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**Cuckooing**

**(Home Invasion) Guidance**

January 2025

Review Date: January 2027

**What is ‘Cuckooing’?**

‘Cuckooing’ is a form of exploitation and the term used when an individual or a criminal gang target the home of a vulnerable person so they can use the property for criminal purposes such as drug-dealing, hiding weapons and other criminal activities. Criminals often befriend a vulnerable person in order to exploit them and use their property. The term takes its name from cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds.

Initially perpetrators may approach the vulnerable person offering free drugs or other things they may need; however, this may progress to threats of violence, and/or the victim being made to pay off drug debts through use of their home and/or to assist in drug dealing. Victims may be forced to stay in their bedroom or are prevented from freely using rooms in their home such as their kitchen / living room. They are usually intimidated and left with little choice but to cooperate. Sexual assaults or exploitation may also take place.

Drug networks / gangs are likely to target several people who live close to each other so they can quickly move between the different properties and avoid getting caught.

Older children/young people are also exploited by older criminals to enter properties that have been cuckooed and are used as drug runners and for manning the drugs (mobile telephone) line.

**What can increase the risk to Adults?**

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| • Mental health conditions  | • Drug debt / financial difficulties  |
| • Poverty | • Having a ground floor flat |
| • Drug / alcohol addiction  | • Previously homeless  |
| • Living alone | • Being close to a stairwell |
| • Physical disability  | • Single parent  |
| • Socially isolated | • Having a spare bedroom |
| • Elderly  | • People with care needs living independently  |
| • Reduced contact with services | • Learning Disability |

**What might cuckooing look like?**

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| **Potential Indicators of Cuckooing** | **Potential Indicators of Child Criminal Exploitation** |
| Anti-social behaviour / crimes  | Large amounts of money / cash |
| Complaints of noise  | Evidence of travel e.g. tickets, etc |
| Increased / nuisance visitors ‘comings and | Unexplained gifts - new clothes / trainers / accessories (new phone) |
| goings’ | Secretive / withdrawn |
| Young people frequenting the property Curtains / blinds closed  | Criminal behaviour |
| Person scared / not willing to disclose what’s happening or leave the property | Associations with known offenders – Gang / OCG members |
| Unexplained injuries  | Missing from home |
| Damage to property / doors open  | Carrying weapons / weapons found |
| Increased fob use  | Unexplained injuries |
| Lost / replacing key fobs  | Picked up & dropped off in cars |
| Availability of space – spare bedroom to grow cannabis | Returning with large amounts of alcohol, cigarettes, drugs |
| Lack of engagement  | Possession of drugs paraphernalia, snap bags, grinders |
| Evidence of takeaway boxes/litter  | Older friends, different peer group |
| Electric scooters and/or scooter helmets at the property | Fearful, change in demeanour – anxious, anger, panic, etc. |
| Security safe in the property  | Drug debts with no way to pay |
| Poverty  | Unkempt / poor self-care |

**Key messages**

* Cuckooing is when criminals take over someone’s home to exploit them.
* The perpetrators may store drugs, weapons or money at the property or use it as a base for drug dealing.
* They may force the person to sell drugs for them to clear their ‘drug debt’.
* They may threaten or harm the person whose home they have taken over.
* Perpetrators will move from one victim to the next in a relatively small area e.g. targeting a block of flats or properties within a few streets of each other.
* There may be an increase in strangers, including young people coming and going at all hours,
* The person who lives at the property may be less visible, or look stressed and anxious.
* The tenant may avoid appointments or disengage with services.

**What should I do if I am worried that someone is a victim of cuckooing?**

If you spot some of the indicators above and are concerned about someone you know who you suspect is being cuckooed, you need to report this to your line manager or designated safeguarding officer who will then advise about any onward referrals.

You should contact the police via 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm or for non-urgent cases via 101 or the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) ‘Report a Crime’ webpage.

To refer concerns or ask advice / discuss your concerns in Rochdale - email the Partnership Enforcement Team at pet@rochdale.gov.uk

Cuckooing cases are likely to have a wider public protection aspect to them, e.g. perpetrators may target more than one victim or household, and therefore, considering the wider public interest, report non urgent cases on 101 or online via the GMP ‘Report a Crime’ webpage.

**Sharing information and intelligence**

Where there are concerns that a person is at risk of, or is experiencing exploitation, you are legally permitted to share information on a need to know basis with other relevant agencies who have a responsibility to safeguard any potential victims. This includes sharing information without consent where a person may be being coerced or under duress, to prevent a crime being committed, or where others are at risk, in the wider public interest.

Also, if you see or hear something and have a feeling that something is not right and have concerns that person may be being exploited through cuckooing, but do not have enough information to be able to make a referral, you must share this information with GMP so they are aware and can begin to develop a picture and determine if any further action is necessary. To share information and concerns you should complete the GMP Partner Intelligence Form and send it via email to FIB@gmp.police.uk. To refer concerns or ask advice / discuss your concerns in Rochdale - email the Partnership Enforcement Team at pet@rochdale.gov.uk

**What should happen next?**

Once a referral has been made, it will be screened and shared with the appropriate team for further action which could include multi-agency discussions where involved agencies can share their information to assess the level of risk to then determine what actions should be taken and by whom. Consideration of the multiagency risk assessment may be necessary to fully document key risks and actions identified.

It is important that this is approached in a person-centred way and by keeping the potential victim at the centre of the multi-agency discussions and decisions i.e. what does the person want to happen? What are the risks to the person? What needs to happen to keep the person safe? Who needs to be involved?

**Useful links**

* RBSAB Cuckooing 7-Minute Briefing
* [Local Government Association Guidance Supporting modern slavery victims: guidance & good practice for council homelessness services](https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/supporting-modern-slavery-victims-guidance-and-good-practice-council-homelessness)
* [Gov.UK Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: Chapter 25 Modern Slavery & Trafficking](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-25-modern-slavery-and-trafficking)
* [Gov.UK Report modern slavery to the NRM / Complete Duty to Notify](https://www.modernslavery.gov.uk/start)

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| **Organisation** | **Telephone** | **Website or contact** |
| Salvation Army, Victim Care Contract – confidential 24/7 referral helpline | 0800 808 3733 | Modern slavery | The Salvation Army |
| Causeway – North of England service provider offering accommodation and community support for support for victims pre and post NRM | 0151 709 9599 | Causeway - Modern Slavery & Criminal Justice Support Charity (wearecauseway.org.uk) |
| Barnardo’s Independent Child Trafficking Guardians – Greater Manchester was an early adopter sites, all under 18 potential victims must be referred | 0800 043 4303 | ICTG - Greater Manchester Barnardo's (barnardos.org.uk) |