



7-minute briefings: Cuckooing

Background – what is Cuckooing?

'Cuckooing' is a crime that often, but not always, accompanies 'County Lines' offending and occurs when people take over the home of a vulnerable person to use for drug dealing and other criminal activity. The name comes from a cuckoo's practice of taking over other birds' nests for its young.



County lines

'County Lines' refers to the phone numbers, or lines, that criminal gangs who traffic drugs from urban to rural areas operate to sell them. Often, they use violence to drive out local dealers and exploit children and vulnerable people to 'run', or supply and sell drugs for them. Heroin, cocaine, crack cocaine and cannabinoids are the most common drugs supplied.



Who does it affect?

Those on the receiving end of cuckooing are often lonely and isolated. They may have drug or alcohol problems and may sometimes be involved in criminality themselves. They may not present as vulnerable and often do not identify as such. They can be older adults, people with learning disabilities, mental or physical health problems, sex workers or single parents.



Recruitment

Victims can be groomed, including via social media, and deceived into viewing the offenders as potential benefactors, friends or even romantic partners, before intimidation, physical or sexual violence, and debt bondage – 'repaying' the cost of drugs first given as 'free' – are used as means for gaining control of the property.

Consequences

Gangs can have access to several addresses. They can move quickly between people's homes for a few hours, days or longer. Because 'cuckooing' means criminals operate from a property rather than the street they can evade detection by the police more easily. Some adults may be forced from their properties, or decide to abandon them, making themselves homeless and leaving the gangs free to commit more crimes.

Indicators of cuckooing

- Extra people at the house
- Increased traffic outside
- More litter & Anti-social behaviour
- Signs of drugs use
- Changes in behaviour
- Unexplained absences & missed appointments
- New 'friends'
- More parties
- Changes in finances
- Increased drug use
- Physical injury
- Disengagement

What to do

Have information? Contact Notts Police on **101** or **999** in an emergency or call the Modern Slavery Helpline on **0800 0121 700** or report it online.

If you are concerned about an adult at risk, contact the MASH on **0300 500 80 90**, or [Report abuse or neglect of an adult | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

[NSAB Procedures](#)

[NSAB Resources](#)

[Modern slavery | Nottinghamshire Police](#)

More info on referral and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) can be found at [Modern slavery - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Want to discuss concerns?

Contact the Slavery Exploitation Team: msvp@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

