

# Tackling Cuckooing

## Multi Agency Guidance

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## 1. Overview

### Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is primarily aimed at frontline staff who work with vulnerable adults. It can also be used as a source of information and advice to support individuals, families, carers and members of the public.

### Who has produced this guidance?

It has been produced by an East Kent Multi-Agency Task and Finish Group, established to respond to an increasing prevalence of cuckooing cases across Ashford, Canterbury, Dover and Folkestone & Hythe areas.

### What is this guidance for?

This guidance is to raise awareness of the issue of cuckooing and provide a framework for agencies to work to when dealing with cuckooing cases. It seeks to promote a consistent approach and to ensure there is an effective multi-agency response which supports victims, alongside action to prevent, disrupt and reduce cuckooing in our areas.



## 2. Key definitions

### County lines

County lines is a national term used by police and law enforcement agencies to commonly describe the approach taken by gangs and criminal networks originating from urban areas, who travel to locations such as a county or coastal towns to sell class 'A' drugs. Gangs typically use children, young people and vulnerable adults to deliver drugs to customers and this often involves the person being subjected to deception, intimidation, violence and grooming. The county lines business model is linked by a marketed mobile phone line through which users phone for specific drugs to be supplied.

### Criminal exploitation

The criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults is not only in relation to drugs, but can include other forms of criminal activity such as arson, violent offences, storing firearms or weapons, and holding money.

One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange. This is where the victim is offered, promised or given something they need or want. The exchange can be something intangible such as status, protection or perceived friendship. It can also be in the form of something more tangible such as money, drugs or other gifts. There is an unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs.

Criminal exploitation does not always involve violence, threats of violence or physical contact. It can also occur using technology and/or social media.

Because they are more easily detected, individuals who are exploited are more likely to be arrested and criminalised for criminal behaviour than those individuals or groups who are exploiting them. It is important for professionals to consider that just because the person is in receipt of something or involved, it does not make them any less of a victim.

### Cuckooing

This term is named after the nest-stealing practices of wild cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds. Cuckooing itself is not a criminal offence, but it is antisocial and is another form of criminal exploitation.

(Source Kent Police - PC Nick Pell, Gangs Co-ordinator)

Definition of cuckooing:

*'Cuckooing is where a drug dealer or group of drug dealers takes over the premises of a vulnerable person either by friendship, force or a combination of both, before turning it into a base to deal drugs from. Cuckooing is not a group of drug users moving in with a fellow user and then all of them using drugs together and causing anti-social behaviour in the vicinity.'*

It occurs when professional criminals target the homes of vulnerable adults so they can use the property for drug dealing or other criminal activity. These criminals are very selective about who they target as a cuckoo victim, and are very entrepreneurial in their approach.

(Source Kent Police - Canterbury Community Safety Unit)

*An officer working with cuckooing victims described how the police had discovered a business plan at a property being cuckooed. It detailed projected income from activity and outlined a series of 'rules' for tenants being cuckooed to follow. This included 'be nice to the police' and 'don't wear flash jewellery'. This demonstrates the thought behind organised criminal activity such as this.*

It is common for gangs to have access to several addresses. They move quickly between vulnerable people's homes for just a few hours, a couple of days or sometimes longer. This helps gangs evade detection. By cuckooing, criminals can operate from a

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discrete property, making it an attractive option to avoid detection.

Criminals are predatory and manipulative. They often approach the vulnerable person offering free drugs to use their home, they will then force the victim to deal for them to 'repay' their drug debts.

(Source Spine Television, 2012)

A victim describes the takeover:

*"They come in with a smile... they've said they are doing you a favour, you bought the line, you know it's your fault, you've let them in. They come in as friends. And you know they are not but they've got all the power."*

When the criminals use a victim's property for criminal enterprises, they can become terrified of going to the police for fear of being suspected of involvement in drug dealing, or being identified as a member of the gang, which could result in their eviction from the property. Some vulnerable adults may be forced to leave their homes, making themselves homeless and leaving the gangs free to sell drugs in their absence.

(Source BBC Wales)

The victim told the BBC that a gang of men came to his home one evening last year.

*"I don't know why I opened my door, but I did, and they barged past me, straight into my living room. [There was] a lot of 'we'll give you this, we'll give you that, just let us stay here,' [but] I had no choice in the matter. I had to go into my bedroom, and I was there for two days. The only place I was allowed to go was to the toilet. It was terrifying. They were in and out constantly - they weren't selling [drugs] from here, they were meeting people in other places - and they left the front door open. I just went quietly and left."*

(Source Dover District Council)

*"We have had victims who have had to leave their homes because of fear and threats that have been made towards them. Tenants have ended up living in tents or staying in Bed and Breakfast accommodation because they can't return to their home."*

Cuckooing can take on many forms. For example an older person who may live alone and have no family or friends or support network. They feel lonely and look for friendships in any form, becoming targets to those that have picked up on their vulnerability. They believe they have gained a friend allowing the person to stay with them at their home without realising they are being taken advantage of. There are also cases where a female has been used to befriend a vulnerable male with the idea that they are their girlfriend, the girlfriend is likely to be a victim of exploitation herself almost becoming the gang's 'bait'.

