

# Catalyst Specialist Project Team

PROVIDING  
SUPPORT FOR  
VULNERABLE  
ADULTS AFFECTED  
BY CUCKOOING

## SPECIALIST OUTREACH TEAM

- Supporting people to live safer lives
- Increasing community safety
- Financial savings for the police and our community

# Cuckooing in Surrey - Quotes from victims

**"I HAD NEVER HEARD OF CUCKOOING AND NEVER THOUGHT MY SO CALLED FRIEND COULD BE MY NIGHTMARE"**

**"I NEEDED THE SUPPORT WHEN IT WAS HAPPENING, NOT AFTERWARDS"**

**"HE WAS ONLY ABOUT 17 YEARS OLD BUT HE PUT A BIG KNIFE ON THE TABLE SO I KNEW I HAD TO DO AS HE SAID"**

**"MY CONTACT DETAILS WERE SOLD TO SOMEONE IN PRISON FOR SPICE"**

**"THE ONLY PLACE I COULD SLEEP IN MY OWN HOME WAS THE KITCHEN FLOOR"**

**"THE ONLY WAY I COULD SEE OUT WAS TO TRY TO KILL MYSELF"**

**"I COULD HAVE LOST MY ACCOMODATION BECAUSE OF MY SON"**

**"I CAME HOME TO FIND A DRUG PRODUCTION LINE IN MY KITCHEN"**

**"I WAS FORCED TO STAY IN MY ROOM WHILE THEY WERE HERE"**

**"THEY CLIMBED IN THROUGH THE BACK GARDEN, WOULD OPEN THE WINDOW, CLIMB IN AND THEN LET OTHERS IN THE FRONT DOOR"**

# What is Cuckooing?

**Cuckooing:** is a type of exploitation where they take over the victim's home and use it for illegal activity. The name comes from the cuckoo bird, which is known for taking over 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.

**Methodology:** Perpetrators will often deliberately target vulnerable adults who live alone, because they are seen to be easier to manipulate.

**What we offer:**

- Experienced assertive outreach workers
- A rapid response to support clients at immediate risk in collaboration with partner agencies
- Help build resilience to prevent future exploitation

