



Home Office

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance Framework

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Executive Summary

This statutory guidance is issued under section 77 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act). Any persons or agency investigating offences in relation to controlling or coercive behaviour under section 76 of the 2015 Act must have regard to it. **This guidance is primarily aimed at statutory and non-statutory bodies working with victims, perpetrators and commissioning services, including the police, criminal justice and other agencies.**

This guidance provides information on controlling or coercive behaviour, to assist the police, criminal justice and other agencies in identifying, evidencing, charging, prosecuting and convicting the offence. This guidance also provides information on how to reduce the risk of harm to the victim and their family; provide support for the victim and their family, including how other agencies and support services can assist; and manage the perpetrator.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is a subset of domestic abuse. This guidance is intended to be read alongside the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#), the [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the Welsh Government [National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence](#) (new strategy to be published in 2022). The Government has also published a refreshed [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy](#) which has been followed by a [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) and [a supporting male victims](#) of crimes considered violence against women and girls [document](#). These are supported by a revised [National Statement of Expectations](#), which provides clear and consistent guidance for local areas on how to commission support services for victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Professionals should be aware that controlling or coercive behaviour is a pattern of behaviour, often encompassing a range of abusive behaviours such as physical, sexual and economic abuse.

This guidance reflects content in the draft Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance to ensure both documents are aligned. A consultation on the draft Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance concluded in September 2021 and the finalised version will be published in 2022. Any further changes made to the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance post-consultation, will also be reflected in the finalised version of this guidance.

Section 1 sets out the status and purpose of this guidance. This section provides an overview of the controlling or coercive behaviour offence and further detail on the aims of, and audience for, this guidance.

Section 2 provides further detail on what constitutes controlling or coercive behaviour, guidance on how to identify and evidence the offence, including conducting appropriate risk assessments; an overview of tactics used by perpetrator; information on where the offence does not apply and considerations for other offences.

Sections 3 and 4 provides detail on the defence where the defendant believes he or she was acting in the best interests of the victim, criminal penalties and protection orders for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence.

Section 5 outlines the importance of a multi-agency response and how support and other services can assist the victim and their family and manage the perpetrator.

Section 6 provides information on related harms, offences and other subsets of domestic abuse.

Section 7 sets out key related considerations, how victims can be subjected to multiple abusive behaviours because of their different characteristics and how this can serve as a barrier to accessing services and support, particularly if they are not adequately designed to meet their needs.

A glossary of acronyms used throughout this guidance is at **Annex G**.

Section 1 – Purpose of this guidance

Introduction

1. Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) introduced the criminal offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. The offence was brought into force in recognition of the severe impact of such behaviour which often includes economic, emotional and psychological abuse, as well as threats, whether or not they are accompanied by physical and sexual violence, and abuse. The offence was also brought into force to close a legislative gap where this type of behaviour occurred between intimate partners but was difficult to prosecute as harassment (as it could be for ex-partners or family members). The offence carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.
2. The controlling or coercive behaviour offence previously only captured behaviour between current intimate partners whether or not they lived together, and ex-partners or family members who live together. This meant that abuse by an ex-partner or family member, where the victim and the perpetrator no longer lived together, could not be prosecuted for controlling or coercive behaviour. As such, when reported, there was often lack of clarity over which offence to apply, and controlling or coercive behaviour was often charged and prosecuted using other offences, such as stalking or harassment (as a course of conduct that occurs on two or more occasions).
3. Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) amended the definition of “personally connected” in section 76 of the 2015 Act. This removed the “living together” requirement, which means **that the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour will apply to partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together**. It is therefore no longer a requirement for intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to live together, in order to be considered “personally connected”.
4. This change to the law has been made as we know controlling or coercive behaviour does not stop when a relationship ends, and can often intensify and worsen post-separation. Prior to the extension of the offence, police, domestic abuse organisations and prosecutors often raised concerns on it not being clear when a relationship has ended, as relationships where controlling or coercive behaviour is present, often end but then resume over a period of time. Victims may be coerced by the perpetrator to return to the relationship, may feel they need to be in the relationship out of necessity (e.g. due to housing needs, financial dependence, lack of support outside of the relationship)¹ or may perceive remaining in the relationship as safer, with separation being a significant risk factor in domestic abuse cases.² This often presents challenges for the police and prosecutors in terms of collecting evidence to build a case either on controlling and coercive behaviour or stalking.

¹ [Refuge.org.uk \(2022\) Barriers to Leaving.](https://www.refuge.org.uk/2022/02/barriers-to-leaving/)

² [Myhill A, Hohl K \(2019\) The “Golden Thread”: Coercive Control and Risk Assessment for Domestic Violence., Journal of Interpersonal Violence. Volume 34, Issue 21-22, pp.4477-4497.](https://doi.org/10.1080/08862605.2019.1644497)

Removing the requirement for ex-partners or family members to still be “living together” seeks to address these issues.

5. **The amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence will come into force in later this year.** This statutory guidance has been updated to reflect the changes made to the offence, wider measures within the 2021 Act and the accompanying Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, as well as other relevant guidance and training material for frontline agencies.
6. Section 1(3)(c) of the 2021 Act created a statutory definition of domestic abuse which encompasses a range of abusive behaviours, including controlling or coercive behaviour. Section 2 of the 2021 Act defines the term “personally connected” for the purpose of the relationship criteria in section 1(2)(a) of the 2021 Act. Please refer to **Annex B** for the full statutory definition of domestic abuse, the legal definition of “personally connected” and the 2021 Act amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence.
7. In this guidance, “A” is referred to as the perpetrator of the abuse and “B” is referred to as a victim of the abuse. The term ‘victim’ is used in this document to denote someone who has experienced domestic abuse. As set out in section 3 of the 2021 Act, ‘victim’ includes children (under 18) who have seen, heard, or experienced domestic abuse and are related to, or under the care of, either the adult victim or the perpetrator. It should be noted that not everyone who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse chooses to describe themselves as a ‘victim’ and may prefer another term, for example, ‘survivor’. We recognise both terms, but in this document, we have used the language of the 2021 Act, which is ‘victim’.
8. All names used in case studies within this guidance have been changed to protect identities.

Definition of controlling or coercive behaviour

9. The controlling or coercive behaviour offence is only applicable where:
 - The victim and perpetrator are **personally connected** at the time the behaviour takes place;
 - The behaviour must have had a **serious effect** on the victim, meaning that it has caused the victim to **fear violence** will be used against them on **two or more occasions**, or it has had a **substantial adverse effect on the victim’s usual day to day activities**; and
 - The behaviour takes place **repeatedly or continuously**.
 - **The perpetrator must have known that their behaviour would have a serious effect on the victim**, or the behaviour must have been such that he or she “ought to have known” it would have that effect.
10. Controlling or coercive behaviour should be dealt with as part of safeguarding and public protection procedures and professionals should be aware of the impact of this behaviour on victims, including children and young people.

Please see **Annex A** for the full offence of controlling or coercive behaviour and the legal power for this statutory guidance.

Aims of the guidance

11. This guidance is intended to provide:

- **Clear information on what constitutes controlling or coercive behaviour and how to identify the offence.** This guidance is to support agencies in understanding controlling or coercive behaviour and how to identify the offence, including the types of behaviours that are within the range of the offence, and the impact that these behaviours can have on victims, including children and young people.
- **Guidance to the police and other criminal justice agencies on circumstances where the offence will apply and where other offences might be considered.** There can be a perception that controlling or coercive behaviour is a ‘complex’ offence and therefore difficult to identify and investigate. However, police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) data shows that since the 2015 Act came into force, there has been a consistent increase in cases being charged. This guidance is issued to assist criminal justice and other agencies in identifying and evidencing controlling or coercive behaviour; and in charging, prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of the offence.
- **Guidance to the police and criminal justice agencies on the different types of evidence that can support in identifying, evidencing and charging the offence, and how this should support prosecutions and sentencing.** Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident – it is an intentional pattern of behaviour which takes place over time, in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. In responding to a call-out or a report, it is important for police officers to look beyond the report or call they are responding to, to consider the wider context, and to conduct enquiries around potential patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour and other forms of abuse being perpetrated.
- **Information on reducing risk to the victim, including using protection orders; supporting the victim; and responding to the perpetrator’s behaviour.** A multi-agency response is critical to identifying and supporting victims and their families at an early stage and responding to the perpetrator. Multi-agency working enables professionals to get a better understanding of all the risks and needs of the victims, including children and young people, and the perpetrator (and any other family members and linked individuals), and to work collaboratively to respond to these risks without waiting for the abuse to escalate.

Audience

12. This guidance extends to England and to reserved matters in Wales. Any persons or agency using this guidance must be also familiar with the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#). This guidance, to be read alongside relevant legislation and strategies, should be referred to by Welsh agencies or devolved bodies discharging functions which are reserved to the UK Government (policing and criminal, civil and family justice matters).
13. The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour applies in England and Wales but it should be noted that the Senedd has the legislative competence to legislate for Wales in this area. Devolved bodies and local organisations in Wales should therefore refer to the relevant Welsh legislation, in relation to devolved matters - such as the [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy, and associated guidance, which are referenced throughout this document. We would expect both devolved and non-devolved organisations to continue to work together to implement the 2021 Act, where relevant and appropriate.
14. **This guidance is primarily aimed at police and criminal justice agencies in England and Wales involved in the investigation of criminal behaviour.** However, the information contained in this guidance is also relevant to organisations and agencies in England and Wales working with victims (including children) or perpetrators of domestic abuse, and to those dealing with the other consequences of domestic abuse, such as financial institutions. Some of these organisations may have statutory duties to safeguard victims of domestic abuse, including in relation to Welsh legislation. The following list is not exhaustive:
 - English and Welsh local authorities
 - Police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners
 - The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
 - Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and Cafcass Cymru
 - Specialist domestic abuse and other violence against women and girls support services
 - Local housing and homelessness teams, registered social landlords
 - Early years, childcare, schools, colleges and higher education settings
 - Children’s social care providers
 - Adult social care providers
 - NHS England and NHS Improvement (from 2022, NHS England)
 - Clinical Commissioning Groups (from 2022, Integrated Care Systems)
 - NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts
 - Employers
 - Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation services
 - Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Financial services (banks, building societies etc)
 - Community and faith groups.

Section 2 – Criminal justice response

The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour

15. The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour states that:

An offence is committed by A if:

- A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person, B, that is controlling or coercive;
- At the time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected;
- The behaviour has a serious effect on B; and
- A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

16. Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the 2021 Act), amended Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) (offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship) as follows:

“(6) A and B are “personally connected” if any of the following applies—

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (6A));
- (g) they are relatives.³

(6A) For the purposes of subsection (6)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.”

This amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, to remove the “living together” requirement for ex-partners and family members, will come into effect later this year.

³ Section 63 of the Family Law Act 1996 states “relative”, in relation to a person, means—

(a) the father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, grandmother, grandfather, grandson or granddaughter of that person or of that person’s [F5]spouse, former spouse, civil partner or former civil partner], or (b) the brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece [F6], nephew or first cousin] (whether of the full blood or of the half blood or [F7]by marriage or civil partnership)] of that person or of that person’s [F5]spouse, former spouse, civil partner or former civil partner], and includes, in relation to a person who [F8]is cohabiting or has cohabited with another person], any person who would fall within paragraph (a) or (b) if the parties were married to each other [F9]or were civil partners of each other]

17. There are two ways in which it can be proved that A's behaviour has a 'serious effect' on B:

- If it causes B to fear, on two or more occasions, that violence will be used against them – section 76 (4)(a); or
- If it causes B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their usual day-to-day activities – section 76 (4) (b).”

Where the offence applies

18. The offence seeks to capture **patterns of abuse** that occur over a prolonged period of time, or **cause fear of violence** on two or more occasions, which enables an individual to exert power, control or coercion over another.

When investigating controlling or coercive behaviour, all the following criteria must be met for the offence to apply:

- The controlling or coercive behaviour must take place “repeatedly” (on two or more occasions) or “continuously” (on an ongoing basis). Behaviour displayed on only one occasion would not amount to repeated or continuous behaviour and courts will look for evidence of behaviour that has occurred on two or more occasions, or a pattern of behaviour established over a period of time. As much evidence as possible must therefore be gathered to show that the behaviour has occurred on two or more occasions, is repetitive or continuous in nature. **A victim’s statement, which should include the impact of the behaviour on the victim, is key to this evidence gathering.**

The 2015 Act does not specify a timeframe between repeated incidents of controlling or coercive behaviour, therefore, the abuse does not necessarily have to take place in immediate succession. However, where abuse takes place on two occasions but over a prolonged period (10 years apart for example), it is unlikely that this will be considered behaviour that has occurred repeatedly or continuously.

- The pattern of behaviour has to have a “serious effect” on the victim. This means that the perpetrator has caused the victim to EITHER fear that violence will be used against them on two or more occasions, AND/OR caused serious alarm or distress which has had a substantial adverse effect on the victim’s usual day-to-day activities.

It is important to note that the perpetrator’s behaviour being deemed to have a “serious effect” on the victim, would also include, but is not limited to, **cases where the victim is subjected to repeated and/or regular physical violence, sexual assault, coercion, abuse, or threats of such acts.** This type of repeated behaviour alone may cause some of the adverse effects outlined above.

When attending a call out for physical or other assault, it is therefore important for police officers and frontline responders to look beyond what may be presented to them at the scene and **consider that there may be a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour** and other forms of abuse being perpetrated.

It should also be noted that the offence does not state that the victim must only fear violence by the perpetrator. For example, the victim may fear that the perpetrator has asked another person to commit violence against them.

- The behaviour must be such that the perpetrator knows or “ought to know” that it will have a serious effect on the victim. “Ought to know” means that which a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know.
- The perpetrator and victim have to be personally connected when the abuse took place. Please refer to **Annex B** for the 2021 Act’s definition of “personally connected”.

Types of behaviour

19. Controlling or coercive behaviour shares general elements with other capture or course-of-conduct crimes such as kidnapping, stalking, and harassment, including the facts that it is ongoing and its perpetrators use various means to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate their victims⁴.
20. Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident or act of abuse, it is **an intentional pattern of behaviour that occurs on two or more occasions, or** which takes place over time, in order for one individual **to exert power, control or coercion over another.**
21. **The perpetrator carries responsibility for choosing to carry out these behaviours and is accountable for them.** Whilst it is recognised that men can be victims of the offence, **controlling or coercive behaviour disproportionately affects females**⁵.
22. **Controlling or coercive behaviour is often part of a wider pattern of abuse** committed alongside other forms of often more overt or visible forms of abuse, such as physical or sexual assault. **When responding to a report of another more apparent form of abuse, such as physical assault, it is important to consider that controlling or coercive behaviour may also form part of the abuse.**

⁴ Stark, E (2007) Coercive Control: The Entrapment of Women in Personal Life, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.5.

⁵ [Barlow, C, Johnson, K, Walklate, S, Humphreys, L \(2020\) Putting Coercive Control into Practice: Problems and Possibilities, The British Journal of Criminology, Volume 60, Issue 1, pp.160–179.](#)

23. Whilst section 76 of the 2015 Act sets out the criteria that must be met for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to apply, it is also important to be aware that certain types of behaviour that can amount to controlling or coercive behaviour can manifest themselves in other harms and forms of abuse, including economic abuse, harassment or stalking (see section 6).

24. Differentiating between controlling or coercive behaviour and other forms of abuse, in particular those that involve similar behaviours such as stalking, will also be an important factor in determining which offence to investigate in order to build a case and apply the appropriate charge (see *considering other offences* in this section).

25. In identifying controlling or coercive behaviour, it is important to consider the context in which the behaviour is taking place, in particular:

- **The relationship history and status** between the victim and the perpetrator;
- **The perpetrator's motivations** (please also refer to *perpetrator tactics* in this section); and
- **The harm or risk of harm, and the impact of this harm on the victim** (please also refer to *types of evidence* in this section, the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) First Response Checklist and the Joint National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and CPS Evidence Gathering Checklist)

26. The following list outlines behaviours that are within the range of controlling or coercive behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

- Physical violence, and threats of physical violence;
- Sexual assault, coercion or abuse, and threats of sexual assault;
- Emotional and psychological abuse;
- Abuse relating to faith;
- Verbal abuse;
- Economic abuse (e.g. coerced debt, controlling spending/bank accounts/investments/mortgages/benefit payments);
- Controlling or monitoring the victim's daily activities and behaviour, for example making them account for their time, dictating what they can wear, what and when they can eat, when and where they may sleep, who they meet or talk to, where they may work, restricting access to training/development etc;
- Controlling and monitoring the victim's access to social media and devices (e.g. restricting and checking phone use, needing to know passwords for all social media accounts, location tracking on devices);
- Acts of coercion or force to persuade the victim to do something that they are unwilling to do;
- Threats to expose sensitive information (e.g. sexual activity, sexual orientation and/or transgender identity), or make false allegations to family members, friends, work colleagues, community or others, including via photos or the internet;

- Preventing the victim from learning a language or making friends outside of their ethnic/ or cultural background;
- Intimidation and threats of disclosure of health status or an impairment to family, friends, work colleagues and wider community – particularly where this may carry a stigma in the community;
- Using the victim’s health status to induce fear and restrict their freedom of movement;
- Using immigration status to threaten the victim;
- Threats of being placed in an institution against the victim’s will, e.g. care home, supported living facility, mental health facility, etc (particularly for disabled or elderly victims);
- Making and enforcing rules and regulations that the victim is expected to follow;
- Intentional undermining of the victim;
- Isolating the victim from family, friends, colleagues and professionals who may be trying to support them, intercepting messages or phone calls;
- Refusing to interpret, and/or hindering access to communication;
- Preventing the victim from taking medication, or accessing medical equipment or over-medicating them, or preventing the victim from accessing health or social care (especially relevant for victims with disabilities or long-term health conditions);
- Reproductive coercion, including restricting a victim’s access to birth control; refusing to use a birth control method; forcing a victim to get an abortion, to undergo in vitro fertilisation (IVF) or other procedure; or denying access to such a procedure;
- Using substances such as alcohol or drugs to control a victim through dependency, or controlling their access to substances;
- Using children to control the victim, e.g. threatening to take the children away, threatening to harm the children
- Using pets to control or coerce a victim, e.g. harming, or threatening to harm or give away pets;
- Using a victim’s workplace to control them, e.g. denying access to work, dictating where they work, turning up at work etc; and
- Preventing normal leisure activities such as volunteering, joining local clubs and groups, sports teams, civil/charitable activity, etc.