## Other forms of abuse

Victims can often be exposed to other forms of abuse which can include:

- modern slavery and trafficking
- physical abuse
- neglect (including self neglect)
- domestic abuse
- psychological abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse (including exploitation)
- financial abuse

(Source Canterbury Journal 13 September 2018)

*"A social housing property in the Canterbury City Council area was used by a London dealer to store cash and drugs. He was jailed in August of 2017 after spraying acid in the faces of three people he believed had stolen money from him. Two women and a man suffered severe burns to their faces in the incident in February of that year. The younger of the two women also received injuries which caused damage to her eyesight."*

### 3. A profile of those at risk of exploitation through cuckooing

Criminals are selective about who they target. But there are a number of common vulnerability factors that make individuals more likely to be at risk of cuckooing.

Individuals or families who show signs of cuckooing, should be considered at the greatest risk where they:

- have previously or are currently experiencing neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- have a lack of a stable home environment (now or in the past, for example through homelessness, domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality)
- are socially isolated, lonely or experience social difficulties
- are economically vulnerable (such as having debt, experiencing poverty, or are poor at financial management)
- have a physical disability, autism, or learning disability
- have mental health issues
- have substance misuse issues (in particular Class A dependent drug users)
- are or have been in care
- have connections with other people involved in gangs
- have dementia
- live in an area of social deprivation which is also exposed to violent crime and gang-related activity
- are known to the police/ have a criminal record
- unaccompanied minors (aged 16 to 18)

# 4. An outline of the signs of cuckooing

Frontline workers are best placed to observe the signs of cuckooing and to intervene to prevent or disrupt it.

There are several signs that may indicate an individual could be subject to cuckooing. The more signs outlined below that are present, the greater level of risk:

- usually takes place in social housing or multi-occupancy property, but not always
- people entering the property who would not normally be associated with the tenant
- increase in the number of general comings and goings/unidentified people at the property at frequent/unusual times
- unknown people pressing buzzers to gain access to the building
- neighbours reporting nuisance, fights, noise, or saying there is dealing at the address or drug users regularly at the address
- tenant seeming in fear or controlled by the visitors
- tenant leaving home for long periods of time or turning up at other places to bed down, or tenant seen begging on the streets
- new vehicles, hire cars or bikes outside the property
- damage to the door/the door propped open
- need for repairs or replacement locks
- increased attendance of ambulance services
- significant changes in physical health or emotional well-being of the tenant
- tenant carrying weapons
- tenant withdrawal from social networks
- family concerns for tenant
- suspicion of physical assault/unexplained injuries on the tenant
- unexplained acquisition or gifts of money, new clothes, or new mobile phones
- rent account suddenly becoming in debt or having large credit

- increase in rubbish, bins overflowing or increased quantities of takeaway food containers
- abandoned and broken bikes left outside property/in communal areas
- makeshift beds in the property
- property appearing almost sparse of personal possessions
- lack of food in the fridge
- kitchen appearing unused
- evidence of packaging or drugs being packed, wraps, large number of needles etc
- curtains being kept closed
- tenant's disengagement with support services
- tenant accompanied by unknown people when attending appointments, and these people answering on the tenant's behalf

Frontline workers need to look out for signs that the resident has lost control over their home. Contractors should also be equipped to look out for warning signs, the rationale being that residents are less likely to be concerned about what a tradesperson might see or hear than for example a visiting housing officer or support worker. With an 'all-eyes' approach, visits can expose cuckooing cases a lot earlier.

As intelligence on cuckooing cases can come from a variety of sources such as neighbours, partner agencies and the wider public, it is important that frontline staff apply **Professional Curiosity**<sup>1</sup> to explore and understand what is happening, rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value.

It is essential that appropriate referrals are made if there are suspicions, as this will help to build up the full picture of what's actually happening and ultimately help to safeguard the victim and the wider community.

# 5. The impact of cuckooing

### Impact on the victim

Often the person being cuckooed will be reluctant to raise concerns as this would impact on their availability of drugs which is an attractive offer for those struggling with addiction.

Victims may be fearful of going to the police for being suspected of involvement in drug dealing or being identified as a member of the gang, which could lead to being arrested themselves and lead to potentially losing their tenancy.

(Source Inside Housing 29/11/18) Julie's case:  
"They just took over after the promise of free drugs, gang members came to live in the house. I hid in my bedroom much of the time. I wanted it to stop but I didn't want to be arrested or lose my home. I didn't know where to turn. Once you have been cuckooed, you understand how they operate, you see them everywhere, I'm known now by gangs and users, that's why I have to move."

There is a spectrum of harm, exploitation is widespread, and impact can be further broken down into **material** and **personal consequences**.

### Material consequences of cuckooing

This can include becoming homeless, facing criminal charges and loss of money or assets.

