Domestic Abuse

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted?view=plain) defines domestic abuse as:

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is "domestic abuse" if:

1. A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
2. the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

1. physical or sexual abuse;
2. violent or threatening behaviour;
3. controlling or coercive behaviour;
4. economic abuse;
5. psychological, emotional or other abuse;

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

**Personally connected**

The term 'personally connected' means any of the following:

* They are, or have been, married to each other.
* They are, or have been, civil partners of each other.
* They have agreed to marry one another.
* They are, or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.
* They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship with the same child.
* They are relatives.

# Coercive Control

Controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships is a crime in its own right, under [Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted), and carries a maximum sentence of 5 years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both.

Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident, it is a purposeful pattern of behaviour which takes place over time for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another.

The cross-Government definition of domestic violence and abuse outlines **controlling** or **coercive** behaviour as follows:

* **Controlling behaviour is:** a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
* **Coercive behaviour is:** a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

**Examples of coercive and controlling behaviour**

The types of behaviour associated with coercion or control may or may not constitute a criminal offence in their own right. 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. However, the perpetrator may limit space for action and exhibit a story of ownership and entitlement over the victim. Such behaviours might include (this is not an exhaustive list):

* isolating a person from their friends and family;
* depriving them of their basic needs;
* monitoring their time;
* monitoring a person via online communication tools or using spyware;
* taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep;
* depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist
support or medical services;
* repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless;
* enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim;
* forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities;
* financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance;
* threats to hurt or kill;
* threats to a child;
* threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to ‘out’ someone).
* assault;
* criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods);
* rape;
* preventing a person from having access to transport or from working.

Types of domestic violence or abuse

Domestic violence or abuse can be characterised by any of the indicators of abuse outlined in this briefing relating to:

* psychological
* physical
* sexual
* financial
* emotional.

It also includes so called 'honour’ -based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Possible indicators of domestic violence or abuse

* Low self-esteem
* Feeling that the abuse is their fault when it is not
* Physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts, broken bones
* Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others
* Fear of outside intervention
* Damage to home or property
* Isolation – not seeing friends and family
* Limited access to money

<https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse>

[Domestic Abuse | Salford Safeguarding Adults Board](https://safeguardingadults.salford.gov.uk/professionals/domestic-abuse/)

[Disability & Domestic Abuse - Ann Craft Trust](https://www.anncrafttrust.org/resources/disability-domestic-abuse/)