Please also refer to section 7 in this guidance for further detail on related harms, offences and other subsets of domestic abuse.

Identifying the offence

27. When working with victims of domestic abuse, it is important to be aware that there are no “typical” victims. While some groups may be at greater risk of experiencing domestic abuse, anyone can be affected. Care should be taken to avoid stereotypical assumptions regarding domestic abuse. Irrespective of gender, domestic abuse occurs amongst people of all ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, religion or beliefs, immigration status or socio-economic backgrounds.

Domestic abuse can occur between family members as well as between intimate partners or ex-partners.⁶ When working with victims of domestic abuse, it is also important to demonstrate professional curiosity and avoid making assumptions that may lead to missed opportunities in supporting and protecting victims.⁷

Looking beyond one incident and identifying patterns of behaviour

28. **When responding to a call out, it is important for police officers to use professional curiosity and look beyond what may be presented to them at the scene, in order to identify any patterns of behaviour.** Police officers should always consider the wider context and that there may be other elements of the perpetrator's behaviour, or other forms of abuse being perpetrated, which could amount to controlling or coercive behaviour.
29. For example, **a call out may initially be in response to a report of physical violence or sexual assault, but controlling or coercive behaviour may also be present.** In such circumstances the memory of the assault could also be used by the perpetrator as a further basis for control and coercion.
30. Police officers may sometimes consider investigating offences they are more familiar with or which they perceive to be easier to investigate, particularly if they are focusing on a single incident. This may lead to controlling or coercive behaviour being missed. Research has shown that police officers are experienced in responding to 'incidents' of domestic abuse, particularly physical violence, rather than a pattern of abusive behaviour.⁸ A study found that victims commonly engaged with the police to report an assault (rather than controlling or coercive behaviour), with many cases found to be recorded as actual bodily harm (ABH), even where controlling or coercive behaviour was present in the majority of the cases.⁹
31. **It is therefore vital that when responding to a report, such as physical violence or threat of physical violence, police officers enquire about other elements or patterns of the perpetrator's behaviour underlying the incident that led to a police call out, and other forms of abuse that may also be being perpetrated, which could amount to controlling or coercive behaviour.** For example, repeat police call-outs may demonstrate a course of behaviour by the perpetrator. Controlling or coercive behaviour can, however, be well established before it is reported.
32. In many cases, the perpetrator's conduct might seem harmless - especially if considered in isolation of wider behaviours - and the victim may not be aware of, or be ready to acknowledge that, they are being subjected to abuse. **Consideration of the cumulative impact of any behaviour, particularly where this includes control or coercion within the relationship, will be crucial.**

⁶ [Sentencing Guidelines \(2018\) Overarching principles: domestic abuse](#)

⁷ [SafeLives \(2015\) Professionals miss five opportunities to stop domestic violence, says SafeLives](#)

⁸ [Barlow, C., Johnson, K., Walklate, S., Humphreys, L. \(2020\) Putting Coercive Control into Practice: Problems and Possibilities, The British Journal of Criminology, Volume 60, Issue 1, pp. 160-179.](#)

⁹ [Barlow, C., Johnson, K., Walklate, S., Humphreys, L. \(2020\) Putting Coercive Control into Practice: Problems and Possibilities, The British Journal of Criminology, Volume 60, Issue 1, pp.160-179.](#)

This approach will support any prosecutor to effectively assess whether a pattern of behaviour exists and whether this behaviour amounts to fear that violence will be carried out; or has caused the victim serious alarm or distress, and this has had a substantial adverse effect on their usual day-to-day activities.¹⁰

33. **Where other acts of abuse, including but not limited to, physical violence, sexual assault, coercion, abuse, or threats of such acts, are identified, such behaviour could equally have an impact (adverse effect) on the victim's daily activity, and would equally warrant pursuing a case that could amount to controlling or coercive behaviour.** Whilst a charge for controlling or coercive behaviour can be made without the presence of physical violence or sexual assault, police officers should always consider pursuing cases where violence of this type is identified, without relying on the wider range of non-physically violent coercive behaviours.
34. It should be noted that **evidencing controlling or coercive behaviour does not require two police call outs for the offence to have occurred. Police officers should also be aware that in cases of domestic abuse, where there is insufficient evidence to charge for a physical assault, there may be enough evidence to charge for the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour.**
35. **The amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, to remove the “living together” requirement for ex-partners and family members, will come into effect later this year and will not have retrospective effect.** This means that charges cannot be brought in relation to post-separation abuse before the date the amended offence comes into force. If you are unsure of whether the amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence may apply in a specific case, in the first instance, speak to a specialist Domestic Abuse police officer. Police may seek further Early Investigative Advice from the CPS.¹¹

¹⁰ [CPS \(2017\) Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship](#)

¹¹ Where appropriate, the Service Police and Commanding Officers should refer to the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) rather than the CPS.

36. The case study below is an example of charges being brought for a number of offences including the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour.

Case Study – Becky

Becky and Simon had been in a relationship for four months when Simon first slapped her across the face. After this first assault, the abuse escalated quickly and increased over the next few months, including stamping on, and kicking Becky, causing injuries that left permanent scarring and damage to her hearing.

All offences bar the first were committed whilst Simon was on police bail for the first assault against Becky.

Throughout this time, Simon also increased control over Becky's daily activity, he would also send abusive and manipulative texts to Becky, and continually call her when she was out to check on her whereabouts. When Becky tried to stand up to Simon, he would call her demeaning names, would take her phone, bank cards and keys for periods of time, restricting her independence.

Simon also began making calls to Social Services, with fake allegations about Becky, claiming she was never at home and incapable of caring for their child. Simon also used these fake allegations to try and turn Becky's parents and siblings against her.

When Becky eventually left Simon, these incidents and allegations continued, as did Simon's abusive behaviour towards Becky via social media. After weeks of ignoring Simon's messages, he turned up at Becky's new residence and physically assaulted her. When police officers took Becky's statement, they enquired about the range of previous incidents and asked about the impact Simon's behaviour had on her daily life. Becky disclosed further detail about the level of control she was under including feeling unsafe leaving the house, needing to be in constant contact with Simon, permission to shop and not being allowed to speak to family or friends.

Simon was charged for a number of offences, including common assault, Actual Bodily Harm (ABH), attempted Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH), harassment and controlling or coercive behaviour.

Conducting appropriate risk assessments

37. **Victims of controlling or coercive behaviour may not be aware of, or be ready to acknowledge that the abuse they have previously or are currently experiencing, is part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.** Furthermore, victims of controlling or coercive behaviour may not be aware that such behaviour amounts to a criminal offence. It is important, therefore, that the offence is considered by the police and other authorities when conducting any investigation.
38. Adopting a thorough approach on a first visit to a victim will be critical in supporting police officers to uncover evidence in relation to the offence and building a case. **Conducting a safe inquiry with the victim and undertaking a proper risk assessment will be paramount in investigating a possible offence in order to bring to light evidence of any pattern of abuse, rather than an isolated incident.**
39. **As part of any risk assessment, safeguarding of children must also be ensured.** Police have a duty to protect children from harm and in all investigations the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount should be observed.¹² For further information on safeguarding responsibilities, including for children and multi-agency working, please refer to chapter 4 of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#). Police should also refer to their relevant protocols for safeguarding adults and children.
40. College of Policing guidance on the [context and dynamics of domestic abuse](#) states that **“officers must be able to recognise controlling or coercive behaviour as it can be a warning sign/risk of future violence towards the victim.** Although the conduct may appear low-level, any behaviour or pattern of behaviour which suggest that control or coercion is being exercised over a victim, this must be treated seriously and investigated to determine if an offence has been committed under section 76 of the 2015 Act. **Controlling or coercive behaviour towards another can also include or be committed in conjunction with a range of other offences”.**
41. It is important that wider patterns of behaviour and/or offending are considered, including the wider context of the relationship. **Rather than only asking ‘what happened’ to prompt the specific call to police, police officers should ask specific questions to identify if controlling or coercive behaviour is being perpetrated.**

¹² [College of Policing - Domestic Abuse: First Response](#)

Examples of questions could include:

- Whether the victim is subject to rules;
- If the victim is involved in making decisions;
- If the victim's daily activity controlled or monitored by the perpetrator;
- What effect the behaviour has on their daily activity;
- What the norms they may have in the relationship, with the ex-partner or family member;
- What fears they may have in the relationship or of the ex-partner or family member;
- If the victim is subject to threats;
- If the victim is prevented from seeing certain family members or friends;
- If the victim is subject to other forms of abusive behaviour such as physical violence or sexual assault.

42. **It is also important to ask about past behaviour of the perpetrator, as the victim may not realise that these were also part of a pattern of abuse.** Many victims experience prolonged abuse or go through 'stages' of control or coercion before making a report to the police.¹³ Building trust can help to elicit disclosure and it may be appropriate to tailor the response for the victim.

43. It is important to give the victim the space and time to process what has happened to them, away from the perpetrator. This may also make the victim feel safer and more comfortable with providing further disclosure about the abuse, even at a later stage of an investigation. It is also important to consider providing information about support services. The College of Policing guidance on working with victims and witnesses provides guidance for officers to "recognise the individual needs and concerns of witnesses and treat them with dignity and respect".¹⁴ **Please also refer to Section 5 for further detail on how support and other services can assist.**

*"When the police turned up – he had been loud, violent, aggressive, smashing things and hitting me. By the time the police arrived – what they would have met is me – very frightened, very panicky, very emotional, very trembly – house smashed, not making much sense and him a very gathered gentleman, fantastically well educated, calm, saying he'd never laid a hand on me."*¹⁵

HMIC Focus Group Data, 2014

¹³ Kelly, L (1999) Domestic Violence Matters: an evaluation of a development project, pp.35-37.

¹⁴ [College of Police – Investigation: Working with victims and witnesses](#)

¹⁵ [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary \(HMIC\) \(2014\) Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse. p.76.](#)

44. When attending call outs, it is important to be sensitive to the response of the people being attended to. A perpetrator may seem calm and measured whilst a victim could appear distressed or aggressive. Responding officers should focus on the welfare of the victim and safeguarding, as well as de-escalation techniques, including through emotional awareness, active listening and both verbal and non-verbal communication,¹⁶ to help ease victims who may be traumatised as a result of what they have experienced.
45. **In all domestic abuse cases, if firearms are held by the perpetrator or in the household, the local police Firearms Licensing Team should be notified so that consideration can be given to revoking any licence that the perpetrator holds. It is also important in terms of risk mitigation and intelligence to ensure officers attending future calls have this information.** The [Firearms Licensing Statutory Guidance](#) for police was published in October 2021 and contains further information about firearms licensing in respect of cases involving domestic abuse.

For further support tools for police officers in England and Wales, please refer to the [College of Policing Guidance First Response \(domestic abuse incident\)](#), Joint NPCC and CPS Evidence Gathering Checklist and the Domestic Abuse Matters Training Programme.

Types of evidence

46. There can be a perception that controlling or coercive behaviour is a ‘complex’ offence, that has a high evidence threshold to successfully charge and prosecute. Research on the police response to controlling or coercive behaviour has shown that the likelihood of arrest in such cases was influenced by the likelihood of a successful prosecution, which was also influenced by perceptions that controlling or coercive behaviour is ‘hard to prove’.¹⁷
47. Effective evidence gathering will be crucial to the prosecution case, particularly where the victim decides to withdraw from the case. Investigators should refer to the Joint NPCC and CPS Evidence Gathering Checklist.
48. Exploring all potential lines of enquiry to gather evidence on the full extent of a perpetrator's conduct and obtaining a detailed account of this behaviour is crucial – **a victim's statement is key to this evidence gathering. Taking a comprehensive account of what happened to the victim, as well as the perpetrator's conduct more generally, is critical to building a case.**
49. **It is vital that this statement captures the impact on the victim, rather than simply a description of the behaviours present.** Police officers can help in ensuring that the overall impact is reflected appropriately by asking the right questions early on. In some cases, if a victim is providing evidence in court which has not been captured in the initial statement, it can be detrimental to their case.

¹⁶ College of Policing (2020) Conflict Management Skills

¹⁷ Barlow, C (2019) Policing Coercive Control Project Report, The British Academy and Lancaster University Law School, p.2.

50. Witness statements are also important to support evidence gathering. For example, the family and friends of the victim may be able to give evidence about the effect and impact the perpetrator's behaviour, such as isolating the victim from them.

51. However, a statement is not the only evidence that can be used to support a case. Other examples of the types of evidence that could be used in addition to a victim or witness statement include:

- Phone records (whilst ensuring limited disruption, if any, for the victim and not risking further harm);
- Text messages (whilst ensuring limited disruption, if any, for the victim and not risking further harm);
- Evidence of abuse over the internet, digital technology and social media platforms;
- Copies of emails;
- Photographs of injuries such as: defensive injuries to forearms, latent upper arm grabs, scalp bruising, clumps of hair missing;
- 999 tapes or transcripts;
- CCTV;
- Body-worn video footage;
- Lifestyle and household including at scene photographic evidence – e.g. the things that they usually do, where they live, who they interact with, how they spend their money
- Records of interaction with services such as support services, (even if parts of those records relate to events which occurred before the new offence came into force, their contents may still, in certain circumstances, be relied on in evidence);
- Medical records;
- Bank records to show financial control;
- Previous threats made to children or other family members;
- Diary kept by the victim;
- Evidence of isolation such as lack of contact between family and friends, victim withdrawing from activities such as clubs, perpetrator accompanying victim to medical appointments;
- GPS tracking devices installed on mobile phones, tablets, vehicles etc.;
- Where the perpetrator has a carer responsibility, the care plan might be useful as it details what funds should be used for – e.g. caring for a child, caring for a parent or a sibling.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

52. Controlling or coercive behaviour is an ongoing pattern of offending rather than separate isolated incidents. This means that while there may not be enough evidence to charge the offence when initially reported, as time goes on and the behaviour continues, more evidence can be gathered. CPS guidance states that even where there is not enough evidence to charge a specific case, prosecutors should ask police officers to advise the victim to take steps to gather records to support any future investigation. This might include:

- A diary of events (ideally in a bound book, and/or by keeping an electronic record to record dates/times) noting that there are potential risks to the victim if the perpetrator were to discover this;
- Safely noting details of witnesses who may have observed or heard these events;
- Storing messages or recording calls made by the perpetrator;
- Mobile phone apps can be used to collect and store evidence of domestic abuse;
- Safely speaking to neighbours, colleagues, family, friends or specialist support services.

Further examples of evidence can be also found in the Investigative Development section of the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for Domestic Abuse.

53. **However, before asking a victim to gather records, police officers should be mindful that if a victim still lives with the perpetrator or continues to have direct or indirect contact with the perpetrator, or the perpetrator's family or friends, keeping such records may put the victim at further risk if the perpetrator were to find out about the victim's record keeping.** Police officers should also be mindful that the perpetrator may also be aware that police may rely on such evidence and therefore may make it impossible for the victim to keep such records.

54. Agencies, including the police, should consider ways in which the victim can safely keep records of what is happening to them. This could include: keeping text messages or sending them on to a friend for safekeeping, taking screen shots of emails and social media messages, and keeping a diary. **However, it is important to remember that it is the job of the police to build the case on behalf of the victim, and not the role of the victim to build the case for the police.** Specialist domestic abuse support services, as outlined in Annex G, can support victims and professionals with practical advice on how to record and retain evidence safely.

55. Section 8 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will apply to investigations of the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, as amended by section 68 of the 2021 Act. This allows the police to apply for search warrants to gain access to materials that are likely to be of substantial value to the investigation where they provide relevant evidence. For further information, please refer to the College of Policing toolkit for financial investigations.

