



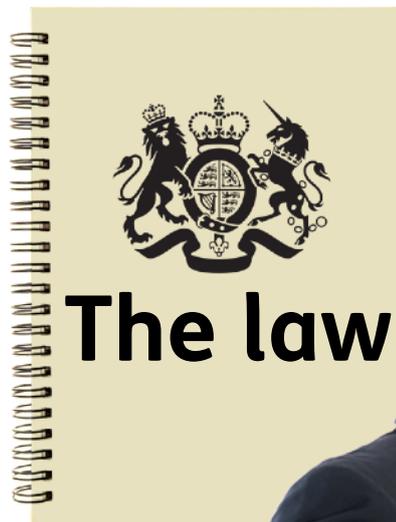
Home Office



Easy  
Read

# Controlling or coercive behaviour

A guide to help organisations  
follow the law



This is an Easy Read version of the  
Home Office Controlling or Coercive  
Behaviour Statutory Guidance  
Framework

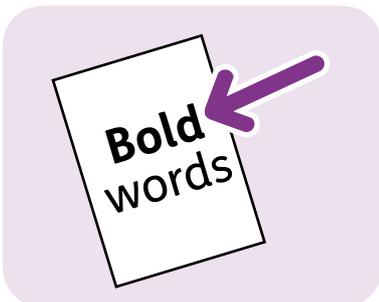
# Easy Read



This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. You may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker.



These are words that some people will find hard. When you see a bold word, we will explain it in the next sentence.

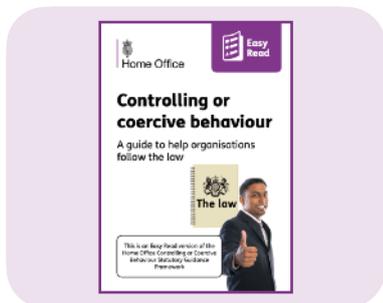


Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

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# About this booklet



This is an Easy Read version of the Government's **statutory guidance** about **controlling or coercive behaviour**.

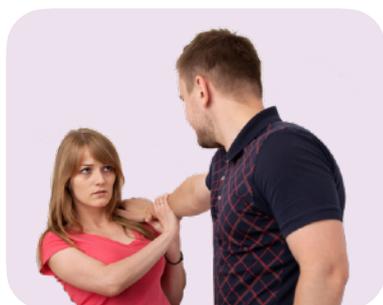


**Statutory guidance** explains what organisations should do to follow the law.



**Controlling or coercive behaviour** is when someone tries to:

- Control another person.



- Force another person to do things they do not want to do.



It is a type of domestic abuse - this is when you are harmed by someone you are close to, like a family member.

# Why we have written this booklet



In 2021, we made a new law called the Domestic Abuse Act.

This law covers controlling or coercive behaviour and the different ways it can happen.



It now includes controlling or coercive behaviour that happens after a couple has split up.

We have written this booklet to tell you about our guidance for organisations that work with:



- People who do controlling or coercive behaviour.



- Victims of controlling or coercive behaviour.



These organisations include the police and the courts.

The guidance is to help organisations follow the law and understand more about:



- What controlling or coercive behaviour is.



- How to spot controlling or coercive behaviour.



- When a crime is controlling or coercive behaviour instead of a different type of crime.



- How to support victims of controlling or coercive behaviour.

# Controlling and coercive behaviour

The law says that controlling or coercive behaviour can only happen if:



- The person doing the controlling or coercive behaviour is **personally connected** to the victim.

**Personally connected** can mean:



- You are, or were, married to the person.



- You are, or were, in a **civil partnership**.

A **civil partnership** is a way of making your relationship legal without being married.



- You have, or had, agreed to get married or join a civil partnership.



- You are, or were, in a relationship.



- You have both been parents to a child or had been in charge of looking after that child.



- You are family members.



- It has a **serious effect** on the victim.

A **serious effect** means:



- The victim is scared that they will be hurt, or



- The victim is so worried that it affects their daily life.

Serious effects on a victim might include:



- Stopping or changing how they spend time with other people.



- Becoming unwell.



- Changing their routine at home, like when they have meals.



- Having to make plans to keep themselves or their children safe.

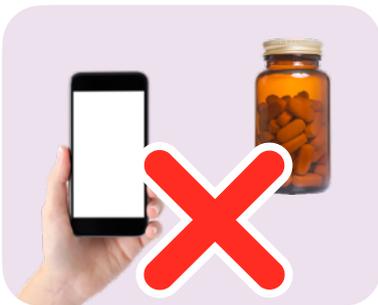
Serious effects on a victim might also include:



- Changing their job.



