

7-minute briefing Coercive control

1. Introduction

Abuse legislation regarding coercive control went 'live' nationally on Tuesday 29th December 2015. This carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine. Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victim's liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self. It describes the wide range of controlling acts including manipulation, intimidation, sexual coercion, gaslighting (a form of psychological abuse in which a victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory, perception, and sanity).

2. Why it matters?

To ensure an effective response, this legislation closes a gap around patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships between:

- intimate partners
- former partners who still live together
- family members

This **DOES NOT** relate to a single incident: it is a purposeful pattern of behaviour that takes place over time, for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. The behaviour has a serious effect on the victim and the perpetrator knows, or ought to know, that the behaviour will have a serious effect on the victim.

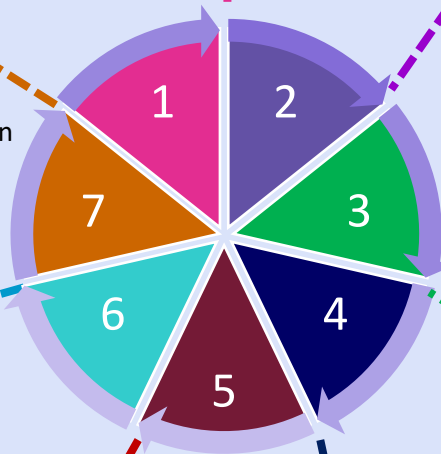
3. What is coercive control?

Coercive control is exerted by a range of behaviours such as:

- unreasonable behaviour or petty demands
- degradation – malicious name-calling or bullying behaviour
- restricting daily activities – isolated from support
- threats or intimidation if the victim doesn't comply

7. Consider and discuss

Do we know enough about coercive & controlling behaviour to recognise it? Are we clear about the impact on children of coercive & controlling behaviour? "Not only is coercive control the most common context in which women are abused, it is also the most dangerous" – Stark 2007



4. Further examples of coercive behaviour

Financial control – monitoring or spending or giving an 'allowance'

- Monitoring of time – stalking of movements
- Removal of a mobile phone or changing passwords
- Deprivation of good
- Destruction of possessions
- Deprivation of the means needed for independence, resistance or escape
- Controlling dress code
- Behavioural control
- Sexual coercion

5. What can we do?

- ✓ Risk assess the situation
- ✓ Signpost and / or refer to support services as necessary including:
 - Bexley Solace Women's Aid
 - Adult Social Care
 - Children's Social Care
- ✓ Triangulate information, for example by checking what the adults or children say.

6. What to do?

- Observe the evidence of coercive control
- Adopt an understanding, non-judgemental, supportive attitude
- Recognise the impact and how victims may present
- Record your observations.