56. The CPS require sufficient evidence to authorise any charge. However, even if a charge cannot be authorised, there are protective measures the police can advise on including safety measures at home and protective orders. Further information on these orders can be found at **Section 4 of this guidance**.
57. Sometimes, victims will ask the police not to proceed with the case and state that they no longer wish to give evidence. Victims may withdraw from a prosecution for many reasons and no assumptions should be made when this happens. It also does not mean that no further action should be taken. The CPS Domestic Abuse Legal Guidance states that the police should provide a statement for the prosecutor following contact with the complainant (the victim in the case) to explain the reasons that a retraction of the allegation/withdrawal of support has been made. Without this there cannot be an informed decision about the next steps to be taken. With any case and any reason given, it is important prosecutors ascertain why a complainant has retracted their allegation or withdrawn their support from the case and the risks and impacts posed to any children and/or any dependants, before deciding what action to take.
58. The police officer's report may reveal the need to consider whether further charges, for example, witness intimidation, harassment or stalking should be brought, or whether there has been a breach of the perpetrator's bail conditions. Where a complainant's account of the allegation in their withdrawal statement is not the same, or is not consistent with their earlier statement, there is a possibility that the complainant may have been pressurised into changing their account. In these circumstances, the police should be asked to investigate changes and, whether a further investigation into the circumstances is required.
59. There can be many possible reasons why a victim of domestic abuse may no longer support a case. These can include:
- fear of other offences being committed, or risk of further harm (both in person, but also through technology);
 - fear of coming face to face with the perpetrator in court;
 - pressure from the perpetrator, the perpetrator's family or associates;
 - fear of repercussions that may follow from family members or peers of the perpetrator, or gang members where either the victim, perpetrator or both are involved in a gang;
 - a wish to be reconciled with the perpetrator, if not already reconciled, or a wish to return to the family, if estranged;
 - the victim is no longer in a relationship with the perpetrator or does not want to re-live the incident;
 - a fear that children will be removed and placed into care, or not wanting to be perceived as 'being difficult' if children or other dependants are involved;
 - a fear the of impact on children, or other dependants, or financial repercussions (such as the receipt of certain child maintenance, tax allowances or financial support through benefits) if the perpetrator were to receive a custodial sentence;

- continuing with a prosecution may cause the victim to feel they are responsible for the perpetrator getting a criminal record; the impact on their job and family finances;
- embarrassment at reporting the complaint (as a result of the victim's or perpetrator's social background, or for example, in cases of child to parent abuse);
- fear they may not be believed and fears that the criminal justice system is biased towards the offender.¹⁸

This is not an exhaustive list

Please refer to Annex D for further examples of reasons for retractions and withdrawals by victims. For further information, please also refer to the [CPS Domestic Abuse Legal Guidance](#) on withdrawals and retractions. Prosecutors should also refer to the Legal Guidance section on [Avoiding the criminalisation of a complainant](#) for further advice.

60. Victims may benefit from having their testimony recorded to enable them to give their best evidence in court. To note, the 2021 Act provided that all domestic abuse victims will automatically be eligible for assistance when participating or giving evidence in family, civil or criminal proceedings. This could enable them, for example, to give their evidence from behind a screen or via a video link.

Perpetrator tactics

61. There is never any justification for perpetrating domestic abuse and although the perpetrator and others may blame the victim for their behaviour, it is never the victim's fault. Whilst some perpetrators do not recognise that their behaviour constitutes domestic abuse, all perpetrators are responsible for their behaviour and should be held accountable.

62. There are many reasons why an individual may become a perpetrator of domestic abuse. These can include: a desire to exert power and control over someone; misogyny; low self-esteem; or learned and replicated behaviour as a result of experiencing of abuse during childhood (although it should be noted that the majority of children who experience abuse during childhood do not go on to become perpetrators).

63. Evidence also shows that more than a third of the service users of one perpetrator programme¹⁹ had employment, training or educational needs, just over a quarter had mental health needs, around a quarter misused alcohol, and just under a quarter had housing needs, with some service users having needs across multiple categories.²⁰

¹⁸ [CPS Legal Guidance: Domestic abuse](#)

¹⁹ [Drive Project](#) developed, by Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance, out of a need to address perpetrators repeatedly offending with either the same or new victims.

²⁰ Hester, M. et al 2020. Evaluation of the Drive Project – A Three-year Pilot to Address High-Risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. University of Bristol. [Executive-Summary_Final2020.pdf](#)

As we cannot fully determine in many cases why an individual becomes a perpetrator, there remains a limited understanding of how and why individuals carry out abusive behaviours.

64. **A perpetrator may manipulate their victim or those around them to make their abuse invisible, even to their victims. Perpetrators can be particularly adept at manipulating professionals, agencies and systems and may use a range of tactics to maintain contact with and control the victim.** Perpetrators can also seek to minimise allegations, normalise the behaviour and discredit or undermine the victim's account or credibility. These can potentially include:

Threats and intimidation

- Using threats in order to manipulate the victim – e.g. by telling the victim they will not be believed by the police or other agencies, that they will inform social services, that their children will be taken away;
- Threatening to remove care or not undertake caring responsibilities where the victim is reliant on this, threatening the victim around the withdrawal of medicines;
- Telling the victim that they will not be believed because they have mental health issues, learning difficulties or disabilities, or issues with substance abuse;

Manipulation

- Making false or vexatious allegations against victims and convincing professionals that their controlling tactics are for the victim's own safety and/or for the safety of their children. The police should examine whether this has been a feature in previous relationships by discussing with the victim or accessing police call outs or relevant criminal records held on the perpetrator²¹. College of Policing guidance on [Arrest and other positive approaches](#) states that “a manipulative perpetrator may be trying to draw the police into colluding with their coercive control of the victim; police officers must avoid playing into the primary perpetrator's hands and take account of all available evidence when making the decision to arrest”;
- Threatening to ‘out’ the victim as a form of coercive control, telling the victim that they will not be believed because they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans, or manipulating the victim's knowledge of what support is available for LGBT people and using myths and stereotypes around LGBT domestic abuse to make professionals believe that abuse between same-sex couples does not exist;
- Disguising compliance – e.g. with a court order;
- Playing different professionals off against one another;

²¹ Police should make appropriate use of the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) (DVDS), including on the “right to know”, where necessary to protect a victim from harm. Updated DVDS guidance will be released later in 2022.

- Manipulating the victim’s immigration status as a form of coercive control, including withholding ID, passports and visas from victims, lying about their status, purposely letting a victim’s visa lapse or failing to act on sponsorship duties for immigration purposes;
- Making threats of suicide as a method of controlling the victim, especially to prevent them from leaving.²² Research highlights an association between domestic homicide and perpetrator suicidal ideation, self-harm and threats of suicide. Retrospective analysis presented in academic literature shows that domestic homicide perpetrators are at least three times more likely than other types of perpetrator to have suicidal tendencies;²³
- Using children as a form of control or coercion– e.g. access, such as breach of handover protocols, seeking to manipulate children’s feelings towards ex-partner (victim).

Exploitation

- Exploiting the communication support needs of the victims or manipulating the victim’s knowledge of what support is available and making professionals believe that the victim does not have capacity to report accurately or that reports are not credible due to communication difficulty;
- Exploiting interpretations of religion or faith to maintain control of victims and perpetuate harm;
- Targeting people who might be vulnerable (there may be evidence of this from previous relationships).

Sabotage

- Attempting to frustrate or interfere with a police investigation, including attempting to undermine the victim’s statements by for example, claiming they are mentally ill;
- Seeking to control the victim’s finances, ability to access funds or obtain an income;
- Using the courts to continue abuse, for example not turning up to court dates, sending unnecessary and repeated legal letters and making threats around contact;
- Missing or cancelling appointments;

Further information on perpetrator tactics can be found in Chapter 3 of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance.

²² Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme, NPCC, College of Policing (2021) [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\): Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.55](#)

²³ Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme, NPCC, College of Policing (2021) [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\): Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.6](#)

65. The CPS [Domestic Abuse Legal Guidance](#) states that “Prosecutors may often be presented with conflicting accounts of the incident, with each party claiming to be the victim. The offender may make a counter-allegation of abuse, or argue that they have acted in self-defence, making it difficult to identify and distinguish between the primary victim and primary aggressor. The police should explore the nature of the relationship between the individuals; the context of the offending, including any previous call outs, allegations and/or convictions involving the individuals; and, whether there are any other factors at play which may impact on an allegation, such as civil or family proceedings.”²⁴

See table 1 of the [CPS Toolkit for Prosecutors on Violence Against Women and Girls Cases Involving a Vulnerable Victim](#) on assessing the credibility and understanding perpetrator tactics.

66. If you are unsure of whether the controlling or coercive behaviour offence applies in a specific case then speak to the CPS.²⁵ If you require advice about controlling or coercive behaviour or domestic abuse more generally, you can also speak to a specialist service provider or Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). If the advice is on a specific case, you will need the victim’s permission before seeking that advice. For further guidance on charging, please refer to [Charging \(The Director’s Guidance\) - sixth edition, December 2020](#).²⁶

Potential of proceeding with a prosecution without the victim’s live evidence [evidence-led prosecutions]

67. CPS legal guidance confirms that the prosecution strategy should, from the outset, consider the possibility of proceeding without the victim’s support. In these instances, consideration should be given to the evidence in the case and whether there is enough to proceed without the victim’s live evidence. Prosecutors should consider:

- Using evidence other than that of the victim including admissions in interview, CCTV, 999 tapes, body worn video footage, social media evidence or other witnesses;
- *Res gestae* - statements made by the victim or a witness to a third party, during or shortly after the time that the offence was committed, that are so directly linked to the events occurring, so as to make it unlikely that they were distorted or concocted – may be admissible as hearsay;
- Other hearsay - utilising the Criminal Justice Act 2003 to admit an absent victim’s statement in evidence if there is evidence that the victim is in fear or if it is in the interests of justice to do so.

68. Under the Victims’ Code, the police must offer a victim of domestic abuse the opportunity to make a victim personal statement (VPS), even if they have not given any other witness statement.

²⁴ [CPS Legal Guidance: Domestic abuse](#)

²⁵ Service Police and Commanding Officers should refer to the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) rather than the CPS.

²⁶ [CPS \(2020\) Charging \(The Director’s Guidance\) Sixth Edition](#)

Please also refer to the [College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\) on Investigating Domestic Abuse](#).

Service Police and Commanding Officers should consult the '[Armed Forces Code of Practice for the Victims of Crime](#)'.

Considering other offences

69. **Good intelligence and record keeping will be important in ensuring that evidence is documented and kept in relation to a course of conduct.** This includes reports made by the victim. If historic offences are disclosed, they should be logged in line with National Crime Recording Standards and flagged appropriately as domestic abuse.
70. **It may also be possible to charge for multiple offences.** For example, a person could be charged with common assault or rape and controlling or coercive behaviour. The CPS will be able to advise on what combination of charges are most appropriate, **but it is important to remember that the presence of controlling or coercive behaviour does not mean that no other offence has been committed or cannot be charged.**
71. "Summary only"²⁷ offences, such as common assault, can only be heard in the magistrates' court and currently have a six-month time limit (after the offence occurred) to prosecute²⁸. It is therefore important to consider the wider context around an assault, or other relevant summary offences, and if this may form part of a wider pattern of abuse that may also involve controlling or coercive behaviour. It should also be noted that the controlling and coercive behaviour offence is not subject to prosecution time limits as it is an "either way"²⁹ offence, which can be heard in either a magistrates' court or the Crown Court.
72. The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour does not have retrospective effect. This means that charges cannot be brought in relation to behaviour(s) that occurred before the date the offence came into force. However, behaviour that occurred before implementation of the offence may still be cited as evidence of bad character and any evidence relating to it should be passed to the CPS³⁰ who can consider making an application to the court. **The amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence, to remove the "living together" requirement for ex-partners and family members, will come into effect later this year and will not have retrospective effect.**

²⁷ [Health and Safety Executive – Court Stage: Overview](#)

²⁸ The PCSC Bill will change how the six-month time limit is applied for offences of common assault or battery involving domestic abuse in England and Wales. The change means the six month time limit will run from the date of it being reported to the police formally to the police, rather than the date of the offence. This would give victims more time in which to seek justice given that domestic abuse is often reported late relative to other crimes. The amendment creates a two-year backstop and no proceedings can be commenced after the elapse of two years from the commission of the offence

²⁹ [Health and Safety Executive – Court Stage: Overview](#)

³⁰ Service Police and Commanding Officers should refer to the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) rather than the CPS.

73. **There may be instances where it might be appropriate to consider a charge for the offence of stalking rather than controlling or coercive behaviour. The Government, the CPS and the police are currently working on developing clear and consistent advice and guidance on when to consider a charge for the offence of stalking. This advice will be included in the final version of this guidance later this year.**

Further documents to refer to:

- [Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse](#)
- [Authorised Professional Practice First Response Checklist](#)
- [Joint NPCC and CPS Evidence Gathering Checklist](#)
- [CPS Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Prosecutors](#)
- [CPS Charging Guidance 2020](#)
- [DASH Risk Checklist Form and Guidance](#)
- [College of Policing Guidance on Understanding risk and vulnerability in the context of domestic abuse](#)

Where the offence does not apply

74. There are circumstances where acts of controlling or coercive behaviour may have taken place, but it is not possible for the offence to be charged. The offence would not apply where:

- The victim and the perpetrator were not “personally connected” at the time the behaviour occurred (see Annex B for full definition of “personally connected”). In such circumstances it should be considered whether a course of conduct can be evidenced with a view to bringing charges under existing harassment or stalking legislation. If there are threats of violence but the victim and perpetrator are not personally connected, other offences should be considered such as Threats to Kill³¹ or Common Assault, where the perpetrator “recklessly causes another to suffer or apprehend immediate unlawful violence”.³²
- The behaviour in question is perpetrated against a child under 16 by someone aged 16 or over who has responsibility for that child (see subsection (3)). This is because the criminal law, in particular the child cruelty/ neglect offence in section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933³³, already covers such behaviour – making it an offence to cause a child emotional or psychological suffering, including through exposure to domestic abuse. It should also be noted that section 3 of the 2021 Act recognises that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse and it treats such children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, where they are related to either the victim or perpetrator.

³¹ A person who without lawful excuse makes to another a threat, intending that that other would fear it would be carried out, to kill that other or a third person shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.

³² [CPS \(2020\) Offences against the Person, incorporating the Charging Standard](#)

³³ As amended by section 66, Serious Crime Act 2015

- The behaviour is not taking place repeatedly or continuously, for example, it was truly a one-off behaviour.
- The behaviour does not have a “serious effect” on the victim as defined by the law. The behaviour will have a “serious effect” if: it causes the victim to fear, on two or more occasions, that violence will be used against them – section 76 (4)(a); or if it causes the victim serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities – section 76 (4) (b). CPS guidance states that the following might be examples of a serious effect on the victim:
 - Stopping or changing the way someone socialises
 - Physical or mental health deterioration
 - A change in routine at home including those associated with mealtimes or household work
 - Putting in place measures at home to safeguard themselves or their children
 - Changes to work patterns, employment status or routes to work

Other examples of a serious effect could include:

- Being monitored by and needing to report back to the perpetrator
- Restricted financial independence, e.g: being denied access to money, being prevented from working, perpetrator sabotaging employment, being denied access to joint bank accounts, coerced debt
- Being deprived access to medication, phone and internet usage
- Feeling unable to have family or friends visit
- Becoming socially isolated
- Being told what they can and cannot wear

This list is not exhaustive.

Section 3 – The defence

75. Subsections (8) to (10) of Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 provide for a defence where the defendant believes he or she was acting in the best interests of the victim.

The defence outlined above is not available to those who have caused another person to fear that violence could be used against them.

76. In order to be able to rely on this defence, a defendant needs to show that they believed that they were acting in the best interests of the victim and that their actions were reasonable in the circumstances. A defendant would not be able to rely on the defence where a person with access to the same information did not believe their behaviour was reasonable, even if the defendant may have genuinely believed it to be. For example, it is not just a question of A saying, “I think it was in B’s best interests”. There is an objective element to the defence that allows a magistrates’ court or a Crown Court jury to reject the defence submitted where they find that the defendant’s behaviour is unreasonable.

