

Coercive Control and Perpetrator Behaviour

Domestic abuse can happen in any intimate or family relationship, to anyone regardless of gender, sexuality or social background. It can also happen inside or outside of the home, over the phone, internet or social networks. Domestic abuse can happen at any time during a relationship or after a relationship has ended.

Types of domestic abuse

- Psychological/emotional abuse – [more info](#)
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking – [more info](#)
- Online or digital abuse
- Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA)
- Honour Based Violence (HBV) – [more info](#)
- Coercive Control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)

Common examples of coercive control

- Isolating a victim from friends and family.
- Depriving a victim of basic needs, such as food.
- Monitoring a victim's time.
- Monitoring a victim's activity online.
- Control over aspects of a victim's everyday life, where they go, who they see and what they wear.
- Depriving a victim access to support services.
- Repeatedly putting a victim down.
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising a victim.
- Being pressured or forced into unwanted sexual activity.
- Controlling finances.
- Making threats or intimidating behaviour.

What is Coercive Control

Coercive control 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.

In 2015 controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship was made a crime under the Serious Crime Act.

An estimated **7.9%** of women (1.3 million) and **4.2%** of men (695,000) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

(Crime Survey for England and Wales, March 2018)

95% of domestic abuse survivors report experiencing coercive control.

(Kelly et al, 2014)

Support available

Women's Aid

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24/7 helpline)
Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
Website: www.womensaid.org

Northumbria Police

Tel: 999 emergency/101 non-emergency
Website: www.northumbria.police.uk

Victims First Northumbria

Tel: 0800 011 3116
Website: victimsfirstnorthumbria.org.uk

National Stalking Helpline

Tel: 0808 802 0300

Halo Project

(Honour based violence/ forced marriage)
Tel: 01642 683045
Email: info@haloproject.org.uk
Website: www.haloproject.org.uk

The Angelou Centre

(North East BME service)
Tel: 0191 266 0394
Email: admin@angelou-centre.org.uk
Website: www.angelou-centre.org.uk

NSPCC

Tel: 0808 8005000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Barnardo's – www.barnardos.org.uk

Perpetrator Behaviour

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off event and can take many forms. A victim can often experience different forms of abuse at the hands of the same abuser.

Not all domestic abuse is physical and can also include harassment, stalking, sexual coercion or coercive control. A domestic abuse perpetrator may exhibit controlling behaviour over the victim and their everyday life which can escalate over time and may include control over finances.

Victims of domestic abuse may find that their relationship with their abuser moves quite quickly and that they are pressured to show commitment at a relatively early stage. The abuser may also display jealousy and attempt to isolate the victim from other important people in their lives such as friends and family members. An abuser may have unrealistic expectations and will expect the victim to meet all or most of their needs. They may appear hypersensitive and perceive even slight setbacks as personal slights or insults. They may also blame others for how they feel or any problems that they experience.

As the abuse continues, victims may find themselves being the subject of verbal attacks and insults at the hands of the perpetrator. The abuser may begin to use force in sex that at first appears playful or to be testing the boundaries, which can then escalate to more serious sexual assaults within the relationship. As the abuse continues, the abuser may begin to use aggression or threats of violence which often escalate to violent acts, either towards the victim or in some cases, animals or pets within the household. Abusers often have a violent past which the victim may or may not be aware of (Hackney Council 2019).

You can find information regarding Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) [here](#).

Case Study - Alex Skeel

Coercive control can be perpetrated by anyone in any relationship, some people assume that victims are always female, however like any domestic abuse, males can be victims too. A documentary showing just how easily this can happen was produced by the BBC. Survivor Alex Skeel is the subject of 'Abused by my girlfriend' which tells the true story of how Alex lived through an abusive relationship with his girlfriend Jordan Worth.

The pair met as teenagers and the relationship gradually became more controlling and violent. Alex was isolated from his family and friends. Jordan took over Alex's Facebook account, controlled when he could eat, resulting in him losing weight and slept with objects to physically abuse him with. Alex's family were left powerless to stop

what was happening and did not realise the extent of the violence and control in the relationship. This case was described as one of the most extreme cases of domestic violence Bedfordshire Police had ever seen.

Alex's partner was the first woman convicted of coercive and controlling behaviour in the UK. In April 2018 she was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison. You can see the full film through a link in [this article](#).

A shorter version of the documentary is available [here](#).

Wakefield Council produced a short film to help explain how coercive control can happen in relationships.

Operation Encompass - The Next Steps use this video in one of the KS4 sessions - [view here](#)