**Cuckooing**

**What is Cuckooing?**

*Cuckooing is the growing practice of drug dealers taking over homes of vulnerable people or drug addicts for the purposes of supplying drugs to the community.*

*Reports are increasing about anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and violence by dealers who have been driven out of the larger towns or sent by drug bosses.*

Drug dealers are increasingly targeting vulnerable people and taking

over their homes to set up shop, leaving victims with little choice but to co-operate.

Anyone with mental health problems, learning disabilities and substance misuse issues are easy prey. This can be done by initially befriending the person and results in them living in fear of their health and their tenancy/home when increasing numbers of drug dealers take over and use threats of violence to control the person and the home.

Drug addiction plays a large role in the successful takeover of homes and victims can be given drugs and become addicted, making the decision to tell almost impossible. This is how they succeed for so long.

Where the person has a tenancy, the Landlord will usually only find out from reports made by the community following a marked increase in activity at the property. Tenants are usually too scared to tell anybody for fear of reprisals and/or losing their home. Neighbours will also be affected due to the increase in traffic and noise this activity causes.

**How can cuckooing affect tenants?**

If you have been targeted by cuckoos and the police raid your home, you are also likely to be arrested and possibly charged and convicted for dealing drugs. You also risk losing your home for drug activity. The cuckoo will just move on and find somebody else and you will be left to pay for any damage caused to your home and potentially be left with an expensive drug habit.

**What can you do if your home is taken over?**

Tell someone

Cuckooing itself is not a criminal offence but it is anti-social. The Tamworth Community Safety Partnership is well equipped to support victims as long as they co-operate in assisting to remove cuckoos.

You can report this activity to our team if it is a council tenancy on the contact details below or to Staffordshire Police on 101 (999 if you are in danger at the time) or online at [www.staffordshire.police.uk](http://www.staffordshire.police.uk).

**What can your Landlord do?**

Tamworth Borough Council has a zero-tolerance approach to drug dealing in its’ properties and if a resident refuses to co-operate with us to remove the ‘cuckoo’ then we will pursue eviction proceedings.

If you are a victim of cuckooing, our Neighbourhood Impact team will support you and work with local agencies to remove offenders from your home.

**Cuckooing in private accommodation**

If you own your home and are being cuckooed, help is available but you need to tell us.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 extended closure powers. Previously known as a crack house closure order, a Closure Notice can be issued without notice to remove everybody from a property except for the person legally entitled to live there (the tenant/owner) for up to 48 hours. If the behaviour continues, an application can be made to the court for a Closure Order for up to 6 months.

If you are a victim of Cuckooing or you wish to report someone else being cuckooed, you can report this to Staffordshire Police on 101 or online at [www.staffordshire.police.uk](http://www.staffordshire.police.uk).

You can also make a report to Tamworth Borough Council at neighbourhoodimpactteam@tamworth.gov.uk.