

Reframing Domestic Abuse Within A Coercive Control Timeline Conference Report

Introduction

‘Coercive control is a serious problem. Abusers use multiple means to access and harm their victims, including economic abuse, harassment, interference with their work and electronic monitoring. Separation is the most dangerous time, when most partner homicides occur.’

([Professor Evan Stark](#))

Coercive controlling behaviour (CCB) is the predominant factor for the majority of domestic abuse victims/survivors NDAS works with. Victims struggle to share the nature of their experiences which considered in isolation may appear innocent, and often victims do not recognise or are unwilling to acknowledge their experiences as abusive. CCB can occur over years and even decades before the abuse is recognised or an incident is reported.

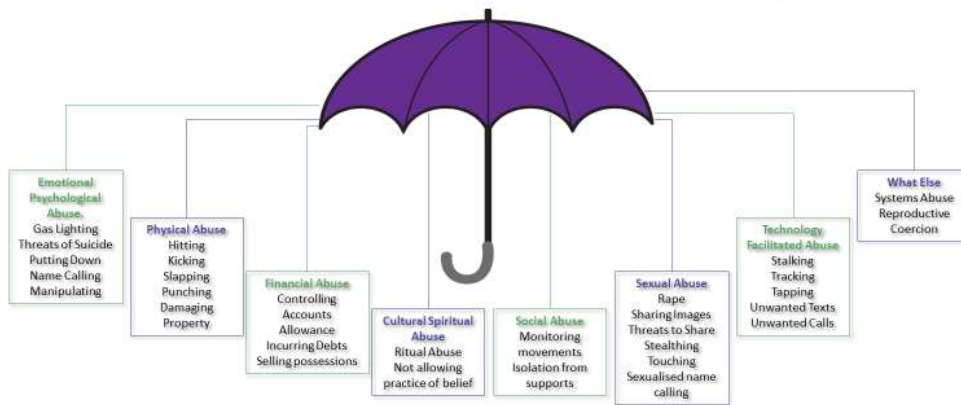
We were delighted to host the NDAS conference during this year's 16 Days of Action with its focus on coercive and controlling behaviour. The conference aimed to provide an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of Professor Jane Monkton Smith, a widely acknowledged expert in the field of domestic abuse and in creating greater understanding of CCB through the '[Homicide Timeline](#)'. The event brought together a multi-agency audience with varying perspectives, providing a space for us to collaborate in considering the implications of the insidious nature of CCB and what the implications are for our individual services and collective responses.

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Background

Umbrella of Coercive Control



Coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic abuse, it is designed to make a person dependent 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 pervades all elements of a survivor's life. It works to limit their human rights by depriving them of their liberty and reducing their ability for action. Experts like Evan Stark liken coercive control to being taken hostage. As he says: "the victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear." (Stark, 2007).

Examples of coercive behaviour are:

- Isolation from friends and family
- Deprivation of basic needs, such as food
- Monitoring time
- Monitoring via online communication tools or spyware
- Taking control over aspects of everyday life, such as where you can go, who you can see, what you can wear and when you can sleep
- Preventing access to support services, such as medical services
- Repeatedly putting you down, such as saying you're worthless
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising you
- Controlling finances
- Making threats or intimidation

(Taken from Women's Aid Coercive Control Factsheet – see Appendix 1)

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Programme

09.00	Registration with tea and coffee
09.30	Welcome – Sharon Brown, CEO of NDAS
09.45	Opening Speech – Susan Dungworth, Northumbria Police Crime Commissioner
10.00	Coercive controlling behavior timeline – Professor of Public Protection, Jane Monkton Smith, University of Gloucestershire via Teams
11.15	Refreshment/comfort break
11.30	Round table facilitated discussions
12.15	Feedback key points
12.45	Closing comments
13.00	Buffet lunch/networking
14.00	Close

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Speaker Biographies

Sharon Brown, CEO,
Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services

Sharon Brown joined Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services (NDAS) in 2021 as CEO. NDAS established in 2003, works tirelessly to ensure all victims/survivors of domestic abuse in Northumberland and their children, are protected; survivors empowered and communities educated on the diversity and impact of domestic abuse.

She has worked extensively within the voluntary and community sector with a focus on the most vulnerable. Previously, Sharon was Director of Youth Homeless North East and prior to this she was Youth Adviser with Government Office North East, and was a member of the North East Child Poverty Commission between 2016 - 2023.



Susan Dungworth
Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner

Susan was elected as Northumbria's Police and Crime Commissioner in May 2024 with a commitment to delivering safer streets and stronger communities. She is a former youth justice worker and councillor and has decades of experience representing people and developing policy. She has held a range of positions serving local people ranging from being the Leader of the Northumberland Labour Group to Chairing Seaton Valley Community Council. Among her priorities are tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing violence against women and girls and strengthening neighbourhood policing.



