

Partners in Care and Health Webinar on Cuckooing/Home Invasion: Challenges for Safeguarding Adults

Friday 06 March 2026 10.00AM – 12.00PM

- The **Local Government Association** and **Association of Directors of Adult Social Services** are **Partners in Care and Health** (PCH) working with well-respected organisations.

PCH helps councils to improve the way they deliver adult social care and public health services and helps Government understand the challenges faced by the sector.

The programme is a trusted network for developing and sharing best practice, developing tools and techniques, providing support and building connections. It is funded by Government and offered to councils without charge.

- www.local.gov.uk/PCH



Programme:

10.00am	Welcome and Introductions – Dr Adi Cooper OBE , Partners in Care & Health Lead for Safeguarding Adults, LGA
10.05am -10.20am	Cuckooing (Home Takeover) - David Williams , Independent Chair Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board
10.25am -10.45am	<p>The Newcastle Model - an evolving model of safeguarding practice in response to Home Takeover</p> <p>Kath Armstrong – North East North Cumbria ICB Exploitation Safeguarding Nurse</p> <p>Kerry Cooke – Newcastle Safeguarding Adult Manager and Exploitation SPOC</p> <p>Claire Nixon – Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board Coordinator</p>
10.50am -11.05am	<p>Nottingham & Nottinghamshire - Slavery Exploitation team And Serac</p> <p>Jemma Whitworth - Senior Caseworker - Slavery Exploitation Team/Community Protection Safeguarding Gateway</p>
11.10am - 11.45am	<p>The Camden Experience – Addresses of Concern (AOC), Op Pantera & partnership working - Oli Walker, Community Safety Enforcement Manager</p> <p>Op Pantera – Overview - Inspector Andrew Cameron, Project Adder – Op Pantera MOPAC, Metropolitan Police</p> <p>Op Pantera - Cuckooing project evaluation - Emily Evans, Research Fellow, University of Birmingham</p>
11.55am - 12.00pm	Chairs closing remarks



Cuckooing (Home Takeover)

Task & Finish Group



National Network for Chairs
of Safeguarding Adults Boards

Context

A time limited task and finish group to:

- understand key learning across SABs
- identify SAB work happening in this area including best practice and any gaps
- disseminate knowledge and resources to the SAB manager network



Outputs:

- **National SAR analysis report**
- **Best Practice models & Leeds toolkit**
- **Resource and guidance/pathway examples**

Limitations:

- **Crime and Policing Bill – Currently in parliament**
- **National statutory and non-statutory guidance – Home Office leading**

**Led by Hampshire
SAB with 21 SABs
represented**

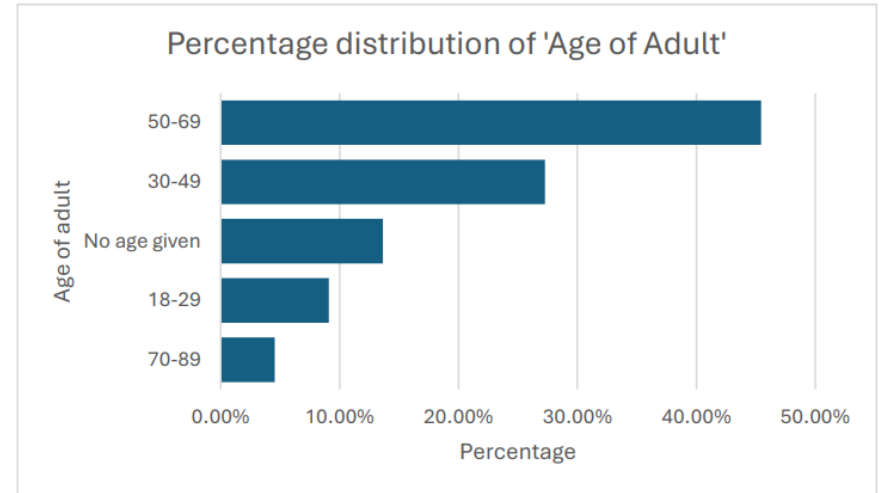
Thank you!

SAR Analysis

- Aim was to identify themes in the learning identified within mandatory and discretionary safeguarding adults reviews and non- statutory learning reviews.
- The network identified relevant reviews through the direct knowledge of board managers, including unpublished reviews and a search of the SAR Repository.
- The summary report is based on the thematic analysis of learning from the circumstances of 22 adults who were seriously harmed, or died, where cuckooing and/or exploitation was a core feature of the abuse suffered.

Gender and Age

- 28% female and 72% male.
- The two young adults (18-29 years) were both care experienced with a history of being exploited with the perpetrators continuing to target them as they entered adulthood.



