

## Highlight Report

### Cuckooing in Sheffield



<b>Project Name:</b>	Development of a Cuckooing protocol	<b>Project Sponsor:</b>	Sam Martin, Head of Commissioning Vulnerable Adults Suzanne Allen, Head of Citywide Housing Jason Siddall, Head of Communities Janet Kerr, Deputy DASS and Chief Social Work Officer
<b>Project Manager:</b>	Michael Corbishley		
<b>Date Mandate Approved:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2023		
State which <b>Strategic Outcome/s</b> this project links to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Strong and connected neighbourhoods which people are happy to call home: Sheffielders live in clean, vibrant and caring communities where people feel safe and are treated with respect.</li><li>- Healthy lives and wellbeing for all: Sheffielders all have the opportunity to lead long, healthy, active and happy lives and can connect to the right health and wellbeing support at the right time</li></ul>		

#### 1. Project Objectives and Summary

This projects aim is to prevent Cuckooing taking place and reduce the risks and impact in instances where it is occurring. This will be achieved by:

- Agree the strategic home for responding to Cuckooing as linked to wider strategies for early intervention and prevention, care and support, community safety, and homelessness prevention and independent living.
- Developing a new multi-agency operational response model informed by best practice, evidence of need and successful outcomes

This project will compliment existing work that is underway including:

- The development of training on how to identify Cuckooing and support victims including current enforcement responses via Community Safety and South Yorkshire Police

- Delivery of a public facing awareness campaign given the prominent role communities play in initially identifying Cuckooing

A more effective response will have a wider benefit to the range of public sector resources that are deployed in the city, including Housing, Care, the NHS, Community Safety and Criminal Justice.

## **2. Project Background**

Cuckooing is a practice where people take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. There are different types of cuckooing:

- Using the property to deal, store or take drugs
- Using the property to sex work
- Taking over the property as a place for them to live
- Taking over the property to financially abuse the tenant

At both a national and local level instances of vulnerable adults being Cuckooed is reported as increasing with the National Crime Agency and the Home Office linking the growth in Cuckooing to the rise in County Lines. Across England there are an increasing number of local authorities putting greater emphasis on identifying and responding to Cuckooing effectively.

In Sheffield, whilst good practice in response to incidents of Cuckooing has been identified, responses and outcomes remain inconsistent. Feedback from frontline practitioners and managers is that this is due to:

- A lack of awareness across the wider Sheffield workforce
- No agreed multi-agency responses or protocols in place
- No strategic oversight of the issue

At a multi-agency meeting in September 2022, whilst it was recognised that the issue appears to be increasing it was agreed that we required a better understanding of the scale and impact of the issue before developing this workstream any further. The local Changing Futures programme in Sheffield agreed to undertake this data analysis.

Easily accessible quantitative data is unavailable, both in Sheffield and nationally, as very few organisations record incidents of Cuckooing in its own right. Therefore, the Changing Futures programme team undertook the following approach to establish a data set:

- Data was extracted from multiple Sheffield City Council systems using 'search functionality'. This pulled out records which included any mention of 'Cuckooing', 'Cuckooed' or 'Cuckoo'.
- These records were then manually checked to distinguish whether cuckooing was suspected, whether it was taking place, whether the record related to a victim or perpetrator and the nature of the cuckooing
- Data sets were also requested from partner organisations across the city. These submissions were then cross referenced with the primary data set and duplicates removed

As Cuckooing is not explicitly recorded it is worth noting the limitations of this approach to establishing a truly accurate data set. It is likely that in absence of explicitly recorded instances of Cuckooing we have ended with a under estimation in terms of scale.

