

Women's

AID

North Ayrshire

FOCUS ON COERCIVE CONTROL

Domestic abuse isn't always physical. Coercive control is an 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.



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WHAT IS COERCIVE CONTROL?

Coercive control is an act, or a pattern of acts, of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation that abusers use to harm, punish or frighten survivors. It doesn't relate to a single incident – it is a purposeful pattern of behaviour. This controlling behaviour keeps a person dependent on their abuser by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive control creates invisible chains and a sense of fear that affects all elements of a survivor's life. It works to limit a person's human rights by depriving them of their liberty and reducing their ability for action.

COERCIVE CONTROL IS A CRIME

Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse. We can support you if your abuser is perpetrating this abuse. You are not alone. Controlling or coercive behaviour within an intimate or familial relationship is a crime and perpetrators can be prosecuted.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 widened the definition of abuse to include physical abuse, sexual violence, psychological or financial abuse.

The offence can carry a maximum of 14 years imprisonment.

Isolating you from friends and family.

Depriving you of basic needs, such as food or sleep.

Monitoring your time.

Monitoring you via online communication tools or spyware.

Monitoring your movements when you are out and about.

SOME COMMON EXAMPLES OF COERCIVE CONTROL

Making you take part in illegal activities.

Repeatedly putting you down, such as saying you're worthless.

Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising you.

Controlling your finances.

Making threats or intimidating you.

Telling you what you can wear and where you can go.

Telling you who you can see or talk to.

Threatening to hurt you or themselves if they don't get their own way.

Keeping track of who likes your posts or who messages you.

Sending you negative or insulting messages.

Monitoring your accounts.

Using technology to track your movements and activities.

Sending you explicit pictures without your consent and demanding you send them in return.

COERCIVE CONTROL OFTEN INCLUDES DIGITAL ABUSE

Constantly texting you and making you feel you can't be separated from your phone.

Making you give them your passwords to your email or your social media accounts.

Abusing apps like Find My Friends to check your location.

Controlling your bank apps.

Making threats or intimidating you by text, message, or phone.

Sharing (or threatening to share) intimate pictures of you.

Telling you who you can see or talk to.

Fraudulently logging in to your accounts as you.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE COERCIVE CONTROL

1

Acknowledge the abuse. This can be difficult, especially if you have been in denial or if the abuse was subtle.

2

Talk to someone you trust: a friend, family member, or an organisation like Women's Aid.

3

Record details about what happened. Include dates, times, locations, if you can. This can be helpful if you decide to report it, but it's also useful for you to see patterns of abuse.

5

Seek help from a professional who specialises in domestic abuse to help you through the healing process.

4

Consider reporting the abuse. This is entirely your choice, and you can change your mind later.

COERCIVE CONTROL IN SCOTLAND

- 1,333 charges relating to coercive control were reported to Scotland's Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service between April 2024 and December 2024.
- There were 135 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in North Ayrshire per 10,000 population in 2023-24.
- The clear majority of victims of coercive control in Scotland in 2023-24 (83%) were female.

HELP FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING COERCIVE CONTROL

There are lots of organizations to help women in Scotland who have experienced domestic abuse, including coercive control. **In an emergency, call 999.**

Refuge's Digital Break-Up Tool

Refuge have a brilliant new Digital Break-up Tool that helps you secure commonly used apps on your phone, laptop, or tablet.
refugetechsafety.org/

North Ayrshire Women's Aid

A specialist local service that provides emotional and practical support to women affected by domestic abuse.
01294 602 424
nawomensaid.com

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Free and confidential legal information affected by gender based violence such as domestic abuse.
08088 010 789
scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Free 24-hour helpline for women who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, with all female advisors.
0808 2000 247
nationaldahelpline.org.uk

The Revenge Porn Helpline

Supports all adult victims of intimate image abuse in the UK.
0345 6000 459

Victim Support Scotland

Provides information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system.
0800 160 1985
victimsupport.scot