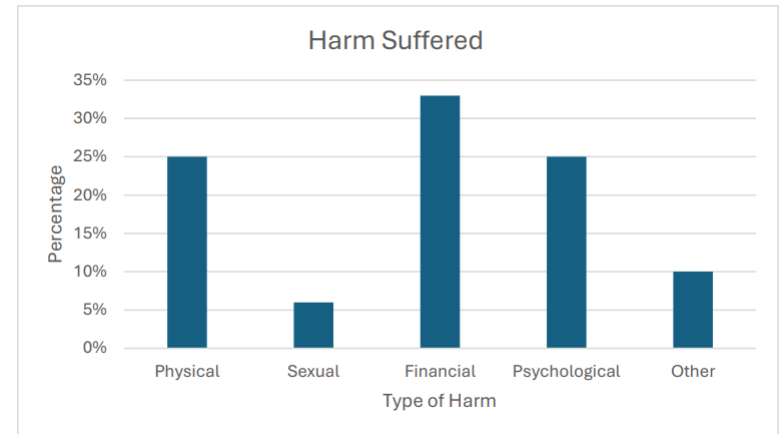
Complex needs

- The most common area of vulnerability was dependency on drugs or alcohol.
- The presence of multiple adversities, and complex need arising from this, was a factor for the majority of the adults.
- The complexity of each adult's circumstances created a challenging landscape for the intervention of support and safeguarding services.



Exploitation and harm type

- The motivators of cuckooing behaviour vary between perpetrators and can intersect and overlap. This is well evidenced in the subject cohort, with adults exploited for multiple purposes by the perpetrators.
 - 30% Drug related
 - 26% Shelter
 - 21% Financial abuse
 - 4% Sexual exploitation
 - 4% Weapons/Stolen goods
- For all victims the consequences were significant and both direct and indirect.
- There are several deaths relating to substance misuse, and the presence of significant self-harm indicating severe psychological distress. Several of those who suffered physical harm sustained serious injuries.



Learning and Recommendations

Recommendation	Frequency
Multiagency Information Sharing	18
Practitioner knowledge and awareness of signs and indicators	18
Local systems and processes for responding to cuckooing as a safeguarding concern	17
Professional Curiosity	14
Risk Assessment	14
Application of the Mental Capacity Act	12
Language and impact on assessment	6
Diagnostic Overshadowing	5

Recommendations based on specific circumstances of the adult(s):

- Actions taken to disrupt perpetrators
- The response of the criminal justice system
- Responding to disengagement with services
- The application of Making Safeguarding Personal in Housing services
- Record keeping and understanding of context
- Recognising and responding to multiple disadvantages
- Understanding barriers to communication/help-seeking
- Training in safeguarding vulnerable drinkers

Next steps

All SABs to consider:

- 1) What measures are available to raise awareness of cuckooing and exploitation with adults and the wider community with a view to preventing serious harm?
- 2) How do local services equip frontline practitioners with the knowledge and skills needed to identify cuckooing and exploitation?
- 3) Is there a sufficient multiagency framework in place to respond to this complex form of abuse?
- 4) Is the SAB working collaboratively with related strategic boards to ensure a cohesive response?

We will share this report with the Home Office to consider within their ongoing work to develop national guidance and legislation.

Best Practice models

- Newcastle – Claire Nixon / Kerry Cooke
- Nottingham City – Jane Paling & Emma Coleman



Keeping it simple

- Built on experience from Operation Sanctuary and response to adult sexual exploitation.
- Use of standard safeguarding adult procedures and S42 duties
- No separate/distinct process
- Putting adult's at risk at the centre of the response
- Contextual safeguarding and disruption
- **Would there be a circumstance when a victim of home takeover would not meet adult at risk criteria?**

Dedicated exploitation roles and partnership links

- Single Point of Contact Safeguarding Adults Manager and Social Worker for adult exploitation cases within Adult Social Care.
- Exploitation Officers within Northumbria Police
- Exploitation Nurse within ICB
- Weekly Force-wide meeting between Police, Children's and Adults Social Care to review support and disruption for cases with an "exploitation marker"
- Strategic and operational links between adult social care and community safety.

Research informed

- **Adults at risk of exploitation: putting the pieces of the jigsaw together** – 2-year realist evaluation. 60 interviews and review of closed S42 enquiries.
- Adults experiencing exploitation face many barriers, often have multiple co-occurring vulnerabilities that perpetrators know how to target to get control, often have care or support needs, which can be missed by agencies.
- This is compounded by heavy workloads and victim blaming attitudes or a lack of appreciation of impact of coercion and substance use.
- The use and implementation of safeguarding adult processes is variable nationally. However, in order for the governance structures, policies and procedures to work systematically, the right contextual conditions need to be in place concurrently. Strategically and operationally.
- Our research is the first to show, through thorough data collection and rigorous data analysis, the conditions necessary to enable them to be used effectively. The safeguarding process allows a central point of coordination, ensuring all agencies cooperate but **works best when the right knowledge, skills attitudes values and beliefs, relationships are embedded at all levels of the system (adults at risk and families, professionals and policy makers)**. This helps all agencies to understand their roles and duties to disrupt the exploitative activities.
- Whilst there are gaps in legislation and policy, SGA processes can be utilised to ensure a coordinated response to try to manage risks, ensure communities and people are safer and ensuring accountability that each agency is fulfilling its roles and statutory powers. This works best when there are relationships, positive attitudes, and there is the right knowledge in workforces across all agencies both operationally and strategically.
- [Adults at Risk of Exploitation: Putting the Pieces of the Jigsaw Together](#)
- Research about exploitation during Covid was catalyst for production of [home takeover animations](#), funded and led by Newcastle City Council Public Health team.
- Language – term “cuckooing” is dehumanising and not well understood

Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

msvp@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Slavery Exploitation Team (SET) Is a specialist local authority team with dedicated officers who work with partners to identify and tackle exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking and establish pathways to support for survivors.

