

1

Background

Coercive control is a pattern of behaviours a perpetrator uses to gain power and control by undermining a person's self-esteem or sense of self and restrict or remove their freedom or liberty. It describes a number of controlling acts including intimidation, sexual coercion, manipulation, and gaslighting, a form of psychological abuse in which a victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory and sanity.

[Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015](#) created a new offence of controlling and coercive behaviour. This offence carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and a fine.

2

Why it matters

The legislation closes a gap around patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships between intimate partners, former partners who still live together and members of a family. It does not relate to one single event, but instead is a pattern of behaviour that occurs over time. There were 17,616 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019, compared to 9,053 in the previous year. 97% of defendants prosecuted for coercive and controlling behaviour in the year ending December 2018, were male. (ONS, 2019).

3

Information

Coercive control includes a range of behaviours such as:

- Unreasonable behaviour or petty demands
- Degradation, malicious name calling or bullying behaviour
- Limiting daily activities and isolating the victim from support
- Threats and intimidating behaviour if the victim is not compliant
- Financial control
- Monitoring a victim's time or stalking their movements
- Removal of their phone or changing their passwords

7

Questions to consider

Do you know enough about coercive control?

Are you clear on the impact of coercive control on adults and children?

If you have a suspicion that someone is a victim of coercive control, do you know what to do?

For more information visit:

[White Ribbon UK](#)
[16 Days 16 Stories](#)
[NEST Lancashire](#)
[Home Office Guidance](#)
[The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
[Women's Aid](#)
[Domestic Abuse: How to get help](#)
[NEST](#)
[Wish centre](#)
[Empowerment](#)
[Lancashire Constabulary](#)
[Lancashire Victim Services](#)
[Fylde Coast Women's Aid](#)

6

What to do

Understand a victim's reasons for refusing services or disengaging from services.

Understand the victim's strengths. Build these strengths to help them engage with services.

Keep in touch with a victim regularly to discuss their relationship & how services can help them. Contact should be more frequent and persistent with higher assessed risk.

Work in partnership with other services so that information is shared & protection of victims is comprehensive & co-ordinated.

Risk is never static. A perpetrator may adopt different ways to control & coerce a victim to disguise compliance or evade detection. Be alert, aware & remain in contact.

5

The effect of these behaviours on victims can cause, fear, inaction, reluctance to leave a partner, appearing to collude with an abusive partner, resistance to accepting services, increased levels of suicide, self-harm, substance misuse, deterioration of mental health, and increased risk to children in the family including emotional and physical abuse.

Lancashire Constabulary's [#Noexcuseforabuse](#) campaign outlines the signs of Domestic Abuse and how to access help and support from the Police, as well as information about Clare's Law and the [Ask for ANI](#) guidance.

4

- Depriving a victim of food
- Destroying a victim's possessions
- Depriving them of the ability to be independent, resist or escape
- Controlling their dress code
- Controlling their behaviour
- Sexual coercion

It is important to be mindful that these individual behaviours can add up to a cumulative effect.