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HOMICIDE TIMELINE

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith OBE

Jane is a Professor of Public Protection at the University of Gloucestershire with a specialism in homicide. She has authored a new theoretical framework for tracking homicide risk in cases of Coercive Control and Stalking that has had wide international impact.



Jane is the author of the influential book 'In Control - Dangerous Relationships and how they end in Murder', which has sold thousands of copies worldwide.

In addition to academic work, she maintains a wide portfolio of professional and case work, providing analyses for police and the legal profession, expert reports and training.

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Table Discussion

The overarching question for the facilitated discussion groups was ‘How do we improve our responses to intimate partner abuse in Northumberland?’

A multi-agency group of delegates sat on six themed tables:

- Domestic abuse
- Health
- Community
- Police
- Housing
- Education

Each group was asked to define what is included within the focus area, for example, community could include local services, local businesses, church groups, community groups etc.

The groups then went on to discuss three questions and to identify actions to improve responses to CCB:

- What level of understanding of CCB is there across, for example communities?
- What is working well in responding to victims of CCB?
- What needs to be changed or added to ensure victims of CCB get the support they need?

Recommendations for action

Domestic Abuse

1. Create a common, jargon free, dialogue for all services to define CCB
2. Develop methods of gathering evidence of CCB across all services
3. The DASH RIC should be adapted to include CCB identifiers

Health

4. Embed the homicide timeline into the DASH RIC
5. Involve GP's more; GP's hold more information on a person from birth to death than any other professional, they are key to identifying domestic abuse and ensuring victims access support

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Community

6. Educate, improve and create better understanding of the nuances of CCB to increase recognition of people experiencing CCB
7. Investigate changes to law that are required to improve responses to CCB including orders, thresholds, contact orders and increasing understanding
8. Ensure services have information/evidence sharing protocols in place to prevent re-traumatising victims when having to tell their story over and over again.
9. All services/professionals should use the same tools which in turn would reduce the stress on the victims

Police

10. Key messages and how we distribute information should be inclusive in order to reach everyone, for example, to include gypsy backgrounds, LGBTQIA+
11. Reduce the amount of point of contacts for a victim through working better together/ multi agency working to reduce the client being passed around

Housing

12. Housing organisations should establish specific Domestic Abuse Teams with good knowledge and procedures
13. Increase accommodation for victims with multiple enduring needs
14. Increase safe accommodation for victims

Education

15. Constantly raising awareness through training provision including online training for professionals on CCB
16. Intervention needs to start earlier to address potential CCB

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Next steps

This report will be forwarded to Northumberland Domestic Abuse Board, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Northumbria Police and the ICB with a request that they specifically consider the 16 recommendations for action and provide a response to NDAS. NDAS will circulate this report widely and to all delegates. We also commit to reporting back once responses are received to the recommendations.

Evaluation

WWW

Talking to different people

Collaboration - Different background, all one subject

Jane Monckton Smith knowledge on CCB

Police – input, training, hearing experts

Talking about CCB – discuss event on social media (would like to see how far we can come in a year)

Nice to know it's spoken about

Open conversation

Good opened with Police Inspector case of CCB

EBI

More men engaged in the conversation

Contact

Sharon Brown ceo@nda.services

Vicky Burnett admin@nda.services

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Conference resources

Appendix 1: Sharon Brown – Introduction slides with link to Sharon Baker, Chief Inspector, Avon and Somerset Police: A Survivor of Coercive Control



Sharon Brown CEO
NDAS Slides CCB Co

Appendix 2: Professor Jane Monckton Smith – Homicide Timeline



Homicide Timeline
JMS.pptx

[What is the Homicide Timeline | Homicide Timeline](#)

Appendix 3

women's aid

until women & children are safe

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.

Coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic abuse.

This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

We campaigned and succeeded in making coercive control a criminal offence since 2015. This has marked a huge step forward in tackling domestic abuse. But now we want to make sure that everyone understands what it is.

Coercive control creates invisible chains and a sense of fear that pervades all elements of a survivor's life. It works to limit their human rights by depriving them of their liberty and reducing their ability for action. Experts like Evan Stark liken coercive control to being taken hostage. As he says: "the victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear." (Stark, 2007).

Some common examples of coercive behaviour are:

- Isolating you from friends and family
- Depriving you of basic needs, such as food
- Monitoring your time

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- Monitoring you via online communication tools or spyware
- Taking control over aspects of your everyday life, such as where you can go, who you can see, what you can wear and when you can sleep

- Depriving you access to support services, such as medical services
- Repeatedly putting you down, such as saying you're worthless
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising you
- Controlling your finances
- Making threats or intimidating you

Statistics on coercive control

- There were 43,774 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023. This is an increase from 41,626 in the year ending March 2022, and 33,954 in the year ending March 2021 (ONS, 2023a).
- There were 811 defendant proceedings and 566 offenders convicted of controlling or coercive behaviour in the year ending March 2023 in England and Wales (where controlling or coercive behaviour was the principal offence (ONS 2023b)).