The **SERAC model** (Slavery Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference) is a multi-agency safeguarding initiative developed by **Nottingham City Council** and expanded to cover the County in 2024

- Developed following an NRM post resettlement pilot scheme after identifying a gap in provision
- Drive a multiagency approach to identification, prevention and management of slavery, exploitation and trafficking
- Focus on cases that fall below the threshold for statutory agency involvement
- The SERAC is a monthly multiagency meeting that unites agencies to discuss suspected or known cases and plan a joint response to manage risk and identify appropriate interventions
- Develop multi-agency action plans to safeguard individuals and disrupt exploitation
- Focus on creative, solution focused discussion
- Share intelligence and concerns about suspicious activity
- Complex cases require complex solutions

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Key

Journey of a referral

Triage Risk
Immediate
safeguarding
Low level investigations
Partnership working
Identify Advocates
Professional Curiosity

Partners/ Referral

Police
Adult Social Care
Housing Providers
Local Authority teams
Health
DWP

Vulnerability

How vulnerability impacts
on risk and safety
Statutory thresholds
Barriers to accessing
support
Identifying as a victim
Intersectionality

RAG Rating

Assess risk on key
factors
Identify agencies to
address all factors
holistically to reduce
risk of re-exploitation

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Outcomes-

- Supporting police investigations
- Feed into National Referral Mechanism referrals
- Safety Planning
- Risk Reduction
- Identifying hidden harm
- Reduce impact on other services

Other initiatives -

- Training
- Research- Shaping local and national picture
- Presence on multiple local and national boards and panels
- Safeguarding Gateway
- Another Way

Accolades-

- Expansion into County area
- Inspired interest from other regions (e.g., Met Police, Birmingham) to replicate the model
- Recognised as best practice locally and nationally including by the by the Local Government Association (LGA), the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and in Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)
- Featured in national and international research and documentaries.

Key resources

- [Preventing and Disrupting Cuckooing Victimization: Professional Toolkit | School of Law | University of Leeds](#)
- [Tricky Friends animation | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board](#)
- [Steven's Story - A personal experience of Cuckooing](#)
- [See something, say something – Franks Story](#)



Next steps

- T&F group to close (pending feedback from Chairs Network)
- All SABs to share learning & resources with partners locally to influence practice improvements
- SAB Managers network to review & respond as necessary to legislation and stat guidance when published

The Newcastle Model

an evolving model of safeguarding practice in response to Home Takeover

Kath Armstrong – North East North Cumbria ICB Exploitation Safeguarding Nurse
Kerry Cooke – Newcastle Safeguarding Adult Manager and Exploitation SPOC
Claire Nixon – Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board Coordinator

