

Coercive Control

Coercive control is a crime. It is the very heart of domestic abuse. It does not have to be physical to be abuse. It is a persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by an abuser over a prolonged period designed to achieve obedience and create fear. It may include coercion, threats, stalking, intimidation, isolation, degradation and control. It may also include physical and/or sexual violence.

Coercive control is all about making a woman's world smaller – trapping her, restricting her independence and freedom. A controlling partner may shut out her friends and family, control her movements, micro-manage what she eats or wears, restrict her access to money – all the time chipping away at her confidence and destroying her self-respect.

- If it happened after January 1, 2019, coercive control is a criminal offence in Ireland.
- Section 39 of the new Domestic Violence Act 2018 sets out that:
 - (1) A person commits an offence where he or she knowingly and persistently engages in behaviour that:
 - (a) is controlling or coercive
 - (b) has a serious effect on a relevant person, and
 - (c) a reasonable person would consider likely to have a serious effect on a relevant person.

Examples of Coercive Control:

- Isolates you from friends and family.
- Deprives you of basic everyday needs such as food, clothing, electricity, or heating.
- Monitors your online activity, has spyware on your phone, or laptop.
- Takes control of where you can go, who you can see, what you can where, when you sleep and when you are allowed to leave the home.
- Stops you from accessing support services such as medical, dental, social welfare.
- Repeatedly puts you down (you are worthless, stupid, fat, ugly etc.).
- Enforces rules and activities to humiliate and dehumanise you.
- Coerces you into sexual activity.
- Forces you to take part in criminal behaviour (shoplifting for example).
- Controls the finances and stops you from working or having your own money.
- Threatens to reveal private information about you (pictures and videos etc.).