(Source BBC Inside out 2008). A victim describes how his life spiralled out of control. 'Clarence' aged 55 years old held a job down and kept his home running until his closest family member moved away. He turned to drugs and dealers moved into his home. "I ended up with several dealers living in my house. There was prostitution, robbery, murder...all kinds of things." Clarence felt he could not go to the police. The police raided his home and he was made subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order. He subsequently lost his home and ended up in a homeless shelter. Once he was clean of drugs, he moved into a shared house and has started to live again.



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## Personal consequences of cuckooing

This can include escalating addiction, decline in mental and physical health, loss of dignity and self control, and feeling powerless.

(Source Canterbury City Council) 'John' lost his home after being cuckooed and became a rough sleeper. He was proactively engaging with outreach services and had been placed in temporary accommodation. He was being seen by the mental health team and was medicated. John had a relapse with his addiction to drugs and left the accommodation. Mental health withdrew medication because he was using again. He ended up back on the streets and dealing for a county line gang. Due to his drug debt he has been beaten up twice in the last week. At this point he is not willing to accept help and does not feel ready to make life changes.

Examples such as this are frustrating for frontline workers who witness the rapid decline in their client's physical and mental health. Interventions of support will only work when the victim is ready to break the cycle. In the interim it is essential to make sure there are regular checks on the safety and wellbeing of the individual.

Subsequent to being cuckooed victims may need access to a range of services such as help with their drug addiction or support with managing any relapse. This too could be applicable to the mental health needs of the victim.

(Source East Kent Housing) 'Claire' was a vulnerable adult with additional needs which included learning difficulties and mental health problems. She was not in receipt of any support at the time of being cuckooed. Once it was discovered that she was a victim of cuckooing, she was given an assisted move to an alternative home and a multi-agency package of support was put in place to ensure she was able to successfully break the cycle. This support included a social care package. One year on Claire is fully engaged with services and successfully living a new life.

## Impact on the community

Cuckooing has a significant impact on the surrounding community. If a home is being used, the impact can include noise nuisance, increased rubbish, vandalism and vehicle movements. Residents in the wider community or direct neighbours can also experience a general sense of insecurity or fear of the perceived threat.

(Source East Kent Housing) One of the properties that was used for cuckooing was a one-bedroom flat in a block of several units. The impact on the community and adjoining neighbours was that they experienced significant anti-social behaviour such as noise, shouting, frequent visitors requesting access to communal area, rubbish etc. As there was significant violence at the property, neighbours were fearful and they had vulnerabilities themselves. This impacted upon their general quality of life as they were frightened to go out or of encountering the perpetrators in case they forcibly moved into their homes. As a result some of these neighbouring tenants had to be moved. The cuckooing was dealt with and a 'sensitive approach' to reletting these properties was taken.

# 6. Approaches to tackling cuckooing

Criminal exploitation, including county lines and cuckooing puts the safety of vulnerable groups, including children and adults with care and support needs, and the wider community at risk. It is important individuals, communities and public services all work together to prevent and protect vulnerable groups and our communities from this harm.

Whilst cuckooing itself is not a crime, there are many types of interventions that can be used to tackle cuckooing ranging from informal to formal enforcement action. It is key that each case is dealt with on an individual basis. Consideration should be given as to whether the individual is a vulnerable person and a 'victim' or whether they are fully complicit. Agencies should use their appropriate powers available to them in a coordinated way to tackle the issue, and work together to support police interventions.

The ultimate aim is to prevent cuckooing taking place at addresses in our districts. We want to make our communities safer and protect our vulnerable residents by disrupting and deterring gang-related drug dealing and violence, and reducing the anti-social behaviour associated with it.

## Proactive interventions

**Data sharing** - The GDPR aims to refocus data protection to remind us that people are at the heart of the process; people whose personal information matters to them. It therefore gives people rights in relation to their information and also requires organisations and public bodies to operate in a fair, lawful and transparent manner when they, for example, obtain and collect; use, share and publish; store, archive and delete people's personal information. But the GDPR also specifically recognises that "data protection" should not be an excuse to prevent proper sharing of personal data. It reminds us that we can, and sometimes we have a legal obligation to share personal information. Information sharing can be vital, for example in emergency situations.

Further guidance can be found at:

**[www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/40642/Safeguarding-adults-information-sharing-protocols.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/40642/Safeguarding-adults-information-sharing-protocols.pdf)**

The Information Commissioner's Office recommend that data sharing is governed by a data sharing agreement to ensure that the parties involved abide by their obligations under data protection law and that the data subjects rights are provided for. The Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement had been designed for this purpose.

Further guidance can be found at:

**[www.dartford.gov.uk/by-category/council-and-democracy2/subject-access-rights-data-protection-act-1998/k-mip-kent-and-medway-information-sharing-agreement](http://www.dartford.gov.uk/by-category/council-and-democracy2/subject-access-rights-data-protection-act-1998/k-mip-kent-and-medway-information-sharing-agreement)**

**Collecting evidence** - It is essential everyone records concerns and escalates them appropriately. This will ensure a full picture is developed and interventions are targeted. Without robust data and evidence it is hard to prove a case and secure the best outcome either through police interventions, or through housing related legal proceedings.