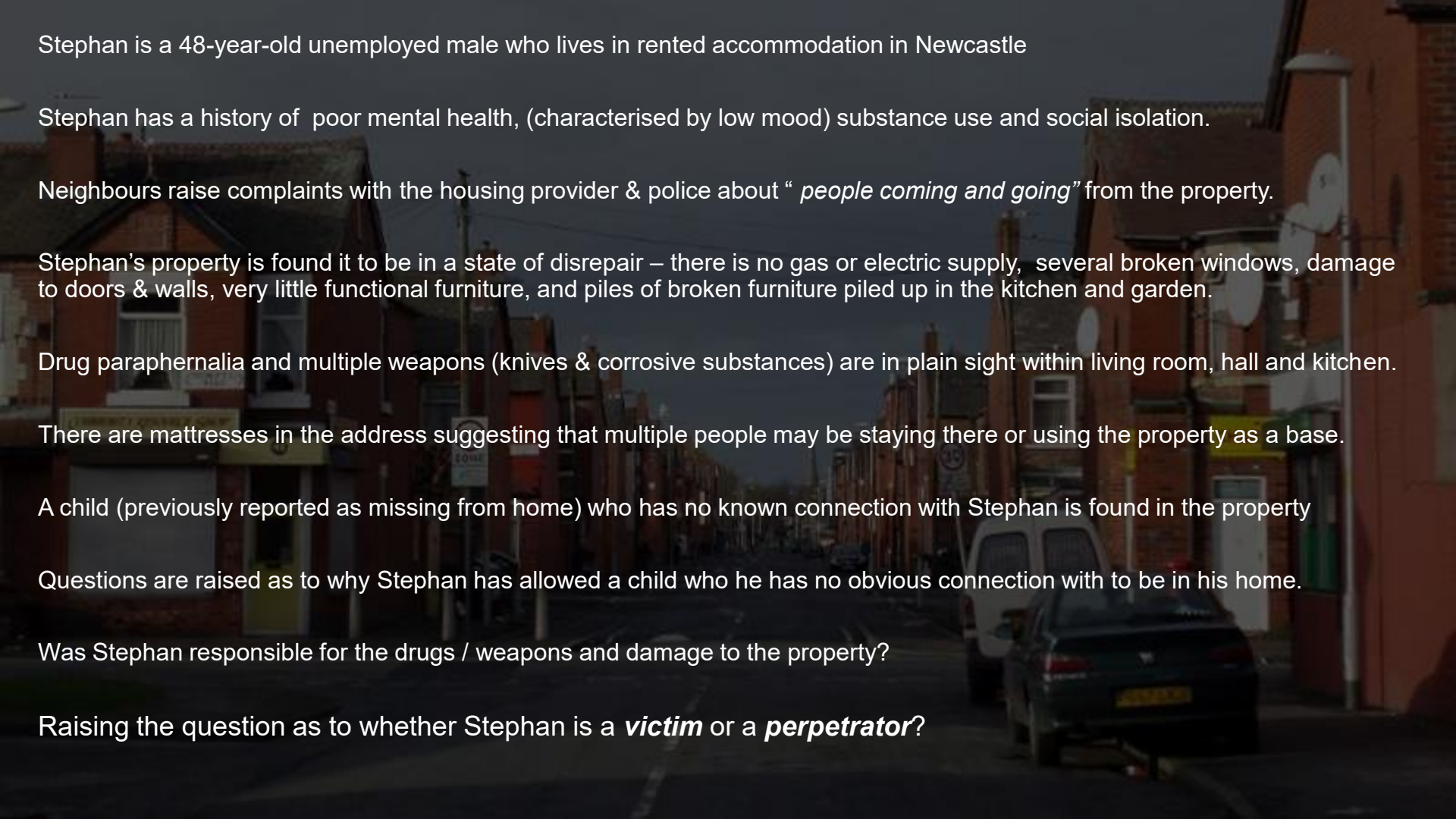


Keeping it simple

- Built on experience from Operation Sanctuary and response to adult sexual exploitation.
- Use of standard safeguarding adult procedures and S42 duties
- No separate/distinct process
- Putting the adult at risk at the centre of the response
- Contextual safeguarding and disruption
- Dedicated roles
- **Would there be a circumstance when a victim of home takeover would not meet adult at risk criteria?**

Stephan's story





Stephan is a 48-year-old unemployed male who lives in rented accommodation in Newcastle

Stephan has a history of poor mental health, (characterised by low mood) substance use and social isolation.

Neighbours raise complaints with the housing provider & police about “ *people coming and going*” from the property.

Stephan’s property is found it to be in a state of disrepair – there is no gas or electric supply, several broken windows, damage to doors & walls, very little functional furniture, and piles of broken furniture piled up in the kitchen and garden.

Drug paraphernalia and multiple weapons (knives & corrosive substances) are in plain sight within living room, hall and kitchen.

There are mattresses in the address suggesting that multiple people may be staying there or using the property as a base.

A child (previously reported as missing from home) who has no known connection with Stephan is found in the property

Questions are raised as to why Stephan has allowed a child who he has no obvious connection with to be in his home.

Was Stephan responsible for the drugs / weapons and damage to the property?

Raising the question as to whether Stephan is a *victim* or a *perpetrator*?

- * Safeguarding adult's enquiry undertaken:
- * Financial and housing needs immediately addressed
- * Professional curiosity key for all agencies
- * Lead Professional and core group established to build trust and establish consistent
- * Recognition of the power imbalance and coercive control being exerted
- * Appropriate language in meetings / discussions / records and assessments
- * Engagement was assertive but intentionally paced to avoid Stephan feeling overwhelmed and disempowered
- * Safe ways of entering property used to minimise risk (gas safety check used as a non-threatening access opportunity)
- * Care and support needs assessed
- * Health needs assessed and supported at Stephan's pace (gently assertive but trauma attuned)
- * Liaison with Children Social Care (the child has been exploited as part of a criminal network and "instructed" to stay at property)
- * Information sharing actively promoted
- * Police harm reduction plan implemented (monitoring of location, visits, liaising with neighbourhood cocoon watch)
- * Community Safety placed CCTV around Stephan's street – as a deterrent and to collect evidence
- * Engagement with neighbours
- * Neighbourhood wardens increased patrols
- * Safety planning measures to ensure practitioners could continue supporting him safely implemented

It's not all black
and white



Reflective Learning Points

Vulnerability can be hidden beneath behaviours that appear chaotic or criminal.

Adults with capacity can still be subject to undue influence and coercive control.

