



Kirklees Safeguarding Children Partnership

Coercive Control

What is it?

Coercive control describes a deliberate and calculated pattern of behaviour and psychological abuse designed to isolate, manipulate and terrorise a victim into complete fearful obedience. Coercive control is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Controlling tactics include isolating victims from family, friends and professionals; controlling how victims acquire and use money and economic resources; monitoring communications, tracking their movements, using hidden cameras and spyware; and gaslighting (convincing victims and others that the victim is crazy, and their erratic behaviour is the reason why perpetrators need to control them i.e. they are terrible with money, they are a danger to themselves and others etc).

Why it matters

95% of domestic abuse victims report experiencing coercive control, and victims tell us controlling coercive behaviour is the worst part of being in abusive relationship. Controlling and abusive tactics can escalate dramatically if there are any threats to that control i.e. a victim attempting to leave the relationship. 92% of domestic homicides include controlling behaviour.

What is the impact on children

Research suggests that children may experience behavioural and emotional difficulties as a result of coercive control, whether there is severe physical violence in the relationship or not. Childhood exposure to coercive control, and living in fear of perpetrators, can affect the way children regulate emotions, respond to fearful stimuli, develop trusting relationships with others and make decisions for themselves. Living with toxic levels of stress also may have a detrimental impact on learning, and on development across a range of health and well-being indicators.

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.

What should we do?

Professionals working with children and families in Kirklees should be equipped to recognise coercive and controlling behaviour and know how to respond sensitively, without escalating risks for victims and/or children. Above all, victims and children making disclosures should be listened to, believed and taken seriously. Professionals should seek specialist advice

through local support networks if they need information and advice about how to support victims and children.

Where can I get more information and/or support?

<https://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/safeguarding-2/different-types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/>

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Supporting-a-survivor>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/>