

**DOMESTIC ABUSERS/COERCIVE CONTROLLERS: 15 HIGH RISK FACTORS OF SERIOUS HARM & HOMICIDE**

1. **Victim's perception of risk of harm:** victims of domestic abuse often underestimate their risk of harm from perpetrators. However, if they say they fear further harm to themselves, their child(ren) or someone else this should be taken seriously.
2. **Separation (child contact):** women who attempt to separate from a male abuser are strongly linked to intimate partner femicide. Abusers escalate their behaviour on separation & use child contact or disputes over custody to continue the abuse. 76% of victims are murdered after they have separated from the abuser. 80% of murders of women happen within the first six months of separation.
3. **Pregnancy/new birth (Under 18 months old):** domestic abusers may start or escalate in pregnancy. Victims who are assaulted whilst pregnant, when they have recently given birth or who have young children, should be considered as high risk. This is in terms of future harm to them & to the unborn/young child.
4. **Escalation:** as violence is repeated, abusers escalate their behaviour. Domestic abuse victims are more likely to become repeat victims than any other type of crime.
5. **Community Issues/Isolation:** needs may differ amongst ethnic minority victims, newly arrived communities, asylum seekers, older people, people with disabilities, as well as travelling or gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. This might be in terms of perceived racism, language, culture, insecure immigration status and/or accessing relevant support services. Be aware of forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence whereby family/community try to restore their mistaken sense of honour & respect. Victims may be particularly isolated &/or vulnerable. Take their concerns seriously.
6. **Stalking:** is a pattern of unwanted, fixated & obsessive behaviour which is intrusive & causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress. 1 in 2 domestic stalkers, if they make a threat, will act on it. Stalking and physical assault are significantly associated with femicide and attempted murder. This is not just about physical violence but coercive control.
7. **Sexual Assault:** Those who report a domestic sexual assault tend to have a history of domestic abuse whether or not they reported previously. If there is coercive control, there will most likely be sexual coercion. Many domestic sexual offenders are high risk and potentially dangerous offenders who rape significant women & strangers. Check if they are a serial perpetrator.
8. **Strangulation(choking/suffocation/drowning):** any attempt to strangle a woman or block her airway increases the risk sevenfold. Once hands go around the neck, an abuser will escalate their behaviour.
9. **Credible Threats to Kill:** A credible threat of violent death can very effectively control a victim, & some may carry out this threat. 1 in 2 domestic stalkers, if they make a threat, will act on it.
10. **Use of Weapons:** Abusers who have used a weapon, or have threatened to use a weapon, are at increased risk of violent recidivism.
11. **Coercive Control (CC):** is a behavioural regime to isolate, entrap, exploit & subjugate in order to utterly dominate. CC is unfreedom and correlates significantly with serious harm, suicide, femicide & familicide. Look for the power imbalance. Consider so-called honour-based violence – the victim may not have the freedom of choice. The perpetrator will try and manipulate & control others around the victim including professionals.
12. **Child Abuse:** Evidence shows that both DA and child abuse can occur in the same family. Child abuse can act as an indicator of DA in the family and vice versa. Check for coercive control. Children are victims too.
13. **Animal/Pets Abuse:** there is a link between cruelty to animals, child abuse & coercive control. The use or threat of abuse against pets is often used to control others in the family. Abuse of animals may also indicate a risk of future serious harm.
14. **Alcohol/Drugs/Mental Health:** the abuser's drug & alcohol use is not the cause of the abuse. It is a choice to abuse.
15. **Suicide-Homicide:** Abusers may threaten suicide to control & manipulate the victim. An abuser who is genuinely suicidal should also be considered homicidal.