Kent Police are keen to build up locality based intelligence to establish the extent and reach of county lines. If an agency gathers information it is important to pass it on to Kent Police through the most appropriate route based on the level of risk:

- **IMMEDIATE** - immediate risk to life or serious injury at the time then dial 999
- **HIGH** - not immediate risk but potential risk to life or serious injury with offender returning then dial 101
- **MEDIUM** - no immediate risk identified but possible cuckooed address with corroborating evidence email local Kent Police Community Safety Unit, or Crimestoppers, or dial 101
- **STANDARD** - no immediate risk identified but possible cuckooed address with no evidence, email local Kent Police Community Safety Unit or Crimestoppers

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Useful data that Kent Police would be interested in receiving includes:

- which gangs and county lines are operating in your district
- who is being targeted (vulnerable adults/children, groups, estates and organisations)
- what risk do individual members pose (weapons, violence, CSE, criminal exploitation)
- what home-grown gangs are active or emerging in your district
- what is the local profile of a vulnerable person most likely at risk
- what mobile app communication do gangs and drug networks favour (whatsapp, SMS, social media)
- identify mobile phone numbers attributable to gang members
- whether gang members continue their criminality from prison

Not all neighbours or members of the community are willing to provide evidence so it is essential that all agencies promote reporting and encourage the use of anonymous routes such as those offered via Crimestoppers. The use of diary sheets should be encouraged as this gives a structured approach to the collation of evidence. These cannot be accepted anonymously however agencies can protect the witness's identity through giving third party evidence at court.

Complaints are another good indicator of the broader picture of a case. Complaints may be made to various departments. It is essential that this is collated to fully understand the nature and scale of a case. Complaints may include those made to the landlord, environmental health officer, social services, community safety units, waste collection, contractors, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, etc.

## Raising awareness of cuckooing

By raising awareness of the methods used by these criminals, cuckooing victims and the signs to look out for, we want to protect vulnerable people from becoming involved in the first place, help them get out the often dangerous situations they find themselves in, and encourage people to report information about drug dealing to the police.

There is lots of work going on behind the scenes to tackle drugs across Kent but there is a growing need

for people in the community and frontline staff to report any suspicious activity in neighbourhoods.

A key priority is protecting the vulnerable and by knowing what to look for, residents and frontline staff can help to build up a clear picture that will be used to inform enforcement and safeguarding activity.

It is important to use a wide range of methods to raise awareness of cuckooing. This includes social media, posters in key locations with high footfall, or locations where more vulnerable parts of the community access regularly, at community events, neighbourhood days or community safety promotion days. The wider the reach, the more awareness there will be of the issue and signs to look out for.

## Preventative and targeted interventions

The collation and analysis of data enables agencies to profile those most likely to be targeted by perpetrators and in what areas it is most likely to take place. This allows the police and their partners to raise awareness to try and deter cuckooing taking place, or stop it before it escalates. This also shows perpetrators that such activity will not go under the radar, especially if the key message is 'see it, report it'.

## Reactive interventions

There needs to be robust working practises for dealing with premises that have been cuckooed. This includes gathering intelligence, executing drug warrants, closing premises quickly and using ASB Act powers when necessary to bring relief to neighbours, supporting vulnerable or displaced residents and taking direct action against perpetrators of crime.

There are a number of legal remedies that can be used to stop activity at a property if for example the tenant will not engage with services, does not see themselves as a victim and will not disconnect themselves from the perpetrators, or where they are too frightened to take any action themselves. This can include:

**Injunctions and exclusion orders** - These are normally used when there is an urgent and pressing need that needs to be addressed or where there is a significant risk. If there is extreme violence then the police will take appropriate action. However, where the activity is putting other vulnerable residents at risk, a landlord is able to seek immediate action

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through the courts. An injunction is an order which tells someone that they have to do something or that someone is prohibited from doing something. An exclusion order prevents someone from living in the property. An exclusion order is useful when the tenant is too frightened to tell perpetrators to leave a property, and puts the onus on the court telling that person(s) that they have to leave. If breached then there is a risk of imprisonment.

(Source East Kent Housing)

*Scott, a single male, allowed drug gangs to use his property over the weekend. There was lots of comings and goings, noise, visitors etc. There were a number of other vulnerable residents living in very close proximity. The tenant would not tell the gang members to leave, so the council successfully obtained an injunction and exclusion order to protect the other residents.*

**Closure orders (full or partial)** - In the more extreme cases, the council and Kent Police will work together to obtain closure orders on the cuckooed properties. Closure orders restrict who can enter the property. These can either be a full or partial closure. Breaking a closure order is a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment, meaning that the police can immediately arrest drug dealers found in a home with a closure order on it. Closure orders provide landlords with mandatory grounds for possession. However, this process can take some time for cases to be heard by the courts, there are also additional legal costs which are incurred.

