



Home Office

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

Statutory Guidance

What the police and organisations
should do to keep victims safe

April 2022

Easy read version of the
Statutory Guidance Framework



What the words mean

Abuser

A person who uses cruel behaviours to hurt, control or scare someone else (the **victim**).

Controlling or coercive behaviour

This is a type of domestic abuse. The abuser uses violence, threats, puts them down or scares and frightens the victim. They do this to so they can control the victim and make them do things they don't want to. This behaviour often happens with other abusive behaviours, including physical, sexual and financial abuse.

The government says **controlling or coercive behaviour** is:



- acts designed to make a person feel inferior and/or dependent by keeping them apart from friends, help and support. It can include taking advantage of their money and things they have, stopping their independence, and controlling what they want to do.
- an act of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the **victim**.

Statutory guidance

Statutory guidance sets out what the police and other organisations must do to follow with the law.

Perpetrator

A person who uses **controlling or coercive behaviour** to abuse someone else (the victim).

What the words mean

Mental Capacity Act

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 gives people the power to make their own decisions. It also means that any decision made, or action taken, on behalf of someone who cannot decide for themselves is made in their best interests. It assumes that a person is able to make decisions for themselves unless it can be shown that they can't do this.

Victim

The person who is abused, hurt or injured by someone else (the **abuser**)

Who is the statutory guidance for?



The information in this guidance is mainly for police and criminal justice organisations in England and Wales.

It is also for all organisations working with **victims** including children and people who use **controlling** or **coercive behaviour** to abuse others.



It will help these organisations to find out and show if it is happening.

This will help get the **abusers** charged and be punished.



The Serious Crime Act 2015 introduced the criminal offence of **controlling** or **coercive behaviour** in very close or family relationships.



The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 changed the definition of who counts as 'personally connected' in the 2015 Act.

This Act says the **victim** and the **abuser** no longer have to be 'living together'.

This means that the offence of **controlling** or **coercive behaviour** will also include partners, ex-partners or family members.

This is whether or not the **victim** and **abuser** live together.



This change will start later in 2022.



This list is some behaviours that are included in **controlling** or **coercive behaviour**.

- Physical violence or threats of violence;
- Sexual assault or abuse or threats;
- Controlling the **victim's** daily activities and behaviour, for example controlling their time, what they wear, when they eat and sleep;



- Financial abuse such as taking all the victim's money
- Controlling the **victim** using social media and phones;
- Forcing the **victim** to do something that they don't want to do;
- Threatening to give out information about the **victim's** sex life.
- Telling lies to family members or the local community including posting photos on the social media;
- Stopping the **victim** from making friends;
- Using immigration status to threaten the **victim**;
- Threats of being put into care (particularly for disabled or elderly **victims**);
- Separating the **victim** from family, friends and professionals who may be trying to support them;
- Stopping the **victim** communicating with others;
- Stopping the **victim** from getting health or social care
- Stopping the **victim** from using birth control methods; or forcing them to get an abortion;
- Using drugs or alcohol to control a **victim**
- Threatening to take the children away or harm them;
- Harming or threatening to harm or give away pets.



When the police go to a call for help, it is important that they find out if there is a pattern of abusive behaviour.

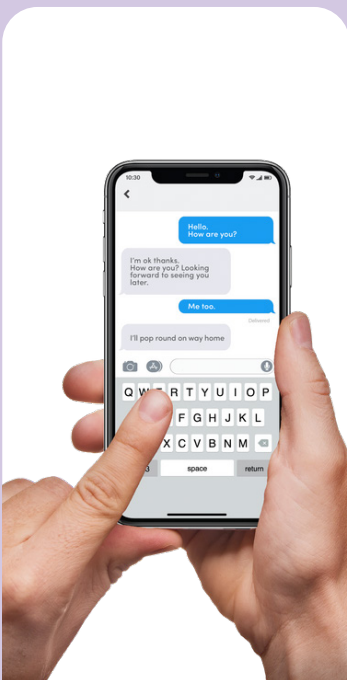


Victims of controlling or coercive behaviour may not realise they are **victims**. Or they may not accept they are being abused.



Some of the signs are:

- The **victim** is made to follow rules
- The **victim** is not allowed to make their own decisions
- The **victim** is frightened of their partner, ex-partner or family member;
- If the person has been a **victim** of physical violence or sexual assault.



Examples of evidence:

- Phone records, text messages and emails
- Evidence on the internet or social media
- Photographs of injuries, medical records
- Recordings of 999 calls
- CCTV
- Bank records;
- Records kept by the **victim**
- No contact with family and friends, such as the **victim** stops going to their social activities.



The police must be careful about asking the **victim** to keep records. This may put **victim** at more risk if the **abuser** finds them.

Abusers can be clever at fooling professionals, agencies and systems. They do this by:



- Saying things that are untrue about the **victims** to make professionals believe it is for the **victim's** safety
- Interfering with police investigations including saying the **victim** is mentally ill
- Telling the **victim** they will not be believed by the police or other agencies
- Targeting people who might be vulnerable
- Making professionals believe that the **victim** does not have capacity
- Telling the **victim** that they will not be believed because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual

Criminal punishment and protection orders



Controlling or **coercive behaviour** is a serious criminal offence.

The person who commits the crime can get up to 5 years in prison or a large fine.

Controlling or **coercive behaviour** can be dealt with by either a magistrates' court or the Crown Court.



Restraining orders can be made under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 to protect a **victim**.
This means the **abuser** must keep away.



Sometimes the **abuser** will be asked to join a behaviour change programme.
They may also have to wear an electronic ankle tag.



Victims in an abusive relationship can find it difficult to end the relationship.
People may not understand why victims do not just leave.
Victims may also ask the police to stop going further with the case.

More information about controlling or coercive behaviour



Anyone can be a **victim** of domestic abuse, but in 73% of police cases the victims are women.



Controlling or **coercive behaviour** sometimes ends with the **victim** being abused more.
These are some other ways the **victim** may be abused.



Physical abuse, like being hit or punched.



Sexual abuse such as forcing their partner to have sex.



Economic abuse such as taking all their money.



Abuse that uses technology and social media.



Honour - based abuse, where people abuse a victim to get respect from others in the community.



Verbal abuse, like calling names.



People can be **victims** of different types of abuse based on their sex, race, age, religion etc.



Other things can stop **victims** from getting help:

- The **victim** may be worried about what the abuser can do to them or their children
- The **victim** may feel alone, worthless or may feel they are to blame for the abuse or that they cannot look after themselves
- The **victim** may worry they will not be believed or may feel embarrassed about telling people about it
- The **victim** may not have enough money to support themselves or their children
- If the **victim** lives in the country rather than the town they may find it harder to get help
- The **victim** may have language difficulties making it hard to tell people about the abuse



Being pregnant can make victims more vulnerable.

Abuse during pregnancy can be harmful to babies' development if the mother is upset and scared.



Older people can also be the **victims** of **controlling** or **coercive behaviour** by partners or family members.
This can affect both men and women.
The **victim** may not realise they are being abused.

There is lots of support available for victims

The websites of organisation who can help are at the end of the **Controlling** or **Coercive Behaviour** Statutory Guidance.