Section 4 – Criminal penalties and protection orders

77. Controlling or coercive behaviour is a serious criminal offence and has a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.
78. The independent Sentencing Council, which develops sentencing guidelines for courts, has issued a guideline on controlling or coercive behaviour which can be found [here](#). This provided guidance on factors the court must take into account that may affect the sentence and sets out different levels of sentence, within the maximum penalty, based on the harm caused to the victim and the culpability of the offender
79. There are a number of criminal and civil measures to target perpetrators of controlling or coercive behaviour and to protect victims and their families. A multi-agency response is also key in protecting and supporting the victim and their family at an early stage, including children and young people, as well as managing the perpetrator.
80. Restraining orders can be made under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 by a court to protect a victim, victims or any other person from conduct, that amounts to harassment or stalking. For example, they can be used when someone has been convicted or even acquitted of such an offence, and may even be imposed where the perpetrator receives a custodial sentence (recognising that harassment can occur from within prison or following release).
81. Restraining orders generally prohibit a person from contacting victims and place restrictions on them doing anything described in the order. For example, a restraining order may prohibit a person from coming within a certain distance of the victim's home. A person who is subject to such an order and who breaks its terms without reasonable excuse, will be deemed to be in breach of the order, which is a criminal offence and punishable by a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.
82. The police can also apply to the magistrates' court for a Stalking Protection Order (SPO) under the Stalking Protection Act 2019 to protect someone from a risk associated with stalking. SPOs can be used in relation to any type of stalking, irrespective of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. SPOs can include prohibitions on the perpetrator's behaviour (such as not contacting a victim) and/or positive requirements (such as attending a programme to address their stalking behaviour). Breach of the terms of an SPO without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence, with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.
83. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced a new civil [Domestic Abuse Protection Notice](#) (DAPN) to provide immediate protection following a domestic abuse incident, and a new civil Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO) to provide flexible, longer-term protection for victims from all forms of domestic abuse. A DAPN would be issued by the police and could, for example, require a perpetrator to leave the victim's home for an initial period of up to 48 hours.

Within the 48-hour period, the police must make an application to the magistrates' court for a DAPO. DAPOs will also be available in the family, civil and criminal courts, and applications could be made by victims, the police, any specified third party as set out in regulations, and any other party given leave of the court to apply. Criminal, family, and civil courts will also be enabled to make a DAPO during on-going court proceedings, which do not have to be domestic abuse related. **DAPNs/DAPOs will be piloted in selected areas in England and Wales in early 2023, before an expected national roll-out in 2025 when they will replace the Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders nationally.**

84. DAPOs will be able to impose both prohibitions and positive requirements on perpetrators. Prohibitions could include restricting the perpetrator from coming within a specified distance of the victim's home and/or any other specified premises, such as the victim's workplace. Positive requirements would require the perpetrator to take an action such as attend a behaviour change programme, an alcohol or substance misuse programme or a mental health assessment. They could also impose electronic monitoring ('tagging') in order to monitor compliance with other specific requirements, and mandatory notification requirements of name and address onto the person subject to the order.
85. Courts will be able to vary the requirements imposed in response to changes in perpetrator behaviour and the risk they pose. The DAPO will also not have a minimum or maximum duration, allowing victims to obtain the protection they require for as long as needed.
86. Breach of a DAPO will be a criminal offence, carrying a maximum penalty of up to five years' imprisonment, or a fine, or both. We will also preserve the contempt of court route for victims who wish to pursue breach in the civil courts.

See Sentencing Council guidelines which identify the principles relevant to the sentencing of cases involving domestic abuse:

<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/publications/item/overarching-principles-domestic-abuse-definitive-guideline/>

Section 5 – Multi-agency response

How support services can assist

87. Support services can assist in supporting the victim to engage with the criminal justice process. Providing specialist support can assist in preventing the victim from withdrawing from a case and also supports the gathering of evidence, for example, by providing service and case records, and records of contact made with helplines.

88. The police should follow their local protocols and guidance including risk assessment procedures and make referrals to specialist support services including multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), helplines and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) where required. IDVAs can also support a victim throughout the criminal justice process. This can include:

- Liaising with the police on the victim's behalf;
- Ensuring the victim is kept informed at each stage of the prosecution process;
- Working with prosecutors to support the victim;
- Making contact with witness care services at the court to ensure they are aware of any victim needs and to determine what support they can offer;
- Advising the victim of what special measures are available such as screens, videolink and separate entrances; and
- Attending court with the victim for emotional support.

89. Victims in an abusive relationship can find it difficult to end the relationship and there can be a lack of public and professional understanding around to why victims do not “just leave”, which can create further stigma around the abuse they are experiencing and be a barrier for victims accessing effective support.³⁴ Victims may also ask the police not to proceed any further with a prosecution of a case and withdraw their support from the process.³⁵ Professor Liz Kelly produced a six-stage process which provides a framework to help understand why people may stay in an abusive relationship or show reluctance to report.³⁶ This framework can help practitioners to understand how the victim may view their situation and outlines the following six stages:

- **Managing the situation.** The victim has started to experience abuse, they respond initially by adapting their behaviour and seeking ways to manage it themselves.
- **Distortion of perspective/reality.** The victim's day to day life is affected by trying to manage the abuse. They experience increased anxiety and focus on adapting behaviour to appease the perpetrator. The victim adopts the perspective of the perpetrator and starts to blame themselves.

³⁴ [Overstreet, N. M., & Quinn, D. M. \(2013\). The Intimate Partner Violence Stigmatization Model and Barriers to Help-Seeking. Basic and applied social psychology, Volume 35, Issue, pp.109–122.](#)

³⁵ [CPS Guidance \(2020\) Domestic Abuse](#)

³⁶ Kelly, L (1999) Domestic Violence Matters: an evaluation of a development project, pp.35-37.

This can also amount to “gaslighting”, a form of psychological abuse where the perpetrator manipulates the victim which can make them doubt themselves, their memories and judgement, leading to a devastating impact on their mental health and wellbeing.³⁷

- **Defining abuse.** The victim is gaining an awareness that the relationship is abusive.
- **Re-evaluating the relationship.** The victim is reconsidering different aspects of the relationship and thinking through their options should they stay or leave
- **Ending the relationship.** The victim leaves the relationship. It can take multiple attempts and they may return to the relationship. There is a potential for victims to work through the stages multiple times.
- **Ending the violence.** The victim ending the relationship does not always ensure that the abuse ends. It is important to be aware this may in fact place them at greater risk of serious, and even fatal assault.³⁸ Appropriate risk management is therefore required.

90. There is also specialist support to help perpetrators to change their behaviour. Information can be obtained from [Respect](#) or other local programmes. A referral or self-referral to a perpetrator programme should only be made in conjunction with specialist advisers and following an appropriate risk assessment.

See **Annex F** for support services for perpetrators and refer to chapter 6 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#) for further information on perpetrator programmes.

How other services and agencies can assist

91. There are a range of agencies and support services that may hold information that could provide relevant evidence that would assist in building a case. For example: medical records, case notes from other services such as mental health, drug and alcohol services, financial services or the family justice system. Contextual evidence may also be available from housing services, for example records of damage to property such as holes in walls or complaints from other tenants³⁹.

92. It is important to remember that section 3 of the 2021 Act recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and are related to either the victim or perpetrator. The police, alongside other agencies, can play an important role in identifying children who need help and protection as a result of domestic abuse, which can include controlling or coercive behaviour, and ensuring that they get the support they need.

³⁷ Women's Aid (2018) [Women's Aid responds to Prime Minister's commitment to toughen laws on gaslighting](#).

³⁸ Kelly. L (1999) Domestic Violence Matters: an evaluation of a development project, pp. 35-37.

³⁹ Due regard must be given to any data protection requirements, including the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), when sharing information, (whilst noting the provisions within the 2018 Act applicable for the purpose of preventing and detecting crime, and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders). Further guidance can be found in the Information Commissioner's Office [Guide to Law Enforcement Processing | ICO](#).

93. In relation to children and young people (up to 18 years), the statutory guidance document, [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2018) sets out what professionals and organisations need to do, individually and in partnership with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places a shared and equal duty on the three safeguarding partners, (the local authority chief executive, the accountable officer of a clinical commissioning group and a chief officer of police) to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.
94. In Wales, statutory safeguarding responsibilities are set out in the guidance [Working Together to Safeguard People, Volume 5: Handling individual cases to protect children at risk](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard People, Volume 6: Handling individual cases to protect adults at risk](#). The Wales Safeguarding Procedures help practitioners apply the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and statutory guidance, across agencies.⁴⁰

For further information on safeguarding responsibilities, including for children and multi-agency working, please refer to chapter 4 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#). Police should also refer to their local protocols for safeguarding adults and children.

⁴⁰ [Wales Safeguarding Procedures \(safeguarding.wales\)](#)

Section 6 – Related harms, offences and other subsets of domestic abuse

Harassment or stalking

95. It is important to understand the differences between the offences of **controlling or coercive behaviour** and those of **harassment or stalking**.

Similar to controlling or coercive behaviour, harassment or stalking involve a course of conduct or pattern of behaviour which causes someone alarm or distress, or a fear of violence.

96. The criminal offences of harassment and stalking are set out in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (the 1997 Act) at sections 2, 2A, 4 and 4A:

- **Section 2 (harassment)** the defendant pursues a course of conduct, which amounts to harassment of another and which the defendant knows, or ought to know, amounts to harassment. The offence applies where such behaviour is targeted at an individual on two or more occasions or where the harassment is targeted at two or more people at least once, for example the harassment of a group of disabled people.
- **Section 2A (stalking)** involves carrying out harassment of one other person more than once, where the acts and omissions involved are associated with stalking.
 - Stalking is not defined, but section 2A provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of acts and omissions which could in context represent stalking, such as following someone, contacting them or trying to do so, or monitoring their use of internet, e-mail or other electronic communications.
- **Section 4 (putting people in fear of violence)** the defendant pursues a course of conduct that amounts to harassment which causes a person to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them and which the defendant knows, or ought to know, that their behaviour would have this effect.
- **Section 4A (stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress)** involves section 2A stalking conduct which either causes someone to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them, or which causes them serious alarm or distress which has a substantial effect on their usual activities.

97. Although there is no statutory definition of harassment, it is generally understood to involve improper, oppressive and unreasonable conduct that has been targeted at an individual and calculated to alarm them, cause them distress or intimidate them. The conduct might be verbal or non-verbal and it does not have to be the same type of action on every occasion. For example, a perpetrator could use a variety of means to harass someone such as sending threatening texts or emails, making abusive phone calls, damaging property or falsely reporting a person to the police when they have done nothing wrong.

98. Stalking does not require a personal connection, which is a key difference with controlling or coercive behaviour and other forms of domestic abuse. The police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have also adopted the following description, which appears in the Government's statutory guidance on Stalking Protection Orders:

Stalking is a "pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress to the victim."⁴¹

99. For further guidance around harassment and stalking, please refer to the following:

- [CPS Legal Guidance on Stalking and Harassment](#)
- [Stalking Protection Orders: Statutory Guidance for the Police](#)
- [College of Policing guidance](#)
- [CPS / Police Protocol on the Appropriate Handling of Stalking Offences](#)
- [College of Policing briefing note for amendments to the protection of harassment act 1997](#)
- [College of Policing training on Violence Against Women and Girls including stalking and harassment](#)

100. To safeguard victims from further abuse, officers should be aware of the above guidance to ensure that the appropriate action is taken when considering if a case is one of controlling or coercive behaviour and/or, harassment or stalking.

⁴¹ [Home Office \(2021\) Stalking Protection Orders: Statutory Guidance for the Police, p.26](#)

Domestic homicide and suicide

101. **Controlling or coercive behaviour is a risk factor in domestic homicides, particularly for female victims of intimate partner homicide⁴² and a significant pre-cursor for suicides.**⁴³ Where suicide has occurred, police and prosecutors should consider whether the perpetrator's controlling or coercive behaviour could amount to Unlawful Act Manslaughter.⁴⁴
102. The 2020-2021 Domestic Homicide Project's⁴⁵ review of literature and evidence found that controlling or coercive behaviour is a substantial risk factor in both intimate partner homicide and suspected victim suicides where there is a history of domestic abuse.⁴⁶ The review found that 28% of suspects were previously known to the police for controlling or coercive behaviour, and was one of the five most frequent risk factors.⁴⁷
103. The project also identified that in many cases of intimate partner homicides, controlling or coercive behaviour from a suspect towards a victim was strongly present.⁴⁸ It also identified that suspected victim suicide and intimate partner homicide in many ways have very similar risk profiles. A history of domestic abuse, non-fatal strangulation and attempts to separate are all indicators of controlling and coercive behaviour and they are risk factors for both intimate partner homicide and suspected victim suicide. This suggests that cases of high-risk domestic abuse, often characterised by control or coercion, might equally end in either a homicide or suspected victim suicide.
104. The project's report recommended that all agencies involved in any MARAC process should consider the risk of victim suicide following domestic abuse alongside the risk of homicide, where risk factors indicate controlling or coercive behaviour – including a history of non-fatal strangulation and attempts to separate – are present.⁴⁹

⁴² [Home Office \(2021\) Review of the Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Offence p.59](#)

[Johnson, H et al \(2019\) Intimate Femicide: The Role of Coercive Control, Feminist Criminology, Volume 14, Issue 1 p.3-23](#)
[Monckton Smith, J \(2019\) Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight Stage Progression to Homicide, Violence Against Women, Volume 26, Issue 11 p.1267-1285](#)

⁴³ [Wolford-Cleaver, C et al \(2017\) Associations of Emotional Abuse Types with Suicide Ideation among Dating Couples, Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, Volume 26, Issue 9, p.1042-1054](#)

⁴⁴ [CPS Legal Guidance \(2019\) Homicide: Murder and Manslaughter](#)

⁴⁵ In 2020 the Domestic Homicides Project was established by police and government in England and Wales to collect, review, and share quick-time learning from all police-recorded domestic homicides and also from suspected suicides of individuals with a history of domestic abuse victimisation in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions. The project published its findings in the Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme, NPCC, College of Policing (2021) [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\): Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021](#). The report draws on the following sets of data gathered for the project: case submissions from police relating to 208 incidents, Home Office Homicide Index data covering the period of 2005/06 to 2019/20, a written survey of all 43 English and Welsh police forces and on-depth one-to-one interviews with eight force domestic abuse leads from across the English and Welsh regions.

⁴⁶ The Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme (VKPP), NPCC, College of Policing (2021) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.14.

⁴⁷ The Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme (VKPP), NPCC, College of Policing (2021) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.52.

⁴⁸ The Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme (VKPP), NPCC, College of Policing (2021) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.12.

⁴⁹ The Home Office, Vulnerability and Knowledge Programme (VKPP), NPCC, College of Policing (2021) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021, p.74.

105. From this research, we can draw a key conclusion that identifying and prosecuting controlling or coercive behaviour can further mitigate against the range of risk factors that can lead to other harms and offences, such as suicide and homicide.

106. There is also a clear correlation between stalking behaviour and the risk of serious harm or death. A research study covering 358 homicide cases (female victim and male perpetrator) in the UK in the years 2012, 2013, and 2014, showed that stalking behaviours were recorded in 94% of these cases, and control and coercion recorded in 92% of these cases.⁵⁰

107. For further guidance on these associated risk factors, please refer to the [Stalking Protection Orders: Statutory Guidance for Police](#).

Other subsets of domestic abuse

108. **Controlling or coercive behaviour can be a prominent feature of other types of abuse.** Some examples are listed below but further detail is set out in Chapter 2 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Physical abuse

109. Physical abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, often forms part of controlling or coercive behaviour. This can involve, but is not limited to:

- Being, or threatened to be, kicked, punched, pinched, pushed, dragged, shoved, slapped, scratched, choked and bitten;
- Use, or threats of use, of 'weapons', such as knives and irons;
- Being burned, scalded, poisoned, or attempted drowning;
- Objects being thrown at or in the direction of the victim;
- Violence or threats against family members, friends and/or pets;
- Causing harm by damaging or denying access to medical aids or equipment – for example Deaf persons may be prevented from communicating in sign language or may have their hearing aids removed; and
- Harming someone whilst performing 'caring' duties, which are often performed by relatives. This is especially relevant for disabled victims and may involve force feeding, over-medication, withdrawal of medicine or over-medication or denying access to medical care.

⁵⁰ [Monckton-Smith, J. et al. \(2017\) Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide, p.3.](#)

Sexual assault, coercion and abuse

110. Sexual assault and abuse can be prominent features of controlling or coercive behaviour. Perpetrators may use sexual assault or abuse, or threats of sexual assault or abuse to control and coerce a victim. This can involve:

- Rape;
- Being pressured into sex, or sexual acts, including with other people;
- Being forced to take part in sexual acts because of threats to others, including children;
- Unwanted sexual contact or demands;
- ‘Corrective’ rape (the practice of raping someone with the aim of ‘curing’ them of being LGBT);
- Intentional exposure to HIV or sexually transmitted infections;
- Being pressured or being tricked into having unsafe sex, including deception over the use of birth control;
- Forced involvement in making or watching pornography; and
- Hurting a victim during sex, including non-fatal strangulation.

111. Victims can also be the subject of reproductive coercion, which can involve: restricting a victim’s access to birth control; refusing to use a birth control method; deception regarding the use of birth control including falsely claiming to be using contraception; forcing a victim to get an abortion, IVF or other related procedure, or denying access to such procedures.

112. There are also links between sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including forced prostitution. Perpetrators may force or coerce a victim into exchanging sex for drugs, alcohol or money, or committing a crime, such as theft, to pay, for example, for the perpetrator's drugs or alcohol.

113. “Rough sex”, including sadomasochistic activity, can involve the infliction of pain or violence, simulated or otherwise with the aim of providing sexual gratification for the parties involved. This type of activity can encompass a wide range of behaviours and, although it may occur in private and be consensual, section 71 of the 2021 Act states that the infliction of serious harm, which results in actual bodily harm (ABH) or other more serious injury or death, will mean that the person responsible for those injuries will be liable to a criminal prosecution, irrespective of whether consent had been given by the person in receipt of the injuries or not.

