

He controlled both of us

Briefing on recognising leading a double life as coercive control

This brief highlights our justice system failing victims who've been pursued by a campaign of dominance. Perpetrators leading a double life set out to [groom](#) and trap victims in fake relationships causing lifelong damage. This experience of [coercive control](#) follows a trajectory of charm or *love bombing* followed by escalating threats and demands.

Police and CPS have an inadequate understanding of coercive control and how they should have applied [section 76 of the Serious Crime Act](#). As a result, perpetrators face no consequence for immoral and harmful deceit, and move onto their next victims. Coercive control is the foundation for all domestic abuse, yet few prosecutions or convictions, are made.

This campaign began November 2019 encouraging [other victims](#) to come forward, and all have reported symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD, many also experienced physical violence. If the emotional scars were visible on the outside of victim's bodies, they would be unrecognisable.

Campaign objectives

- 1) Domestic Abuse Bill to recognise adult grooming
- 2) Domestic Abuse bill to recognise impact on life post relationship
- 3) Victim centred [actions](#) to end this type of coercive control

Verified by

[Campaign supported](#) by

- SafeLives
- Women's Aid
- End Violence Against Women
- Domestic Abuse Commissioner
- Centre for Women's Justice
- Cassandra Wiener

Coercive control

It's about entrapment, domination and subordinating someone. [Laura Richards, Criminal Behavioural Analyst](#)

Victim impact survey

52% reported abuse to police
0% resulted in prosecution
40% had suicidal thoughts
95% lost sense of self
95% couldn't control or stop worrying
54% PTSD
81% not knowing what's real anymore
72% little interest in doing things
77% poor appetite or overeating
63% panic attacks

Catherine Garrod case study

Catherine was groomed into a fake relationship for three and a half years. Her abuser pursued her, asked her everything about her life and told her he was looking for a family and forever.

He was charming, attentive and keen to progress the relationship quickly, and as soon as she committed, he pulled back. When she wanted to discuss their future, he'd say she was putting pressure on him and the relationship never progressed.

In playfighting, he'd exert physical dominance clamping his hand over her mouth and nose, pinning her down with his body weight and on one occasion he sliced her neck with a laminated card. She regularly had fingerprint bruises and would tell him this wasn't what she'd signed up for.

Each time she tried to leave, the manipulation cycle repeated with tears and promises. He wanted them to sell their houses and buy together but found fault in every viewing. She told him he'd trapped her by selling her a dream, delivering nothing and not letting her live the life she dreamed of. Again she'd try to leave.

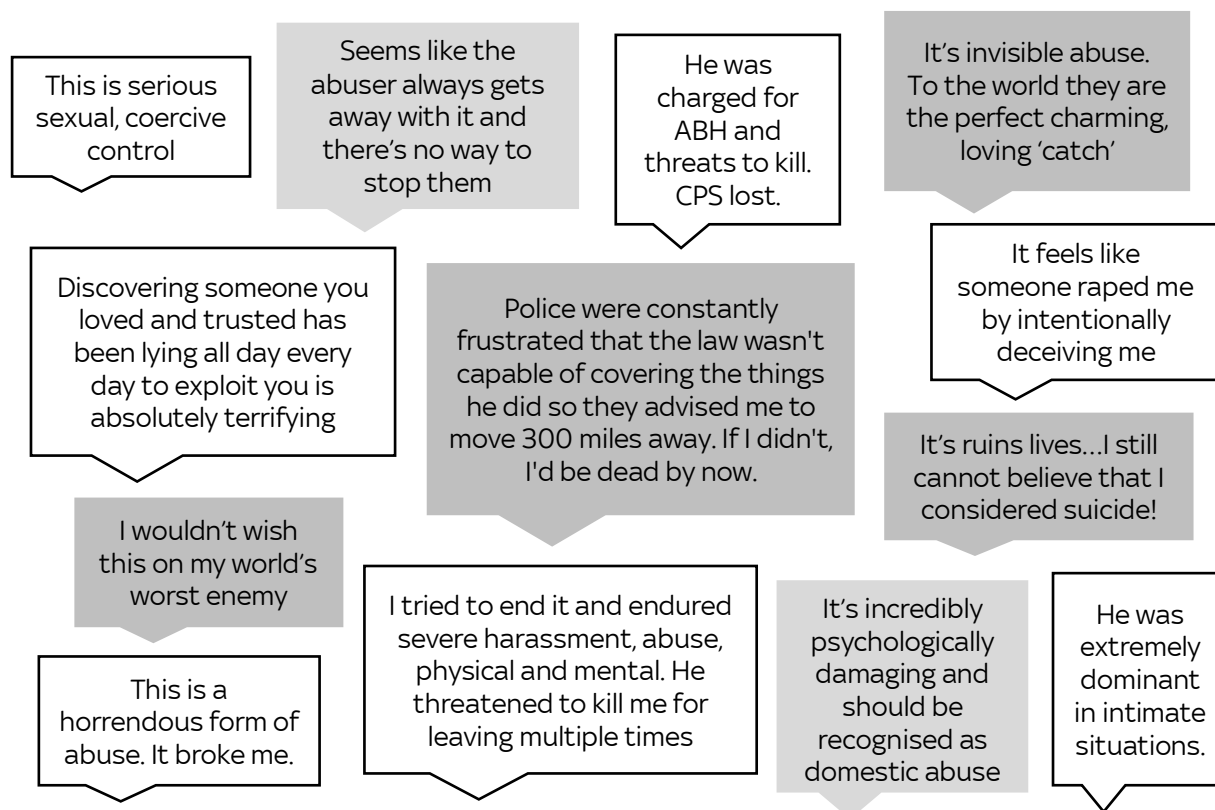
Catherine was contacted by another woman who described an [identical](#) pattern with her, overlapping two years. They discovered every move was calculated and he'd been obsessed with controlling their lives. They discussed him having all the traits of a serial killer, which prompted them sharing that more recently he had been telling them both how much he'd like to kill them and how easy it would be.

