

# Cuckooing: 7 Minute Briefing

## 01 What is cuckooing?

“Cuckooing” (also known as “forced home invasion”) is when a criminal befriends an individual who lives on their own. They move in and then use the property to operate unlawful activity - such as drug dealing. It is often linked to County Lines and can be any type of accommodation including rental and private homes, student accommodation and commercial properties.

## 02 County Lines

Cuckooing is not currently a criminal offence in itself. However, there may be a range of offences related to the act of cuckooing such as County Lines. County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into areas across the country using a dedicated mobile phone line or other form of ‘deal line’. A common feature is the drug gang using children, young people and vulnerable adults to deliver or store the drugs into other towns and counties. This can also include money and weapons.

## 07 Additional information

You can speak to someone via:

Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700

Victims First Specialist Service, are also skilled at working with people who have been exploited, and can be called on 01844 487987 Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm

Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Or talk to your social worker, GP, housing officer or someone you trust.

## 06 What to do if you are the victim

Are you being used like Line of Duty’s Terry?

Campaign in Slough

[Are you being used like Line of Duty’s Terry? - Slough Borough Council](#)

Questions to consider:

- Does a family member or someone who you consider a friend have control over what happens in your home?
- Are you unhappy with what is happening in your home?
- Are you stopped from contacting your family and friends or having visitors to your home?
- Is someone forcing you to do something you don’t want to?
- Are people in your home eating all your food?

## 05 Recruitment

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.

## 03 Who is at risk?

Victims are often vulnerable people - most often adults. It can include people who are:

- older, living with a mental or physical health condition, living with a learning disability, involved in prostitution, single parents, isolated, living with forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.

Victims will be controlled by the person using their property for illegal means - such as drug dealing. The victim may be coerced into taking drugs themselves or being a part of the illegal activity.

## 04 Signs to look out for

Victims may not tell you what is happening, but you can look out for some signs if you are worried. Signs can include:

- having someone staying at the property
- people of significantly different age from the resident present at the property
- not staying in the home
- decline in the state of the property
- increased use, new use or re-start in use of drugs
- not allowing entry to the home
- increase in self-harm
- scared or unwilling to talk about the situation.

