

# Home Takeover (previously known as Cuckooing)

## 1. What is it?

Home Takeover or Cuckooing is a crime that often, but not always, accompanies 'County Lines' offending and occurs when drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person to use for drug dealing and other criminal activity. The crime of 'cuckooing' vulnerable people is named after the cuckoo's practice of taking over other birds' nests for its young

## 2. Victims

Victims are often lonely and isolated. They can have drug or alcohol problems and sometimes be involved in criminality themselves. They may not present as 'typical' victims and often do not identify as such. They can be older adults, people with learning disabilities, mental or physical health problems, sex workers or single mums

## 6. What to do if you are concerned for someone

Are you worried about someone? Don't sit in silence! Please contact Family Connect on 01952 385385 or in an emergency call 999



## 3. How can it happen

Victims can be groomed, including via social media, and deceived into viewing the offenders as potential benefactors, friends or even romantic partners, before intimidation, physical or sexual violence and debt bondage – 're-paying' the cost of drugs first given as 'free' – are used as means for gaining control of the property

## 5. Warning signs:

- An increase of vehicles and people stopping at the property, often for short periods at various times of the day or night
- An increase of anti-social behaviour / drug use around the property
- Not seeing the resident of the property as often

### The individual may have:

- Stopped engaging with support services
- Present with unexplained injuries
- Paid off debts (including housing debts) in full and in cash
- Appear withdrawn and fearful of disclosing information for fear of 'betraying' the criminals, abuse or eviction
- Started associating with new unidentified people who are often present at the home
- Changed their appearance either wearing expensive clothing or appearing unkempt

## 4. Legal impact

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, landlords or property managers can receive up to 14 years imprisonment or a substantial fine for having drugs residing at their property. The property may be seized or forfeited as well as prosecuted for money laundering. The premises may be 'closed down' and boarded up under the terms of a Premises Closure Order: (Section 76 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014)