

Cuckooing

1 What is Cuckooing? A tactic where a drug dealer (or network) takes over a vulnerable person's home to prepare, store or deal drugs or for other criminal activity e.g. storing weapons. It is commonly associated with exploitation and violence. The crime is named for the Cuckoo's practice of taking over other birds' nest for its young.

2 Who Are the Victims?

Victims are often lonely and isolated, they can have substance misuse problems and sometime be involved in criminality themselves. They may not present as typical victims and often do not identify as such. Older adults, people living with learning disabilities, mental or physical health problems; sex workers, single parents can be more vulnerable to cuckooing.

3 Controlling the Victim

Victims can be groomed through Social Media, the offer of free drugs or deceived into viewing the offenders as friends or even romantic partners. Intimidation, physical or sexual violence and debt bondage (repaying the cost of drugs first given as free) are then used as means of gaining control of the property. Once control is established the criminals have a discreet location out of sight of police from which to conduct their activity. Criminals will often use young people to maintain control of the property and to continue the criminal activity from the location.

4. Spotting the Signs in the Victim

- Disengagement from services
- Presenting with unexplained injuries
- Changes in finances e.g. suddenly paying off debts, large deposits in bank accounts
- Changes in appearance or behaviour e.g. appearing fearful of disclosing information
- Refusing access to staff or agencies
- Frequent reports of lose of fob/key to individual's property



7. Operation Expel

Op Expel is an information sharing scheme for professionals to share concerns or intelligence about cuckooing with Police. In response to a Referral Police will:

- Place Vulnerability Marker on address
- Visit victim x 2 a week
- Provide County Lines letter and leaflet when appropriate
- Offer reassurance to the victim that intention is to safeguard and support, NOT criminalise or evict them.

For more information about the scheme and how to share information visit:

www.westcheshire-csp.co.uk/our-work/

6. What to do

Have information? Contact the Police on 101 or complete an Op Expel referral (see number 7). In an emergency always call 999

Concerned about an Adult:

Call Adult Social Care: 0300 123 7034

Out of Hours: 01244 977277

Email:

accesswest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Concerned about a Child:

Call Children's Services (iART) : 0300 123 7047

Out of Hours: 01244 977 277

Email: i-ART@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

5. Spotting the Signs at the property

- Increase in vehicles/people coming and going from the property
- Increase in anti-social behaviour around the property
- Open drug dealing near the property
- Increased and/or changes in activities e.g. parties, at the property
- New 'friend' or 'carer' at address
- New locks on internal doors



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