing is an attractive option for criminals as it allows them to operate in a discreet location away from police view.

7. Further Information on Cuckooing can be found at:

[National County Lines Coordination Centre – Cuckooing Masterclass](#)

[High Speed Training – What Is Cuckooing?](#)

[County Lines Short Stories: Cuckooing – Kent Police](#)

6. Responding to Cuckooing Concerns

It is important victims are identified and safeguarded as early as possible. *The sooner it is known the sooner it will stop.*

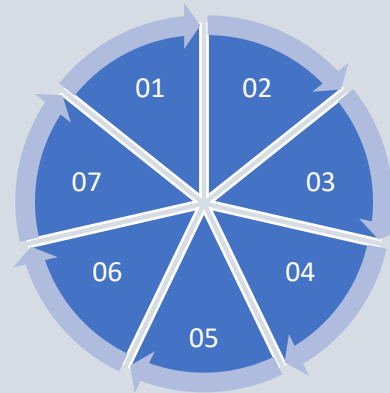
Oxford City Council have developed a memorable guide (NEST) to help identify and assist victims of Cuckooing:

Notice the signs.

Evidence your concerns. Make a note of your concerns, times, dates, names, and what has happened. If there is lots of noise, [download the Noise App to record it safely.](#)

Stay Safe. Do not approach any of the people you believe may be perpetrators of Cuckooing.

Tell the Local Authority and the Police. If you are concerned cuckooing is happening in your area or think someone may be a victim of cuckooing, please call the Police on 101. If it is an emergency, please call 999. You can also [report it online](#), or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via [crimestoppers-uk.org](#). You can contact the Local Authority for advice on 01225 394 200 or make a referral online via the [Adults Portal](#).



5. Spotting the Signs: The Person

Victims of cuckooing are usually too scared to report it to anyone. It is important that you are able to spot the following signs that may indicate a person is being cuckooed:

- Signs of physical abuse – bruising, cuts or injuries
- Changes in behaviour
- Disengaging from services
- The victim may become withdrawn and fearful of disclosing information
- Relationships with controlling individuals or groups
- Change in financial circumstances
- Signs of drug use or increased drug use

2. How?

Criminals will often target vulnerable adults and use various means to gain access to their home and exploit them. In some cases, the adult may be lonely and living alone and criminals will use this to befriend them, creating a false sense of trust. Victims may also be drug users, and the criminals will give them drugs to gain control. Once control is gained, larger groups will sometimes move in to the property. Control is then maintained through violence and intimidation.

3. Who are the victims?

Criminals will deliberately seek out vulnerable individuals. Typically, people who are cuckooed may be:

- Living with drug and alcohol addiction
- Single parents
- Involved in criminality or prostitution
- Living with a learning disability
- Living with mental or physical health problems
- Older adults living alone in the community
- Experiencing poverty/financial difficulties

4. Spotting the Signs: The Property

You may notice changes in and around the property that suggest cuckooing is taking place. These could include:

- An increase in people entering and leaving, often at strange times
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour activity in and around the property
- Professionals visiting may see new 'friends' or unfamiliar faces at the property
- An increase in cars or bikes outside, or a high number of vehicles stopping at the property for a short time
- The resident has not been seen at the property as often