- Not being able to spend their own money, or get a job.



- Not being able to get medicine, use their phone or the internet.



- Not being able to have family or friends to visit.



- Being cut off from other people.

Serious effects on a victim might also include:



- Being told what they can or cannot wear.



- Being punished or having to follow rules.



- Being scared of being punished.



- It has happened 2 or more times.



- The person doing the controlling or coercive behaviour knows that it is having a serious effect on the victim.

# What the police and courts should do



When the police are called because someone has been hurt, they should think about whether controlling or coercive behaviour has happened.

Police should remember:



- Victims might not know they have been controlled.



- It is always the fault of the person doing the controlling or coercive behaviour, called the 'perpetrator'.

- Victims of controlling or coercive behaviour can also be victims of other types of domestic abuse, like:



- Being hurt or other types of violence.



- Sexual abuse - this is something sexual that they have not agreed to.



To spot controlling or coercive behaviour, it is important to think about the lives of the people involved.



Like, whether domestic abuse services have worked with them in the past.



It is important to listen to victims of domestic abuse.



Police should not assume anything about victims.

If police assume the wrong thing about a victim, it can stop them from supporting the victim in the right way.



Police officers should think about whether the perpetrator has controlled the victim before.

This is called a 'pattern of behaviour'.



The police can decide that controlling or coercive behaviour has happened on their first visit.

## Risk assessments

**Risk assessments** look at:



- Whether someone is a victim of controlling or coercive behaviour.



- How much danger they are in.



Police officers should talk to the victim and do a risk assessment.

This is to find out if there has been a pattern of behaviour.



This should be done in a way that is safe for the victim.

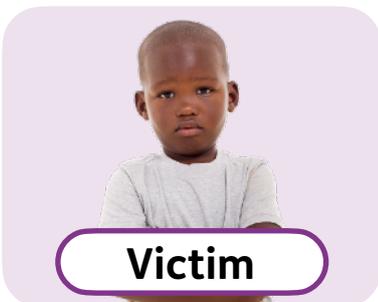
## Children



Police officers must make sure that children are safe.



Children may see or hear domestic abuse that involves someone they are personally connected to.



If this happens, the law says they are victims.



Controlling or coercive behaviour can happen to children.

But children can also be used to control others, like another parent.

# Guns

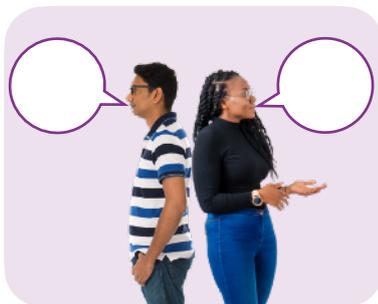


If there is a gun in the home, police should call a team called the 'Firearms Licensing Team'.



This team has the power to take the gun away.

## What the perpetrator says



The perpetrator and victim may say different things about what has happened.

The perpetrator may say that:



- They are actually the victim, or
- They were only trying to defend themselves.

Police officers should think about whether:



- The victim might have hurt the perpetrator because of the abuse.



- The perpetrator might be lying.



- Both people have been hurt or upset.



- The perpetrator is trying to get the police to help them control the victim.

Police officers should write down:



- How each person acts.



- Whether either person has made threats.



- Whether either person has been violent in the past.



- Whether either person has tried to protect themselves or someone else.



- What other people who were there, like friends, family or neighbours say.

# Evidence



**Evidence** is what police and courts look at to prove whether a crime happened, and who did it.



It is important that the police get the right evidence of controlling or coercive behaviour.



This will help to punish the person who did it.



What the victim says is an important piece of evidence.



Police officers should ask questions to find out if controlling or coercive behaviour has happened.

Police officers should ask questions like:



- If the victim had to follow rules.



- How much control the victim has over their own life.



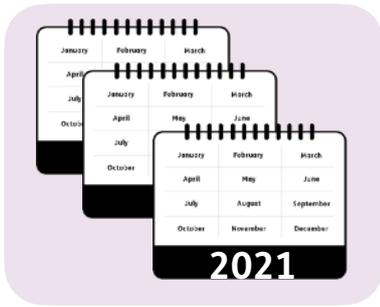
- Whether the victim can get documents, like their passport.



- If the victim can see family and friends.



- If the victim has been hurt.



It is important to ask about what has happened in the past.