114. Non-fatal strangulation can also be part of sexual abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) addresses this by amending the Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) to introduce two new sections – sections 75A and 75B – which create a new and specific criminal offence of strangulation and suffocation, that will apply in England and Wales. The offence will apply to any case where a person intentionally strangles or suffocates another person and will have general application. This means that it can apply to all cases where a person intentionally strangles or suffocates another person, including those cases where the offence occurs in a domestic abuse context.

115. The offence of strangulation and suffocation will cover a range of behaviours, including strangulation, but will also cover suffocation and other methods used by a person that affect a victim's ability to breathe. As is currently the case under the law for other assault offences, this offence will also include a defence which is set out in section 75A (2) of the 2015 Act. However, that defence will not apply where the victim suffers serious harm (actual bodily harm (ABH)) or other serious injury, and where the defendant had intended to cause that harm or was reckless as to causing harm, no matter whether the victim consented to the acts that resulted in the serious harm or not.

Verbal abuse

116. Examples of verbal abuse include:

- Repeated yelling and shouting;
- Verbal humiliation either in private or in company;
- Being laughed at and being made fun of;
- Insults and threats; and
- Mocking someone about their disability, transgender identity, religious or faith belief, sexual orientation, physical appearance etc.

For further guidance on emotional or psychological abuse, please also refer to Chapter 2 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Economic abuse

117. The 2021 Act includes economic abuse as a form of domestic abuse (see Annex B for full definition).

118. **Economic abuse⁵¹ can also be a form of controlling or coercive behaviour, where it is repeated or continuous.** It can make an individual economically dependent on the perpetrator, and/or create economic instability, making it more difficult for them to escape and access safety. This can result in an individual staying with a perpetrator and experiencing more abuse and harm as a result.⁵² **It is important to be aware that economic abuse may take place or persist after the victim has separated from the perpetrator. This pattern of behaviour can (as of later this year) be investigated under the amended controlling or coercive behaviour offence.**

119. **Victims of economic abuse may not recognise they are being abused and/or may not be aware that such abuse may amount to a criminal offence.** For example, someone who has entered into shared financial arrangements with a partner may not realise that their partner is using the arrangement to control, dictate or misuse how this money is spent.

⁵¹ Sharp, N (2008) 'What's yours is mine' [The different forms of economic abuse and its impact on women and children experiencing domestic violence, Refuge, p.37.](#)

⁵² Earlywine, M. and Stohl, I (2015) [In Our Shoes: The Next Steps – An Advocate's Guide, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, pp.1-117.](#)

It is therefore important to be aware of the range of ways in which a perpetrator can seek to economically abuse their victim. Effectively identifying such abuse can also provide important evidence to support evidencing controlling or coercive behaviour or other offences.

120. Examples of economic abuse might include the following, where they have a substantial adverse effect on the victim:

- Controlling the family income;
- Not allowing a victim to spend any money unless 'permitted';
- Denying the victim food or only allowing them to eat a particular type of food;
- Running up bills and debts such as credit/store cards in a victim's name, including without them knowing;
- Forcing the victim to take out contracts (such as phones or gadgets), or taking out contracts in the victim's name without their consent;
- Refusing to contribute to household income;
- Deliberately forcing a victim to go to the family courts so they incur additional legal fees;
- Interfering with or preventing a victim from regularising their immigration status so that they are economically dependent on the perpetrator;
- Not allowing a victim to set up personal identification (e.g. applying for a National Insurance number) which may preclude them from being able to achieve financial independence;
- Preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits, or forcing someone to commit benefit fraud or misappropriating such benefits;
- Interfering with a victim's education, training, employment and career so that they are economically dependent on the perpetrator;
- Not allowing a victim access to mobile phone/car/utilities;
- Damaging the victim's property;
- Not allowing a victim to buy pet food or access veterinary care for their pet.
- Coercing the victim into signing over property or assets
- Refusing to make agreed or required payments, for example mortgage repayments or child maintenance payments; and
Deliberately frustrating the sale of shared assets, or the closure of joint accounts or mortgages.

121. A survey on the impact of economic abuse highlighted that 57% of victims of economic abuse were in or had been in debt, 26% had a negatively impacted credit score, and 25% had experienced abuse related to spending and credit, such as having debt put in their name without their knowledge, or due to coercion.⁵³ This can limit someone's ability to leave an abusive relationship or it can create ongoing difficulties post-separation.

⁵³ Butt, E. [Know economic abuse: 2020 Report](#): Refuge: 2020.

122. **As with controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse can continue or escalate post-separation in the case of intimate partners, or the victims' finances may be controlled by another family member who does not live with them, when the absence of physical proximity may mean that it is the only way left to control the victim.** Examples of post-separation economic abuse might include the following:

- Non-payment of mortgage;
- Preventing the sale of a jointly-owned property;
- Misuse or empty joint bank accounts;
- Non-payment of child maintenance; and
- Repeated/unnecessary applications in court proceedings.

123. The organisation Surviving Economic Abuse, in partnership with Money Advice Plus, has created a [guide](#) to understanding economic abuse for victims.

124. In February 2021, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published updated guidance for firms on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers, and this includes specific reference to economic control within understanding relationship breakdown and domestic abuse as a driver of vulnerability.

125. The FCA defines vulnerability as customers who, “due to their personal circumstances, are especially susceptible to harm, particularly when a financial services organisation is not acting with appropriate levels of care”. In assessing the potential vulnerability of customers, consideration should be given to:

- **Health:** health conditions or illnesses that affect ability to carry out day-to-day tasks;
- **Life events:** life events such as bereavement, job loss or relationship breakdown;
- **Resilience:** low ability to withstand financial or emotional shocks;
- **Capability:** low knowledge of financial matters or low confidence in managing money (financial capability). Low capability in other relevant areas such as literacy, or digital skills.

126. The FCA guidance states that firms should take steps to ensure that their staff are capable of recognising and responding appropriately to the needs of vulnerable customers and that they “expect firms to provide their customers with a level of care that is appropriate given the characteristics of the customers themselves”. In relation to domestic and economic abuse, FCA guidance states that “relevant staff should be aware that this is widespread, with both immediate and long-term impacts on victims and survivors across all drivers of vulnerability. It is important that relevant staff are aware of how perpetrators of abuse can use financial services in their abuse and recognise how to safely provide victims with the support they need”.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Financial Conduct Authority (2021) Guidance for firms on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers, p.18. .

127. Financial services should also refer to the UK Finance [Financial Abuse Code](#), which sets out how participating banks and building societies should support customers who are victims of domestic, financial or economic abuse. The Code aims to bring increased awareness and better understanding of what domestic, financial and economic abuse looks like for firms, employees, victims, potential victims and their families, and ensure more consistency in the support available for those who need it.

Case Study – Laura

After a decade of marriage and several children, Laura's abusive partner Darren left her and they got a divorce. Darren continued to harass her after separation, and this got increasingly worse so she got a non-molestation order. Darren was arrested for breach of the order, and the police mentioned the possibility of issuing a harassment warning against him. Laura also complained to the police about the economic abuse she experienced after separation but found that they were not interested in it and said they could take no further action regarding it as they lacked the powers. Laura experienced the following post-separation economic abuse:

- Child tax credit – Darren made false allegations against her, so she regularly had to prove all her income and expenditure relating to wages, childcare etc. Darren had taken credit cards out at the address after he had left. All her payments were stopped for several months, before being reinstated and backdated.
- Employment - Darren made false child abuse allegations to social services and the police. The police interviewed her under caution regarding the alleged offences. This could have a significant impact on her career due to working with vulnerable children and requiring an enhanced DBS check, which it may show up on.
- Property – Darren refused to remove Laura from joint mortgages and then defaulted on them to the extent that they went into negative equity. Darren did not comply with a court order to permit removal of her name from the mortgages, and the bank has said it is unable to follow through on the court order without his cooperation. Laura then got orders of sale on the properties but they were in such a poor state that she could not sell them due to the bank not accepting the low offers. The properties were repossessed by the bank, who also disclosed her safe address to the perpetrator through the court paperwork. The bank chased her for debts of tens of thousands of pounds due to her being 'jointly and severally liable' for the mortgages. The bank was looking to her to pay the full amount or attaching a debt order to her home which she lives in with her children.

Laura's credit rating is ruined – she will not be able to get a mortgage or loan again, or if she does it will be at a very high interest rate. Laura says: 'The economic abuse will impact me for the rest of my life'.

Laura reached out to Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) and works alongside the charity to raise awareness as an Expert by Experience. SEA also shared guidance and resources with Laura to advocate for herself with the bank. The charity also supported Laura to raise awareness about her experience, including in the national media. This led to the mortgage debts being written off and Laura and her children were able to keep their home. Laura was also supported to complain to the Financial Ombudsman Service safely, so that Darren was not contacted during the complaints process. The Ombudsman directed the bank to award compensation for the data breach.

Technology facilitated abuse

128. **Controlling or coercive behaviour can also take place using technology and the internet, enabling the abuse to be perpetrated both within the home and from a distance.** A survey conducted by Refuge found that 1 in 6 (16%) of those experiencing at least one behaviour suggestive of online abuse or harassment reported this from a current partner or ex-partner. This figure rises to 1 in 5 (22%) amongst younger women aged 18 to 34⁵⁵. This can happen during an intimate relationship but also post-separation. Professionals should be alert to technology-facilitated abuse and how it can play a key role in domestic abuse. Particular consideration should be given within young people's intimate relationships, given their lives are often heavily online based.

129. Some examples of technology-facilitated abuse include:

- Placing false or malicious information about a victim on their or others social media;
- Cyber-stalking;
- Trolling, such as leaving abusive messages via social media;
- Image-based abuse – for example the non-consensual distribution of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause the person depicted distress, as well as threats to distribute such material;
- Hacking into, monitoring or controlling email accounts, social media profiles and phone calls;
- Blocking the victim from using their online accounts, responding in the victim's place or creating false online accounts;
- Use of spyware or GPS locators on items such as phones, computers, wearable technology, cars, motorbikes and pets;
- Hacking internet enabled devices such as PlayStations or iPads to gain access to accounts or trace information such as a person's location
- Using personal devices such as smart watches or smart home devices (such as Amazon Alexa, Google Home Hubs, etc) to monitor, control or frighten;
- Use of hidden cameras;
- Creation of fake accounts; and
- Using other people to create fake online or social media accounts or use their own accounts to harass or monitor the victim by proxy. This can allow the abuse to continue even when the victim may have blocked the perpetrator on their social media and devices.

130. When considering technological abuse in the context of investigating or prosecuting controlling or coercive behaviour, it is important to note that these behaviours can lead to the victim being made to fear violence on two or more occasions, or adapt their everyday behaviour as a result of serious alarm or distress, in the same way that abuse perpetrated in person can. Misusing technology in this way allows perpetrators significant anonymity and little oversight or accountability for their behaviour.

⁵⁵ [Refuge \(2021\) Unsocial Spaces: Make online spaces safer for women and girls](#)

Case Study – Tania

Tania's husband Charlie said he knew more about technology than her and set up her smart phone using his email address. Charlie also downloaded a tracking app onto the phone saying this was in case Tania lost it, but when it showed Tania as anywhere else but home, the supermarket or work, he would become angry.

Charlie installed CCTV in all the main living spaces in their home, telling Tania this was for their safety. Soon Charlie started checking the cameras remotely, questioning what she was doing, whenever Tania was home without him.

One day, Tania left her phone at home and went to meet a friend. Charlie turned up unannounced and was angry, accusing Tania of deliberately leaving her phone at home. Tania later found a tracking device on her car. Tania started to feel that she was being monitored all the time and felt she could not do anything without Charlie's permission, as he would always find out somehow.

Tania also began to notice she was no longer getting notifications from her social media apps and that these had been disabled. When Tania opened the apps, she saw that Charlie had sent abusive messages to her family and friends, pretending to be her, telling them she no longer wanted contact and their numbers had been blocked.

Tania spoke to her brother on the phone about wanting to end the relationship. When Charlie came home, he knew all about the conversation and became violent. When Tania reported the assault to the police and they arrived to take her statement, they noticed the cameras in the house. Police officers asked about this, leading to Tania to disclose other elements of Charlie's behaviours. During the investigation, police also found hidden recording apps on Tania's phone that were linked to Charlie's email. Police were able to charge Charlie for assault, as well as controlling or coercive behaviour.

Abuse relating to faith

131. Whilst faith can be a source of support and comfort to victims, domestic abuse can occur in relation to, and through using, an individual's faith and belief system. Using religion and faith systems to control and subjugate a victim can be a form of emotional and psychological abuse.⁵⁶ It is often characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour within a religious context.
132. This abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on victims. The abuse may include, but is not limited to the following examples:
- Manipulation and exploitation through the influence of religion;
 - Requirements for secrecy and silence;
 - Marital rape and the use of religious scripture to justify that;
 - Coercion to conform or control through the use of sacred or religious texts/teaching, e.g. theological justifications in sexual coercion or abuse;
 - Causing harm, isolation and or neglect to get rid of an 'evil force' or 'spirit', that is believed to have possessed the victim; and
 - Requirement of obedience to the perpetrator of domestic abuse, owing to religion or faith, or their 'divine' position.
133. Domestic abuse can also involve using, or preventing, a victim from practising their faith or religious obligations.

'Honour'-based abuse

134. 'Honour'-based abuse (HBA) is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of the family and/or community, or in response to individuals trying to break from constraining 'norms' of behaviour that their family and/or community is trying to impose. HBA can include emotional or psychological abuse and a range of other circumstances, not all of which represent domestic abuse under the 2021 Act, for example if the victim and perpetrator are not personally connected. However, HBA will typically be carried out by a member or members of the family and is likely to involve behaviours specified in the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act.
135. Evidence has shown⁵⁷ that victims at risk of HBA who were accessing domestic abuse services were eight times as likely to be experiencing abuse from multiple perpetrators, and had experienced abuse for an average of two years longer before accessing support than those not identified as at risk of HBA.
136. This type of abuse is most commonly experienced by victims from close-knit or closed communities with a strong culture of 'honour' and 'shame', such as some, travelling communities, closed ethnic/religious communities and other particularly isolated social groups⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Oakley, L. R., Kinmond, K. S., & Humphreys, J. 2018. [Spiritual abuse in Christian faith settings: Definition, policy and practice guidance](#). Journal of Adult Protection, 20(3/4), 144-154.

⁵⁷ SaveLives, 2017. [Your Choice: 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and domestic violence](#). Spotlight Report #HiddenVictims.

⁵⁸ SaveLives, 2017. [Your Choice: 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and domestic violence](#). Spotlight Report #HiddenVictims

However, victims may be female or male and those at risk can include individuals who are LGBT. Forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are forms of HBA (further detail is included in Chapter 2 of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance). Conversion therapies may be a form of HBA and so-called corrective rape of LGBT victims.

Section 7 – Related considerations

137. **Individuals can be the victims of multiple and different abusive behaviours because of the way different characteristics**, such as sex, race, ethnicity, disability, transgender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief **can intersect and overlap**, along with other factors such as socio-economic position or immigration status. These factors can create additional barriers to accessing services and support, if they are not adequately designed to meet a victim's needs.

138. **Other factors that can also make it more difficult for a victim to access support are listed below:**

- **Risk of escalation of abuse, threats and violence** – the post-separation period carries a high-risk of violence for victims, including children, with the greatest risk of serious harm and homicide. The victim may be fearful of what the perpetrator may do to them or their children, including if they leave their situation, or fear losing custody of their children or children's social care involvement based on threats from the perpetrator;
- **Impact of coercive control and trauma** – the abuse may make the victim feel isolated, worthless, to feel they are to blame for the abuse and/or be convinced they cannot look after themselves;
- **Shame and stigma** – including fear of not being believed, feeling shame around disclosing abuse and/or being able to access support;
- **Economic dependence/instability** – the victim may not have access to resources they need to be able to support themselves or their children independently or may not be able to afford legal representation due to lack of access to legal aid;
- **Living in a rural or isolated community** – a victim may face increased isolation from support networks and lack of access to services if they are living in a rural community compared to an urban setting or if they have not been allowed to mix freely with wider society;
- **Spouse or partner of a posted worker** – a victim may be living in accommodation provided by the perpetrator's employer and this may be away from their support networks, such as in military accommodation;
- **Language and communication** – the victim may face specific challenges in communicating the abuse which may hinder them from accessing or seeking assistance;
- **Connections to local area** – the victim may fear leaving their local area where they have a network of support (friends/family) and where their children are settled in schooling, as well as concern about the upheaval to their children's lives;
- **Religious/community/family pressures** – the victim may be under pressure from religious or community figures, or members of their extended family, not to leave, or to return if they have left;
- **Immigration status** – if the victim has insecure immigration status, they may be fearful of seeking help from statutory agencies due to concern of immigration action being taken against them/ or having their children removed from their care;

- **Impact of alcohol, drugs or substance misuse** – the victim may have developed a reliance on substances to try and cope with the abuse or be in a position where the perpetrator supports and/or facilitates the addiction to maintain control over them;
- **Mental health** – domestic abuse can lead to a number of health-related issues for the victim, including the development of a specific mental health condition or conditions;
- **Mental capacity** – someone with impaired mental capacity (due to a disability, illness or brain injury) may be particularly vulnerable, both in terms of the chances of their being a victim, and their ability to access support. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 aims to empower people to make their own decisions wherever possible and to ensure that any decision made, or action taken, on behalf of someone who lacks the capacity to make the decision or act for themselves is made in their best interests. It should be assumed that a person has capacity to make a decision for themselves (the right to autonomy) unless it is established that they do not have capacity.

