



CUCKOOING SAFETY PLAN

This document is for clients and their workers to review together and create a personalised cuckooing safety plan. It will give examples of warning signs for both to look out for, ideas for responding using local partner services, what some of the challenges might be, and how we can work together to achieve a good outcome.

What is Cuckooing?

Tenancy cuckooing happens when someone takes over your home, often by gaining your trust and then refusing to leave. They may claim they are helping to keep you safe by staying in your home. Over time, they might start using your space for risky activities or even dealing illegal substances. They may also offer free or discounted drugs in exchange for staying over. You may feel this is fine and manageable until you want the perpetrator to leave, at which point they may become aggressive and force you out of your home.

Cuckooing is extremely common – it is nothing to be ashamed of. Reach out to your support worker - they will work with you and listen to what you want to happen. Your safety comes first, and support workers are here to help. You have a say in what happens next. If workers believe you're at risk, they may involve other services to protect you, but they will always try to keep you informed so you remain in control as much as possible.

Here are quotes from people who have experienced cuckooing:

- *"As soon as they find out you have your own flat they start wanting to be your friend. They start calling you, suggesting you hang out at your flat together. They start being really nice to you and offering you the drugs they know you are addicted to"*
- *"They keep calling asking if they can come around"*
- *"They bring around people you do not know and invite other people when they are at your flat"*
- *"They are in and out. Saying they need to go to the shop but really they are using your place as a base to sell drugs from"*
- *"People overstaying their welcome, often saying they are helping me or caring for me"*

"In this game you cannot win. You can only win by leaving the game"

Vulnerabilities for cuckooing

Research tells us that you are more likely to be a victim of cuckooing if the following apply:

- dependency on substances (e.g., drug gangs may offer free drugs in exchange for staying over)
- recovering from substance use (e.g., drug gangs target their old clients to cuckoo)
- lack of support systems and feelings of isolation and loneliness (e.g., you may want company and believe the individual wishes to provide support)
- history of relationship problems (e.g., neglect/ abuse)
- mental health difficulties (e.g., low self-esteem, difficulty regulating emotions)
- financial difficulties
- learning disabilities
- physical disabilities
- friends with vulnerable or dangerous people.

How many of the vulnerabilities apply to you? What can you do to protect yourself?

Feeling Lonely?

Think about ways to connect with others in a positive way. This could include reaching out to supportive friends, joining a group or activity, or simply keeping the TV or radio on for background comfort.

Struggling to Set Boundaries?

If you find it hard to say no, practice being assertive. You have the right to protect your space and safety. Try:

- Saying “no” confidently and firmly.
- Keeping your address private.
- Never give your keys to anyone.
- Only allowing people you fully trust into your home.

Using Substances?

Recognising your triggers can help you regain control. Consider:

- Identifying moments when you're most vulnerable to using.
- Keeping your home separate from places where you use or pick up substances.
- Seeking support, such as referrals for treatment and attending appointments with professional help.

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Warning signs

Everyone’s situation is unique, and you are the expert on your own experiences. To help us support you and keep you safe, it would be helpful to identify any warning signs that might suggest cuckooing in your home. Here are some examples—feel free to add any others you’ve noticed.

<u>Warning signs</u>	<u>Yes/ No?</u>
People being overly friendly	
People overstaying their welcome	
People asking to use your flat or stay over even when you have said no repeatedly	
People building up a dependency e.g., drugs, debt, relationship	
Being asked to do things you’re not comfortable with e.g. selling drugs, give money to others	
People are rude and disrespect you in your property	
Threats of violence	
People use your house to sell drugs	
People who want to give you drugs for free or in exchange for staying over	
Feeling stressed about people coming over but worried you can’t say no	
I never let my support worker come to my home	
I’m not keeping in regular contact with my worker	
I’m often without money, even just after I have been paid	
Trouble with relationships, there’s suddenly a lot of new people around who don’t seem to have my best interests at heart	
People are often in my flat while I am out and inviting other people round as well	
People I don’t know are pressing buzzer to gain access to the building	
You don’t feel comfortable in your flat anymore and spend more time elsewhere	
Regularly reporting lost keys / fobs but not wanting the lock changed	
Concerns from neighbours about people coming and going throughout the day and night	
Other people are telling me to be careful about these individuals	
People saying they are helping me or caring for me	
Sudden changes in mood – I’m stressed about visitors, but then don’t want support to get them removed. Maybe I’m afraid of them getting back at me?	

Responding to the warning signs

Everyone's situation is different so everyone's plan to prevent cuckooing will be different. Please think about any warning signs you and your worker can look out for and agree on what actions each of you can take to keep you safe in case we see them come up.

Warning sign	What can I do to keep myself safe?	What can my worker help with?
Example: there are signs of increased substance use in my flat	Get back on script so dealers and users aren't coming round	Referral for treatment and support me to attend my appointments
Example: people are often in my flat when I'm out	<p>Think honestly about whether I can trust them – are they here for me or my flat?</p> <p>Not leave my key or fob with anyone and let staff know if I need a lock change</p> <p>Consider welfare checks from police to help remove visitors</p> <p>'Break the cycle': you can say that you are going to move out and go away for a while so that they have to find somewhere else</p>	<p>Meet regularly at the flat to reflect on relationships</p> <p>Offer to keep a spare key and work with repairs teams for a lock change</p> <p>Contact police if they think I'm at risk</p>
Example: Feeling stressed about people coming over and worried that I can't turn them down or ask them to leave	<p>Assertiveness and boundaries to protect you and your property: block numbers and blank the people if you see them in the street- do not engage with them!</p> <p>Tell them that professionals or police are watching the address (even if not true)</p>	Ask worker for their opinion. Practice saying no with your worker.
Example:		
Example:		
Example:		

What happens if my property does start to be cuckooed?