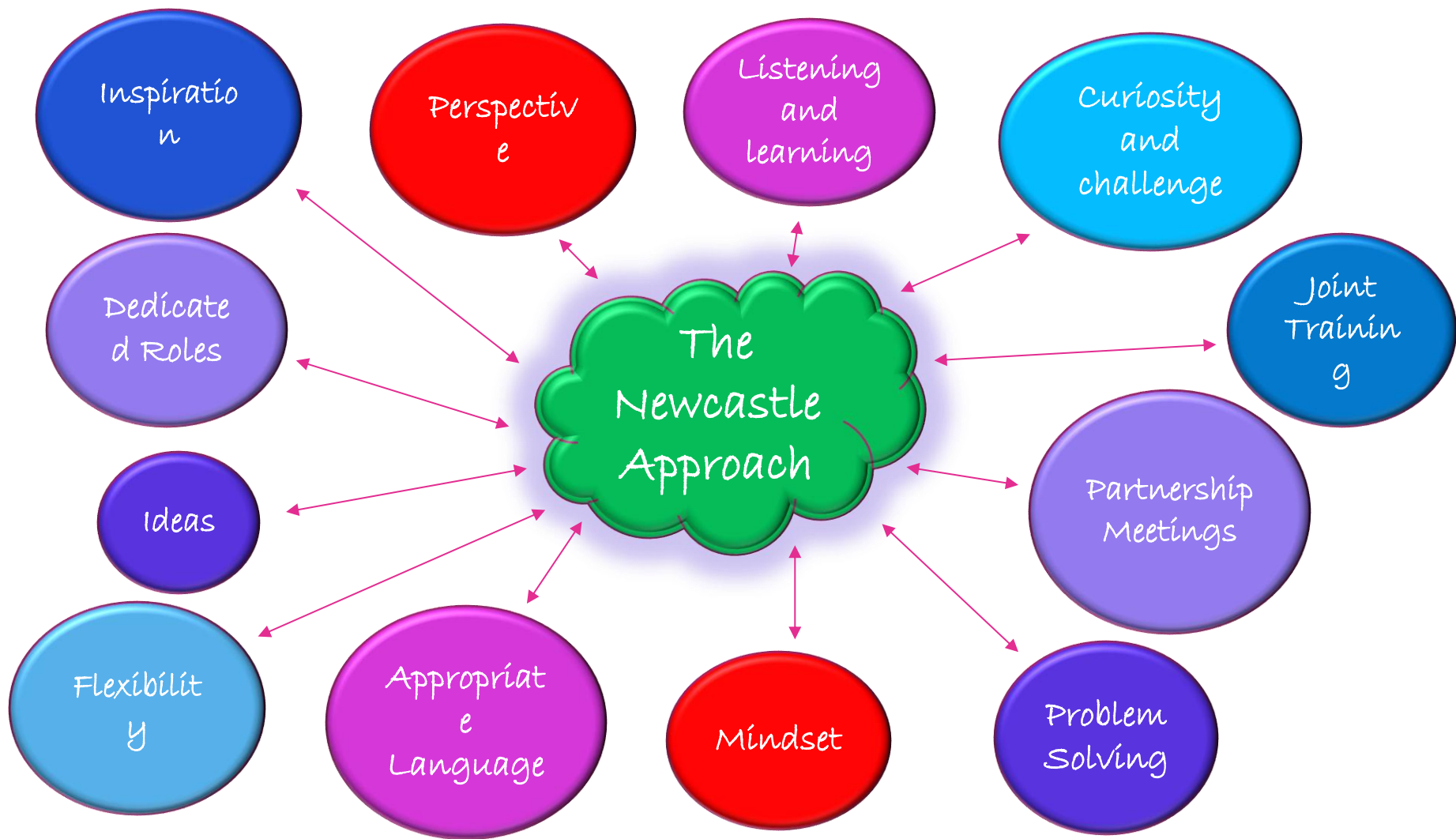
Trauma-informed, relationship-based practice is essential when working with exploitation.

Disruption must be carefully balanced against the potential for increased risk.

Safeguarding adults and safeguarding children are often interconnected.

Multi-agency intelligence sharing is critical in responding to exploitation.

Partnership is key



Putting the jigsaw together

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Challenges

It's not easy...

We face many challenges when working with Home Takeover

- No disclosure
- Declined support
- Vulnerabilities missed
- Not always a county lines model
- Moving the problem

RESOURCES

Home Takeover Animation – Targeted and Trapped

“Targeted and trapped” was a cross-partnership piece of work developed in Newcastle with CC Animation Studios in 2024.

The animation has been adopted by numerous other SABs since

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8jzVjINY_HWVJWXM4j31w4EbieGJkuH

[Adults At Risk of Exploitation: putting the pieces of the jigsaw together](#) (research webinar)

[Exploitation Checklist](#)

[Exploitation Language Guidance](#)

[Home Takeover SAB Webpage](#)

[Exploitation Training Competency Framework](#)

[Making a good safeguarding adults referral](#) (webinar)



Thank you for
listening

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- Claire.Nixon@newcastle.gov.uk



Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

SLAVERY EXPLOITATION TEAM AND SERAC

Slavery Exploitation Team (SET)

A specialist local authority team with dedicated officers who work with partners to identify and tackle exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking and establish pathways to support for survivors



Developed following an NRM post resettlement pilot scheme after identifying a gap in provision

Drive a multiagency approach to identification, prevention and management of slavery, exploitation and trafficking

Focus on cases that fall below the threshold for statutory agency involvement

The SERAC model

The Slavery Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference is a multi-agency safeguarding initiative developed by Nottingham City Council and expanded to cover the County in 2024

