

A Practitioners Quick Guide to Coercive and Controlling Behaviour



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Coercive control is recognised as an offence by the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#) as the behaviour that underpins [domestic abuse](#). It is a pattern of behaviour which seeks to take away the victim's sense of self, minimising their freedom of action and violating their human rights. Coercive power is used to inflict unpleasant or painful consequences on a person acting on their own choices so that they have no choice but to follow the preferences of the person inflicting harm rather than their choice.

Signs of Coercion and Control

Isolating a person from friends and family

Taking control over aspects of everyday life e.g. where they can go, what they can wear

[Gaslighting](#), making the victim doubt their perception and judgement

Manipulation of others including professionals

Monitoring their time

Monitoring via online communication tools including spyware and passwords to Social Media accounts

Depriving of their basic needs

Depriving them of access to support services such as medical or specialist

Impact on Children

- Higher risk of mental health and emotional difficulties throughout their lives
- Increased risk of physical health and neurological difficulties
- Increased risk of poor educational engagement and outcomes
- Increased risk of drugs and alcohol misuse
- Behavioural issues
- Increased risk of criminal behaviour
- Interpersonal difficulties in their own intimate relationships and friendships
- More likely to be bullied or engage in bullying

Financial abuse including control of finances such as only allowing a punitive allowance

Prevention of access to transport and working

Repeatedly putting a person down and telling them they are useless

Enforcing rules/activity that humiliates, degrades and dehumanises the victim

Forcing the victim to take part in criminal behaviour e.g. shoplifting or neglect of children to encourage self-blame
Threats to hurt or kill

Threats to a child

Threats to publish private information

Assault

Rape

Criminal damage

- More vulnerable to sexual abuse
- More vulnerable to exploitation
- Difficulties with attachment and bonding
- Can often display anger towards victim

Impact on Adult Victims

- Poor mental health and emotional wellbeing e.g. low self esteem
 - Problematic use of drugs and alcohol including prescribed medication
 - PTSD
 - Limits the ability to parent
 - Debilitated, unable to function
- Unable to make decisions

What can we do?

Be trauma informed
- take time to understand the presenting behaviours and impact.

Use plain language that is kind, respectful and not blaming.

Use the [DASH Risk Assessment](#) and the Harm Matrix to assess risk.

Use the [County Durham Children and Families Practice Toolkit](#) to help identify resources.

Be alert for the physical and mental health impacts.

Routinely create opportunity for safe enquiry.

Include repair and healing in the planning and plan for the child/young person.

Be aware of attempts by perpetrators to manipulate professionals.

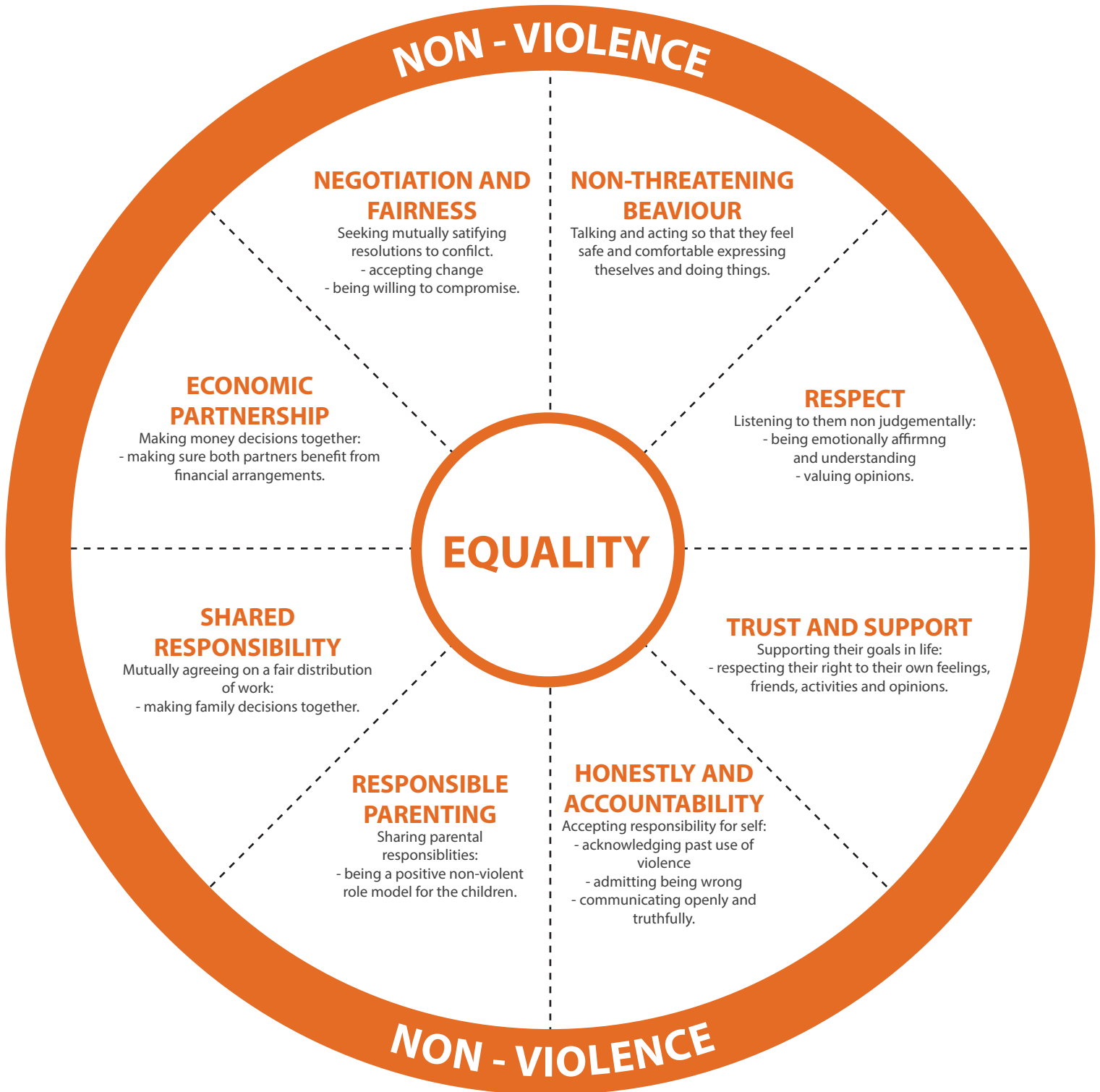
Be aware of how [technology](#) can be adapted and used by perpetrators.

Keep up to date by attending regular training and engaging in CPD.

Duluth Power and Control Wheel – Signs of Coercion and Control



Duluth Equality Wheel – Positive Behaviours



What can we do?

