Cuckooing: The Norfolk Partnership Approach



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Learning objectives



- Define cuckooing(home takeover)and its key characteristics
- Recognise indicators of cuckooing and criminal exploitation
- Identify individuals most vulnerable to cuckooing
- Explain the three core elements of a cuckooing offence
- Discuss how a multi-agency response can assist with identifying/proving the offence and offer appropriate safeguarding to victims
- Understand how a multi-agency group came together to develop a Safeguarding Toolkit and Guidance for Norfolk.

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What is Cuckooing?

Cuckooing is a form of criminal exploitation where an individual(s) coerces, forces or intimidates a person into sharing, providing or giving up their accommodation to the individual(s), who then use it as a base for their criminal, or other exploitative activity without their consent; or consent that may not have been given freely, where it is obtained by coercion, deception and other forms of abusive and/or violent behaviour.

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Such activity may include using the property:

- To deal, store, grow, make or take drugs
- As a place to stay, live or house others
- To store cash, weapons, valuables or other items
- For any forms of abuse or exploitation, for example physical, sexual, financial, coercive control – including domestic abuse and modern slavery



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Key points from definition

Exploitation

Taking an unfair advantage of another person or situation, often through a power imbalance.

Refers to the exploitation of a person's vulnerability, or the use of psychological manipulation (coercion and intimidation.)

Without consent or consent not given freely

Consent obtained through abusive/violent behaviour or by deception.

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Who may fall victim to cuckooing?



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Mum
Missed call: School

Identifying when an offence has been committed?

Three core elements

1) Control of the dwelling

- Suspect exercised control over the victim's home
- Not just visiting – must show dominance/takeover
- For example, staying without permission, controlling access, using rooms.

2) Purpose = Criminal Activity

- Control must be for enabling criminal conduct e.g. drug supply, storage of weapons, exploitation networks.

3) Lack of genuine consent – occupier does not freely consent

- Consent invalid if obtained through
- Coercion, Threats, Dependency, Exploitation of vulnerability.

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How can partner agencies help police with identifying/proving this offence?

May receive victim first account

- Loss of control of home
- Intimidation
- Threats or violence

Understand the victim's vulnerability

- Substance misuse / physical disability
- Mental health issues
- Learning difficulties
- Isolation / bereavement

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Core evidence

Third party evidence

- Neighbours / housing officers:
  - Reports of activity
- Police logs:
  - Repeated attendance
- Partner agencies:
  - Social services
  - Drug / alcohol services

Control / takeover indicators

Often used to demonstrate "control":

- Unknown persons staying at address
- Frequent footfall / short visits
- Changes in locks or restricted access

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Changing our way of thinking

A victim may seem complicit. They may have initially allowed entry. They may not make any complaint at first. Look at **why** they allowed it. Focus on exploitation dynamics, not surface behaviour. Look for an imbalance of power. They may consider the perpetrators to be their 'friends'. They may tell officers that they are happy to have them there.

Consider what is leading them to say that:

- Fear of violence
- Reliance on Class A drugs
- Stockholm Syndrome
- Debt bondage
- Mental health issues
- Isolation and vulnerability

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Steven’s Story – A personal experience of cuckooing

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CUCKOOING

STEVEN'S STORY

Cuckooing is the act of taking over a vulnerable persons home to use it as a base to carry out illegal activities.




Money
Eating all your food; coming over on pay day; asking to borrow money then disappearing; stealing from you
Physical
hitting and kicking you; smashing or damaging things
Housing
Taking over your flat; sleeping in your bed; inviting other people in that you don't know
You
Intimidation
Calling you names; saying you're mad or crazy; putting you down;
Threats
Saying they will call police and report you; threatening to hit/punch you; threatening to leave and then you will be lonely
Controlling
Taking your phone; not allowing you to leave; making you feel that you need them in your life; making you cancel your support; refusing to leave

Cuckooing Partnership Group

- **Established as a sub-group of the Norfolk Exploitation and Anti-Slavery Group (NEAG).**
- **Multi-agency membership**
- **Focuses on strengthening partnership safeguarding responses and providing practical guidance for practitioners.**

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Home takeover and Cuckooing Guidance

- Developed to support frontline practitioners working with adults at risk of cuckooing (home takeover).

- Provides practical tools and guidance including
  - Cuckooing (Home Takeover) Checklist
  - Cuckooing Risk Factors Checklist
  - Adult Care Act 2014 Eligibility Criteria
  - Key contacts and helplines

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What to do if you suspect someone is being Cuckooed?



- Use **professional curiosity** to notice signs that something does not feel right
- **Assess risk** to an individual or family

- Call **999** for immediate risk to life otherwise **101**
- **Report online** to the police if there is no immediate risk
- If someone **has the appearance of care and support needs**, contact Adult Social Care **online** or call **0344 800 8020**
- If Police or Adult Social Care thresholds are not met, convene a multi-agency meeting: **Next steps**

- **Secure premises** or seek **alternative accommodation**
- **Safety planning** for victim/s
- Ensure **basic needs met**
- Raise a **safeguarding concern**
- **Complete Checklist here**
- See **Risk Factors Checklist here**

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Which agencies can help?

- Adult Services: assess Care and Support needs and eligibility (through API processes)
- Change Grow Live: if substance misuse is a key vulnerability consider referral to CGL (with consent of victim)
- Housing departments: *should* give a victim of cuckooing a priority need for a home move
- Victim care: Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care
- Consider working with your local OPT to arrange a multi-agency case conference to assist with problem solving an issue.
- Partial Closure Orders can assist with this but remember that your householder is a victim.

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Any questions?



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