

# Thematic Learning from Leeds Safeguarding Reviews

This brief is based on the findings from 4 safeguarding reviews undertaken by Safer Leeds and LSCP, to learn lessons and improve future responses to safeguarding incidents. These reviews (some of which will be published) all focused on incidents whereby a level of domestic violence and abuse was evident.

	COERCIVE CONTROL	ASSESSMENTS	RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN	MEN PRESENTING IN CRISIS	FAMILY MEMBERS AS ASSUMED PROTECTIVE FACTORS	COMPLEXITY
IMPROVING PRACTICE	<p>A form of psychological violence which controls the victim's movements, friendships, contact with family, parenting, finances and many other areas of their life. This behaviour can make perpetrators feel very powerful and / or it can help them avoid feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, inadequacy, fear of losing the victim.</p>	<p>Narrow, focussed assessment may miss the impact of one person's behaviour on other family members. This may put family members at increased risk either directly from acts of violence and abuse, or indirectly such as emotional abuse or neglect.</p>	<p>When a relationship breaks down, or at the point of separation (including the time leading up to separation) risk is greatest both for the victim and any wider family members. They are most likely to experience an escalation in frequency and severity of violence and abuse as a misguided way of trying to keep the relationship together.</p>	<p>Additional vulnerabilities including mental health issues, drug abuse and suicidal ideation and self-harm can lead practitioners to overlook the potential risks that the individual poses to others. This may lead to narrow assessments of risk and focused intervention.</p>	<p>Where children or other family members are in the household, there's a false belief that they are in a position to raise the alert if risk increases, however this is not true. Also there may be a perception that death or serious injury won't be inflicted due to their presence or existence.</p>	<p>Relationships which included significant levels of complexity can decrease levels of engagement or recognition; Victims appearing as if they are coping can be masking actual situation therefore preventing the identification of violence/ abuse; Multiple disadvantage and poor experiences of services may lead people to be less engaged; Previous experience of abuse can lead to distorted expectations of relationships and support.</p>
KEY LEARNING	<p>Be alert to the impact of coercive control and how it may impede someone from speaking out, seeking help or recognising the situation. Assessments should consider how coercive control is manifesting within relationships.</p>	<p>Assessing the risk of an individual needs to be linked in with the assessment they present to all vulnerable family members, including women and children hence the need for a holistic and 'Think Family' approach rather than a silo approach.</p>	<p>Relationship breakdown and separation are the point at which practitioners working with domestic violence and abuse victims need to be undertaking regular risk assessments and safety planning with the victim and the supportive agencies around them.</p>	<p>Practitioners need to think wider than the needs of the person in front of them. The presenting issue should be considered within the context of potential risks to others, and that the presentation of vulnerabilities may indicate a critical point for services to intervene.</p>	<p>Practitioners should avoid making assumptions that thought and care for children will prevent abusers from doing something extreme. In addition they should avoid placing unrealistic expectations on them in relation to their ability to disclose.</p>	<p>When working with vulnerable people practitioners should recognise that abuse may be taking place even if there are no outwardly indicators or the relationship is considered "normal" by the victim due to past experiences.</p>