The SERAC is a monthly multiagency meeting that unites agencies to discuss suspected or known cases and plan a joint response to manage risk and identify appropriate interventions

Develop multi-agency action plans to safeguard individuals and disrupt exploitation

Focus on creative, solution focused discussion

Share intelligence and concerns about suspicious activity

Complex cases require complex solutions

Journey of a referral



TRIAGE RISK



IMMEDIATE
SAFEGUARDING



LOW LEVEL
INVESTIGATIONS



PARTNERSHIP
WORKING



IDENTIFY
ADVOCATES



PROFESSIONAL
CURIOSITY

Key Partners/ Referral sources

Police

Adult Social
Care

Housing
Providers

Local
Authority
teams

Health

DWP

Vulnerability



How vulnerability impacts on risk and safety

Statutory thresholds

Barriers to accessing support

Identifying as a victim

Intersectionality

RAG Rating



Assess risk on key factors



Establish opportunities for intervention



Identify agencies to address all factors holistically to reduce risk of re-exploitation

Outcomes

Supporting police investigations

Feed into National Referral Mechanism referrals

Safety Planning

Risk Reduction

Identifying hidden harm

Reduce impact on other services

Other initiatives & Accolades

- ▶ Training
- ▶ Research- Shaping local and national picture
- ▶ Presence on multiple local and national boards and panels
- ▶ Safeguarding Gateway
- ▶ Another Way
- ▶ Expansion into County area
- ▶ Inspired interest from other regions (e.g., Met Police, Birmingham) to replicate the model
- ▶ Recognised as best practice locally and nationally including by the by the Local Government Association (LGA), the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and in Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)
- ▶ Featured in national and international research and documentaries

The Camden Experience – Addresses of Concern (AOC), Op Pantera & partnership working

Camden Community Safety Partnership

Author: S.Sheldon

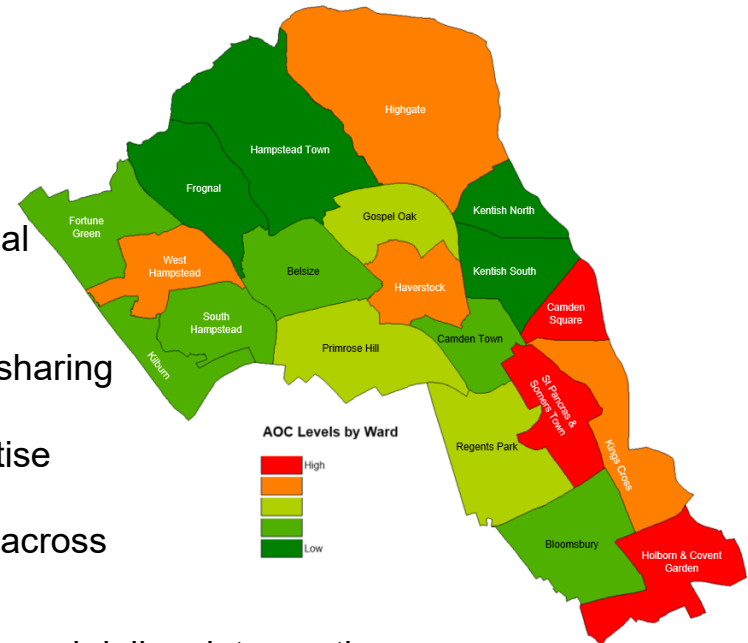
AOC – The beginning

- The Address of Concern initiative, which predates Operation Pantera, was created in early 2019, following review of a number of cases where exploitation and cuckooing was a contributing factor in the failure to maintain tenancy.
- The culmination of that review highlighted organisational deficiencies in appropriately identifying instances of cuckooing, information sharing between partners and internal departments, as well as the accurate recording of data.
- The review highlighted the growing trend of cuckooing as part of the modus operandi of both local and regional gangs/OCGs, which also included county lines, CSE and CCE.
- We further identified that criminal cohorts were taking advantage of inconsistencies in enforcement and awareness across boroughs and in BCUs.
- The first AOC list was created and joint work with the LIT began, with an ambition to proactively identify properties and cohorts in order to deliver targeted interventions in partnership with statutory agencies and 3rd sector support providers.

Operation Pantera

In 2020 the AOC was handed over to the NPT resulting in the creation of Op Pantera, which Resulted in:

- A more focused, streamlined and responsive relationship between the Police and council.
- Expansion of the virtual team to include additional police teams, such as gangs and IOM
- Improved synergy around intelligence and data sharing
- Facilitation of Project Adder resource and expertise
- Retention of cuckooing policy at corporate level across services.
- Improvements to the time taken to resolve cases and deliver interventions.
- A comprehensive training program for LBC, Police and external agency staff as well as a public information campaign delivered through social media platforms



Op Pantera +

The evolution

With the creation of Op Pantera , a new and renewed focus on cuckooing has led to:

- Expedited enforcement against our most high risk and high harm addresses
- The creation of a Cuckooing panel, providing oversight and accountability at senior level across services and agencies.
- Providing opportunities to learn and share best practice across previously untapped sources of expertise and knowledge.
- Opportunity to be part of a wider study which will help to inform regional policy and operational delivery in advance of the passing of new cuckooing specific legislation.

