Coercive Control: a whole family approach

DR JANE MONCKTON SMITH
Why are we here?

- 2012 New definition for Domestic Abuse
- 2012 Stalking criminalised (under protection of Freedoms Act 2012)
- 2014 HMIC concerns indicative of problems in multiple agencies
- 2015 Coercive Control criminalised (under the Serious Crimes Act 2015)
- High profile criticism of agencies: Child Sexual Exploitation; Sexual; abuse; stalking; domestic abuse
- 2016 Abuse of Process campaign gains ground
- 2017 Family court scrutiny re child safety and DA victims cross examination
Why do we need to understand coercive control?

- Research says that Domestic Homicide is predictable (Adams 2007)
- Coercive Control predicts homicide more effectively than violence by nine times (Stark 2007)
- At least ten people will die every week in the UK as a result of abuse and neglect
- Emerging findings from UK Domestic Homicide Reviews support and reflect international findings
- Course of conduct legislation – stalking and coercive control – reflect its importance
- Research shows that people who are controlling are not just ‘anyone’ they are identifiable in many cases
Coercive Control

- Domestic Abuse/Violence
- Stalking
- Psychological abuse/Abuse of Process
Immediate fear
Chronic fear

DREAD
Fear of someone

- Walking on eggshells
- Avoiding the consequences of upsetting someone
- Threats to your safety or that of someone else
- Coerced compliance
Victim
Skilled managers of a dangerous individual
Someone who has had many of their choices taken away
A life dominated by the needs of the perpetrator and fear of consequences

CP
They are not responding to the particular dynamics of an individual relationship – this is ‘who they are’
Deep seated fear of the victim leaving their control
Unable to take challenge or rejection
Obsessive, repetitive, compulsive, fixated

DA/CC
Methods of control
Violence is one method of control, there are more
Pattern of behaviour or course of conduct – ongoing and constant
S - space
T - time
A – action/activity
R - resources
E - emotions
A whole family approach

Variable perspectives
Victim, children, offender, wider family

Variable Risk
primary victim and children at risk. Offender at risk.

Safety planning
three tier approach, and a wide angle lens
Consideration of different perspectives

**Primary victim**
- Chronic fear
- Managing CP
- Managing safety
- Anticipating consequences
- Ambiguous behaviours – safety management
- Inconsistent with fear – victims are human

**CP**
- Separation anxiety
- Resistance to challenge
- Fear of rejection
- Maintaining control to manage anxieties
- Maintaining control to manage status
- Personality disorder
- Control issues

**Children**
- Collateral damage
- Focused damage
- Controlled by primary victim to manage risk
- Controlled by CP to achieve control over primary victim
- Used to enforce control
- Used to continue abuse
- Used in court processes
- Fear/compliance
Consideration of Variable Risk and threat

**Primary Victim**
- Homicide
- Stalking
- Menace
- Violence
- Housing
- Finances
- Sexual assault

**CP**
- Suicide
- Life imprisonment
- Incarceration
- Court orders
- Child contact restricted
- Police record
- Anxiety
- Loss of employment

**Children**
- Homicide
- Lose both parents
- Physical harm
- Emotional harm
- Instability
Convicted of the murder of his daughter Ellie Butler

Previous charges for violence against Ellie – taken away from his custody

Fought to get her back from his in-laws

Won his fight and murdered her within a year

Defended himself a second time

TRIGGER: DEFIANCE
Raoul Moat

- Threats to kill
- History of abuse
- Threats to commit suicide
- History of violence
- Separation
- Peripheral threat
- TRIGGER: SEPARATION
Mick Philpott

- History of abuse
- History of ‘threat to life’ violence
- Domestic abuse and violence
- Control of two families
- Aggressive
- Obsessed
- Fixated
- TRIGGER: SEPARATION
Alan pemberton

- History of abuse
- Stalking
- Threats to kill
- Threats to commit suicide
- Obsessed
- Fixated
- Peripheral threat
- Sexual violence
- TRIGGER: SEPARATION
Daniel spencer

- History of abuse
- Threats to kill
- Stalking
- Violence
- Peripheral threats
- Sexual violence
- Control
- Obsessed

TRIGGER: SEPARATION AND FINANCIAL THREAT
# Safety Planning

## Risk Interview
- **Primary victim**
- **CP**
- Peripheral threat/risk

## Safety Actions
- **Primary victim**
- **CP**
- Peripheral threat/risk

## Consequence Management
- **Primary victim**
- **CP**
- Peripheral threat/risk
Thinking about threat

- The threat is always situated within the CP/stalker/abuser – the threat may be to anyone associated with the victim or the CP
- The threat could be directed outside of the primary victim (Mick Philpott, Ben Butler, Raoul Moat, Alan Pemberton) threat has a wider focus
- Incarceration does not eradicate control (any contact will maintain control)
- Abuse of process (counter allegations, civil actions)
- Separation does not equal safety; the threat needs to be controlled, neutralised or contained. Separation often creates escalation
DART: Evidence based reference tool which organises information under six key headings:

Information...
1. Coercive control
2. Stalking
3. Victim care
4. Evidence gathering
5. Homicide triad
6. Friends and families

For use by...
Multi-agency Professionals
Friends and families
Victims
Being used and piloted by police
First stage of the process:
- fact finding
- Map against known risk markers
- Map against CP characteristics
- Consider peripheral threats
Safety actions

- Second stage: having gathered the information mapped against knowledge – what are the actions relevant to this case?
- Agree safety actions with the victim
Consequence management

- What consequences might there be for each action?
- Can the victim manage the consequences?
- Can others manage the consequences?
- How will the CP deal with challenge?
- Agree how the victim will manage the consequences of challenge to the CP
- This must be realistic – as soon as it becomes unrealistic the victim will probably revert to her original safety plan – you are trying to replace that
Primary Victim perspective

- consequences
Children