Fear set in as they realised how sinister his behaviour was and they reported him to the police. Surrey and Thames Valley said CPS wouldn't authorise a charge for coercive control as he hadn't controlled what they wore, who they spent time with or their finances.

Instead Surrey Police charged for common assault against Catherine as she had dates of him threatening to kill her, but his defence got him off February 2019 on the basis the *playfighting* was consensual as she believed he loved her.

What victims want public services to understand

Survey created November 2019 to ask others who've experienced the same type of coercive control to share their experience. So far 24 people have come forward and here are responses to the question *What would you like parliament, police, CPS and magistrates to know about this kind of abuse?*



Campaign support

- **Jess Asato, SafeLives** *"Stereotypical, manipulative groomer. Current law focuses on fear in relationship rather than impact. Conversation needs to be reframed."*
- **Annie Poland, Women's Aid** *"The whole of society has to respond to this"*
- **Sarah Green, End Violence Against Women** *"Same drivers as coercive control, clear same behaviour enjoying power and control with a sense of entitlement. Won't be uncommon."*
- **Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner** *"This case could be used as example in the statutory guidance and linked with another campaign to recognise post relationship impact"*
- **Harriet Wistrich, Centre for Women's Justice** *"It would be helpful to highlight this case in correspondence with the Supreme Court as another example where the law needs clarification... ..to appeal a decision from the High Court - that deception to identity and intention does not amount to a criminal offence."*
- **Cassandra Wiener, Coercive Control & Criminal Law Researcher** *"Yup. It's CC alright and a good example of why police need training. It didn't amount to assault, and yet it was far more serious than assault. An assault would have had less of a devastating impact on your life."*
- **Petition [signed by 1,736](#)**
- **Metro [Man's sinister double life revealed by identical cards sent to two girlfriends](#)**

Actions to address and ultimately end this type of abuse

We need to encourage more victims to come forward, so we can understand the full extent of the abuse and address it without hesitation. When victims do come forward, our justice system must protect and avoid re-traumatising people when they're at their most fragile. Our media must recognise abuse for what it is and stop glamorising power and control over another person.

1) Include this type of abuse in the legal definition of domestic abuse

- Recognising the immoral deceit and psychological impact post relationship
- Include case study for all public services
- Review the 2015 Serious Crime Act section 76 (page 4&5)

2) Create a victim centred justice system

Single point of police contact

- Regular calls to check in so victims know what's happening next (even if no new news)
- Calls to be at a time you expect, particularly if calling from an unknown number
- Police texts to be less distressing (all begin with perpetrator name)

Guidance on protecting yourself

- Tech security
- Home security (police visit within 24 hours)
- Personal security (Claire's Law)

Processing what's happening

- Signpost to fully funded domestic abuse services
- Witness care team to guide through court process
- Access to therapy (remove trauma processing restrictions if attending court)

Experience in court

- CPS in touch ahead of the trial and have adequate time with victim on the day
- Perpetrator and victim cap on number of people they bring with them
- Perpetrator to face consequence - programme, fine, custodial