139. **Protected characteristics**, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, such as age, disability, race, migrant or immigration status, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, **can also create specific barriers to leaving an abusive relationship or accessing support.**

Age

140. It is important to be aware that people of all ages can be victims of controlling or coercive behaviour, with some facing additional barriers in accessing support. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2020 showed that women aged 16 to 19 years were significantly more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse than women aged 25 years and over. For men, there were few significant differences by age, however, those aged 55 to 74 years were less likely to be victims of domestic abuse than those in most other age groups.⁵⁹

Children and young people

141. Controlling or coercive behaviour can have an impact on children and young people in relation to parental or other family member relationships. Section 3 of the 2021 Act recognises that domestic abuse can impact on a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse and that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right. It is important to recognise that living with domestic abuse will have a direct impact on a child's physical and mental health. Research shows that for children who experience controlling or coercive behaviour, the impact is likely to be similar to adult victims.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ [ONS \(2020\) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#)

⁶⁰ [McLeod, D \(2018\) Research in Practice: Coercive control: Impacts on children and young people in the family environment, p.29](#)
[Katz, E \(2016\) 'Coercive control-based domestic abuse: Impacts on mothers and children'. London: Presentation, AVA \(Against Violence and Abuse\) training seminar](#)

“Practitioners, policy-makers and leaders of organizations must begin to recognize how children who have lived with coercive control-based domestic violence will likely have experienced highly restrictive and un-free family lives, with limited opportunities to develop personal confidence, a sense of independence and competence, and social skills.”⁶¹

Dr Emma Katz (2016)

142. Whether present in the house during particular incidents of domestic abuse or not, children and young people will be experiencing the effects of the perpetrator’s everyday patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour. The isolation from family and friends, the tension and fear within the home and lack of access to financial and other forms of independence for the non-abusive parent will all directly impact on the child’s development and quality of life.
143. Young people can experience domestic abuse in their relationships, by a partner or ex-partner. Navigating their first, or an early intimate relationship, can make it more difficult for them to recognise abusive behaviours, or may not feel that their relationship is mature enough to be abusive, coupled with the fact that those in abusive relationships may not always see themselves as victims due to the control or coercion the perpetrator exerts over them.⁶² Furthermore, fear of authority or getting a partner, ex-partner or family member into trouble with the police may also be a barrier to reporting abuse.
144. Young people may also experience abuse through new technologies and social media, which can be used as a monitoring or harassment tool by the perpetrator.⁶³ SafeLives Children’s Insights dataset, showed that 53% of the 13 - 17-year-olds supported had experienced jealous and controlling behaviour.⁶⁴
145. The definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act includes a minimum age for the victim and the perpetrator of 16 years. However, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance applies to all cases of domestic abuse, irrespective of the age of the perpetrator or victim (including those under 16). **Anyone over the age of criminal responsibility can be investigated for, and charged with, offences involving domestic abuse, including the specific offence of controlling or coercive behaviour.** Where a victim is aged 18 or under, child safeguarding procedures should be followed, regardless of whether there is any police action (for further information on children’s safeguarding, refer to chapter 4 in the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#)).

⁶¹ [Katz, E \(2016\) Coercive Control: How it Impacts Children in Many Different Ways. Domestic Violence Report, Volume 22, Issue 1, pp. 1-16.](#)

⁶² [SafeLives \(2017\) Safe Young Lives: Young People and domestic abuse, pp. 22 & 38.](#)

⁶³ [SafeLives \(2017\) Safe Young Lives: Young People and domestic abuse, p.8.](#)

⁶⁴ [SafeLives \(2017\) Safe Young Lives: Young People and domestic abuse, p.19.](#)

146. Young people experiencing or perpetuating abuse in their own relationships need to be supported and engaged with in a way that is specifically tailored to their needs. In Wales, this is set out in the All Wales Practice Guide - safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse, issued, and to be used in conjunction with, the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.⁶⁵ Children and young people, due to their age, will often have to rely on specialist services designed for adult victims that are not always appropriate.

Case Study – Kerry

Kerry met her first boyfriend Lewis at school. Lewis told her that the others in their friendship group were jealous of him so she should stop talking to them. He also asked Kerry to let him access her location settings on her phone, to share her social media passwords and phone passcode. When Kerry questioned this, Lewis said that this was the norm for couples and proved that she had nothing to hide.

When Kerry would go out with her friends, Lewis would constantly call her and get angry if she didn't answer straight away. When Kerry did answer, Lewis would tell Kerry she should come home. To avoid conflict, Kerry eventually stopped seeing her friends and going out, and instead spent most of her time with Lewis.

Lewis pressured Kerry to send him naked photos of her and it was around this time he also started acting aggressively towards Kerry: shouting and calling her names. Whenever Kerry tried to end the relationship and leave, Lewis would start an argument and threaten to send the naked photos of her around school. Kerry felt increasingly isolated and did not feel able to talk to her parents, in fear of getting into trouble over the photos.

Eventually Kerry confided in her teacher who encouraged her to speak to her parents and the police. When officers took Kerry's statement, she told them about the impact the relationship had on her social life and self-confidence. Kerry showed them the threatening messages from Lewis, how he tracked her location via her phone and regularly logged onto her social media accounts. Kerry's friends also spoke to police about how Lewis would abuse her over the phone. This allowed the police to build a case and charge Lewis with controlling or coercive behaviour.

For further guidance on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and the response of professionals in supporting children and young people, please refer to Chapters 3 and 4 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

⁶⁵ [Social care Wales \(safeguarding.wales\)](#)

Older people

147. Older people can be victims of controlling or coercive behaviour by partners, ex-partners or family members. This abuse may include economic, emotional, psychological, sexual or physical abuse or neglect, and can affect both men and women. The victim may also not see themselves as a victim of such abuse.
148. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that older women and men experience domestic abuse at lower rates than younger women and men⁶⁶, as the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) does not currently collect data on adults over 74, we do not know the true prevalence of domestic abuse amongst this age group⁶⁷. Data from the year ending March 2020 CSEW shows that 4.4% of women aged 60-74 were victims of domestic abuse. In relation to men, this data shows that 1.9% of men aged 60-74 were victims of domestic abuse.⁶⁸
149. SafeLives' Insights dataset, gathered from data provided by services working with victims of domestic abuse, showed that victims aged 61 or over were more likely to experience domestic abuse from a family member compared with those under the age of 61 (44% compared with 6%) and were more likely to experience abuse from a current intimate partner than those under the age of 61 (40% compared with 28%)⁶⁹. The same dataset also showed that as a group, older people were more likely to experience abuse from a family member than an intimate partner.⁷⁰
150. Assumptions around age and domestic abuse may result in difficulties accessing support. For instance, injuries or mental health issues may be seen as the result of a victim's health and social care needs, without enquiries being made around domestic abuse. Older victims are not being seen by specialist support services in the numbers that we would expect and can face significant barriers when asking for help or when trying to end an abusive relationship with a partner, ex-partner or family member. Barriers for older people accessing support can include lack of access or knowledge of the internet, feeling that services are only for younger people and limited awareness of the services and options that are available to them.⁷¹
151. Generational attitudes and norms can also be a barrier for older people in reporting abuse or accessing support. Older victims are more likely to have grown up in a time where what happened at home was considered to be private and it would not have been deemed socially acceptable to discuss matters that occurred behind closed doors.⁷² SafeLives Insights dataset shows that 25% of older victims have lived with the abuse for 20+ years.⁷³

⁶⁶ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) data](#), year ending March 2020.

⁶⁷ Once it is possible to return to the face-to-face mode of delivery for the CSEW, ONS will immediately remove the current upper age limit for respondents to the self-completion modules. It will then take 12 months of data collection to enable us to produce accurate estimates.

⁶⁸ ONS, 2020. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶⁹ [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse, p.6.](#)

⁷⁰ [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse, p.6.](#)

⁷¹ [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse, p.16.](#)

⁷² [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse, p.15.](#)

⁷³ [SafeLives \(2016\) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse, p.15.](#)

Given the length of time older victims are likely to have experienced abuse, there can be a 'that's just the way it's always been' attitude that prevents disclosure.⁷⁴

152. These barriers can be severe for victims who have been subject to years of prolonged abuse, are isolated within a particular community through language or culture, are experiencing long term health impacts or disabilities, may jointly or singly own a home which they share with the perpetrator or are reliant on the perpetrator for their care or money.

153. It is crucial that abuse against older victims is reported and that they get the support they need. In providing information and resources on support for older victims of abuse, consideration should be given to targeting areas where they are visible to older victims, for example GP surgeries or other public spaces.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ SafeLives (2016) Safe Later Lives: Older People and Domestic Abuse , p.15

⁷⁵ [McGarry, J and Simpson, C \(2011\) Domestic abuse and older women: Exploring the opportunities for service development and care delivery. Journal of Adult Protection, Volume 13, Issue 6, pp.294-301.](#)

Case Study – John

When John's wife died, his daughter Jenny suggested she move in to help look after him. Jenny offered to take charge of the shopping and other household bills, using her dad's bank card. When John asked if he could go shopping with Jenny, she said this would be too much effort and eventually stopped letting him accompany her on any outings or use his own bank card. The fridge was often empty and John started getting letters from the utility company saying the bills weren't being paid. When John asked Jenny about this, she got angry and said he was probably getting confused due to old age.

The phone line was eventually cut off due to non-payment. John suggested he get a mobile phone but Jenny said he didn't have anyone to talk to and wouldn't know how to use it anyway. John soon started to lose touch with his friends.

John was also struggling to keep on top of the washing and suggested they hire a cleaner. Jenny refused, citing it was a waste of money and accusing him of saying she was doing a bad job in caring for him. Jenny would often invite friends over and tell her dad he needed to stay in his room. If John came out, Jenny would become angry, belittling him and shouting at him in front of her friends. Eventually John stayed in his room whenever Jenny's friends were over.

John was very low, became unkempt, lost weight and felt isolated. John's GP was concerned about his presentation and asked him if everything was ok at home. John explained the situation and together they contacted the police who identified financial abuse due to Jenny restricting John's access to his finances, as well as having allowed debts to accrue in her dad's name. John told police about the food shopping and officers identified this as restricting his independence and access to food.

This allowed the police to build a case for controlling or coercive behaviour. Bail conditions were put in place to stop Jenny returning to the home and the GP referred John to Adult Social Services to arrange alternative care arrangements to support him at home.

For further guidance on older victims and safeguarding vulnerable adults please refer to Chapters 2 and 4 of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance.

Pregnancy

154. Being pregnant may put women and girls at increased risk of abuse, although the data available on prevalence of domestic abuse amongst pregnant individuals is limited. Some research suggests that 40–60% of women experiencing domestic abuse are abused during pregnancy, while others suggest it is much lower, ranging between 1% and 20% (depending on country and how prevalence is calculated).⁷⁶ Whilst data is mixed, pregnancy has been found to be a specific risk factor that can make victims more vulnerable.⁷⁷
155. Domestic abuse experienced during pregnancy and in the earliest years is harmful to birth outcomes and a baby's early development. A mother's emotional state can have a direct influence on foetal development and ongoing stressors such as domestic abuse can disrupt a baby's neurodevelopment. This can affect the cognitive functioning and emotional regulation of a child, shaping behavioural and emotional outcomes.⁷⁸
156. Whilst pregnancy may increase risk of abuse, the interaction with health professionals may provide an opportunity for women and girls to seek support, as well as for professionals to reach out to women and girls who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

Further information on the relationship between domestic abuse and pregnancy, associated risks and how to respond can be found in Chapters 3 and 4 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Disability

157. For disabled victims, the abuse they experience is often directly linked to their disability and perpetrated by the individuals they are most dependent upon for care, such as intimate partners, ex-partners or family members who may be acting as a carer. Research suggests disabled victims are more likely to face abuse from an adult family member compared to non-disabled victims and are more likely to be still living with the perpetrator.⁷⁹
158. Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the year ending March 2020, shows that those with a disability were more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse in the last year than those without; this is true for both men (7.5% compared with 3.2%) and women (14.7% compared with 6.0%).⁸⁰

⁷⁶ [SafeLives \(2016\) A Cry for Health, p.36.](#)

⁷⁷ Yakubovich, A, et al (2018) [Risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence against women: Systematic review and meta-analyses of prospective-longitudinal studies](#). American Public Health Association: 108(7): 1-11

⁷⁸ [Huth-Bocks, A, Levendosky, A & Bogat, G \(2002\) The effects of domestic violence during pregnancy on maternal and infant health, Violence and victims, Volume 17, Issue 12, pp. 169-185.](#)

Donovan, B et al (2016) [Intimate partner violence during pregnancy and the risk for adverse infant outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#). BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology: 123(8), 1289-1299.

⁷⁹ [SafeLives \(2017\) Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled people and domestic abuse, p.9.](#)

⁸⁰ [ONS \(2020\) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#)

159. Deaf and disabled victims (this includes victims with physical or sensory impairments, mental health issues, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, long-term health conditions and neuro diverse victims) may face additional forms of abuse where the perpetrator is using the victim's impairment to abuse them.

160. Disabled victims may be at increased risk in relation to particular examples of abusive behaviour, either from an intimate partner, ex-partner, family member, or carer (who is personally connected to them),⁸¹ or face specific risks relating to their situation as disabled people. Power-imbalance between the carer who is perpetrating domestic abuse and the victim, due to their dependency on the perpetrator, and the victim's subsequent isolation, can lead to even more widespread and pervasive means of control and coercion. Such behaviour by the perpetrator in this context can include:

- Withholding, destroying or manipulating medical equipment;
- Preventing access to medication, personal care, meals and transportation;
- Taking control of finances and denying the victim money for their prescriptions and essential needs related to their impairment;
- Fear of institutionalisation; and
- Making demands in return for care giving.⁸²

Case Study – Ewa

Ewa was in a car accident that resulted in her often needing to use a wheelchair and struggling with chronic pain. Despite this, her partner Piotr still expected Ewa to keep the house clean, cook meals, do the food shopping and care for their children full-time. If Ewa was unable to complete these tasks to Piotr's standard, he would refuse to collect her prescription or would hide her medication, leaving her in worse pain. Sometimes when Piotr went to work, he would take Ewa's wheelchair with him as "punishment" which meant she could not physically leave the house.

Being unable to access her medication and wheelchair worsened Ewa's condition, and at times she would struggle to dress herself or wash. Piotr would refuse to help with these daily tasks, as he would say this was "not his job". He would often berate Ewa about her appearance and would say she could not leave the house looking a certain way. Piotr eventually said he would help Ewa with her care but would expect sex in return. Ewa felt she had no choice as she was becoming increasingly reliant on Piotr. This abuse impacted Ewa's self-esteem and left her feeling trapped and completely isolated.

Children's Social Services became concerned about the children's presentation and visited Ewa while Piotr was at work. Ewa disclosed what had been happening and the police were called. Ewa's local authority was able to support in sourcing accessible accommodation for Ewa and the children, as well as assist Ewa with her ongoing care needs. Piotr was later charged with controlling or coercive behaviour.

⁸¹ The relationship between carers and the cared is not covered by the definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act unless there is also a personal connection between them.

⁸² [SafeLives \(2017\) Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled people and domestic abuse, p.18.](#)

For further guidance on disability and safeguarding vulnerable adults, please refer to Chapters 2 and 4 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Deaf victims

161. It is important to highlight the experiences of Deaf victims, many of whom do not identify themselves as being part of a disability group. The Deaf community are a linguistic minority based on their language and many Deaf people experience personal and structural barriers in accessing help and reporting abuse. Deaf people may encounter specific barriers to accessing support when experiencing controlling or coercive behaviour as they might not be aware of the available support, and/or professionals may not know to use appropriate communication methods.
162. The Deaf community can face systemic barriers which prevent them from easily accessing appropriate support services in times of need. They may face additional barriers including language and communication, a distrust of police and a fear of rejection from the wider community. There is also likely to be under reporting of abuse by Deaf victims due to the barriers to communication and information. Professionals and service providers should be aware that Deaf and Disabled victims need specialist support services who can understand their cultural and linguistic needs. Where possible, professionals working with Deaf and Disabled victims should be expected to have some lived experience of the Deaf community, as having to relive their trauma time and again with new people (e.g. sign language interpreters) can be disruptive to their healing and may result in them disengaging from much needed support. This may also be relevant for those with a learning disability who may use an advocate or carer to support their process of talking about their experience.
163. Deaf people are often underrepresented in professional roles, which makes them a valuable resource when seeking out appropriate referral pathways - the ability to share a common language and culture ensures that Deaf people can control their own narrative and their perspectives and experiences are able to be fully understood by those who are supporting them. Following best practice, Deaf individuals should always be signposted or referred on to a Deaf domestic abuse service (see Annex F) or a Deaf-led specialist service in the first instance. To achieve optimum outcomes, professionals working with Deaf victims should be able to communicate fluently using sign language, without the need for third party communication support. Organisations and agencies should also consider collaborative working relationships with other specialist services, so that they are able to jointly meet the needs of their clients through the sharing of resources, knowledge and complementary skillsets.