The victim might not know that they have been controlled.



It is important to find out if the abuse has had a 'serious effect' on the victim's life.



It is also important to talk to other people, like the victim's family and friends.



They can help explain what effect the controlling or coercive behaviour has had on the victim's life.

Police should look at lots of things, like:



- Information from people's phones and computers, like who they have called, texted or emailed.



- Photos and videos from their house, like damage to walls and doors.



- Information from their bank, doctor or support services.

Police officers can advise victims to make more evidence by creating records - these are things like:



- A diary explaining what controlling or coercive behaviour has happened.

Records are also things like:



- Writing down the names of people who have seen the controlling or coercive behaviour happen.



- Recording phone calls with the perpetrator.



- Speaking to family, friends or support services.



Police should remember that the victim might be in danger if the perpetrator finds these records.



The most important thing is to protect the victim.

# Asking the police to stop



Sometimes victims will ask the police to stop looking at whether controlling or coercive behaviour has happened.

This might be because:



- They are scared of what might happen.



- They do not want to think about it any more.



The police and lawyers can punish the perpetrator, even if the victim does not want them to.



Police and lawyers can try to find other types of evidence.



They must give the victim the chance to speak up for themselves.

## What the perpetrator might do



A perpetrator might try to make it so that others cannot see the controlling or coercive behaviour.



They may be very good at getting organisations to stop looking into whether they are abusing someone.

They might do this by:



- Making threats to the victim.



- Getting others to do what the perpetrator wants.



- Stopping the victim from speaking up by controlling them.



- Making it difficult for the police or other organisations to look into whether they are controlling the victim.

## Other crimes



The perpetrator could have done other crimes as well as controlling or coercive behaviour

If there is enough evidence, they can be punished for those crimes.



If the crime happened before the new law, it might not count as controlling or coercive behaviour.



But it might count as other crimes, like **Harassment** and **Stalking**.

**Harassment** is when someone keeps doing or saying something that makes another person feel scared or not safe.



**Stalking** is when someone keeps following, watching or contacting another person without the other person agreeing.

# When the law says it is not controlling or coercive behaviour

The law says it is not controlling or coercive behaviour if:



- The perpetrator is not personally connected to the victim. We explain what this means on page 7.



- It was done to a child who the perpetrator was looking after.  
This is a different crime.



- It only happened once.



- It did not have a 'serious effect' on the victim. We explain what this means on pages 8 to 11.

# What someone might say in court



When the police decide that someone has been a victim of controlling or coercive behaviour, the person who did it will go to court.

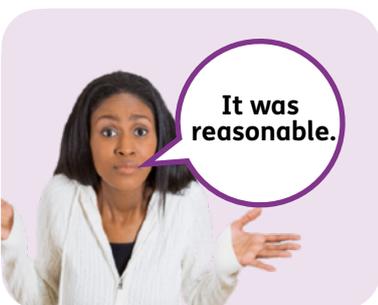


This part of the booklet explains what the person might say in court to explain why they did what they did.

The law says that they can say they believed:



- They were doing what was best for the victim.



- What they did was reasonable - this means it was a normal way to behave.

They could not say this if:



- They made the victim scared they would hurt them.



- Other people do not agree that they were reasonable.

## Making choices



Some people cannot make choices for themselves. This could be because they are ill, disabled or another reason.



Someone might say that they controlled the victim because the victim could not make choices for themselves.



There are a lot of rules about doing this.

If these rules were not followed, the person cannot say this in court.

# Punishing controlling or coercive behaviour

Someone who does controlling or coercive behaviour can:



- Go to prison.



- Have to pay a large amount of money, called a fine.

There are new ways to protect victims, called:



- Domestic Abuse Protection Notice - this protects them right after they speak up.



- Domestic Abuse Protection Order - this protects them for a longer time.



There are other ways to protect victims, depending on what has happened to them.

# What other services will do



It is important that services and organisations work together to support the victim and their children.

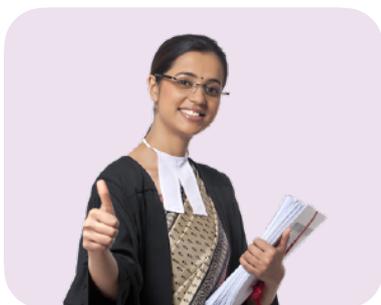
Services can support victims by:



- Speaking up for the victim to the police.



- Making sure the victim knows what is happening.



- Working with lawyers to support the victim.



- Working with other services to make sure they know what the victim needs.

