



One minute guide

Coercive Control Offence

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What is coercive control?

Coercive control or controlling behaviour is a common feature in abusive relationships.

In most cases of domestic violence and abuse, coercive control is present. It can include domination without acts of violence and usually involves a range of financial, emotional and other forms of pressure designed to control and dominate an intimate partner (or ex-partner).

Victims report that coercive control can be more damaging than physical abuse and can greatly undermine their confidence and self-esteem.

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality (Home Office, 2013)'.

Coercive control is a significant indicator of risk to life, especially after a relationship has ended and has featured highly in recent Domestic Homicide Reviews in Leeds.

What is the coercive control offence?

Victims who are subjected to sustained patterns of domestic abuse can seek protection under a new offence.

This is the Coercive Control Offence which is contained in [Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015](#) which came into force on 29th December 2015. The new offence means that victims who experience extreme psychological and emotional abuse can see the perpetrators brought to justice. The offence carries a maximum of 5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both.

In this offence, controlling or coercive behaviour causes someone either:

- To fear that violence will be used against them on at least two occasions; or
- Serious alarm or distress which has a substantial effect on their usual day-to-day activities.

When looking at cases, prosecutors will be trained to look at the overall effect the controlling and/or coercive behaviour has had on the victim. The consideration of the cumulative impact of controlling and coercive behaviour and the pattern of behaviour within the context of the relationship will be crucial.

Practitioners should talk to people they are working with about the seriousness of coercive behaviour, the fact that it is a criminal offence and where appropriate help them to access relevant support. This may include assisting them to contact the police to report a crime.

What kinds of abusive behaviour might be taking place?

This type of abuse in an intimate or family relationship can include a pattern of threats, humiliation and intimidation. This behaviour can include:

Stopping or changing the way someone socialises;

Controlling their social media accounts;

Limiting access to family, friends and finances;

Dictating what they wear;

Monitoring a person via online communication tools e.g. tracking apps on mobile phones; and

Repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless and humiliating and embarrassing the victim.

Key contacts or for more information

The key contact is:

Michelle de Souza, Manager - Domestic Violence Team—Safer Leeds
michelle.desouza@leeds.gov.uk

For more information, you can read the statutory guidance framework:
[Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship](#)

You can also look for more information on the new website:
Leedsdomesticviolenceandabuse.co.uk

You can also read other one minute guides on subjects related to domestic violence and abuse:

[Domestic Violence](#), [Joint Targeted Area Inspection—Domestic Abuse](#),
[Daily Domestic Violence Meeting](#), [Domestic Violence School Notifications](#),
[Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#), [Caring Dads Programme](#), [PACT](#),
[Family Drug & Alcohol Court](#) and [Front Door Safeguarding Hub](#).