Personal expenses

- Perpetrator to pay charges victim has paid out to feel safe

3) Media influence

Nationwide public awareness campaign

- Telling perpetrators to seek help or face consequence
- Showcasing healthy relationships with partners and parents

Ofcom regulations to change the narrative of women being less

- News outlets to stop describing perpetrator as good guy gone wrong
- Entertainment to stop glamorising perpetrators e.g. the stalker plot in You on Netflix
- Mandate 50% female 50% male writers, producers and directors in all film and tv
- Radio stations to stop playing songs with misogynist lyrics

Online regulation to prevent abusive content

- Shut down distributors on porn sites and social media (like anti-piracy)

Grooming on WhatsApp before our first date

[08/02/2015, 15:09:02] Perpetrator: That's good then. Can never be too careful on POF...

[08/02/2015, 15:09:14] Catherine: Do tell...

[08/02/2015, 15:09:27] Perpetrator: Have you just fallen into your roles then?

[08/02/2015, 15:09:58] Perpetrator: **Heard stories of fake people on it. Not who they say they are etc**

[08/02/2015, 15:10:40] Catherine: Yeah it's happened to me. Dated someone who was fricken married last year!

[08/02/2015, 15:10:51] Perpetrator: **Really!!!??**

[08/02/2015, 15:10:55] Perpetrator: **Ffs**

[08/02/2015, 15:11:15] Catherine: yeah I was really upset as I'm so against cheating

[08/02/2015, 15:11:21] Catherine: And he knew it

[08/02/2015, 15:12:41] Perpetrator: **I bet you kicked off when you found out!? Ive heard that happens a lot as well**

[08/02/2015, 15:14:39] Catherine: I tried to find his wife but couldn't. He still tried it on for weeks after. Had to take his call in the end, be really blunt about what sort of person I thought he was and then block him.

[08/02/2015, 15:14:49] Catherine: Thankfully it worked

[08/02/2015, 15:15:59] Perpetrator: **How did you find out?**

[08/02/2015, 15:16:02] Catherine: POF did nothing and he set up a new profile with a different name

[08/02/2015, 15:17:12] Catherine: He was in a TV advert so I googled him and he has professional pages that say '...lived in Surrey with his wife' I sent him a screenshot

[08/02/2015, 15:17:43] Catherine: He ignored me for a couple of hours then suggested I could be his bit on the side

[08/02/2015, 15:17:47] Catherine: Arse!

[08/02/2015, 15:18:07] Catherine: Old news now though

[08/02/2015, 15:18:31] Perpetrator: **Bloody hell! That's a story... Can't believe the front of the guy**

[08/02/2015, 15:20:23] Catherine: Yeah I told him he totally violated me and I felt sorry for his poor wife. He was very charming and a very good liar

[08/02/2015, 15:21:26] Perpetrator: **I just don't get why some married male or female would go on a dating site... Not the sort of relationship I'm looking for...**

[08/02/2015, 15:21:41] Perpetrator: Someone

[08/02/2015, 15:23:06] Catherine: I know. I told him to stop preying on single people looking for a relationship. Apparently there are have an affair sites so if you're gonna do it, do it there!

[08/02/2015, 15:23:21] Catherine: Must have different wiring

[08/02/2015, 15:23:43] Perpetrator: **It's sick and twisted really**

[08/02/2015, 15:24:16] Perpetrator: **Playing with people's minds**

[08/02/2015, 15:24:49] Catherine: Yeah it really messed with mine and put me off dating for ages

[08/02/2015, 15:25:10] Catherine: I'd always thought I was a good judge of character

[08/02/2015, 15:25:16] Perpetrator: If you don't mind me asking how long ago was that?

[08/02/2015, 15:25:26] Catherine: Over a year

[08/02/2015, 15:25:51] Perpetrator: Well and truly old news then

[08/02/2015, 15:26:10] Catherine: Oh yes

[08/02/2015, 15:26:39] Catherine: But I'm likely to run a mile if I have any doubts 🏃

[08/02/2015, 15:26:56] Perpetrator: **You seem really genuine. I like that! Quite refreshing tbh**

[08/02/2015, 15:27:23] Catherine: Thank you and it's refreshing that you asked about it

