

### What is Coercive Behaviour?

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Coercive Control is Domestic Abuse and often referred to as "hidden in plain sight".

Coercion is a continuing act or pattern of acts (assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation) designed to harm, punish or frighten their victim. This includes honour-based violence, FGM and Forced Marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

### What is Controlling Behaviour?

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It is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent. This is done through isolation from support, exploiting resources for personal gain, depriving them of means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Victims/Survivors, families and professionals often do not realise they are a victim.

In Norfolk, there have been domestic homicides which included coercive control as a key element.

### Signs to look for

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Coercive Control often starts with emotional abuse and there is a process involved to gain trust, developing into power and control over the person.

- Moving the relationship on quickly at the start, with over-the-top displays of attention and affection – exaggerated compliments, gifts and communication overload.
- Start to make demands/rules/expectations such as control and access to finances, phone usage, daily movements, what to wear and isolation from friends and family. There may be consequences if these are not followed such as threats and intimidation towards children/pets..
- Distorting reality for the person can happen and involve manipulation of professionals.

### Impact on the person

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The impact of the control on the person may include:

- Lack of confidence and self esteem
- Feelings of shame
- Feeling trapped
- Powerless
- Use of drugs & alcohol to feel better
- Doubting own memory and abilities
- Physical injuries
- Fear of "what's next"
- Impact on children – physical, emotional abuse

### What's my role?

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- Be familiar with your Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Policies, always following the reporting procedures.
- Police, NIDAS and Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care are all available to provide support.
- Your local domestic abuse champion or safeguarding lead may ask you for more information.
- Be proactive and ask (in a safe space), making it a routine enquiry. Always use a trauma informed approach, record conversations verbatim (questions/answers), what impact is it having, what changes are observed (diet, work, medication, relationships, carer, socially).

### The Law

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- The Serious Crime Act 2015 makes coercive and controlling behaviour an offence in intimate and familial relationships
- It is a purposeful pattern of behaviour taking place over time, exerting power, control or coercion over a person
- It must cause fear of violence on at least 2 occasions OR caused serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on the victim's usual day-to-day activities.

### Further Information

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- Coercive and Controlling behaviour, Statutory Guidance [here](#)
- NIDAS [link](#)
- Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care [link](#)
- Norfolk Police Online Reporting [link](#) or 999/101
- Norfolk County Council – [link](#) and [link](#)