

GUIDE TO

CUCKOOING



The vision of the Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board is that all adults in Surrey live a life free from fear, abuse and neglect.

WHAT IS CUCKOOING?

Cuckooing is a type of exploitation by criminal gangs. It involves befriending a person, then taking over their home and using it to deal drugs. The name comes from the cuckoo bird, which is known for laying its eggs in other birds' nests.

This type of activity is closely linked to 'county lines' drug trafficking, where people are used to supply drugs from major cities to suburban, rural and coastal areas. In this case, the victim's home becomes a base for developing operations in a new area.

WHAT DOES CUCKOOING INVOLVE?

Gangs will often deliberately target adults with care and support needs who live alone, because they're seen as being easier to manipulate.

People targeted are often unable to protect themselves from being exploited as they may be:

- » Drug users or ex-addicts
- » People with mental health issues, physical disabilities or cognitive impairments
- » Older people who are socially isolated

Criminals use a range of clever tactics to manipulate and exploit others, such as:

- » Offering drugs in exchange for use of the person's home
- » Offering friendship or sex
- » Giving gifts or paying bills
- » Using force or threats of violence

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF CUCKOOING

Sometimes, the person being exploited has no idea that they're being used or is simply too afraid to speak up, which can make it very difficult to spot what's going on.

If you're concerned that someone you know is a victim of cuckooing, look out for the following warning signs:

- » The person's address has been taken over and they appear scared, threatened or coerced
- » Having more money, clothes, jewellery or other items that they usually couldn't afford, such as a new phone
- » Becoming unusually withdrawn or other changes in behaviour
- » Misusing drugs or alcohol

GETTING HELP

If you're worried that a person is being exploited or at risk of harm, contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

- » Call on **0300 470 9100**
- » Email ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk
- » Text on **07527 182861**
- » Out of hours, call **01483 517898**

When you contact MASH, rest assured that we'll take your concerns seriously. We'll reach out to the person in question to discuss their wishes and work with them to find a way forward.

In an emergency, or if you believe someone is in immediate danger, always dial 999 for the police.