

BARNSLEY SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD**Cuckooing: Guidance for Staff****What is Cuckooing?**

Cuckooing is a practice where people take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. It takes the name from cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds. They may begin befriending the adult at risk – gangs will select members who are charming and manipulative for them to quickly build a rapport. They will then offer the adult something of interest to them, this could be a relationship, friendship, drugs and/or alcohol, money, or clothing.

People who choose to exploit will often target the most vulnerable in society. They establish a relationship with the person to access their home. Factors such as mental illness, addiction, a history of abuse, poverty, social isolation, physical or learning disabilities and/or a history of being in care settings may increase a person's risk of becoming a victim of cuckooing. There are different types of cuckooing including:

- Using the property to grow, deal, store or take drugs (which is the most common type of cuckooing)
- Using the property to sex work or to store weapons
- Taking over the property as a place for them to live or to financially abuse the tenant

Gradually the 'benefits' for the affected person will reduce and may eventually come to an end and the perpetrators may threaten the adult at risk verbally or physically if they try to put a stop to their criminal activity. They will also discourage family/friends and support workers from visiting the vulnerable adult's address. It is common for the perpetrators to have access to several cuckooed.

Indicators of Cuckooing:

- There may be frequent visitors to the property at unsociable hours and/or suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside an address – offenders will often have new vehicles outside the property and may frequently use taxis or hire cars.
- An increase in the number of coming and goings to and from the property.
- Possible increase in anti-social activity in and around the property.
- Unusual smells coming from the property.
- The property may appear to become almost sparse of valuable possessions inside and go into a state of disrepair.
- The victim may show signs of drug use, self-harm, or changes in emotional wellbeing. They may also start carrying weapons and acquire money/clothes/mobile phones.
- The victim may develop relationships with controlling individuals or groups or there may be changes in their usual routine such as leaving home/care without explanation.
- The person may disengage with support services or professionals visiting may be aware of new unidentified persons in the property.

Actions to consider:

- If you suspect someone is a victim of cuckooing, you should speak to South Yorkshire Police on 101 or in an emergency 999
- Contact Adult Social Care for all exploitation concerns. This is the point of contact regardless of whether the adult has care and support needs. The contact number is 01226 773300
- If there are any associated concerns about exploitation of children, these should be referred immediately to Children's Social Care and the Police. The contact number is 01226 772423
- If the property is a Berneslai Homes Property contact 01226 787878