

Coercive controlling relationships among young people

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Slide 1:

Hello, my name is Rachael and I'm here to talk about an advisory session I have planned for parents based on coercive controlling relationships. So firstly, I would introduce myself to the parents and explain that the purpose of this session is to raise awareness, particularly in relation to identifying signs of coercive control and strategies parents can use to help their children.

Slide 2:

As a part of the introduction, I would then outline the contents on what I would be covering during this session. As shown on the PowerPoint, I would cover:

Understanding Coercive control (5 minutes)

Impact on young people (5 minutes)

Recognising the signs (5 minutes)

The role of Youth Workers as a protective factor (5 minutes)

How to support your child (5 minutes)

Activity and Summary (5 minutes)

It is during this stage when I prompt parents with a trigger warning, as they will see what is coming up, if at any point they find anything uncomfortable, they have the option to leave the room and they will be made aware that I am available after the session for a chat if they want or need it.

For the last part of the introduction, I will remind them that they can take notes during the session, and they can ask questions either through out or at the end of the session.

Slide 3:

Following on from this, starting with content one which is ‘Understanding Coercive control’.

I would firstly outline what I would cover during this part of the session.

- 1) Define Coercive control and
- 2) Why it is an important topic.
- 3) Characteristics of coercive control.
- 4) Vulnerabilities of young people

Slide 4:

Starting with the definition, I would explain to parents that coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts, of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation that someone uses to harm, punish or frighten others (Refuge, 2017).

Importance:

Domestic abuse isn’t always physical, to quote Women’s Aid (2025, np) “Coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic abuse”

Slide 5:

Additionally, I feel that this is an important topic for parents to gain knowledge on after I read a new report from the Youth Endowment Fund (2025). This report revealed that nearly a

half of teenagers who have been in a relationship have experienced violent or controlling behaviours from a partner.

Based on a survey they conducted, the type of violent and controlling behaviours that teenagers reported experiencing in their relationships include:

- Feeling pressured or forced into sexual activity against their will.
- Having explicit images or videos of themselves shared online without their consent.
- Made to feel afraid to disagree with their partner.
- Their partner made them feel scared to break up with them.

Slide 6:

Moving on from this, I would then talk about the characteristics; these are basically the tactics used in a coercive controlling relationship. I would explain to these parents that if their child is in a coercive controlling relationship, then their partner may be:

- Obsessively texting or calling them.
- Isolating them from friends and family.
- Stopping them from going to work or school/college/university.
- Getting upset and angry when they text or hang out with other people.
- Pressuring them to do things they don't want to do. For example, engaging in sexual activity before they are ready or sharing naked photos themselves online.
- Monitoring or controlling their social media accounts.
- Tracking their location via GPS.

(Welsh Government, 2025)

Slide 7:

I would also mention this phrase which is used frequently among young people known as “Love bombing” (Welch, 2025, np) - this is when someone provides gifts, coming across charming and attentive to ‘love bomb’ their partner. From outside this may seem sweet, and

both partners may seem happy with their relationship, but over time this can result in one partner demonstrating power and control over the other, dictating what they can and can't do, who they can and can't see (Welch, 2025).

Slide 8:

For the last part of this section, I would share some examples to parents how their children may be vulnerable when it comes to coercive controlling relationships.

- Young people may not have had a lot of experience being in a healthy relationship to know what is and is not normal behaviour. Young people experiencing coercive control may not recognise it as abuse.
- Their views on love. For example, their partner's possessiveness may be seen as romantic.
- Social pressures to be in a relationship because all their friends are in relationships and social media showing unrealistic views on a perfect relationship.
- Unaware on who to ask for help, fear of not being believed as they are young.

(Safeguarding Worcestershire, 2013; Welch, 2025; Welsh Government, 2025).

Slide 9:

The next part of session I would focus on content 2 which is the 'impact on young people' that coercive controlling relationships can have. This section is where I would cover the

- Psychological effects
- Physical effects
- Social effects
- Long term consequences

Slide 10:

I would start with the psychological effects with increased mental health problems - becoming anxious, depressed, increased paranoia, low self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

This is where I would go in a bit more detail by explaining that self-confidence and self-esteem can define every person in terms of what we say, think and do. How we feel depends on how much we believe in ourselves and our self-worth. As these are nurtured from childhood into adolescence, it can determine who we become in the future. I would explain to parents that often, this is where coercive control begins. Taking a person's self-confidence and self-esteem is a slow torture of the mind which can impact everything their child thinks and does, stripping them of their identity (Coercive control: A victim's guide, 2017; Erikson, 1950, cited in Sutton, 2020; Barnardo's, 2025).

Slide 11:

Developing unhealthy coping mechanisms is another impact. For example, overeating or misusing substances such as vapes, alcohol, drugs to cope with their anxiety. Their children may feel that this use useful in the moment, but it can lead to addictions and other health problems. (Coercive control: A victim's guide, 2017; Barnardo's, 2025)

Educational drop out due to educational challenges and risks of involvement in criminal behaviour (Smith, 2018).

Slide 12:

I would then move on to talk to parents about the physical impacts.