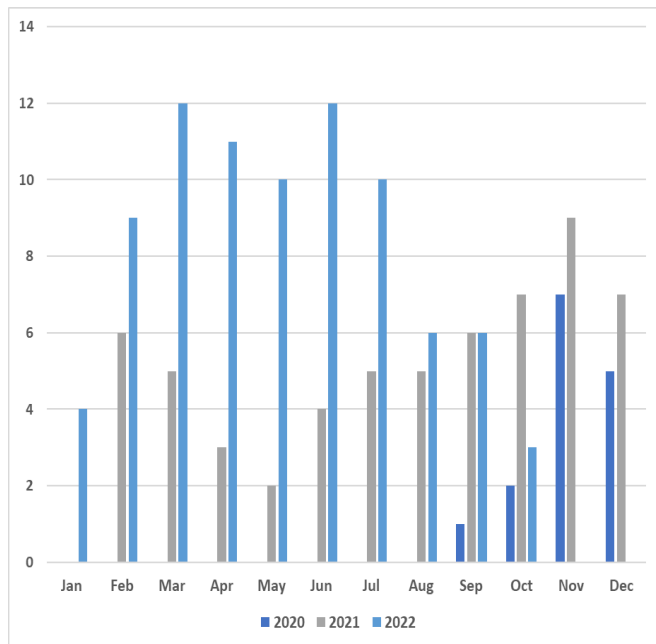
In addition, the Sheffield Race Equality Commission report 2022 flagged the importance of considering race when establishing data sets. Individuals from ethnic minorities were underrepresented in the data set established through the work above. Nationally those from ethnic minorities are most likely to be victims of crime therefore the Changing Futures programme team took further steps to check this was reflective of situation on the ground by:

- Extracting records from SCC systems for local citizens from ethnic minorities that detailed behaviours often associated with cuckooing such as Anti-Social Behaviour, Drug Dealing and Noise Nuisance
- Removing duplicate records where individuals appeared across different data sets
- Manually checking a percentage of these records to ascertain whether the individual could have been a victim of Cuckooing but had not been recognised as such

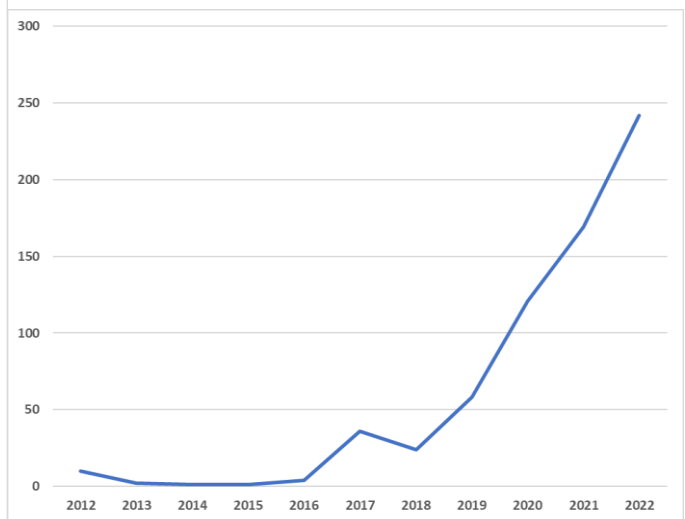
### 3. Evidence of Need

With a data range of October 2020 to October 2022, 287 records were identified through the data process. Once duplicate records, perpetrators and non-related records were removed there were **166 individuals** identified as victims of Cuckooing.

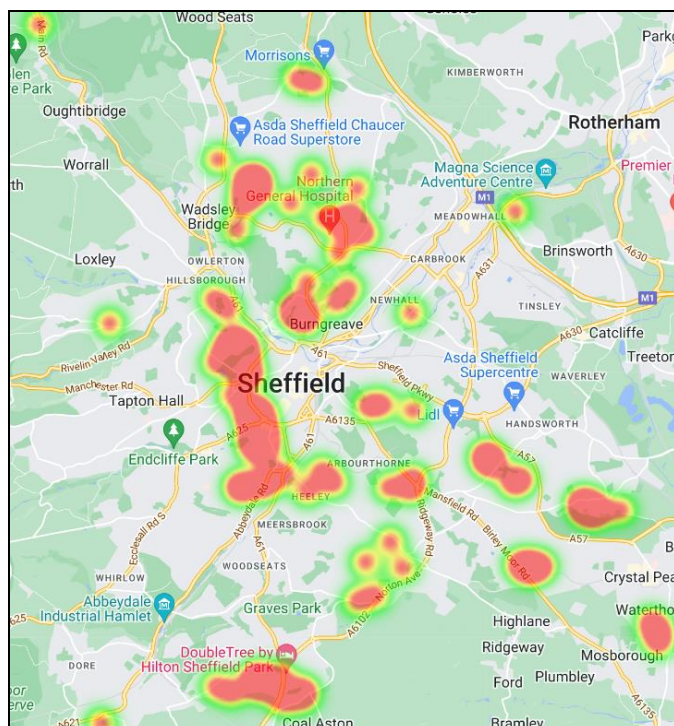
This data work established that Cuckooing is increasing in Sheffield, in 2022 there was a 43% increase in victims of Cuckooing. The two graphs below demonstrate this increase:



