



North Wales Safeguarding Adults Board

'Cuckooing'

What is it?

Cuckooing is a form of crime in which drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person in order to use it as a base for drug dealing.

Criminal gangs are targeting the homes of vulnerable people to be used for drug dealing – a process known as **“cuckooing”** (after the bird that invades other bird's nests) and victims are often left with little choice but to cooperate.

Dealers often approach the vulnerable person offering free drugs to use their home for dealing or in some instances after providing 'free' drugs, will then force the person to deal for them in order to 're-pay' their drug debts.

These criminals are selective about who they target, a lot of the time victims are lonely, isolated, frequently drug users themselves and are already known to the police. Victims can include older people, those suffering from mental or physical health problems, female sex workers, single mums and those living in poverty. Victims may suffer from other forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.

Once they gain control, gangs move in with the risk of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation and violence. Children as well as adults are used as drug runners. It's 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.

“Cuckooing” means the criminals can operate from a property rather than the street, which is out of sight from the police making it an attractive option. They can then use the premises to deal drugs from, which is difficult for the police to monitor because they often will only stay for a short period of time.

These gangs may use accommodation in rural areas, including serviced apartments, holiday lets, budget hotels and caravan parks.

Some vulnerable adults may be forced to leave their homes, making themselves homeless and leaving the gangs free to sell drugs in their absence.

What are the signs of cuckooing?

Signs that 'cuckooing' may be going on at a property include:

- An increase in people entering and leaving.
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Possible increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increasing litter outside
- Signs of drugs use
- Lack of healthcare visitors

Contact:

If you think you have spotted a drugs 'cuckoo' or if you're concerned about a drug related crime where you live, call NWP police on 101.

Only call 999 in an emergency.

If you don't want to speak to the police directly, you can call the anonymous Crime stoppers charity on 0800 555 111.

Consequences:

- 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).

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