

What is post-separation abuse? 1

It is a pattern of behaviour which continues after a relationship has ended. Manipulation, coercion, controlling tactics and behaviour can impact all aspects of a victim's life – children, pets, finances, jobs.

The period after separation remains one of the most dangerous times for those escaping abusive relationships.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides a definition of abuse, and Section 2 provides a definition of "personally connected".

Kaleidoscopic UK produced a post-separation abuse video which is a recommended watch.

Continued Control 2

Research has indicated a number of ways the abusers can continue to control the person:

- Physical/threats of violence
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Abduct a child or using a child to gain information
- Undermining parental authority
- Track and control schedules

Post-separation abuse is ongoing coercive control, creating a continuous harm, with increased risks to mental health, finances, parental stability and physical safety and can often be enabled by systems who fail to recognise the abuse.

Leaving an abusive relationship does not automatically bring safety – for many it is the stage where harm becomes dangerous.

The impact on children 3

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children in their own right as victims of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse makes children's lives frightening and unpredictable, impacts their daily life and the family's ability to function as a whole.

Dr Emma Katz Research highlights that perpetrators often manipulate children and professionals in order to maintain that power and control post-separation.

We must recognise that the abusers' actions are directly harming the child's world.

Learning from DARD's 4

The Femicide Census 2020 identified 37% of women killed by their partner/ex-partner had separated or taken steps to separate. **30% were killed within the first month, and 70% in the first year, of separation.**

Monckton-Smith's 8 stages of homicide timeline shows that separation can actually be a trigger which threatens the perpetrators control, escalating coercive control and stalking behaviours.

- DHR Lynne – economic abuse
- DHR Simon – refusal to sign divorce papers
- DHR Val – separation and mental health
- DHR Maria - separation

Knowledge and Awareness 5

The Duluth Post-Separation Power and Control Wheel helps to articulate the abuse being experienced and is a useful tool for professionals to use in engagement with victim-survivors and perpetrators.

Keeping perpetrators visible in your work, recording/reporting concerns, and continuing to gather evidence of patterns of behaviour will inform the support to the victim/survivor and/or child.

Statements which control, manipulate and undermine:

- "You're a bad parent that lets them get away with anything".
- "I have to tell them no all the time because you won't".
- "Don't listen to your mother, she doesn't know what she's on about".
- "This is just between us; it's your special treat that no-one needs to know about".

Professionals 6

• Be alert to behaviours of control, coercion, and economic abuse, and how these can escalate after separation. Use the Duluth Post Separation Wheel in your practice.

• Use a trauma informed approach, create a safety plan and be professionally curious. Offer a referral into the local NIDAS service.

• Help the non-abusing parent to navigate complex post separation legal processes. Both parents matter have produced a helpful guide to navigate the family court process in the UK, but others are available.

• Carefully consider the impact on any children

• Complete the DASH/DARA Risk Assessment and consider MARAC Referral where High Risk

• Consider your duty under The Care Act 2014 and make a safeguarding referral where necessary.

Further information 7

- Jane Monckton-Smith - The Homicide Timeline
- DHR Lucia – national review involving separation
- Serious Incident Review – Rosie
- Learn more about Post Separation Abuse and Surviving Economic Abuse here
- Post separation abuse
- Online Training and Webinars here
- DAC Family-Court-Report- 2023 Digital.pdf
- Controlling and Coercive Behaviour
- Surviving Economic Abuse and the Law
- Breaking Free: Understanding Post -Separation Abuse in the UK
- DAC Everyday Business Report highlights the importance of identifying domestic abuse in family court proceedings.