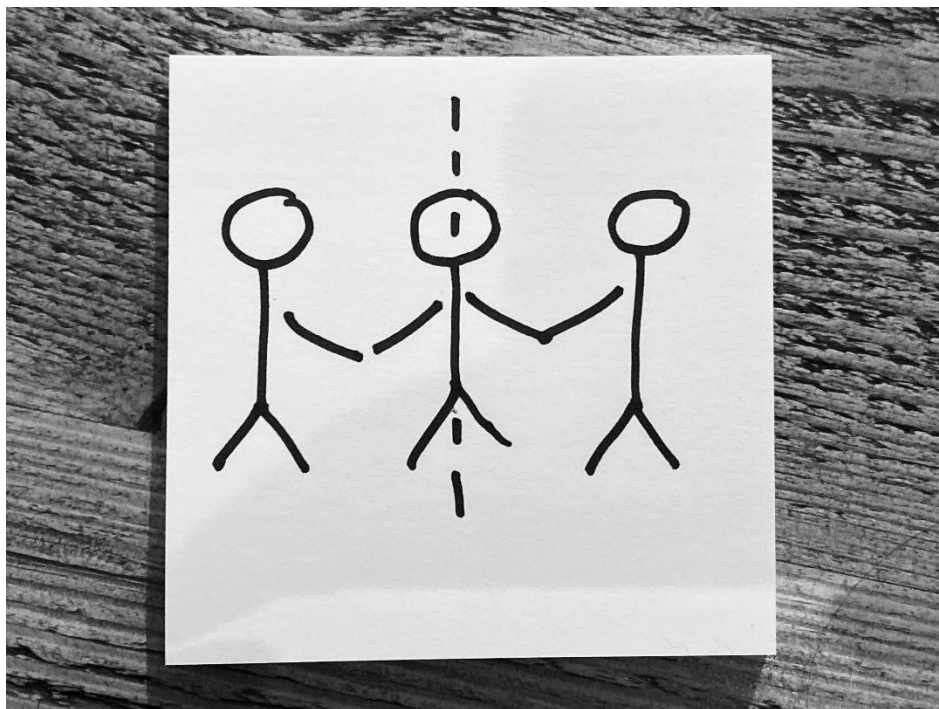
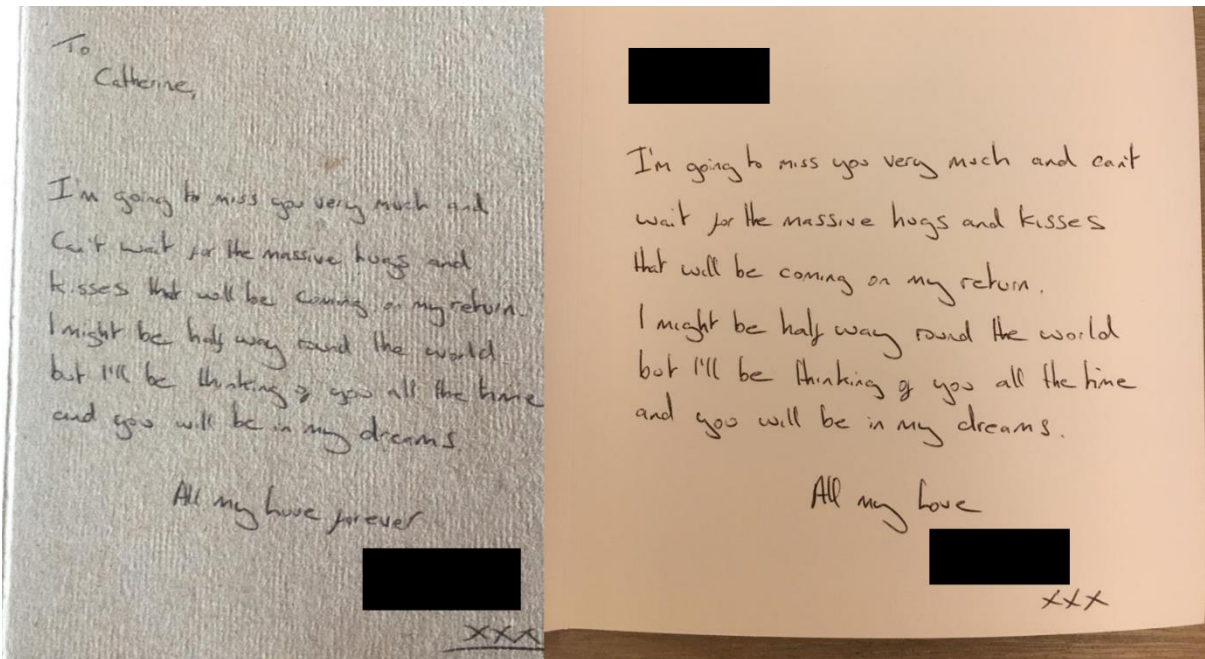
[08/02/2015, 15:28:37] Catherine: I'm not perfect by any means but I reckon if I find someone I can be myself around then they have a damn good catch! 🗣️

[08/02/2015, 15:29:11] Catherine: You had any horror stories?

