

7 Minute Briefing: Coercive Control

1. Background

Coercive control is a term used to describe a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victims sense of liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self. It includes a wide range of controlling acts including manipulation, isolation, intimidation, sexual coercion, humiliation, gaslighting (a form of psychological abuse in which a victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory, perception and sanity). Victims, their family or professionals do not always realise they are a victim.

7. Key points

Follow your own agency procedures.
Use the Early Help Directory for sources of help and support [click here](#)

6. What to do

Use professional curiosity and be confident to ask questions

BELIEVE disclosures made and adopt an understanding, non-judgemental approach.

Gather information and share appropriately to enable risk assessment and relevant response.

Remember the voice of the child and adult.

5. Some examples of Coercive Control

- Using technology to monitor or track a person or threaten them. E.g phones or social media
- Isolation- stalking or restricting movements, alienation of friends/ family
- Manipulation –of friends, professionals, children and family
- Withholding/destruction- food, money, passport, clothes, contraceptives, sanitary products
- Threats to individual and family members and friends

4. What's the effect?

Coercive control may create deprivation of independence and liberty, which can cause co-dependency, making it difficult to break away from the abuser.

There are increased levels of suicide, self-harm, and substance misuse, deterioration of mental health, risk of death and criminal offences. Risks to children also include emotional, physical abuse.

2. Why it matters

Coercive Control is a crime which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and a fine. It is a key factor in Child Safeguarding and Adult Safeguarding; Child Exploitation, Domestic Abuse, Harmful Practices, Modern Day Slavery, Mate Crime and Radicalisation.

This behaviour has a major effect on both the victim and the perpetrator. In Liverpool there have been a number of domestic homicides which included coercive control as a key element.

3. Information

Often coercive control starts through grooming. Predators will target vulnerable children, or adults, families, friends, professionals. They may initially provide support and assistance as part of the grooming process to win the trust of their victim.

Coercive control does not relate to a single incident, it's a purposeful pattern of behaviour that takes place over time, in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another.



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