**Sandwell Domestic Homicide Reviews – Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control** A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is undertaken when a person dies as a result of domestic abuse. This learning note focuses on coercive and controlling behaviour issues highlighted in DHRs. For further information on domestic abuse and to access the published reports from Sandwell’s DHRs please go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

**What is controlling or coercive behaviour?**

**Controlling behaviour**: a range of acts used 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:** an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

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**‘It didn’t appear he was ever genuinely respectful instead, he seemed frequently negative, quick to inform professionals of her inadequacies and the impact they were having on him’ (**[**DHR – 2019**](https://pre.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/469/key-learning-points-from-domestic-homicide-review-published-6-february-2019)**)**

‘Victim had to ‘check in’ numerous times during the day, had to change her lifestyle by not taking time on her appearance; and was told what she could do at work’ ([**DHR – 2020**](https://pre.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/471/key-learning-points-from-domestic-homicide-review-published-3-december-2020))

**‘The perpetrator tried to isolate the victim from her sons by strictly controlling the contact between them’ (**[**DHR – 2019**](https://pre.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/470/key-learning-points-from-domestic-homicide-review-published-11-june-2019)**)**

**‘Youngest son described perpetrator as “a bully” who enjoyed putting smaller and weaker people down, he made her justify her spending, damaged her property and ripped her clothes’ (**[**DHR – 2019**](https://pre.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/470/key-learning-points-from-domestic-homicide-review-published-11-june-2019)**)**

**What do we learn about the significance of Coercive Control in Domestic Abuse?**

**What next?**

Professionals should understand coercive and controlling behaviour, recognise how to challenge those behaviours and respond appropriately, and have knowledge of support available to victims.

Agencies should consider coercive controlling behaviour as part of assessments, interventions and planning including case transfers between workers and case closures. Controlling behaviour such as stalking/harassment and a refusal to accept separation should be recognised, together with a propensity to violence, as important in assessing risk.

We will raise awareness of the adverse impact of coercive control in relationships so that not only victims are able to recognise this form of DA, but family and friends are better equipped to identify safe pathways to provide that support.