

Bitesize Briefing: Home Takeover

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[Practitioner Information
Booklet \(Leeds University\).](#)

1 What is Home Takeover?

Home takeover - **sometimes known as 'cuckooing'** - is a form of exploitation, where criminals take over the home of a vulnerable person to carry out illegal activities. It is commonly associated with **county lines (drug trafficking/dealing)** but it can also involve other crimes and forms of abuse.



2 Signs and Characteristics of Home Takeover

Home takeover can happen to anyone, but victims are often vulnerable adults:

Things to Consider

Do they appear anxious or fearful?
Do they have unexplained injuries?
Have they stopped engaging with support?
Do they seem confused/unable to explain who is staying in their home?

Are strangers loitering outside the property?
Is there evidence of property damage?
Has there been a sudden increase in visitors, especially at unsociable or odd times?
Are there unexplained bank transactions?

Are windows always covered or are the curtains always drawn?
Are there unusual smells in/around the property?
Is the adult missing possessions or money?

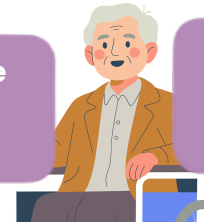
Is the adult isolated?
Is there evidence of drug use or dealing in the property/area?
Are there suspicious/illegal items in the property?

- Elderly
- Living Alone

- Housing Instability
- Financial Difficulty
- Social Isolation

- Substance Use
- Mental Health Conditions

- Learning and/or Physical Disabilities



- Care Leaver
- Sex Worker
- Previous Trauma

- Previous Victim of Abuse or Exploitation

Victims are often targeted because their circumstances make them easier to manipulate or coerce. They may:

Lack awareness or understanding of exploitation.
Be on benefits or low income.
Not know their rights/how to seek help.

Be more receptive to attention or companionship due to loneliness.
Be less likely to report concerns due to fear or trauma.

Live alone in properties with low security, or have tenancies which are easy to manipulate or take over without detection.

Be tempted by offers of money, drugs or gifts
Worry that they will be seen as complicit in criminal activity.

Grooming Tactics

- Befriending the adult and offering them help and/or gifts.
- Using threats, intimidation or violence to control vulnerable adults.
- Creating dependency through drugs, money or emotional manipulation.
- Isolating the adult from their family, friends or caregivers.



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3 Identifying and Responding to Home Takeover

Communication with vulnerable adults about home takeover should be consistent and empathetic – be patient!

Have you had any new people staying with you recently?

Do you feel in control of who comes and goes from your home?

How are things at home? Do you feel you have enough support?

Has anyone asked you for your benefit or bank details?

Is there anyone you can talk to if you are worried about something?

-  **Raise Awareness**
Support vulnerable adults to understand exploitation and their rights; ensure that communication is open and accessible.
-  **Assess and Monitor Risk**
Use tools like the Risk Identification Tool and regularly review care plans. Always consider mental capacity and consent in decision-making.
-  **Take a Trauma-Informed Approach**
Recognise the impact of past trauma on behaviour and avoid re-traumatisation. Prioritise emotional safety and autonomy.
-  **Empower Through Support Services**
Link adults to advocacy services, counselling and peer support groups; help them to access resources and encourage independence whilst offering consistent support.
-  **Explore Safe Housing Options**
Support with emergency accommodation, relocation or tenancy sustainment if required.
-  **Multi-Agency Collaboration**
Work with partner agencies to share information appropriately and protect the adult.
-  **Use Safeguarding Tools and Legal Frameworks**
Consider legal protections under the Care Act (2014) and the Modern Slavery Act (2015). Involve statutory safeguarding partners early.

4 Further Learning and Resources

The Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board would like to acknowledge and thank Leeds University for their contribution to this briefing.

Click to Play:
'Tricky Friends'

Click to Play:
'Targeted & Trapped'

SCAN ME



Webinar on Home Takeover, including information on 'the Newcastle model'.

CLICK HERE

to read our Bitesize Briefing on Information Sharing.

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Risk Identification Tool
(Leeds University).