Are you aware of cuckooing?

What is cuckooing?

Cuckooing is a process where people target the homes of vulnerable adults, resulting in them losing control of their property. They may use the property for any criminal purpose, including drug dealing, sexual crimes and storing weapons.

The vulnerable adult can be exploited and coerced to participate in criminal acts. Young people vulnerable to criminal exploitation can also be associated with these properties.

Cuckooed residents may be victims of crime and the Council, in partnership with the Police, will also provide support to the Cuckooed resident to get the help they need. We can also take steps to prevent people entering addresses which are being used for Cuckooing using formal enforcement action.

This can also help to deter any criminal activity or anti-social behaviour, which have a detrimental effect on the wider community and can make local residents' lives a misery.



Op Pantera+

12 Month Cuckooing Pilot

Launched 1st November 2025

Recommendations

London Assembly Report in 2023 provided 10 Recommendations for Police, MOPAC and Local Authorities.
The pilot seeks to address all 10, with the need for all partners to work collaboratively.

1. BCUs should have dedicated officers trained to deal with Cuckooing

2. Frontline staff need to be trained so they respond appropriately

3. Mayor & MPS should promote awareness so residents spot signs & report

4. MPS should ensure officers are recording cuckooing

5. MOPAC should conduct data analysis of cuckooing in London

6. Mayor should support LAs to develop guidance for rehab services

7. MOPAC should work with MPS to get better understanding of victim experiences

8. Government to develop guidance for LAs on how to deal with cuckooing

9. Expand multi-agency forum model to areas of London

10. Review existing laws and frameworks for effectiveness

Multi-Agency Response – Right Care, Right Person

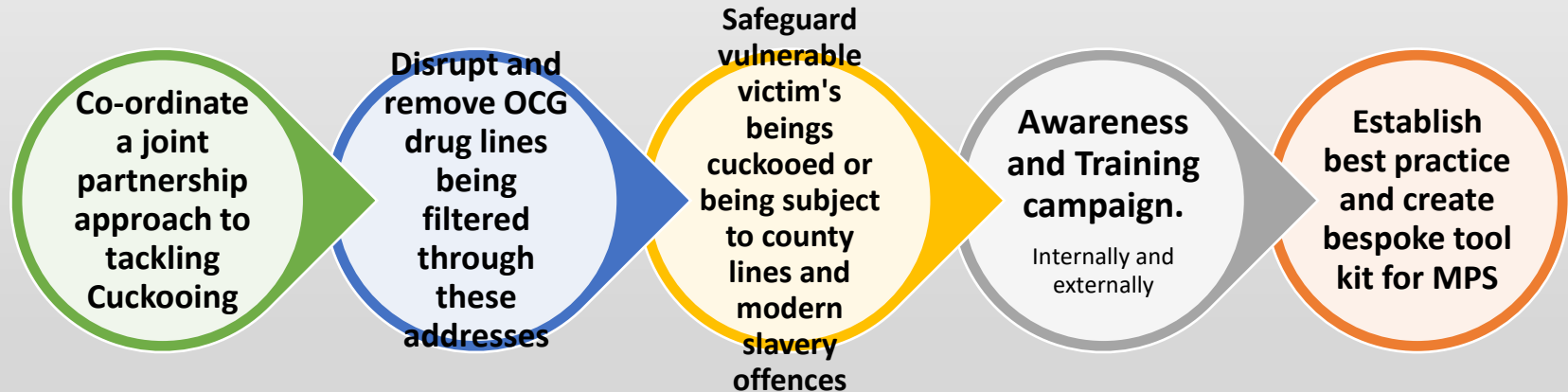
“Until the Met and local authorities standardise their approach to working on the issue, gaps will remain in London” – Unmesh Desai, AM

New Legislation

- Better accuracy of recording incidents
- Provide officers & partners with clearer options, including power of arrest
- Increase trust with victims and communities

