

Coercive Control



What is it? Coercive control is a term used to describe a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victims sense of liberty or freedom. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour. Short video clips provide more information. (Right click on text and select open hyperlink. If in slideshow click on hyperlink) Five minute clip [Staffordshire Police - Coercive Control](#) clip. 3 minute clip [Wakefield Council](#).

What should we do? Be open to any disclosure made. Be sensitive, gather information and make any appropriate referrals. Think about the impact on the child. For more information go to the [Swindon Community Safety Partnership website](#):

What is the impact? Coercive control reduces a victim's power to make decisions, which limits the ability to exercise independence, making it difficult to break away from the abuser. It can lead to: Increased levels of suicide, self-harm, and substance misuse; deterioration of mental health; risks to children in the family including emotional and physical abuse.

The law: On 29th December 2015 the offence of coercive control came into force and applies to behaviour that has happened since that date. It enables charges to be brought in domestic abuse cases where there is evidence of repeated controlling or coercive behaviour and carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine. **UPDATE: On 5th April 2023** the law amended and the controlling and coercive behaviour offence removed the 'living together' requirement. [New statutory guidance](#) has been published.



Coercive control is: a form of domestic abuse. Many perpetrators never use physical violence. Some may use what is best described as minor assaultive violence such as pushing, grabbing and/or getting "up in a victim's face". Others may threaten physical violence. Some may follow through on these threats, but only when they are losing control over the victim.

Grooming: Often coercive control starts through grooming to win the trust of their victim. This will then lead to a pattern of behaviour including: Isolating a person from their friends and family; depriving them of their basic needs; monitoring their time; repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless; controlling the finances; threats to hurt or kill.

Why it matters. One study found that 95 out of 100 domestic abuse survivors reported experiencing coercive control. (Kelly et al, 2014) Wiltshire Police data for 2019-20 recorded 117 reports were made relating to coercive control. Of those 4 victims were male and 113 victims were female.