It's important to recognise that these individuals are taking advantage of you, and if nothing is done, the situation could become dangerous. You could lose your home, be harmed, or even face legal consequences if drugs are involved. We've spoken to many people who have been in this situation—like you, through no fault of their own. Their advice is always the same: seek support as soon as possible. This isn't about 'grassing'; it's about protecting yourself and your home from exploitation. Trusted professionals are here to listen, support you, and help you take the safest steps forward. If your property is being cuckooed, your involvement is crucial in addressing the situation so we can work together towards the outcome you want.

Detailed below are three stages of what to do if your property starts to be cuckooed.

First stage: alerting the housing office, the police, and social services – and reviewing your support needs

- Early action is key. Workers will inform the local authority, housing provider, and police so they can take steps to support you. This will be done sensitively, so it won't be obvious that you were the one who raised concerns—you don't need to worry about being put at risk.
- Your involvement is essential to making these measures work. With your support, the police can remove unwanted individuals from your home, and the housing provider can help secure your front door. Without your input, their ability to act is limited.
- We understand this can be difficult, and you may not feel comfortable involving the police. If that's the case, we can support you in making contact safely and confidentially.

What workers can do	What I can do	Result
Unannounced visits, staged 'fake' warning letters/ complaints from the housing block	Leave the warning letters out for visitors to see	Unwanted visitors could be scared away
Make a report to the police and support me speak to them	Speak to the police, agree to them clearing my flat	The police area able to clear the flat so it's safe for me to return Increase of security and visits to your property to scare away unwanted visitors
Inform the housing provider and maintenance team	Agree to an emergency lock change and not give anyone the new key	Any old keys no longer work; my front door is secure again
Inform council and social services	Consider any extra support the council can offer	I don't have to ask people I don't trust for help with care and support in my flat
Regular home visits to make sure things have settled down	Meet my worker in the flat; let my worker know if the perpetrators are coming round again	My worker and I can safely meet in my flat and work together on any issues that come up

What workers can do	What I can do	Result
Depending on your needs your worker can refer you to services for support for specific issues e.g., drug use, mental health, and relationship difficulties	Link up with services that can support me If using substances get support or pick up substances from another area away from home	You will get your needs met in an alternative way
Support a transfer to temporary accommodation or a new area if required	Move away from the area; let my worker know if the perpetrators are still in contact/ coming around again	
WHAT ELSE CAN MY WORKER DO AT THIS STAGE? (add).		



Second stage: further police action

- If your property is being used for illegal activity, the police may apply to the court for a **closure order**. This is a legal measure that prevents anyone, including you as the tenant, from entering the flat. If a full closure order is granted, your tenancy will end.
- In some cases, a **partial closure order** may be issued instead. This allows you to remain in the property while preventing anyone else from entering. However, it’s important to know that if you allow someone in during this period, you could face immediate eviction. Because of this, the court will assess whether a partial closure order is a suitable option for your situation.

What can my worker do	What I can do	Result
Keep in contact with the police and housing provider for updates on the action they take	Keep in regular contact with my worker so I know what’s happening and can share my views on what I want to happen next	My views are heard, I’m involved in decision-making, I know what the next steps are
If a partial closure order is applied, my worker can support me to say no and refer me to services that can help with isolation	Not let any visitors in the flat for the length of the order, otherwise, they’ll be arrested, and I’ll be evicted.	No one is visiting my flat to try and cuckoo it, the order is passed without breaches, I keep my tenancy
If a closure order is applied, my worker can work with the local authority to find temporary accommodation or new area	Speak to my worker so they know my goals/ and any areas to avoid, attend housing appointments, and understand my first choice might not be immediately available	I avoid rough sleeping and move to a safe space while we all work together to decide what happens next
WHAT ELSE CAN MY WORKER DO AT THIS STAGE? (add).		

Third stage: review housing options

- This is the final stage if earlier interventions have not been successful. By this point, your flat may have been closed due to illegal activity, or you may have decided that staying there is no longer safe. If you need to leave your home, your worker will continue to support you—your support is not tied to your flat, and we will be here to help no matter where you go.
- However, we can’t arrange a move without your input. At this stage, your options may include moving to temporary accommodation, which could be outside your current borough while you apply for a new tenancy. You may also decide that supported housing is a safer option for you. Whatever you choose, we’ll work with you to find the best possible outcome.



What my worker can do	What I can do	Result
Speak to the local authority and housing provider about what immediate options may be available to prevent rough sleeping	Let my worker know what my preferences are and work with them to attend assessments	I move into a safe space where I can take stock of my situation and think about next steps
Support me in entering temporary accommodation – accompany me to assessments, link me with local services, and update everyone who needs to know	Keep working with my worker to look at my longer-term housing goals	I can keep working with my support network to make sure I feel confident about the future
Work with the local authority and housing providers to look at other opportunities	Work with my worker to gather referral documents (ID, bank statements, proof of benefit) so we can be matched to offers and attend viewings with my worker	I am matched to a suitable offer so that I can enter into another tenancy agreement
WHAT ELSE CAN MY WORKER DO AT THIS STAGE? (add).		



