

WOLVERHAMPTON SAFEGUARDING TOGETHER

7 MINUTE BRIEFING: COERCIVE CONTROL



What is coercive control?

Coercive control is a term used to describe a pattern of behaviour which seeks to undermine a person's self-esteem or sense of self and restrict or remove their 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.

It can involve a variety of controlling acts such as manipulation, intimidation, sexual coercion, gaslighting (a form of psychological abuse in which a victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory and sanity).

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:

[Wolverhampton Safeguarding – Domestic Violence](#)

What is coercive control?

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.

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; substance misuse; deterioration of mental health; risks to children in the family including emotional; physical abuse.

What is coercive control?

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.

The law

The offence of coercive control came into force on 29th December 2015 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.

Why it matters?

The legislation closes a gap around patterns of coercive & controlling behaviour in relationships between intimate partners, former partners who still live together and family members.

This does not relate to a single incident – it is a pattern of behaviour that takes place over time, in order for one person to exert power, control or coercion over another. The perpetrator knows, or ought to know, that the behaviour will have a serious effect on the victim.