(Source East Kent Housing)

*Emily was a 70-year-old victim with a long history of being alcohol dependent. She was 'befriended' by a perpetrator who then introduced a London gang to the victim which then went on to operate their trade from her home. She became addicted to heroin and cocaine and was also being financially abused. This led to her begging on the streets. Emily failed to engage with support because she saw the perpetrators as her friends. Because of the impact on her and the neighbourhood, the agencies involved felt that a closure order was the only way to effectively break the cycle. The property was repossessed as she would not break any ties. This has resulted in the victim becoming homeless. Services have tried to offer and provide support, however she does not want to engage.*

(Source Ashford Borough Council) With a recent cuckooing case we wanted to try and tackle the issue but also support the tenant. We decided to use a partial closure order whereby the tenant was able to remain in their home and public agencies were able to visit. The partial closure order was fixed to both the front door and the communal door to ensure the perpetrators knew that action was being taken. This enabled wrap around support to be put in place for the victim, and the police carried out regular Safe and Well checks. The property was also flagged on the police system so that any calls to the police could be responded to appropriately.

**Community Protection Notices** - are intended to stop a person or a body (eg a business) continuing with conduct which unacceptably affects victims and the community.

They can be issued by authorised persons such as council officers, police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs), and social landlords.

They can be issued in circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to believe the subject's conduct:

- is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, and
- is unreasonable, and
- the behaviour is of a persistent or continuing nature.



Before a Community Protection Notice can be issued, the subject must be given a **written warning** stating that a Community Protection Notice will be issued unless their conduct ceases to have the detrimental effect.

Failure to heed to the warning after sufficient time and where that effect continues, may then lead to the issue of a Community Protection Notice requiring them:

- to stop doing specific things and/or
- to do specified things and/or
- to take reasonable steps to achieve a specified result where those requirements are reasonable and have the aim of either preventing the effect of the conduct, or reducing it, or reducing or preventing the likelihood of it continuing or recurring.

A failure to comply with a Community Protection Notice without reasonable excuse is a summary offence carrying a penalty on conviction of a fine, or alternatively, an authorised person may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Items used in the commission of an offence on any premises may be seized under a Warrant and may, following conviction, be ordered to be handed-over for destruction or disposal in another way.

A right of appeal against a Community Protection Notice or its terms can be made to a Magistrates' Court within 21 days of issue.

**Civil injunctions** - are a powerful remedy that can be ordered at the discretion of a civil court. They can offer fast and effective protection for victims and communities and set a clear standard of behaviour for perpetrators, stopping the person's behaviour from escalating.

Only local authorities, social landlords or the police are able to apply for an injunction in respect of the 'housing-related' provisions, where it concerns a person's occupation of residential premises.

**Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO)** - These focus on more serious offenders who engage in criminal activity as well as anti social behaviour. It can only be issued in conjunction with a sentence that is already imposed or if the individual has a conditional discharge. The order will either prohibit specified acts or require the offender to participate in specified acts, for example, attendance at a course to reduce behaviour.

Before imposing an order, the court must be satisfied that the offender has engaged in such behaviour causing harassment/distress, and making the order will encourage the offender to stop said behaviour.

An example of when a CBO may be issued would be where an individual has committed a drug-related offence and as part of the order has to attend a course educating offenders on the effects of substance abuse. Failure to comply is a criminal offence and as such can result in imprisonment and/or a fine.

### Putting the victim at the heart of interventions

In many cases the victim does not see themselves as such, and they find it hard to break away from the perpetrators. It is essential that the right agencies are able to provide the right type of support to help the victim to reflect on their circumstances and work towards making an effective change to their lives.

There are often significant levels of fear. This can range from potential violence, to being afraid of being alone. Reassurance from agencies working with the victim is important to help them gain perspective. Safety planning is also key, helping the victim to identify the risks for themselves and also helping them to put in place mechanisms to reduce the risk.

Much of the success of interventions does depend upon the desire to make a change, and the 'trust' or professional relationship that the victim has with agencies they are working with.

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**Relationship-based practices** - These are an effective way of supporting victims of cuckooing. The central characteristic of relationship-based practice is the emphasis it places on the professional relationship as the medium through which the practitioner can engage with and intervene in the complexity of an individual's internal and external worlds.

**Person-centred interventions** - These are a way of engaging victims and tailoring support to effectively meet the needs of and influence the victim to make changes for themselves. Successful engagement depends upon making a connection with the victim. Having empathic understanding is important, as is explaining how you are going to support the victim so that there are realistic expectations about the professional relationship and the recovery process.

Supporting the tenant through managed moves - This is used when the victim is willing to engage or wants help to break the cycle. It is essential while sourcing accommodation, that contact and relationships are maintained with the victim. This may be through police led safe and well checks, or through other agency visiting or support. A multi-agency approach is essential to ensure interventions are coordinated and the victim is prepared for the move. An appropriate support package is important so the victim has continuity of service interventions and is helped to make a new life in their new home. This should take into account tackling isolation, keeping safe, making new positive connections etc. A managed move is also a way of protecting the security of tenure of victims where they are a social housing tenant.