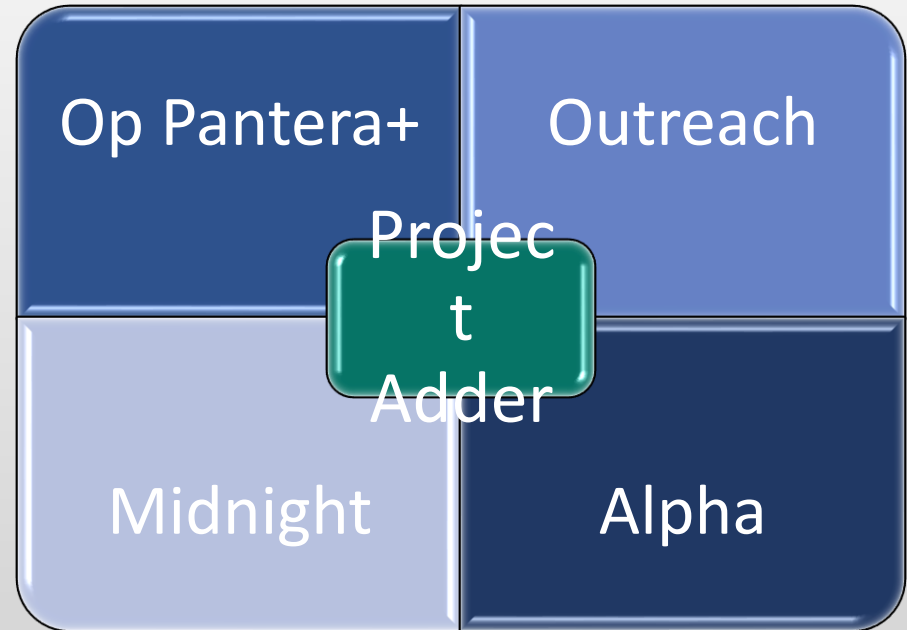
Pilot on CN & NA

- Get ahead of the curve
- MOPAC funded
- External Evaluation of Pilot to enable decisions to be made for consistent process across London



Operational Method

Op Pantera+	Live Case Trackers
	Multi-Agency Forums
	Advice and training
Outreach SNT	Engagement
	Overt visits to premises
	Joint Patrols with partners
Midnight	Execute Closure Orders (SNT)
	Warrants (Jointly with SNT)
	Surveillance
Project Alpha	Monitoring of Social Media
	Young People
Project Adder	Overall Co-ordination
	Analyst support



Op Pantera+ Evaluation

Dr Emily Evans, Dr Brenda Gonzalez

Partners in Care & Health Webinar:
Cuckooing/Home Invasion

6 March 2026

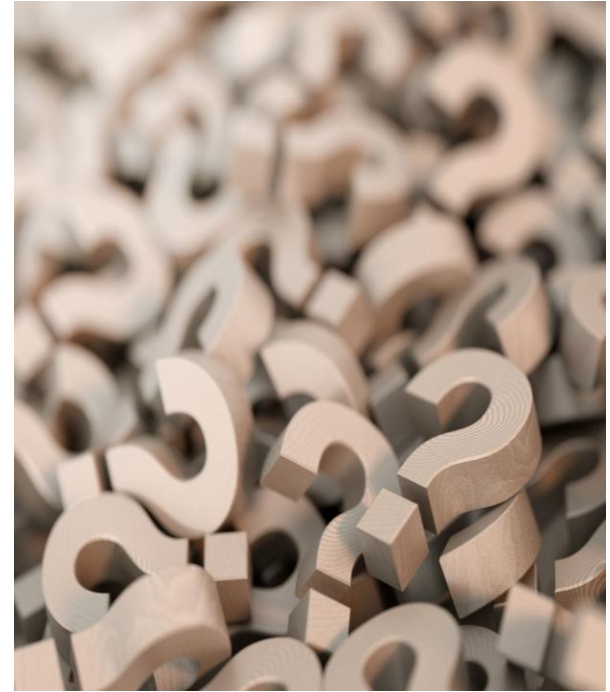


Background

- Op Pantera+ has been running across Camden and Islington (Central North BCU) since 2020 and in late 2025 was rolled out to Enfield and Haringey (North Area BCU).
- Evaluation is funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) in London to evaluate the Metropolitan Police's project aimed at targeting cuckooing – Op Pantera+.
- Evaluation started in September 2025 and is ongoing in 2026. Intended to primarily be an implementation and processes evaluation.
- Evaluation team composed of researchers from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Crime Justice and Policing and Skills for Justice.

Evaluation research questions

- How is cuckooing is being addressed by Op Pantera+?
 - Enforcement, safeguarding, training / information sharing, multi-agency working, data sharing, community relations
 - How does this compare to MPS practice elsewhere?
 - How can best practice be scaled up?
- What aspects are working well, which require improvement? What are the challenges and barriers?
- Have there been unintended consequences (positive or negative)?
- Who is being targeted by cuckooing and how?
 - What are the common associated vulnerabilities
- Which organisations are involved in the work? Which agencies are missing?



Evaluation activities

- Interviews with MPS officers and representatives of each of the four Boroughs (community safety, housing, adult safeguarding, commissioned services including substance misuse) at various points during the evaluation.
- Observations of multi-agency cuckooing panel meetings and other relevant events.

To understand rollout and operation.



Evaluation activities

- Analysis of MPS data on cuckooing incidents:
 - Location – types of properties and geographic locations and how this overlaps with other factors e.g. deprivation
 - Characteristics of victims – sex, age, ethnicity, vulnerabilities
 - Characteristics of suspects – sex, age, ethnicity, vulnerabilities
 - To cover the Op Pantera+ BCUs and MPS as a whole (depending on data availability)
- Estimation of the cost of a cuckooed premises (Police, LA & commissioned services data).



Thank you for your time.

Any questions?



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Information on the Cuckooing Offence

[Crime and Policing Bill: child criminal exploitation, cuckooing \(home takeover\) and coerced internal concealment factsheet - GOV.UK](#)

[Crime and Policing Bill](#)

[Crime and Policing](#)



Thank You