Low mental health can also lead to big impacts on physical health, including self-harm or developing an eating disorder. Stress, anxiety and depression can lead to physical conditions or further aggravate existing medical conditions. For example, headaches, muscular aches and pains, worsen asthma, epilepsy and heart conditions.

(Scottish Women's Aid, 2017; Coercive Control: A victim's guide, 2017; Barnardo's, 2025)

Slide 13:

There are two main social impacts that can occur in coercive controlling relationships which parents need awareness on which are:

- Being isolated from friends and family which may result in depression.
- Difficulty in trusting others and making new friends.

(Scottish Women's Aid, 2017)

Slide 14:

Lastly, the long-term consequences:

- Increased mental and physical health problems like the ones I've mentioned previously. Also, a common long-term impact in Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Struggling to build relationships/trust.
- Addiction to substances.

(Welsh Women's Aid, 2017)

Before I end this part of the session, I would want to reassure the parents that this is to raise awareness, not to scare them. It's not for definite that these impacts will happen as it depends on the level coercive control experienced, length of time exposed to coercive control and individual coping mechanisms, but these are some of the impacts that can occur.

Slide 17:

The next part of this session will focus on content 3 which is 'Recognising the signs' which will focus on:

- Changes in their child's behaviour.

- Signs in their child's relationship.

Slide 18:

Starting with changes in behaviour. Parents may notice:

- Their child becomes withdrawn from family time or family engagements.
- Noticing sudden change in their appearance. For example, changes in clothing style, weight changes and personal care or hygiene.
- They start over thinking and develop a lot more fear and anxiety.

(Welsh Government, 2025)

Slide 19:

I would then talk to parents about the signs to look out for in their child's relationship such as:

- They become concerned or anxious if they are not responding to messages immediately.
- They express fear about the way their partner might react in a situation.
- They make excuses for their partner's behaviour.
- Asking their partner for permission to do anything. For example, going to the shop or meeting up with a friend.

(Australian Government, 2024; Welsh Government, 2025)

Slide 20:

The last part of this section I would want raise awareness to parents on emoji's as many young people use emoji's when texting. I would also recommend parents to watch the Adolescence series on Netflix if they haven't already seen it as it was highlighted in that series about what different emoji's mean (Adolescence, 2025).

This is where I would share an example from my practice on how emoji's can be used as a form of coercive control.

Example:

One particular session I have had previously with a group of young people, one young person kept receiving messages. I joked and said "oh you're popular today" (with her phone pinging with notifications). She said "it's just her partner messaging". Over time, I noticed that there was something up with her, she became quiet and withdrawn. I took her aside and chatted with her privately and she said that her partner wants her to send nude photographs of herself to him, but she does not want to and got very on edge about it. She handed me her phone and all I could see was these 3 emoji's being sent to her. This was learning for me when I firstly discovered that these emoji's mean different things. What these emoji's represent is

Eyes – what her partner wanted to see

Camera – A photograph

Cherries – breasts

= he wants to see a nude photograph of her breasts.

From this, we had multiple of other conversations with this young person and in the end, we found out that she was in a coercive controlling relationship and this is just one example of how she was being controlled.

The purpose of me sharing this is to parents is for them to know that coercive control may not always be obvious and that it does not have to be done verbally, it can be done through texts with emoji's. I would also point out to parents that although I shared an example from my experience with a young girl, gender does not play a part in coercive control and that young boys can also be controlled by girls too.

Slide 21:

This is where we would be about halfway through the session so I would offer parent's a comfort break.

Slide 22:

This is where I would move on to content 4 "the role of Youth Workers" and in this section I would cover:

- Early intervention
- Educate
- Collaboration
- Children's rights
- Support strategies

Slide: 23

I would explain that due to the relationships that Youth Workers build with young people, we are seen as a "protective factor" (Hudd, 2025).

One example of being a protective factor is through early intervention. We work with young people multiple times a week, we as youth workers can identify coercive control through observation and conversations with young people.

I would emphasise to parents the amount of awareness that us youth workers have due to all the training we are provided with. From my own experience, I have had multiple training, not just on coercive control and healthy relationships but in other areas too such as substance misuse, safeguarding and Adolescent mental health. So if their child is showing signs of being in a coercive controlling relationship then that is something that would get identified and they will be supported with interventions that best suit their circumstances.

Slide: 24

I would then talk to parent about the 5 pillars of Youth Work (Youth Work in Wales review Group, 2022, p.8).

There 5 pillars that underpin Youth Work's purpose and delivery. Focusing on one of them, "Educative". We as youth workers can educate young people on healthy relationships and coercive control. Not only will enable them to recognise the signs if they may be a victim of coercive control also where and who they can go to for help and support.

Slide: 25

Next, I would touch on the values of Youth Work, in particular, working in "Partnership with young people and others" which is one of our values in the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019, p.5). I would explain to parents that we as youth workers collaborate with other organisations and practitioners. In my experience, I have worked with counsellors, substance misuse teams, teachers and the police. If their child is in a coercive controlling relationship, we have links with the wider field to provide them with enhanced support if needed.