[08/02/2015, 15:29:17] Perpetrator: **Well I'm not looking to play games. I want to meet someone special**

[08/02/2015, 15:29:34] Catherine: Ditto 🏃

Identical "love" notes sent from Catherine's perpetrator



contact@hecontrolledbothofus.co.uk
www.hecontrolledbothofus.co.uk

Follow on social



[Sign the petition](#)

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015

Section 76 should have been applied to the abuse reported. Verified by Cassandra Weiner, doctoral researcher at the University of Sussex looking at coercive control and the criminal law.

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship

[Legal Guidance, Domestic abuse](#)

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. Prior to the introduction of this offence, case law indicated the difficulty in proving a pattern of behaviour amounting to harassment within an intimate relationship (the Statutory Guidance cites the following cases - *Curtis* [2010] EWCA Crim 123 and *Widdows* [2011] EWCA Crim 1500).

The new offence, which does not have retrospective effect, came into force on 29 December 2015.

An offence is committed by A if:

- A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person, B, that is controlling or coercive; and
- At time of the behaviour, A and B are personally connected; and
- The behaviour has a serious effect on B; and
- A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

A and B are 'personally connected' if:

- they are in an intimate personal relationship; or
- they live together and are either members of the same family; or
- they live together have previously been in an intimate personal relationship with each other.

There are two ways in which it can be proved that A's behaviour has a 'serious effect' on B:

- If it causes B to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them - s.76 (4)(a); or
- If it causes B serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities - s.76 (4) (b).

For the purposes of this offence, behaviour must be engaged in 'repeatedly' or 'continuously'. Another, separate, element of the offence is that it must have a 'serious effect' on someone and one way of proving this is that it causes someone to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them. There is no specific requirement in the Act that the activity should be of the same nature. The prosecution should be able to show that there was intent to control or coerce someone.

The phrase 'substantial adverse effect on Bs usual day-to-day activities' may include, but is not limited to:

- Stopping or changing the way someone socialises
- Physical or mental health deterioration
- A change in routine at home including those associated with mealtimes or household chores
- Attendance record at school
- Putting in place measures at home to safeguard themselves or their children
- Changes to work patterns, employment status or routes to work

For the purposes of the offence A 'ought to know' that which a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know - s.76 (5).

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable:

- On conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or a fine, or both;
- On summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or a fine, or both.

Prosecutors are reminded that:

- For an either way offence, it is not necessary for the last incident to have occurred within the previous six months;
- Offending within a domestic abuse context is an aggravating factor because of the abuse of trust involved;
- Appropriate ancillary orders can be applied for upon sentence or acquittal e.g. restraining orders. Prosecutors should liaise with the police to seek the views of the victim before an application is made.

Defences Available

In relation to subsection 4(b) (behaviour causing Serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities) it is a defence to show:

- That in engaging in the behaviour in question, A believed that he or she was acting in B's best interest; and
- The behaviour in all the circumstances was reasonable.

A is to be taken to have shown this if:

- A has raised sufficient evidence of the facts adduced to raise an issue with respect to them; and
- The contrary is not proved beyond reasonable doubt.

In determining whether A ought to know that their behaviour would have a serious effect on B, the question to be considered is whether a reasonable person in possession of the same information would know that the behaviour would have a serious effect on someone.

Note that this defence is not available in relation to subsection 4a (behaviour that causes B to fear on at least two occasions that violence will be used against them).

Scottish law is simpler and easier to apply

The primary purpose of this campaign is to have police and CPS better utilising the existing law. A secondary purpose is to simplify the criminalisation of domestic abuse, like Scotland already do:

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018

[Engaging in a course of abusive behaviour](#)

1 Abusive behaviour towards partner or ex-partner

(1) A person commits an offence if—

- (a) the person ("A") engages in a course of behaviour which is abusive of A's partner or ex-partner ("B"), and
- (b) both of the further conditions are met.

(2) The further conditions are—

- (a) that a reasonable person would consider the course of behaviour to be likely to cause B to suffer physical or psychological harm,
- (b) that either—
 - (i) A intends by the course of behaviour to cause B to suffer physical or psychological harm, or
 - (ii) A is reckless as to whether the course of behaviour causes B to suffer physical or psychological harm.