Almost all those convicted for controlling or coercive behaviour in England and Wales in the year ending March 2023 were male – 553 out of 566 (97.7%) (ONS, 2023b). Although the ONS publication does not give the sex of the victims, we know from other research (as below) that the majority of victims are likely to be women.

- One study of Crime Survey for England and Wales data found that women are far more likely than men to be the victims of coercive controlling behaviour abuse that involves ongoing degradation and frightening threats – two key elements of coercive control. Working within the limitations of the current crime survey questions, the study found that among intimate personal violence victims who had experienced only one abusive relationship since the age of 16, almost a third (30%, n = 791) of the abuse reported by female respondents could be classified as coercive control in this way, contrasting with only 6% (n = 52) of the abuse reported by male respondents (Myhill, 2015).
- Analysis of Merseyside Police domestic abuse data found that 95% of coercive control victims were women and 74% of perpetrators were men. 76% of coercive control cases happened within an intimate partner context. The study found that common abusive behaviours used in coercive control included "...use of technology (such as phone trackers, controlling social media usage, barrage of text messages or monitoring phone usage), sexual coercion, monitoring behaviours, isolation, threats, financial abuse, deprivation (depriving access to

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support) and physical violence (63% of coercive control cases featured reports of physical violence)” (Barlow et al, 2018).

Appendix 3: Delegates

Susan Dungworth	Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner (Opening speaker)
Sharon Brown	CEO, NDAS (Introduction)
Professor Jane Monckton Smith	Gloucestershire University (Keynote Speaker)
Heidi Boden	Media & Communications Officer, OPCC Northumbria
Julie Smith	Victim & Restorative Justice, OPCC Northumbria
Nicola Seymour	Detective Chief Inspector, Northumbria Police responsible for Domestic Abuse
Sam Maughan	Northumbria Police Sergeant
Darren English	Police Constable for Neighbourhood Rural policing
Lynne Kirsopp	Police Constable for Neighbourhood Rural policing
Laura Birchall	Northumbria Police Sergeant
Kate Benson	Northern Neighbourhood Police Inspector
Martin Brooks	Strategic Community Safety Police Officer
Lesley Pyle	Northumberland & North Tyneside Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Lead
Mandy Payne	Safeguarding & Compliance Coordinator, Bernicia
Denise Singleton	Community Connector, Karbon Homes
Sara Dickson	Development Worker, Rape Crisis

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Sarah Oliver	Senior Counsellor & Family Practitioner, Acorns Project
Jeannie Killoran	Children's Counsellor, Acorns Project
Andy Watmough	CEO, Cygnus Support Limited
Lorraine Burley	Counselling Manager, Cygnus Support Limited
Ivan Wintringham	Senior Policy Advisor, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Department for Education
Jane Pikett	NDAS Trustee
Pippa Boughton	Team Leader, Harbour Support Services
Katie Hewitt	Service Manager, Harbour Support Services
Kirsty McElderry	Everyturn
Emily Harrowsmith	Everyturn
Taylor Johnston	Everyturn
Beth Tilley	David Grey Solicitors
Jeanette Steuer	David Grey Solicitors
Ben Cairns	David Grey Solicitors
Hannah Lant	Barclays Bank Local Specialist
Joanne Armstrong	Represent Women
Erin Parker	Represent Women
Reagan Simpson	Young People Support Worker, NCC
Molly Larkin	NHS Safeguarding Nurse
Lisa Oguona	Training & Development in Children, Social Care, NCC
Joanne Lintin	Family Hub Manager, NCC
Jessica Burnell	Support Worker, R21

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Dana Bowerthorpe	Support Worker, R21
Helen Milner	Chair of NDAS
Kerry Mulcahy	Team Manager, NDAS
Ann Connor	Fundraising and Finance Lead, NDAS
Rachel Walton	Initial Response Practitioner, NDAS
Wendy Coates	Initial Response Practitioner, NDAS
Melanie Devine	Domestic Abuse Practitioner, NDAS
Kaitlin Cavagin	Domestic Abuse Practitioner, NDAS
Ailish Carr	Domestic Abuse Practitioner, NDAS
Paula Armstrong	Domestic Abuse Practitioner, NDAS
Elleanor Boyle	Prevention Practitioner, NDAS
Karren Spowart	Prevention Practitioner, NDAS
Will Rees	Children & Young Peoples Counsellor, NDAS
Vicky Burnett	Office Manager, NDAS

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