*'Margaret' was a victim of domestic abuse and had numerous medical issues including mental health problems. Her 'partner' was allowing perpetrators to use the property for the means of selling drugs. There was a lack of community reporting but there was a significant amount of agency concern. Through a rent arrears visit, Margaret opened up to the officer about her fears and explained how helpless and trapped she felt. Margaret wanted to break the cycle. She was linked in with domestic abuse services and helped to move alone to accommodation near her family support network. The tenant terminated the tenancy and the council secured a closure order on the property to exclude the partner and other individuals who were still using the property.*

**Victim versus perpetrator** - In some cases evidence and what we are told can indicate that people are victims. They may start off as an unwilling participant in the trading of drugs but this can quickly change. The learning from some cases is that there is a very fine line between the two and professionals need to be very aware of this and not be too quick to make a judgement until the full picture is ascertained.

(Source East Kent Housing)

*Kevin and Jean told us that they were victims. Officers and the police had great concerns about the safety of the couple. A management move was agreed on the basis that they severed links with the perpetrators. The police, social services and housing all felt there was a need for a move because of various incidents including physical assault. The couple were moved and support was put in place for them. However, it has now come to light that they have maintained their associations and are active members of the gang.*

# 7. What to do to protect and safeguard the victim and the community

If a crime is in progress - call 999.

If a child or adult is in immediate danger - call 999.

### **Concerns about criminal activity or about an individual or address**

If you have specific information of criminal activity taking place or have concerns about an individual or address you should report it to Kent Police either online via

[kent.police.uk/services/report-online/kent-police-online-reporting/](https://kent.police.uk/services/report-online/kent-police-online-reporting/) or by calling 101.

**Anonymous reporting** - If you don't want to speak to the police directly, you can call the anonymous Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers is an independent charity that works with police forces throughout the UK, and people can use it to pass on information about a crime anonymously.

You can also report online via [crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/give-information-online/](https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/give-information-online/). You don't have to give them your name or any personal information. Calls are not recorded and cannot be traced.

**Safeguarding concerns** - If you are working with or receive specific information about a child or an adult with care and support needs, and/or you have concerns about a family or accommodation where identifiable children, adult(s) with care and support needs reside or visit, you should:

- discuss your concerns and work with the child, their family or the adult, if possible and safe to do so
- seek advice from your line manager and/or the designated safeguarding lead in your organisation
- report your concerns through appropriate safeguarding procedures for your own organisation or contact Kent County Council who have staff available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to talk to you about your safeguarding concerns

■ **During the day and in office hours** if you are concerned about an adult call 03000 41 61 61 (text relay 18001 03000 41 61 61) or email [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk).

■ If you are concerned about a child call 03000 41 11 11 (text relay 18001 03000 41 11 11) or email [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk).

■ For out of hours and in an emergency, for example during the night, call 03000 41 91 91. For more information visit: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/report-abuse>

**Modern Slavery** - If there is evidence that the child or adult is a victim of modern slavery you must make (if you are a first responder), or contribute to a referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Please see the Home Office National Referral Mechanism Guidance for more information

