

**Coercive Control Factsheet**

**What is coercive control?**

Domestic abuse isn’t always physical. Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

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.

Experts like Evan Stark liken coercive control to being taken hostage. As he says: ***“the victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear.”***

**Behaviours may include:**

* Isolating a person from their friends and family
* Depriving them of their basic needs
* Monitoring their time
* Monitoring a person
* Controlling aspects of their everyday life i.e. where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and sleep
* Depriving them access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services
* Repeated put downs. Enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim

**Is coercive control a criminal offence?**

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created an offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships. This became an offence on 29 December 2015. It recognises that Domestic Abuse is not always violent and can take other forms. This offence currently carries a maximum sentence of 5 years, a fine or both.

An offence is committed by A if:

* A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person, B, that is controlling or coercive; and
* At time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected; and
* The behaviour has a serious effect on B; and
* A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

**Types of Evidence**

Evidence gathering is crucial in proving Coercive Control offences. Agencies need to ensure they fully document any disclosures and these are located securely. Types of evidence could include:

* Copies of emails; phone records; text messages;
* Evidence of abuse over the internet, digital technology and social media platforms;
* Evidence of an assault; photographs of injuries such as: defensive injuries to forearms, latent upper arm grabs, scalp bruising, clumps of hair missing. medical records;
* 999 tapes or transcripts; CCTV; body worn video footage;
* Lifestyle and household including at scene photographic evidence;
* Records of interaction with services such as support services, (even if parts of those records relate to events which occurred before the new offence came into force, their contents may still, in certain circumstances, be relied on in evidence);
* Witness testimony, for example the family and friends of the victim may be able to give evidence about the effect and impact of isolation of the victim from them.
* Local enquiries: neighbours, regular deliveries, postal, milk delivery, window cleaner etc;
* Bank records to show financial control;
* Previous threats made to children or other family members; diary kept by the victim
* Victim’s account of what happened to the police,
* Evidence of isolation such as lack of contact between family and friends, victim withdrawing from activities

The statutory guidance can be found at[**Statutory guidance framework: controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship**](Statutory%20guidance%20framework:%20controlling%20or%20coercive%20behaviour%20in%20an%20intimate%20or%20family%20relationship)

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