

COERCIVE CONTROL

1. What is 'Coercive Control'?

Coercive control is a term used to describe a pattern of behaviour that takes place over time. It covers a range of behaviours that a perpetrator chooses to use against their victim in order for them to maintain control and make their victim feel inferior, dependant and frightened.

Coercive control is a key factor in domestic abuse, child and adult safeguarding, exploitation and modern day slavery.

It is a criminal offence in England and Wales for someone to subject another person to coercive control

2. Key Messages

- Coercive control often starts through grooming. Predators will target adults or children they consider vulnerable, initially offering support & care, as a way to win trust.
- The types of coercive control being used will differ from victim to victim & perpetrators will often use a combination of tactics, taking advantage of any weakness or insecurities to manipulate, intimidate, isolate & humiliate.
- Being subjected to coercive control reduces a person's ability to make decisions & limits their independence & can create co-dependency, which makes it very hard for them to break away.
- Coercive & controlling behaviour is the strongest indicator of risk. But it is often missed as the focus is on the severity of single incidents, rather than considering the pattern of behaviour.



4. Resources

- **Coercion & Exploitation**
- **Women's Aid** - What is Coercive Control?
- **Rights of Women** - Coercive Control & the Law
- **Care or Control?** - A Guide to Coercive and Controlling Behaviour
- **Women's Aid** - Controlling Behaviour in Relationships
- **Ask for ANI** - A scheme providing a safe way for domestic abuse victims to access support from the Police or other support services
- **Ask for Angela** - If someone asks bar staff for 'Angela' they will know to provide help getting out of a situation and will help them leave discreetly
- **Domestic Abuse and Child Protection** – Thinking and doing differently
- **NSPCC** - Insights on the impact of coercive control on children and young people

3. What Does This Mean for Me?

- Be confident to ask direct questions
- Look for patterns of coercive control
- Ask if they ever feel frightened or unsafe
- Don't dismiss or minimise non-physical abuse
- Believe disclosures made, adopt an understanding & non-judgmental approach
- Reinforce that it is not their fault
- Gather information & share appropriately as part of risk assessments
- Have referral & signposting information on specialist support available
- **Think Family:** coercive control directed at a mother or main carer will have consequences for others

Remember that separate, sometimes low-level acts can have a damaging cumulative effect on individuals. Are you clear on the impact?

Coercive & controlling behaviour between partners, ex-partners & family members is a crime

Click on the text above to access each link