Dates for the 166 identified victims over the last 24 months. Data collected in October 2022 hence reduction/absence in Nov/Dec



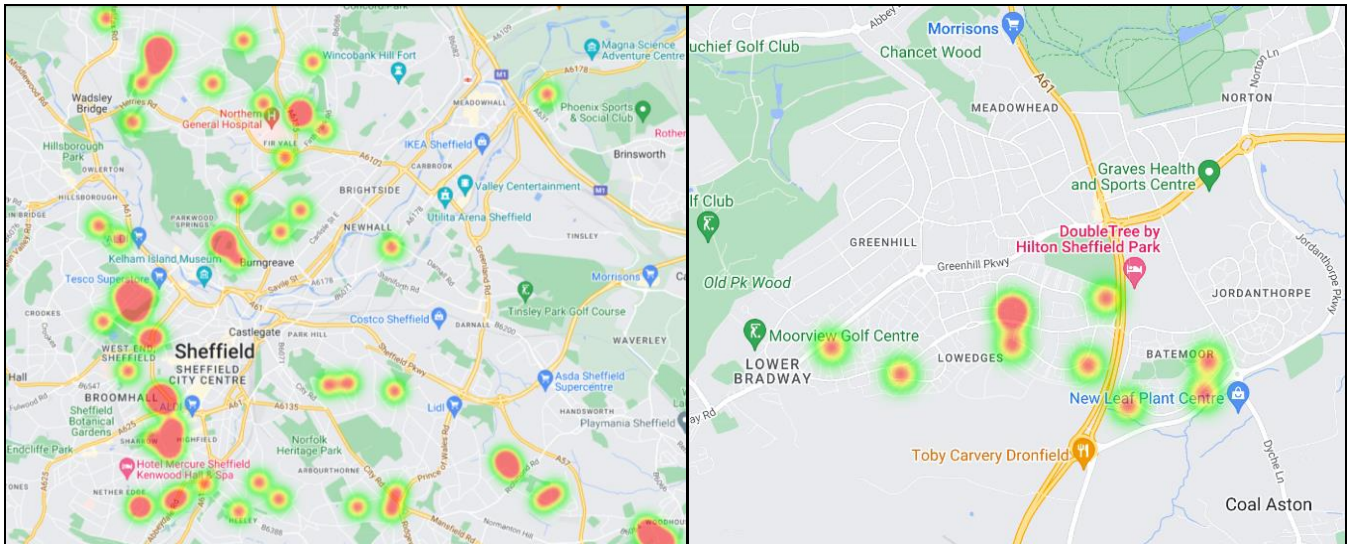
The number of records that include the word Cuckooing (inc variations) in SCC's housing data system OHMS



Cuckooing was most prevalent in the following wards (listed in order):

- Burngreave
- Beauchief and Greenhill (Lowedges)
- Manor Castle
- Walkley
- Nether Edge and Sharrow
- Southey
- Broomhill and Sharrow Vale
- Woodhouse

There was a strong correlation between identified locations for Cuckooing and reported drugs crimes based on South Yorkshire Police crime data. These heat maps show where instances of Cuckooing were most prevalent.