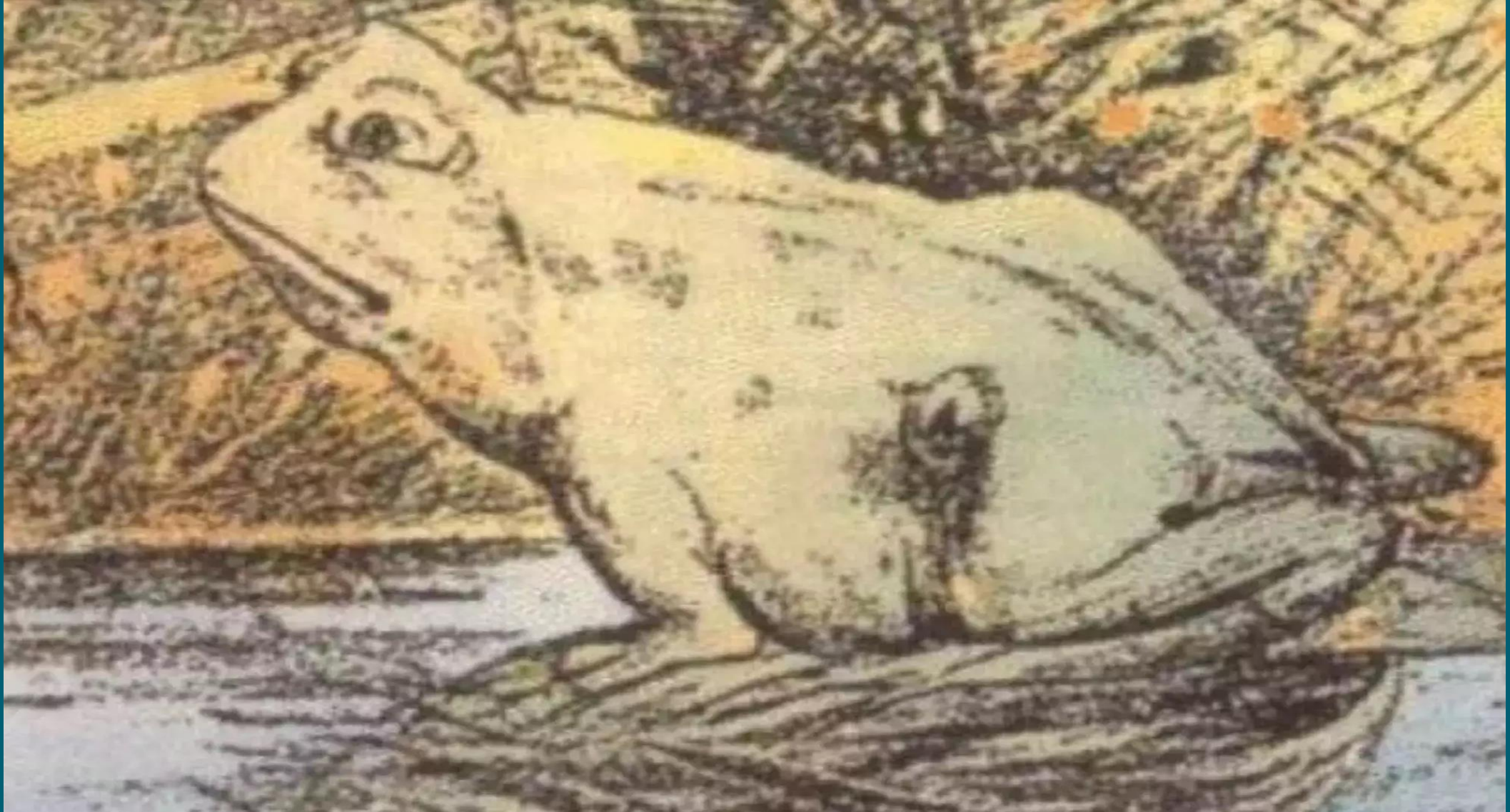
# Stevens Story

A short film based on the experience of  
a cuckooing client.

[Click here to launch film; Steven's Story](#)



Things may not always appear as they first seem, or as how they are presented.



Since October 2018, our Cuckoo service has received **511** referrals across Surrey



**77%** happens within housing association and local authority properties.



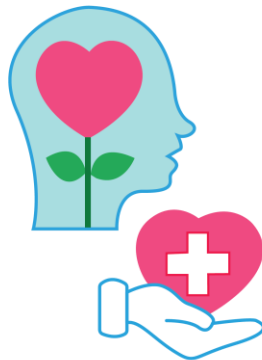
**15%** had **no history** of drugs or alcohol! A further **4%** were **not using** drugs and alcohol at the time of being Cuckooed



Since 2018 we received referrals from **314 Males**, **194 Females**, **2 Transgender** and **1 Non-Binary**



**7%** were aged **70+**. The oldest person being 93. The Youngest person was 18



**62%** Diagnosed mental health  
**48%** Physical Health  
**32%** Physical and Mental Health  
**13%** Neurodiverse/Cognitive

## Setting the scene in Surrey



**17%** where in privately owned or rented, **4%** in supported housing and **1%** in emergency housing

*Could you pro-actively identify and safeguard victims?*

## Professional curiosity – signs to look out for

- Someone who is **known to drink** and **has a spare room** as they **sleep on their sofa**.
- Someone who is **suddenly unable to manage their finances**.
- Talk about a **new friend who is helping them**.
- Becoming **withdrawn**
- **Cancelling home visits**
- **Other people answering their phone**
- Often **similar signs** as in other **controlling relationships**.

# Impact on individuals:



## Risk of losing their tenancy-

*"I thought they were my friends, but they have moved on, and I now have a notice of seeking possession hanging over me".*



## Disengaged from services -

being controlled and socially isolated or unable to leave their home.

*"They always made sure at least one of them was in the house with me all the time and I had to leave my phone if I needed to go out".*



## Getting into debt -

paying for drugs or told they now have a drug debt. Funding other people living there with food and utilities.

*"I was walked to the cashpoint at midnight and was only allowed £20 of my benefits*



## Relapse or start using drugs/alcohol –

possibly as a way of coping with the situation.

*"I had been clean for 3yrs and thought I was helping someone by letting them stay during the cold weather".*



# Impact on the communities:

Property in **disrepair**

**Drug paraphernalia and ASB**  
- People coming and going  
at **unsociable hours**

**Fear**  
of crime/feeling **unsafe**

**Scared** to let their  
children play outside

**Mental health** – not being  
able to sleep  
causing knock on impact  
on relationships  
and work



# Cuckooing Victim Risk Indicators



70% Substance use



67% Reports from neighbours  
(ABC behaviour or concerns)



