

Cuckooing toolkit – protecting vulnerable people

A toolkit for officers to utilise when identifying, disrupting and problem-solving cuckooing and protecting vulnerable people.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Adults at risk Community engagement Drugs and alcohol offences
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Local authority
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Communities Disability General public Offenders Victims
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Aim

The aim of the of the toolkit is to identify cuckooing by raising awareness to drive intelligence and information gathering. By using the information and intelligence gathered, the toolkit aims to protect vulnerable individuals.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the toolkit are to:

- improve knowledge of cuckooing across the Force
- improve the problem-solving approach to cuckooing
- improve the identification and protection of possible victims of cuckooing

Description

South Yorkshire Police conducted a review of how to improve the force response to cuckooing. By looking at national guidance and speaking to multi-agency partners, they identified there was limited knowledge on disrupting and protecting vulnerable individuals from cuckooing. The review also revealed there were no national products to support the force in identifying cuckooing.

Within South Yorkshire Police, an analyst produced a strategic problem profile to understand the force's approach, identify any knowledge gaps, and what strategies would be used to improve the response.

The force consulted with an internal working group to design a cuckooing toolkit. The working group included representation from the following areas:

- neighbourhood policing team
- public protection unit
- vulnerability team
- intelligence team

The corporate communication team were responsible for the overall design. The contents of the toolkit include:

- identifying cuckooing
- gathering intelligence of cuckooing
- investigating and risk management of cuckooing
- problem solving approaches to cuckooing
- signposting to resources offered internally or nationally

The cuckooing toolkit is available as both as PDF on the Force's intranet, and as pocketbook distributed to police stations. While it was free to produce the PDF, the 1,000 copies of the pocketbook and promotional posters costed £300. To promote the use of the toolkit, the force's lead for vulnerable adults visited police stations across South Yorkshire to deliver a promotional presentation to sergeants and inspectors.

The cuckooing toolkit is reviewed annually to reflect any updates to legislation and guidance.

Overall impact

There has been positive feedback from officers and staff who have welcomed the improved focus on identification and protection of victims. This increase in awareness has led to an increase in the number of intelligence submissions.

This has supported changes to the analytical governance structure in identifying hotspots and improving problem-solving of cuckooing.

Learning

- Cuckooing is often misunderstood and therefore not identified. If cuckooing fails to be identified, it can lead to gaps in knowledge in investigations. It is essential to educate the workforce on how to identify and protect vulnerable individuals at risk of cuckooing.
- Investigating cases of cuckooing can be difficult as often it overlaps with many different types of offences such as anti-social behaviour, county lines and housing complaints. Therefore, awareness and problem-solving are key to supporting those at the greatest risk.
- Developing the problem strategic profile took time to examine what was being done in force and identifying knowledge gaps.
- Due to operational demands, it was difficult to get all representatives from the working group to attend sessions to design the cuckooing toolkit.
- Gaining support from the sergeants and inspectors was paramount to the successful roll out of the cuckooing toolkit. By encouraging them to use the toolkit, they were able to disseminate the information to their teams.

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