Services can also support victims by:



- Telling the victim about what help they can get at court.



- Going to court with the victim, to support them.



The police may share some information with other services if it will help support the victim.

# Types of domestic abuse and other crimes

## After a couple has split up



Controlling or coercive behaviour can carry on after a couple has split up.



It might involve violence, or controlling the victim's money.



If the victim and perpetrator have children, they can be hurt or used in this domestic abuse.

# Stalking and Harassment

Stalking and Harassment are crimes that involve:



- Following someone around.



- Not leaving them alone.



- Making them feel scared.



It can be difficult to tell the difference between:

- Stalking.
- Harassment.
- Controlling or coercive behaviour.



Police officers should decide if it is stalking first, because this is the most dangerous crime.



The perpetrator does not need to be personally connected to the victim for it to be harassment or stalking.

## Dying



Controlling or coercive behaviour can lead to the victim dying.

If someone kills themselves, police should think about whether controlling or coercive behaviour caused them to do it.



When police look at controlling or coercive behaviour, they should think about whether the victim might die.



This could be because they have killed themselves, or because the perpetrator has killed them.

## Other types of domestic abuse

Controlling or coercive behaviour can happen at the same time as other types of domestic abuse, like:



- Hurting someone, or threatening to hurt someone.
- Sexual abuse.
- Shouting at and insulting someone.

# Money

Controlling or coercive behaviour can involve money, like:



- Controlling how someone can spend their money.



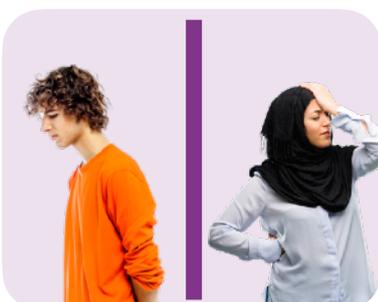
- Stopping them from getting money.



- Not paying money to support the victim or their children, after they agreed to.



- Borrowing money and then making the victim pay it back.



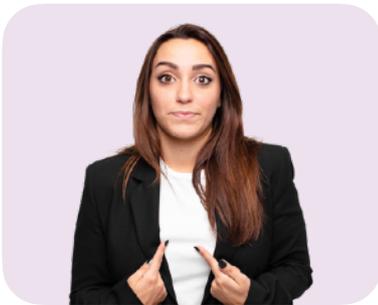
This can happen after a couple has split up.



It might be the only way they can carry on controlling the victim.



Victims may not realise that this is a crime.



Bank staff should know about this kind of domestic abuse.

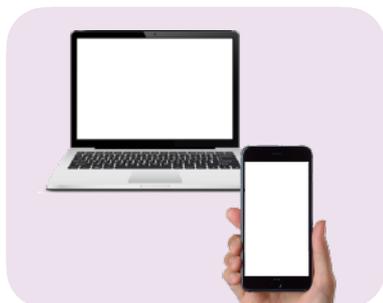


They should check if their customers are vulnerable - this means they are more likely to be harmed.



They should provide victims with support if it happens.

# Technology



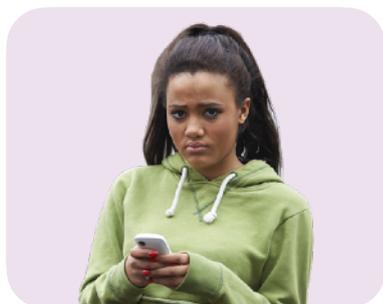
**Technology** is computers, phones and the internet.

Controlling or coercive behaviour can involve technology.

This might include:



- Telling lies on the internet.



- Sending insults and threats to the victim's phone or computer.



- Putting someone's private information online.



- Getting the victim to share their passwords.



This also might include using technology to see what the victim is doing.



Police should not tell victims to stop using technology, because it is very important to people's lives.



Police should look at the perpetrator's technology to get evidence.

# Religion



Religion can support a lot of people.  
But perpetrators can use religion to control victims.



They might say that the victim is breaking the rules of the religion unless they do what the perpetrator says.

## 'Honour'-based abuse



'Honour'-based abuse is when people hurt others because they think it will protect their **honour**.

**Honour** means what others think of them.



This might be because the victim is trying to break away from the rules of that family or group.



It is not always domestic abuse.

But it might be domestic abuse, if it is done by a family member.



Forced marriage and **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** are types of 'Honour'-based abuse.



**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is when a woman's private parts are damaged, for a reason that is not to do with their health.

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