Using available data, we were also able to produce a victim profile:

‘White British, aged 36-45 with a history of homelessness and current substance use & mental health support needs’

It is worth noting that a significant proportion of the females identified as victims of Cuckooing were also known victims of Domestic Abuse. There is a risk that conflation between these concerns has resulted in an underreporting of female victims in relation to Cuckooing.

#### 4. Benefits

- The primary objective is to safeguard vulnerable residents in Sheffield via more effective support
- To disrupt the operations of Organised Crime Groups who target vulnerable adults via Cuckooing to facilitate illegal activities
- To reduce instances of Anti-Social Behaviour and pressures on the related support teams within the city
- Reduce costs linked to rent arrears, property repairs, and resources required for enforcement action
- To support the delivery of strong and connected neighbourhoods where people feel safe
- To deliver better outcomes for vulnerable adults reducing their reliance on long term support services
- Prevent Cuckooing taking place enabling vulnerable adults to live safe independent lives

## 5. Project Approach

The project approach will be to:

- Work in partnership with all stakeholders internal and external e.g. SCC Commissioning Services, SCC Housing Services, social care, NHS, police, probation, social landlords and housing associations, private landlords and a wide range of care and support providers.
- Work in co-production with the customers of the service (residents of Sheffield).
- The Steering Group will be made up of members (senior officers) from SCC Housing Services, SCC Community Services, SCC Commissioning Services, South Yorkshire Police, Adult Social Care Safeguarding,
- The Members of the Steering Group will provide:
  - a strategic level oversight on delivering necessary actions
  - broad knowledge, expertise and advice including horizon scanning
  - direction on how to implement the agreed approach
- Appropriate Sub-Groups to be established as well and be led by experienced officers who will provide skills in more specific area.
- Approval routes – this will develop as the direction of the project becomes clearer but will follow SCC and partner governance as appropriate.

## 6. Project Timescales

- Agree strategic oversight which will hold responsibility for this project – April 2023
- Scope the development of a multi-agency pathway focused on responding to Cuckooing– June – August 2023
- Delivery of city wide training to inform front line practitioners of this pathway – September 2023 +

## 7. Project Resources (people and money)

Resourcing for the project will be met, wherever possible, from within existing service budgets.

Current resources required:

- Project Leads – Michael Corbishley (Changing Futures Programme Manager)

- A Steering Group to be developed comprised of key stakeholders including but not limited to SCC Commissioning, SCC Housing, SCC Communities, SCC Adult Social Care, South Yorkshire Police, Third Sector partners and Registered Providers

## 8. Funding

At current no additional funding is required to perform this work; subject to the scoping work noted in section 6.

## 9. Risk

1. Impact on vulnerable residents being Cuckooed
2. Potential resource implications that arise through the development of a shared strategic and operational response
3. Project is dependent on resource via the Changing Futures programme which is due to finish in March 2024

## 10. Links and Dependencies

This work will support a number of strategic objectives that are shared between key partners, such as:

- Sheffield City Councils Corporate Delivery Plan: Fair, inclusive and empowered communities and Healthy lives and wellbeing for all
- Adult Health and Social Care Strategy 2022-2030: all is relevant. Priorities include Safe and Well, Active and Independent, Connected and Engaged and Aspire and Achieve.
- Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22: strengthen partnerships to support adults with complex and multiple needs
- Community Safety Partnership Plan: Cuckooing, domestic abuse and hate crime
- South Yorkshire Integrated Care Boards Five Year Plan: Developing a Population Health System and Broadening and Strengthening our Partnerships to increase our opportunity
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-24: all is relevant. Ambitions include “Everyone has access to a home that supports their health” and “Everyone has equitable access to care and support shaped around them”
- Sheffield Safeguarding Adult Board Strategic Plan 2020-23: all is relevant. Priorities include “working in partnership” and “engage and empower”.
- South Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2022-25. Current plan priorities are all relevant, including “protecting vulnerable people” and “treating people fairly”.
- South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Strategy: most are relevant. Priorities include “Encourage all professionals and organisations to continue to work toward becoming trauma-informed” and “Work in partnership to improve the mental health of the population, and advocate for those who need support to receive it in a timely manner”.