**SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL-BEING (WALES) ACT 2014**

**HANDOUT**

## Adult Protection and Support Orders (APSOs)

## Coercive control

New government guidance on coercion and control (Home Office, 2015) gives the following definitions:

***Controlling behaviour*** *is: a range of acts designed 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*** *is: a continuing 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.* (page 22)

*Such behaviours might include:*

* *isolating a person from their friends and family;*
* *depriving them of their basic needs;*
* *monitoring their time;*
* *monitoring a person via online communication tools or using spyware;*
* *taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep;*
* *depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services;*
* *repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless;*
* *enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim;*
* *forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities;*
* *financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance;*
* *threats to hurt or kill;*
* *threats to a child;*
* *threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to ‘out’ someone);*
* *assault;*
* *criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods);*
* *rape;*
* *preventing a person from having access to transport or from working.*

*Controlling or coercive behaviour does not only happen in the home, the victim can be monitored by phone or social media from a distance and can be made to fear violence.* (page 4)

The Home Office guidance sets out considerations about coercion and control. It is affected by:

* Gender – controlling and coercive behaviour is primarily a form of violence against women and girls; gender inequality in society can contribute to difficulties in accessing support.
* Impairment – victims may face additional forms of violence related to any impairment.
* Ethnicity – including a distrust of the police, concerns about racism, language barriers, concerns about family finding out, or fear of rejection by the wider community.
* Immigration status – additional barriers, fear of coming forward.
* Fear of losing children.
* Financial abuse –for example, older women who have not worked and who do not have a pension in their own right may be even more financially reliant on abusive partners. Those who are being cared for by a relative may face barriers to reporting financial abuse by that relative.
* Drugs and alcohol – victims may also use alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism, or to block out what is happening to them. Some victims may also be forced into drug taking by the perpetrator in order to exert control over them.
* Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) individuals – may also experience specific forms of abuse that may act as barriers to seeking help, such as threats to reveal sexual orientation to family, or others.
* Forced Marriage – Forcing someone to marry against their will is a criminal offence under the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
* “So-called” “honour based” violence/abuse.
* Age – an older person may be the victim of elder abuse, this may include: financial, emotional, psychological, sexual physical or neglect.
* Adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) – there is currently no legal definition of adolescent to parent violence and abuse. However, it is increasingly recognised as a form of domestic violence and abuse.

It is important to consider issues of migration as part of consideration of coercion and control. The Home Office guidance states that:

*Those subject to immigration control may face additional barriers when attempting to escape domestic abuse. These circumstances may make them more reluctant to come forward and report abuse. Such circumstances may also be exploited by perpetrators to exert control over victims, for example, by threatening to inform immigration authorities, or to no longer support their stay.* (page 7)

People who are held in modern slavery are often isolated psychologically and/ or physically. This can include through removal of documents and threats. A lack of cultural awareness of the victim’s or perpetrator’s background means that it can be difficult to identify indicators of exploitation. Victims are often more vulnerable due to health, limited resources or dependencies. Victims often have a fear of authorities. It can also be difficult to distinguish between victims and perpetrators as perpetrators may have been victims themselves (Home Office, 2016).

This handout can act as a reference for you in your practice.