Speech, language and communication

164. People with speech, language and communication needs may face increased risks in relation to domestic abuse. They may be actively targeted by perpetrators or experience abuse for longer periods of time because of the difficulties they face in explaining what has happened to them, asking for help and accessing the support available. Local authorities should ensure that good practice includes the identification of, and appropriate support for, communication needs, including:

- the links between domestic abuse and speech, language and communication needs;
- the impact of witnessing domestic abuse on children's speech, language and communication, and;
- the services available to support people with those needs, including children (this may involve ensuring the availability of independent interpreters).

165. Many speech and language difficulties are unidentified and undiagnosed. Services should seek to understand the needs of people with these difficulties, including the risk that they may not be, or have been, taken seriously in their reports because of the way that they communicated them.

166. Speech, language, and communication needs can be a risk factor, and are often hidden and unidentified. They can result from lifelong or acquired conditions and for children and young people they may be part of a special educational need or disability.

167. Speech, language and communication services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are covered by joint commissioning arrangements set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice](#), which brings education, health and local authorities, and Youth Offending Teams together to assess needs and agree a local offer. Joint commissioning gives agencies the opportunity to consider the wider factors and interdependencies, such as domestic abuse, and design services accordingly.

For further guidance please refer to Chapter 2 of the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Race and ethnicity

168. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds may experience additional barriers to identifying, disclosing, seeking help or reporting abuse. This may include:

- A distrust of the police and other statutory agencies;
- Suspicion towards the police due to lack of perceived or real support for their community historically and/or currently;
- Concerns about racism and fear of racial stereotyping;
- Fears about immigration and/ or asylum status and risk of deportation;
- Language and cultural barriers;
- Being disproportionately impacted by certain forms of VAWG, including forced marriage, staying in a marriage with a perpetrator, “honour”-based abuse and female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Feeling ashamed and/or concerns about family finding out; and
- Fear of rejection by the wider community.

169. There is often under-reporting of domestic abuse by minority communities, with many victims reporting that stereotypes and assumptions were made about them coming from ‘cultures where VAWG was normalised and accepted’ or their experiences of domestic abuse being treated as housing and/or immigration cases by public authorities.⁸³ Experiences of discrimination and racism may also make a person vulnerable to an abusive situation.⁸⁴

170. Professionals working with minority communities should be aware of barriers and actively seek to ensure the right support is made available to overcome them, including appropriate interpretation and translation support where this may be needed. There are distinct structural barriers that minority communities face in accessing support. The involvement of specialist ‘by-and-for’ services (specialist services that are designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve⁸⁵) is key to ensuring a local area can meet the needs of victims from ethnic minority backgrounds.

171. The Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2020 suggests that those from a Mixed ethnic background were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse within the last year (7.6%) than those from white (5.7%), black (3.7%), or Asian (3.6%) ethnic backgrounds. However, the presence and impact of additional barriers across all groups, and particularly within ethnic communities, may lead to underreporting of abuse. The Home Office Homicide Index indicates that ethnic minority groups were overrepresented in domestic homicide figures from March 2018 to 2020, where 19% of victims where ethnicity was known were recorded as ethnic minorities⁸⁶ compared to 14% of the overall ethnic minority population recorded in the 2011 census.⁸⁷

⁸³ [Thiara, R, Roy, S and Ng, P \(2015\) Between the lines research briefing: service responses to Black and Minority Ethnic Women and Girls experiencing Sexual Violence, University of Warwick, Swell, Isla Foundation and Imkaan, pp.1-31.](#)

⁸⁴ [SafeLives \(2021\) SafeLives' response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Race Report](#)

⁸⁵ [Joint Briefing by Imkaan and the End Violence Against Women Coalition \(EVAW\) \(2020\) Adjournment Debate: Black Women and Domestic Abuse, p.5.](#)

⁸⁶ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

⁸⁷ ONS. [Population of England and Wales - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](#): 2011.

172. There is a growing understanding about domestic abuse within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and barriers to accessing help. Services should consider their particular support needs, which may include language or literacy support arising from disadvantages in relation to education, access to refuge spaces, and helping victims in building other support networks outside the community.

Immigration status and migrant victims

173. Victims who have entered the UK from overseas may face barriers when attempting to escape domestic abuse relating to their immigration status. Some victims may have no recourse to public funds, (NRPF) which can lead to greater dependence on the partner, ex-partner or family. They may also face a greater economic impact of leaving a perpetrator if they are unable to claim benefits or access housing, or if they lose their immigration status by leaving their partner, including destitution and homelessness. This may be exploited by partners, ex-partners or family members to exert control over victims. Examples of how perpetrators can exert control over migrant victims include:

- Threatening to no longer provide support for their stay in the UK.
- Falsifying a victim's immigration status and/or purposefully bringing a victim into the UK with an incorrect visa to ensure they remain vulnerable to immigration enforcement, and without options for regularisation.
- Withholding key immigration documents from a victim, including their passport, so they are unable to ascertain what rights they may have.
- Withholding accurate information from a dependent, for example, when their visa lapses.
- Purposefully mismanaging a victim's immigration status and/or application, so they become overstayers and/or without valid status. This might involve purposefully missing a deadline to renew a dependent's visa.
- Deliberately using the immigration system to control and threaten a victim. For example, actually and/or threatening to report their insecure status to the Home Office.
- Providing misinformation or mistruths to a victim about their rights or to multi-agency professionals involved in working with the victim. For example, falsely stating that the victim has NRPF when this is not the case.
- Subjecting a victim to "honour"-based violence or abuse within a transnational context. For example, ensuring that a victim is at high risk of "honour"-based violence or abuse in their country of origin, and subsequently using the threat of deportation and the likelihood of additional harm as a tool to control them.

174. Perpetrators may use the immigration status of a victim to threaten, exploit, coerce and/or control them. Insecure immigration status can be manipulated as a tool for coercive control.⁸⁸ Victims from overseas may be more reluctant to come forward and report abuse particularly if they are unaware of their immigration status or have been misled by the perpetrator.

⁸⁸ Domestic Abuse Commissioner. [Safety Before Status: Improving pathways to support for migrant victims of domestic abuse](#): 2021.

175. Migrant victims on some partner visas are eligible for the DDVC (Destitute Domestic Violence Concession). This concession enables these victims to apply for leave to remain without the NRPF condition when their relationship has broken down because of domestic abuse, they are destitute and, where they are eligible for, intend to subsequently make an application for indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse. Under this concession, leave is granted for three months. These victims can then apply to claim public funds (benefits) for up to three months while they make an application to settle in the UK. This helps migrant victims on certain partner visas to fund a refuge space with the housing element of the benefits they can claim because their leave will not be subject to a NRPF condition. These victims can then apply for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) under the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain Rules.

176. Professionals should be aware they can refer migrant victims to specialist 'by-and-for' ethnic minority and migrant organisations as best practice. These organisations can provide holistic wraparound support and safeguarding for migrant victims.

For further guidance on migrant victims, immigration status and related considerations, please refer to Chapter 2 in the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#).

Gender and sex

177. Domestic abuse perpetrated towards women by men is a form of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and it is often linked in research to wider gender inequality, misogyny, and perceptions around harmful gender norms.⁸⁹ **Whilst it is recognised that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, statistics consistently show that women are disproportionately affected.** Data shows that in 73% of domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the Police in 2020/2021, the victim was female.⁹⁰ CPS data covering 2020/2021 showed that 76% of victims in domestic abuse-related prosecutions were female.⁹¹ The 2019/20 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that around two-thirds (67%) of adults aged 16 to 74 who had experienced domestic abuse in the last year were female.⁹²

178. Since the controlling or coercive behaviour offence came into effect on the 29 December 2015, the volume of offences recorded by the police has increased steadily.⁹³ The majority of defendants prosecuted, in the year ending December 2020, for controlling or coercive behaviour were male (98%, where the sex was known).⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Guedes, A, Bott, S, Garcia-Moreno, C., Colombini, M.(2016) Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children

⁹⁰ ONS (2021) [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹¹ ONS (2021) [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹² ONS (2020) [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹³ ONS (2020) [Domestic Abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2020](#)

⁹⁴ ONS (2021) [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Men can also be victims of domestic abuse and can experience many similar types of abuse as women, as well as facing similar barriers when it comes to recognising they are being abused and seeking help, including shame, embarrassment, denial, fear of stigmatisation, concerns about being believed and not recognising that they are victims of domestic abuse. The perception that domestic abuse services are targeted at women and a lack of promotion of services to support men, can also create additional barriers to accessing support.

179. In addition, similarly to women, structural inequalities can also discriminate or exclude, explicitly or implicitly, groups of victims, such as gay, bisexual and transgender men and boys.

Sexual orientation and transgender identity

180. Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data to March 2020 suggests that 8.4% of gay men and lesbian women were victims of domestic abuse in the previous year, as were 15.2% of bisexuals. For year ending March 2020, lesbian women were almost twice as likely to be a victim of domestic abuse in the previous year, (12.2%) than heterosexual women (6.9%). Bisexual women were three times more likely to be a victim of domestic abuse than heterosexual women (19.6%). For men the trend is similar but less pronounced, for the year ending March 2020, 3.5% of heterosexual men, 6.0% of gay men and 7.3% of bisexual men were victims of domestic abuse in the previous year.⁹⁵

181. There is currently no nationally representative data on prevalence of domestic abuse for trans victims. In the National LGBT Survey 2017, 48% of transgender respondents had experienced a negative incident⁹⁶ involving someone that they lived with due to being LGBT, or being thought to be LGBT, in the 12 months leading up to the survey.⁹⁷

182. There are many similarities between heterosexual and LGBT people's experiences of domestic abuse. However, LGBT victims may also experience abuse of power and control closely associated with having their sexuality, gender identity or gender reassignment used against them. This may include the following abusive behaviours:

- Threats of disclosure of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender reassignment to family, friends, work colleagues, community and others;

⁹⁵ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/mentalhealth/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales): Data from year ending March 2020.

⁹⁶ Incidents were classified using the following priority: physical harassment or violence; Sexual harassment or violence; Threat of physical or sexual harassment or violence; Verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments; Someone disclosing that the respondent was LGBT without their permission; Exclusion from events or activities; Any other inappropriate comments or conduct not listed above.

⁹⁷ Government Equalities Office. [National LGBT Survey Research Report](https://www.equalities.gov.uk/national-lgbt-survey-research-report): 2018.

- Disclosing gender identity history, sexual orientation or HIV status without consent;
- Limiting or controlling access to LGBT spaces or resources;
- Using immigration law to threaten with deportation to the country of origin, which might be unsafe due to e.g. anti-gay legislation; and
- So-called 'conversion therapy' practices, ranging from pseudo-psychological practices to, in extreme circumstances, violent physical or sexual acts, which can be motivated by a belief that there is a 'right' sexual orientation, and that a person can, be 'cured' if they have a different sexual orientation or gender identity.

183. It is important to note LGBT people are not viewed as a homogenous group. Abuse disclosed by lesbian women may be different to that of bisexual and trans women. Equally, gay men's experiences may be different to that of bisexual or trans men. Trans specific abuse may include coercing a person into not pursuing gender transition including denying or withholding access to medical treatment or hormones, ridiculing, or exotifying their body or assaulting medically altered body parts or forcing exposure.

184. LGBT people experience distinct personal and structural barriers in accessing help and reporting abuse. This may include services lacking quality referral pathways with LGBT specialist sector and low visibility and representation of LGBT issues within services. It can also include lack of understanding and awareness by professionals around unique forms of coercive control targeted at sexual orientation, gender identity or gender reassignment, and professionals minimising the risk experienced by LGBT people.

Case Study – David

David, who was in a relationship with Harry, had recently started a new job and through this, made a new group of friends. David started spending more time with this new groups of friends and regularly went out clubbing with them. Harry started to question David about why he was spending so much time with these friends, when he already had a boyfriend and accused him of cheating. When David denied this, Harry hit him across the face. Harry justified his behaviour claiming that when partners are the same sex, it is not uncommon for argument to get physical but that he would never intentionally hurt David.

David thought about this and realised everything he had seen about abuse was focused on heterosexual couples. David felt less able to challenge Harry as felt he knew more about LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) relationships than him.

When David tried to challenge Harry, Harry threatened to tell David's friends what he was "really like" if he tried to end their relationship. Harry also said he would tell David's family about this alleged cheating. David felt completely controlled by Harry and when he disagreed with him, Harry would become violent and further threaten his relationships with friends and family.

David used an online webchat service to speak to a domestic abuse advisor who told him that this behaviour was unacceptable in LGBT relationships in the same way it is unacceptable in heterosexual relationships. They also told David about his options for seeking further support, and practical advice on how he could end the relationship in the safest way possible should he wish to, as well as how to report this behaviour to the police.

For further detail on protected characteristics and related considerations, please refer to Chapter 2 in the [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#) and the [Welsh Government VAWDASV Strategy](#) (publication early 2022).

A full list of organisations and specialist support services can be found at **Annex F** of this guidance.

Annex A – The offence of controlling or coercive behaviour

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 provides that:

(1) A person (A) commits an offence if—

(a) A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person (B) that is controlling or coercive,

(b) at the time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected,

(c) the behaviour has a serious effect on B, and

(d) A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

(2) A and B are “personally connected” if—

(a) A is in an intimate personal relationship with B, or

(b) A and B live together and—

(i) they are members of the same family, or

(ii) they have previously been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.

(3) But A does not commit an offence under this section if at the time of the behaviour in question—

(a) A has responsibility for B, for the purposes of Part 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (see section 17 of that Act), and

(b) B is under 16.

(4) A’s behaviour has a “serious effect” on B if—

(a) it causes B to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against B, or

(b) it causes B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on B’s usual day-to-day activities.

(5) For the purposes of subsection (1)(d) A “ought to know” that which a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know.

(6) For the purposes of subsection (2)(b)(i) A and B are members of the same family if—

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they are relatives;
- (d) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (f) they are both parents of the same child;
- (g) they have, or have had, parental responsibility for the same child.

(7) In subsection (6)—

“civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;

“child” means a person under the age of 18 years;

“parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;

“relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

(8) In proceedings for an offence under this section it is a defence for A to show that—

- (a) in engaging in the behaviour in question, A believed that he or she was acting in B’s best interests, and
- (b) the behaviour was in all the circumstances reasonable.

(9) A is to be taken to have shown the facts mentioned in subsection (8) if—

- (a) sufficient evidence of the facts is adduced to raise an issue with respect to them, and
- (b) the contrary is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

(10) The defence in subsection (8) is not available to A in relation to behaviour that causes B to fear that violence will be used against B.

(11) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or a fine, or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or a fine, or both.

Legal power for statutory guidance

Section 77 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 provides that:

Guidance about investigation of offences under section 76

(1) The Secretary of State may issue guidance about the investigation of offences under section 76 to whatever persons the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(2) The Secretary of State may revise any guidance issued under this section.

(3) The Secretary of State must arrange for any guidance issued or revised under this section to be published.”

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amended the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to remove the “living together” requirement, which means it may now apply to partners, ex-partners, or family members regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together. See below:

“Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship”

(1) Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1)(b), after “personally connected” insert “ (see subsection (6)) ”.

(3) Omit subsection (2).

(4) For subsection (6) substitute—

“(6) A and B are “personally connected” if any of the following applies—

(a) they are, or have been, married to each other;

(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (6A));

(g) they are relatives.

(6A) For the purposes of subsection (6)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

(a) the person is a parent of the child, or

(b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.”

(5) In subsection (7), for “subsection (6)” substitute “subsections (6) and (6A)”.

Annex B – Provisions within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relevant to this guidance

Section 1: Definition of “domestic abuse”

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
 - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
 - (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

- (4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to —
 - (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - (b) obtain goods or services.
- (5) For the purposes of this Act A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).
- (6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.
- (7) For the meaning of “personally connected”, see section 2.

Section 2: Definition of “personally connected”

- (1) Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies —
- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
 - (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
 - (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
 - (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
 - (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));
 - (g) they are relatives.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if —
- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
 - (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.
- (3) In this section —
- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
 - “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
 - “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
 - “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Section 3: Children as victims of domestic abuse

- (1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.
- (2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who —
- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and

(b) is related to A or B. Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance Framework 16

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if –

(a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or

(b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section –

“child” means person under the age of 18 years;

“parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);

“relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Section 68: Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship

(1) Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1)(b), after “personally connected” insert “(see subsection (6))”.

(3) Omit subsection (2).

(4) For subsection (6) substitute—

“(6) A and B are “personally connected” if any of the following applies—

(a) they are, or have been, married to each other;

(b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

(c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

(e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;

(f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (6A));

(g) they are relatives.

