

# What is Cuckooing

**Cuckooing is when criminals take over the home of a vulnerable person, and use it for criminal purpose such as dealing drugs.**

A criminal will often befriend a vulnerable person, as comfort levels rise more criminals are brought to the home, adding to the activity and taking over the property entirely.

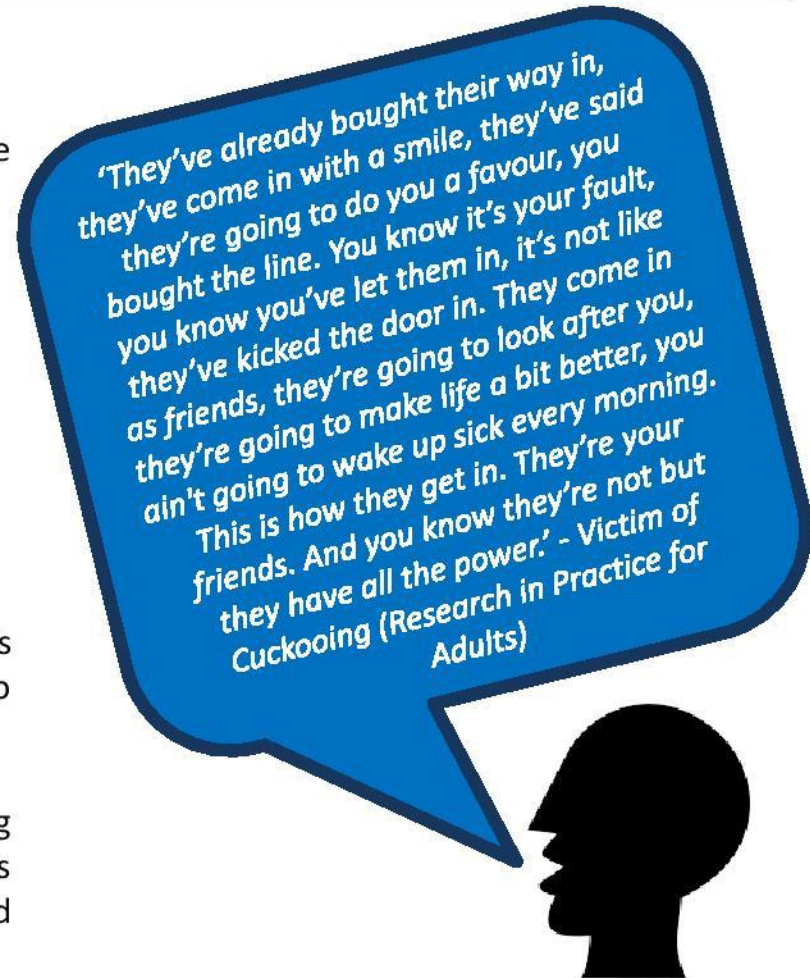
## Who are the victims of cuckooing?

Victims are vulnerable individuals, often drug users but can include people who are...

- older
- living with a mental or physical health condition
- living with a learning disability
- involved in prostitution
- single parents
- experiencing poverty
- isolated
- living with forms of addiction, such as alcoholism

**Controlling the victim:** Once residency is established drug dealers then have a discreet location out of sight of police from which to conduct their criminal activity.

An example of controlling activity could be pacifying victims using drugs. Once the high wears off and the victim wants the criminals to leave, intimidation levels can escalate to the use of threats and violence.



# Spotting the Signs of Cuckooing



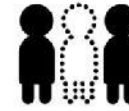
Increase of vehicles stopping at the property, often for short periods



Increase of anti-social behaviour around the property



Open drug dealing near the property



Not seeing the resident of the property as often



Increase of the number of people coming and going at various times of the day or night

## The Vulnerable Person ...

Has stopped engaging with support services

Is presenting with unexplained injuries

Has paid off debts (including housing debts) in full and in cash

Has begun to misuse substances or this use has increased

Is appearing withdrawn and fearful of disclosing information for fear of 'betraying' the criminals, abuse or eviction

Is associating with new unidentified people who are often present at the home

Has changed appearance either wearing expensive clothing or appearing unkempt



# Making a Referral

Partnership working is essential in effectively tackling cuckooing and to prevent it re-occurring. Cuckooing is not a criminal offence in itself. To effectively tackle it, partner agencies need to share information and work together.

It is important to:

- Identify Cuckooing at as early as possible by recognising the signs;
- Support a community response;
- Ensure the nature of 'victim' is recognised;
- Inter-agency sharing of information and co-operation is consistent throughout.

## Cuckooing Legality:

- Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, landlords or property managers can receive up to 14 years imprisonment or a substantial fine for having drugs residing at their property;
- The property may be seized or forfeited as well as prosecuted for money laundering;
- The premises may be 'closed down' and boarded up under the terms of a Premises Closure Order: (Section 76 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)

# Contact Details

MERTON:

[ASCFirstResponse@merton.gov.uk](mailto:ASCFirstResponse@merton.gov.uk)

020 8545 4388

KINGSTON:

020 8547 5005

[adult.safeguarding@kingston.gov.uk](mailto:adult.safeguarding@kingston.gov.uk)

WANDSWORTH:

020 8871 7707

[accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk)

RICHMOND:

020 8891 7971

[Access.Team@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:Access.Team@richmond.gov.uk)

- For a non-urgent police response, call 101
- In an emergency call 999
- CrimeStoppers 0800 555 111



Kingston Safeguarding Adults

Board

Keeping South West London Safe  
Putting victims first—Preventing harm—Working as one team



South West BCU



Richmond and  
Wandsworth  
Safeguarding  
Adults Board



Merton  
Safeguarding  
Adults Board