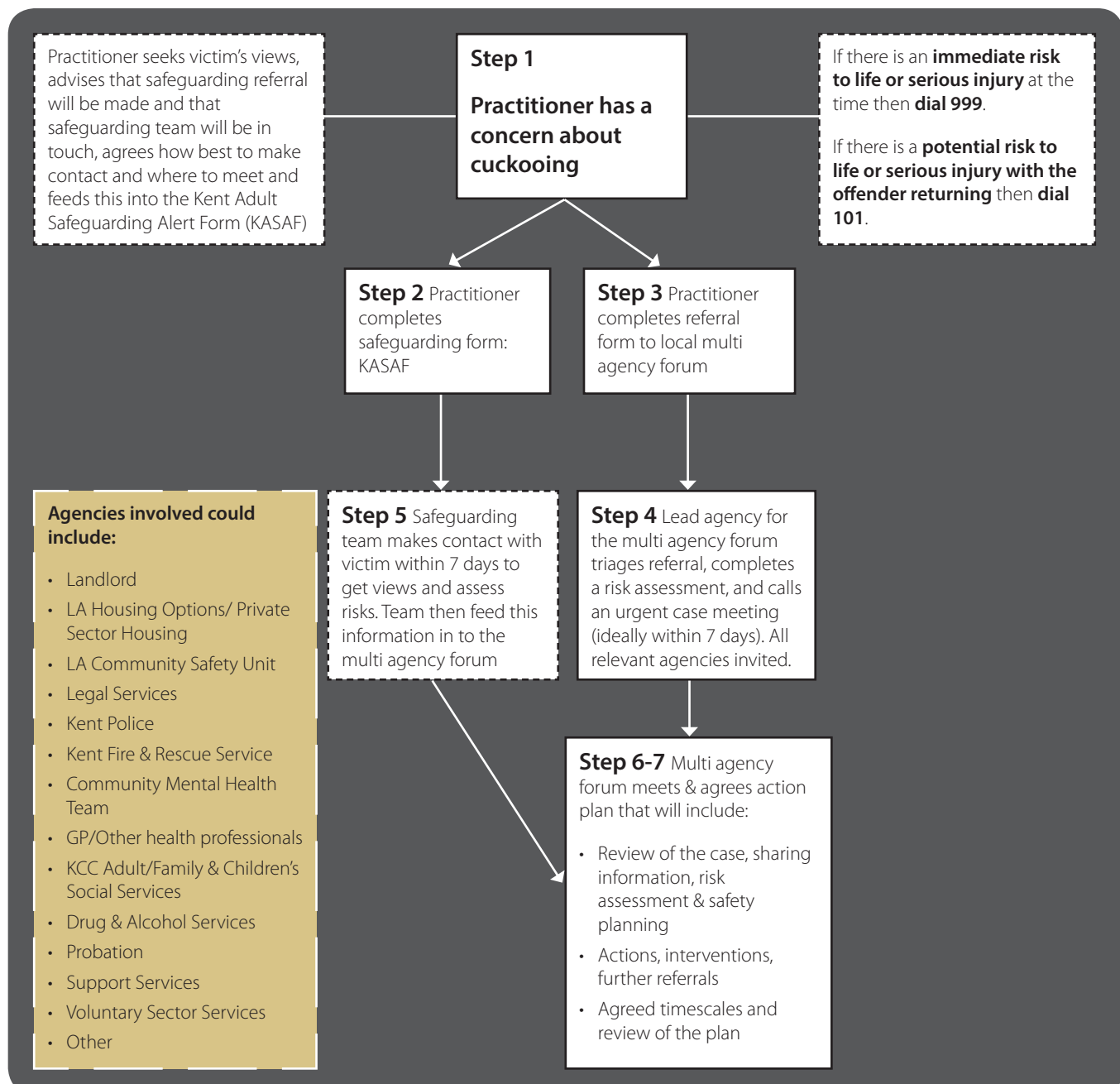
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/560826/6.2286\\_HO\\_LL\\_factsheet\\_duty\\_to\\_notify\\_copy\\_V3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560826/6.2286_HO_LL_factsheet_duty_to_notify_copy_V3.pdf)

**Child Sexual Exploitation** - Kent has recently launched a campaign to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation called Operation Willow. If you have concerns about a child or young person whom you believe is at risk of sexual exploitation please call Kent Police on 101 quoting Operation Willow. You can also contact the National Child Sexual Exploitation Helpline on 11 60 00. For more information please click [here](#)

## 8. Multi agency pathway for dealing with cuckooing cases effectively

Based on best practice and examples from elsewhere, below is the pathway developed and agreed through the Multi Agency Task and Finish Group, for practitioners to follow when there are concerns that a vulnerable person is victim to cuckooing. Each area will have a different 'coordinator' and multi agency forum in operation.

EXAMPLE - Canterbury City Council has adopted this pathway. The council's community safety team is the 'coordinator' and the multi agency forum is the Vulnerable (persons) Tasking Group.





## Step 1. Identification of a concern about victim being cuckooed

Practitioner has a concern about cuckooing and identifies a potential case. Practitioner seeks the views of the victim, advises them that a safeguarding referral will be made and that the safeguarding team will be in contact to arrange to meet with them within 7 days. Practitioner should agree the most appropriate way of making contact and where best to meet. By agreeing contact method and meeting point it will enable the safeguarding team to make contact with the victim quickly.

If there is an immediate risk to life or serious injury at the time then the practitioner should dial 999 so that the police can respond.

If there is a potential risk to life or serious injury with the offender returning then the practitioner should dial 101 so that the police can respond.

Subsequently, the police will carry out their own internal risk assessment of the situation and circumstances, taking into account whether the person subject to cuckooing is a willing participant or not and how best to safeguard the victim if necessary.

## Step 2. Make a Safeguarding Referral

Once an agency identifies a concern that an adult who may have care or support needs is a victim of cuckooing, then a Safeguarding Referral should be made via Kent Adult Safeguarding Alert Form: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/information-for-professionals/adult-safeguarding/adult-protection-forms-and-policies/adult-protection-forms>.

## Step 3. Make a referral into local multi agency forum

Concurrent to completing a Safeguarding Referral, a referral form should be completed and submitted to the local multi agency forum 'coordinator'.

## Step 4. Triaging referrals to the multi agency forum

Referrals received by the 'coordinator' of the local multi agency forum, should be 'triaged' to:

- assess initial or any immediate risk to the individual
- consider the vulnerabilities of the victim
- identify who else is working with the victim that needs to be involved

Risk assessments should consider the types of incidents reported, the level of vulnerability, the risk of harm and what measures are in place already to reduce any risk.