(6A) For the purposes of subsection (6)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

(a) the person is a parent of the child, or

(b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.”

(5A) In subsection (7), for “subsection (6)” substitute “subsections (6) and (6A)”.

Annex C – Relevant definitions in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) (Wales) Act 2015

(1) In this Act—

“abuse” (“*cam-drin*”) means physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse;

“domestic abuse” (“*cam-drin domestig*”) means abuse where the victim of it is or has been associated with the abuser;

“financial year” (“*blwyddyn ariannol*”) means a period of 12 months ending on 31 March;

“gender-based violence” (“*trais ar sail rhywedd*”) means—

- (a) violence, threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation;
- (b) female genital mutilation;
- (c) forcing a person (whether by physical force or coercion by threats or other psychological means) to enter into a religious or civil ceremony of marriage (whether or not legally binding);

“local authority” (“*awdurdod lleol*”) means the council of a county or county borough in Wales;

“Local Health Board” (“*Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol*”) means a Local Health Board established under section 11 of the [National Health Service \(Wales\) Act 2006 \(c.42\)](#);

“purpose of this Act” (“*diben y Ddeddf hon*”) means the purpose in section 1;

“relevant authority” (“*awdurdod perthnasol*”) has the meaning given by section 14;

“sexual violence” (“*trais rhywiol*”) means sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or threats of violence of a sexual nature;

“statutory guidance” (“*canllawiau statudol*”) means guidance under section 15.

(2) A person is associated with another person for the purpose of the definition of “domestic abuse” in subsection (1) if—

- (a) they are or have been married to each other;

- (b) they are or have been civil partners of each other;
 - (c) they live or have lived together in an enduring family relationship (whether they are of different sexes or the same sex);
 - (d) they live or have lived in the same household; and for this purpose a person is a member of another person's household if—
 - (i) the person normally lives with the other person as a member of his or her family, or
 - (ii) the person might reasonably be expected to live with that other person;
 - (e) they are relatives;
 - (f) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not that agreement has been terminated);
 - (g) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement between them (whether or not that agreement has been terminated);
 - (h) they have or have had an intimate personal relationship with each other;
 - (i) in relation to a child, each of them is a parent of the child or has, or has had, parental responsibility for the child.
- (3) If a child has been adopted or falls within subsection (4), two persons are also associated with each other for the purposes of the definition of “domestic abuse” in subsection (1) if—
- (a) one is a natural parent of the child or a parent of such a natural parent, and
 - (b) the other is—
 - (i) the child, or
 - (ii) a person who has become a parent of the child by virtue of an adoption order, who has applied for an adoption order or with whom the child has at any time been placed for adoption.
- (4) A child falls within this subsection if—
- (a) an adoption agency, within the meaning of section 2 of the [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(c.38\)](#), is authorised to place the child for adoption under section 19 of that Act (placing children with parental consent) or the child has become the subject of an order under section 21 of that Act (placement orders), or
 - (b) the child is freed for adoption by virtue of an order made—

(i) in England and Wales, under section 18 of the [Adoption Act 1976 \(c.36\)](#), or

(ii) in Northern Ireland, under Article 17(1) or 18(1) of the [Adoption \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1987 \(S.I. 1987/2203\)](#), or

(c) the child is the subject of a Scottish permanence order which includes granting authority to adopt.

(5) In this section—

“adoption order” (“*gorchymyn mabwysiadu*”) means an adoption order within the meaning of section 72(1) of the Adoption Act 1976 or section 46(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;

“child” (“*plentyn*”) means a person under the age of 18 years;

“civil partnership agreement” (“*cytundeb partneriaeth sifil*”) has the meaning given by section 73 of the [Civil Partnership Act 2004 \(c.33\)](#);

“female genital mutilation” (“*anffurfio organau cenhedlu benywod*”) means an act that is an offence under sections 1, 2 or 3 of the [Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 \(c.31\)](#);

“financial abuse” (“*cam-drin ariannol*”) means—

- (a) having money or other property stolen,
- (b) being defrauded,
- (c) being put under pressure in relation to money or other property, and
- (d) having money or other property misused;

“harassment” (“*aflonyddu*”) means a course of conduct by a person which he or she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other; and for the purpose of this definition—

(a) a person ought to know that his or her conduct amounts to or involves harassment if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to or involved harassment of another person, and

(b) “conduct” includes speech;

“sexual exploitation” (“*camfanteisio rhywiol*”) means something that is done to or in respect of a person which—

(a) involves the commission of an offence under Part 1 of the [Sexual Offences Act 2003 \(c.42\)](#), as it has an effect in England and Wales, or

(b) would involve the commission of such an offence if it were done in England and Wales;

“parental responsibility” (“*cyfrifoldeb rhiant*”) has the meaning given by section 3 of the [Children Act 1989 \(c.41\)](#);

“relative” (“*perthynas*”), in relation to a person, means that person’s parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, half-brother, sister, half-sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece (including any person who is or has been in that relationship by virtue of a marriage or civil partnership or an enduring family relationship).

Annex D – Examples of reasons for retractions and withdrawals by complainants

- Fear of other offences being committed, or risk of further harm (both in person, but also through online technologies);
- Fear of coming face to face with the abuser in court;
- Pressure from the perpetrator, the perpetrator's family or associates;
- fear of repercussions that may follow from peers of the perpetrator, or gang members where either the complainant, perpetrator or both are involved in a gang;
- Pressure from other family members, other members of the community or community 'elders', including being pressured to resolve 'differences' between parties through mediation, or arbitration tribunals conducted within the community;
- Fear of being publicly shamed, disowned or outcast from the community;
- A wish to be reconciled with the perpetrator, if not already reconciled, or a wish to return to the family, if estranged;
- The complainant is no longer in a relationship with the perpetrator or does not want to re-live the incident;
- A fear that children will be removed and placed into care, or not wanting to be perceived as 'being difficult' if children or other dependants are involved;
- A fear the of impact on children, or other dependants, or financial repercussions (such as the receipt of certain child maintenance, tax allowances or financial support through benefits) if the perpetrator were to receive a custodial sentence;
- Continuing with a prosecution may cause the complainant to feel they are responsible for the perpetrator receiving a criminal record and the impact on their job and family finances
- The perpetrator may agree to drop other proceedings such as custody applications for children, if the complainant withdraws the complaint;
- Embarrassment at reporting the complaint (as a result of the complainant's or perpetrator's social background, or for example, in cases of [child to parent abuse](#));
- Fear they may not be believed and fears that the criminal justice system is biased towards the offender;
- Feelings of isolation or vulnerability, and fears they may not be believed as a result of those vulnerabilities;
- Fears that showing support for a prosecution may place them at further risk of harm;

- Fear of immigration status being made known to law enforcement authorities, or fear that a complaint may reveal the perpetrator's immigration status which may not be secure;
- Fear of being 'outed' about their sexual orientation, or transgender identity if not already known about;
- Fear of HIV status or other very sensitive personal information being revealed if not already known;
- Where complainants are involved in prostitution, fears that any previous contact with the police will result in their complaint not being taken seriously;
- Lack of engagement or communication from criminal justice agencies, or a fear of not knowing what will happen if they do support a prosecution; or,
- Concerns that the criminal justice agencies are not aware of the issues they face or may not be sensitive to their specific situation(such as an understanding of why certain special measures are required).

Annex E – Existing offences that may apply in domestic abuse cases

Domestic violence offence (England & Wales)	Statutory provision or common law (England & Wales)
Threats to kill	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s16
Shooting or attempting to shoot, or wounding, with intent to do grievous bodily harm	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s18
Inflicting bodily injury with or without weapon	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s20
Attempting to choke, etc. in order to commit any indictable offence	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s21
Maliciously administering poison, etc. so as to endanger life or inflict grievous bodily harm	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s23
Maliciously administering poison, etc. with intent to injure, aggrieve, or annoy any other	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s24
Causing gunpowder to explode, or sending to any person an explosive substance, or throwing corrosive fluid on a person, with intent to do grievous bodily harm	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s29
Assault occasioning bodily harm	Offences Against the Person Act 1861 s47
Consent to serious harm for sexual gratification not a defence	Domestic Abuse Act 2021 s71
Child destruction	Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 s1
Cruelty to persons under sixteen	Children and Young Persons Act 1933 s1
Offence of breaching restraining order	Sentencing Act 2000 s636
Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 s1 Sexual Offences Act 2003 s1
Procurement of woman by threats	Sexual Offences Act 1956 s2
Administering drugs to obtain or facilitate intercourse	Sexual Offences Act 1956 s4
Indecent assault on a woman	Sexual Offences Act 1956 s14
Indecent assault on a man	Sexual Offences Act 1956 s15
Procuring a miscarriage	Abortion Act 1967 s5(2)
Theft	Theft Act 1968 s7
Blackmail	Theft Act 1968 s21
Destroying or damaging property	Criminal Damage Act 1971 s1
Threats to destroy or damage property	Criminal Damage Act 1971 s2
Violence for securing entry	Criminal Law Act 1977 s6
Abduction of child by parent	Child Abduction Act 1984 s1

Abduction of child by other persons (not parent)	Child Abduction Act 1984 s2
Affray	Public Order Act 1986 s3
Fear or provocation of violence	Public Order Act 1986 s4
Intentional harassment, alarm or distress	Public Order Act 1986 s4A
Harassment, alarm or distress	Public Order Act 1986 s5
Offence of sending letters etc. with intent to cause distress or anxiety	Malicious Communications Act 1988 s1
Common assault and battery	Criminal Justice Act 1988 s39
Intimidation etc. of witnesses, jurors and others	Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 s51
Breach of forced marriage protection order	Family Law Act 1996 s63CA
Harassment - Putting people in fear of violence	Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s4
Stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress	Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s4A
Racially or religiously aggravated assault	Crime & Disorder Act 1998 s29
Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage	Crime & Disorder Act 1998 s30
Racially or religiously aggravated public order offences	Crime & Disorder Act 1998 s31
Racially or religiously aggravated harassment etc	Crime & Disorder Act 1998 s32
Assault by penetration	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s2
Sexual assault	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s3
Causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s4
Causing or inciting prostitution for gain	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s52
Controlling prostitution for gain	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s53
Trafficking into the UK for sexual exploitation	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s57
Trafficking within the UK for sexual exploitation	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s58
Trafficking out of the UK for sexual exploitation	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s59
Administering a substance with intent to commit a sexual offence	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s61
Committing an offence with intent to commit a sexual offence	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s62
Trespass with intent to commit a sexual offence	Sexual Offences Act 2003 s63
Improper use of public electronic communications network	Communications Act 2003 s127
Breach of non-molestation order	Domestic Violence, Crime & Victims Act 2004 s1

Trafficking people for exploitation	Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act 2004 s4 now superseded by the offence at section 2 of Modern Slavery Act 2015.
Kidnapping	Common law
False imprisonment	Common law
Perverting the course of public justice	Common law
Aiding, abetting, counselling, or procuring the commission of: (a) an indictable offence listed in this table; or (b) the offence of attempted murder	Accessories and Abettors Act 1861 s8
The offence of conspiracy in relation to: (a) an indictable offence listed in this table; and (b) the offence of murder	Criminal Law Act 1977 s1
Attempting to commit an offence in relation to: (a) an indictable offence listed in this table and (b) the offence of murder	Criminal Attempts Act 1981 s1
Encouraging or assisting an offence (inchoate offences) in relation to: (a) an indictable offence listed in this table; and (b) the offence of murder	Serious Crime Act 2007 ss44-46
Incitement (pre 1 October 2008) in relation to: (a) an indictable offence listed in this table; and (b) the offence of murder	Common law
Disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress (revenge pornography).	Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, s33
Forced Marriage	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, s1210.
Offences relating to female genital mutilation	Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

Annex F – Support available for victims

Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0808 2000 247, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Age UK – an organisation that supports older people and victims of elder abuse. The Age UK Advice Line is on 0800 678 1602 and open from 8am-7pm, 365 days a year.

Ask for ANI – a codeword scheme for victims to access support from the safety of their local pharmacy.

Broken Rites – a group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy, ministers, and Church Army Officers

Childline – an organisation offering help and support for children and young people. Helpline is on 0800 1111, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Clinks – an organisation that supports the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families. Clinks have a directory of services, although it is not exhaustive, and are experienced in supporting women who have suffered domestic abuse.

Dogs Trust Freedom Project – a specialist dog fostering service for victims fleeing domestic abuse.

Hestia Respond to Abuse Advice Line – a specialist advice line supporting employers to help staff experiencing domestic abuse on 0203 879 3695 or via email Adviceline.EB@hestia.org, open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

Hourglass – a specialist organisation aiming to end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK. Their helpline can be accessed by phone on 0808 808 8141, text on 07860 052906 or email helpline@wearehourglass.org.

Galop – a specialist organisation and LGBT+ anti-violence charity offering support to LGBT+ victims.

Imkaan - a women's organisation providing dedicated support for **black** and minority ethnic women.

Jewish Women's Aid – a specialist organisation supporting Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse. Their helpline is 0808 801 0500 and is open Mondays to Thursdays from 9.30am to 9.30pm (excluding Jewish holidays and bank holidays).

Karma Nirvana honour-based abuse helpline – a specialist organisation supporting victims of 'honour'-based abuse and forced marriage. Their helpline is 0800 599 9247 and is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

ManKind Initiative – a specialist organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Men’s Advice Line – 0808 801 0327 open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm or email info@mensadviceline.org.uk.

Muslim Women’s Network - a specialist organisation supporting Muslim women and girls.

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 999 5428 Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm.

National Stalking Helpline – 0808 802 0300 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30am to 4pm and from 9:30am to 8pm on Wednesdays

NSPCC – the UK’s leading children’s charity working to prevent abuse, rebuild children’s lives and support families.

NSPCC female genital mutilation (FGM) helpline – 0800 028 3550 or email fgm.help@nspcc.org.uk.

Paladin – an organisation that provides support for victims of stalking.

Refuge – an organisation that provides support for all victims of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

Respect – an organisation that works with male victims of domestic abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators.

Restored – a specialist organisation working to tackle domestic abuse by partnering with churches and Christian organisations.

Revenge Porn Helpline – open between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. 0345 600 0459 or help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk.

SignHealth Domestic Abuse Service – a specialist domestic abuse service to support the health and wellbeing of Deaf people.

Solace Women’s Aid – an organisation supporting all victims of violence against women and girls.

Southall Black Sisters – an organisation providing support for ethnic minority victims and migrant women.

Stay Safe East – a specialist organisation providing support for disabled and Deaf victims of domestic abuse.

Surviving Economic Abuse – a specialist organisation dedicated to raising awareness of economic abuse and transforming response to it, working in partnership with Money Advice Plus to provide money/debt advice to victims of domestic abuse experiencing financial difficulties.’

UK Forced Marriage Unit – 020 7008 0151.

Victim Support – a specialist service helping anyone affected by any types of crime, not only those who experience it directly, but also their friends, family and any other people involved.

Women’s Aid – an organisation supporting women affected by domestic abuse.

Wales Specific Organisations

Live Fear Free helpline – Live Fear Free helpline is a free, 24/7 service for all victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence and those close to them, including family, friends and colleagues and concerned others. Live Fear Free can be contacted in the following ways;

- Call: 0808 80 10 800
- Text: 0786 007 7333
- Email: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales
- Live chat: gov.wales/livefearfree

Dyn Wales helpline – an organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse. Helpline is on 0808 801 0321 or email support@dynwales.org

Welsh Women’s Aid – an organisation supporting Welsh women affected by domestic abuse.

BAWSO – a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting ethnic minority communities

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) - an organisation that provides information, specialist support and therapy to anyone who has experienced any kind of sexual abuse and violence; they can be contacted on 01248 670 628 or info@rasacymru.org.uk

Stepping Stones - an organisation that provides therapeutic services to adults who have been sexually abused as children; they can be contacted on 01978 352 717 or info@steppingstonesnorthwales.co.uk

New Pathways - the main sexual violence support service provider for Mid, West, East and South Wales; they can be contacted on 01685 379 310 or enquiries@newpathways.org.uk

Annex G – Glossary of acronyms

- ABH – Actual Bodily Harm
- APP – Authorised Professional Practice
- CAFCASS – Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- CJS – Criminal Justice System
- CPA – Child to Parent abuse
- CPS – Crown Prosecution Service
- CSEW – Crime Survey for England and Wales
- DAPNs – Domestic Abuse Protection Notices
- DAPOs – Domestic Abuse Protection Orders
- DASH – Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and ‘Honour’-Based Violence
- DDVC – Destitute Domestic Violence Concession
- DVPNs – Domestic Violence Protection Notices
- DVPOs – Domestic Violence Protection Orders
- FCA – Financial Conduct Authority
- HBA – ‘Honour’-Based Abuse
- HMCTS – Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service
- HMICFRS – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
- HMPs – Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service
- IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
- ICO – Information Commissioner’s Office
- LGBT+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender+
- MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

- NPCC – National Police Chiefs’ Council
- NHS – National Health Service
- NRPF – No Recourse to Public Funds
- ONS – Office for National Statistics
- SPO – Stalking Protection Order
- VAWDASV – Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- VAWG – Violence Against Women and Girls