Slide: 26

Un Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Unicef, 2025, np). Youth workers uphold the rights of the child. For the purpose of this session for parents I'm just going to focus on three of them: (UNICEF, 2025, np).

Article 12: "Respect for the views of the child. Highlighted in this session I would have mentioned that coercive control can lead to one partner's feelings and emotions being dismissed. We as youth workers will always advocate for young people, ensuring their voices are heard.

Article 19 – “Protection from violence, abuse and neglect”. This is where I would recap from what I said at the start, quoting Women’s Aid (2025, np) again stating that “coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic abuse”. Coercive control may lead to further abuse the longer it goes on and we as youth workers would implement interventions if young people are in a coercive controlling relationship.

Article 39 - “Recovery from trauma and reintegration”. Children have the right to be protected from all forms of exploitation. As highlighted in this session, coercive control can have impacts on mental health and can lead to exploitation. Youth workers can support young people in recovering from their trauma experience through a trauma-informed approach and where appropriate we can refer them to specialised services such as counselling or therapy.

I would emphasise to parents that we as youth workers are aware of all 54 rights of the child and will support their children to reach their full potential.

Slide: 27

Youth workers use a number of support strategies, this is where I would share some examples to parents on how I support young people:

- Depending on their needs, we as youth workers can provide one-to-one support or as group, whatever they feel more comfortable with.
- Building trust and relationships. It would have been highlighted in the session that coercive control can affect the trust that a person has with others. We can create safe spaces for young people to talk about their experiences and express themselves without judgement.
- “Non-formal education” (National Youth Agency, 2025, np). We focus more on personal growth, encouraging confidence, boosting self-esteem and providing a sense of belonging.

Slide: 28

Content 5: How to support your child:

- Open communication
- Educate
- Practical advice
- Helplines

Slide: 29

Communication:

- Keep an honest, open and close relationship with their child. Ensuring they know that they can talk to them about anything.
- It's important their children know they are not judging them.
- Acknowledging that it may be difficult for their child to speak to them about unhealthy relationships, if possible, offer them another appropriate adult to talk to. For example, another family member, a close family friend, a teacher or a youth worker.

(Welsh Government, 2025).

Slide: 30

Educate:

- Make sure their child understands that they have the right to say no and their views should be respected.
- Make sure they know it is never their fault.
- Teaching them to be realistic about body image and that photos they see of celebrities online are often edited and airbrushed.

- For parents to increase their own understanding of unhealthy relationships, they can refer to this session in relation to knowing the signs and how coercive control can impact their child.
- Not to be afraid to tell their children that they are worried and that they will be there for them when they are ready to talk.

(Welsh Government, 2025)

Slide: 31

Practical advice:

- Help build their self-esteem. Praise them when they are doing things well.
- Encourage their child to build a strong support system of people they can trust.
- Keep a journal or log of any concerning behaviour and patterns of coercive control.
- If they believe their child is at risk of immediate danger or harm, call the police.

(Welsh Government, 2025).

Slide: 32

Helplines:

Lastly, I would share some helpline numbers to parents if they wanted advice themselves or if they wanted to share them with their children too. I would recommend to parents to write these helplines down or they could take a photo of this slide.

NSPCC Helpline: Available 24/7 to provide free advice and support for adults concerned about the safety and welfare of children and young people -Telephone: 0808 800 5000. Text: 88858.

Childline: Young people can contact Childline for free and confidential advice – Telephone: 0800 1111.

Live fear free: Available 24 hours to provide advice and support if them or someone are concerned about is in a coercive controlling relationship – Telephone: 0808 8010 800

(Safeguarding Worcestershire, 2013; Welsh Government, 2025).

Slide: 34:

Activity (green flag/red flag)

Activity = Red flag/green flag. State a few examples that are related to either a coercive controlling relationship (red flag) or a healthy relationship (green flag). Participants will choose whether the statement is a controlling relationship or a healthy relationship by holding up a red flag or green flag.

- 1) You're not going out wearing that, are you? (red).
- 2) If you really loved me, you'd do this (red).
- 3) I respect your boundaries and decisions (green).
- 4) I don't want you seeing your friends, they are a bad influence (red).
- 5) I am here to support you and your goals (green).
- 6) I value your opinions even when we disagree (green).
- 7) It's great that you spend time with your friends and family (green/red). Making the other partner feel guilty for arranging other plans (red). Being supportive of their partner making other plans (green).
- 8) Someone constantly wanting to know where their partner is (red).
- 9) Someone taking responsibility for their own actions and emotions (green).
- 10) Wanting to spend a lot of time together (green/red). If one partner demands constant time together and gets upset or angry when the other has other plans (red). Wanting to be in each other's company and choosing to spend time together because they genuinely enjoy it (green).

Slide: 35

Summary: This is where I would recap the main points of the session and that hopefully now parents understand:

- What coercive control is.
- Impact on young people.
- Are now able to recognise the signs.
- How youth workers as a protective factor.
- How they can support child.

At the end of the session, I would ask parents if they have any questions for me. They can ask questions as group or they have the option to see me individually.

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