31% Had Priority debt



57% Would benefit from tenancy support



72% Closure order or ABC considered



58% Were socially Isolated



31% Properties in disrepair



70% Sporadic engagement with services



44% History of homelessness

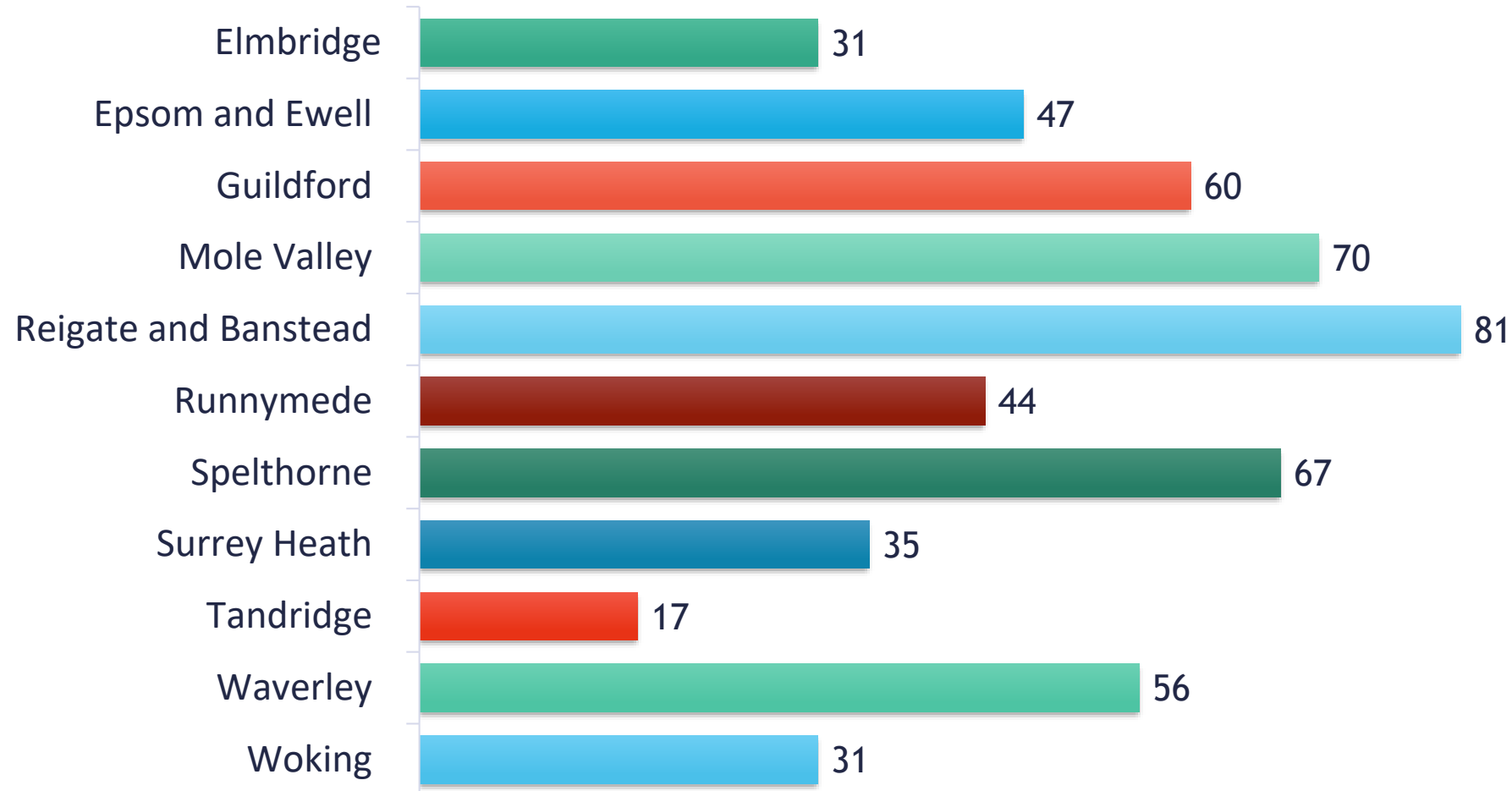


58% Mental health diagnosis



38% Did not meet the criteria for CMHRS

# Referrals by Borough



# What we do-

## Immediate Support

Full assessment and clients consent leading to safeguarding – adults and children, and an agreed support plan



## Wellbeing and Essential Support

- Mobile phones
- Phone Credit
- Emergency Repairs
- Lock Changes
- Food Parcels
- DA Kits
- Medication
- GP Appointments
- Gas
- Electricity
- Support Partial Closures
- Liaise with partner agencies and support networks
- Help to move into emergency accommodation – where applicable





# Wrap-a-round support

## Social Welfare

- Advocacy
- Birth certificate as ID
- Debt Services
- Referrals to appropriate agencies
- Benefits/DWP

## Wellbeing

- Gym membership
- Mental Health
- Foodbank
- Bus Pass

## Housing


- Fire Safety
- Infestations
- Repairs
- Support to/with moving
- Cookers
- Furnishings
- DOCO (Designing Out Crime Officer)





# How to refer

- ▶ **Call a member of the team to find out more and make a referral**
- ▶ **Refer sooner rather than later** – clients may be less willing to engage with services if they feel the issue has been resolved with a partial closure. This does not help their resilience for the future.

## Specialist Project Team contact details

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# Key Points:

- Rarely do people like to think of themselves as vulnerable or being taken advantage of and so may not admit to being cuckooed.
- Question, why are they making that choice?
- Cuckooing can also be carried out by family members, local dealers/users and not just County Lines.
- Breaking down stigma and barriers can be a challenge to engaging and accepting support.
- Interim support may be needed to help get back on track.
- Seeing people in their homes helps give a clearer picture.

# Questions?