

01 Background



Abuse legislation regarding Coercive Control went 'live' nationally on Tuesday 29th December 2015. This carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine. Coercive control is a term developed to help us understand domestic abuse as more than a "fight". It is a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victim's liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self. It describes the wide range of controlling acts including manipulation, intimidation, sexual coercion, gaslighting (a form of psychological abuse in which a victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory, perception, and sanity).

"Not only is coercive control the most common context in which women are abused, it is also the most dangerous" – Stark 2007

Why it matters 02



To ensure an effective response, this legislation closes a gap around patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships between:

- Intimate partners
- Former partners who still live together
- Family members

This **DOES NOT** relate to a single incident: It's a purposeful pattern of behaviour that takes place over time, in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. The behaviour has a serious effect on the victim and the perpetrator knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on the victim.

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Questions

Do we know enough about coercive & controlling behaviour to recognise it?

Are we clear about the impact on children of coercive & controlling behaviour?

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Information

Coercive control is exerted by a range of behaviours such as:

- Unreasonable behaviour or petty demands

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What to do

- Observe the evidence of coercive control.
- Remember that individual behaviours add up to a cumulative effect
- Record your observations
- Risk assess the situation and refer to support services as relevant
- Triangulate information, for example by checking what the children say
- Adopt an understanding/ non-judgemental, supportive attitude
- Recognise the impact and how victims may present
- Risk assess the situation for any children and refer to CSC if required or support services for the child & signpost



Coercive Control

- Deprivation of food
- Destruction of possessions

- Deprivation of the means needed for independence, resistance or escape

- Controlling dress code
- Behavioural control
- Sexual coercion

- Remember that individual behaviours add up to a cumulative effect

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- Degradation – malicious name – calling, or bullying behaviour (buying clothes that are purposefully too small)

- Restricting daily activities – isolated from support

- Threats or intimidation – if the victim doesn't comply

- Financial control – monitoring of your spending, or giving an 'allowance'

- Monitoring of time – stalking your movements

- Removal of mobile phone or changing passwords



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