The 'coordinator' of the local multi agency forum will then set up a multi agency forum meeting to discuss the case, ideally within 7 days of receiving the referral. All key agencies and relevant partners will be invited to attend or send representation. It is essential that all key agencies involved in working with victims are invited to this meeting. This will ensure that there is a clear and broad understanding of the history, context and impact.

## Step 5. Safeguarding team to meet with the victim

The safeguarding team will have a focus on 'Making Safeguarding Personal'. The team will try and visit the victim within 7 days, to seek the victim's views and assess the risks. The team will feed this into the multi agency forum meeting.

## Step 6. Multi agency forum meeting

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- gain an understanding of the case, including history
- consider the impact on the victim and the community
- discuss what needs to be done and the best approach to the case

# Multi Agency Guidance to Tackle Cuckooing

- ensure that steps are in place to safeguard the victim and community
- coordinate interventions to ensure they compliment each other
- develop a person centred action plan, with clear and measurable actions for all involved

This multi agency approach ensures that the relevant agencies are involved from the beginning. It allows for a coordinated response where safeguarding is embedded in everyone's approach. It reflects on the views of the victim and also enables the effective use of the most appropriate interventions by agencies involved.

## Step 7. Review and refresh the person centred action plan

It will be the responsibility of each agency with an action(s) to follow these up, and provide feedback on any progress, challenges or changes.

Subsequently, the 'coordinator' of the local multi agency forum should then organise follow up meeting(s) to monitor, review and refresh the action plan. This will help to ensure that it is relevant, responsive, and outcome focussed. It is essential that any action plan is agile to meet the changing needs of the victim and flexible to change direction where necessary.

## Step 8. Escalation process

If a partner is not fulfilling their role or delivering against actions, it is important that there is an escalation process in place to deal with this, especially where there are safeguarding concerns or there is significant risk.

Each agency should nominate a senior staff member to whom complaints can be raised with. For example, for Kent Police it would be the Chief Inspector for each geographic area.

## 9. Housing protocol for supporting victims of cuckooing

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to help the cuckooing victim to move out of their current area because of the risk of harm, and to enable effective support to be put in place.

In such cases the district or borough council where the victim currently lives, will follow the Kent and Medway High Priority Rehousing (Reciprocal) Scheme (KRS). This can be found on the Kent Housing Group website [www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk](http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk)

The aim of the KRS is to help prevent and relieve homelessness, and should be used to assist in the rehousing of applicants in exceptional circumstances. The scheme sets out a commitment from all local authorities in Kent and Medway to cooperate with regards to helping households to either move out of or in to their area.

Where possible, the council will consider the preference of the individual, and take into account any tenancy sustainment or other support being made available. It may not always be possible however rehouse individuals in their preferred area of choice.

In the first instance contact should be made with Housing Options Manager for the district/borough where the victim currently lives. Ideally Housing Options Managers would have already been engaged at an early stage in any multi agency forums held to deal with cuckooing cases.

# 10. Reference material

(This document has been produced using some of the resources, material and information referenced here)

- **IT'S NOT OKAY. Trapped- County Lines (8 June 2017).**

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLhGpS1f-F0>

Police, local authorities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, young people and an MP have launched a campaign to stop criminal gangs from grooming children and vulnerable adults to commit crime. The campaign has supported the completion of the below short film on You Tube to raise awareness of criminals who are grooming and exploiting children and young adults to commit crime on their behalf. <http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/professionals/trapped1/>

- **Criminal Exploitation – information for practitioners (Manchester Safeguarding Children's/Adults Board)**  
<https://www.manchestersafeguardingboards.co.uk/resource/criminalexploitation/>

- **Marks & Canyon (11 July 2012) CUCKOO Spine TV.**

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hX58oYMBKA>

An 8-minute documentary exploring the experience of an ex-drug user about his experience of drug dealers moving into his home.

- **NCA Publication**

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/832-county-lines-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2017/file>

- **East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership:**

<http://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/help.html>

- **Oxford City Council**

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20101/community\\_safety/1308/cuckooing](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20101/community_safety/1308/cuckooing)

- **Fearless is a site where you can access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality.**

<https://www.fearless.org/en/campaigns/county-lines>

- **The Home Office has produced guidance on county lines to support local authorities:**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-andvulnerable-adultscounty-lines](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-andvulnerable-adultscounty-lines)


- **BBC case study:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p05pbfwn/drugsland-county-lines-1-operation-haze>

- **Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy** Kent and Medway Gangs Strategy 2018-2021



## Multi Agency Guidance to Tackle Cuckooing



Document produced by Canterbury City Council in partnership with:

Ashford Borough Council  
Canterbury City Council  
Dover District Council  
East Kent Housing  
Folkestone & Hythe District Council  
Kent County Council  
Kent Police – Canterbury Community Safety Unit  
Kent, Surrey and Sussex, Community Rehabilitation Company