

Actions, Crimes and Sentences

What crimes could be committed as a result of these actions?

1. Physical violence with or without weapons (including punching, slapping, pushing, kicking, head butting, hair pulling) resulting in permanent damage
2. Violence resulting in death
3. Choking, strangling, suffocating
4. Throwing things at someone, e.g. plates, even if they miss the person:
5. Repeated threats to cause injury
6. Physical violence with or without weapons (including punching, slapping, pushing, kicking, head butting, hair pulling) requiring medical treatment but not resulting in permanent damage
7. Physical violence including spitting or hitting without leaving a mark
8. Preventing someone from visiting relatives or friends
9. Excessive contact e.g. persistent phone calls
10. Sending someone offensive or obscene texts or emails
11. Persistent verbal abuse
12. Locking someone in a room or a house or preventing them from leaving
13. Controlling a person through a “range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.”
14. Coercion using ‘an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.’

Answers in table over the page...

ACTION	CRIME	SENTENCE
Killing someone without any legal defence for doing so (2)	Murder	Life (mandatory)
Killing someone but not intending to or with valid legal defence (provocation, diminished responsibility) (2)	Manslaughter	Life
Physical violence causing long term damage (serious scars, disability) (1, 3 or 4)	GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm)	Life
Psychological and emotional abuse that stops short of physical abuse. (13 or 14)	Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship	5 years' imprisonment, a fine or both
Physical violence or emotional abuse requiring medical or psychiatric treatment. ABH is an assault, which causes hurt to the victim that "need not be permanent, but must be more than transient and trifling"; for example a bruise or a graze. (1, 3, 4 or 6)	ABH (Actual Bodily Harm)	5 years
Physical violence including spitting or hitting without leaving a mark (4 or 7)	Common assault	6 months
Conduct likely to cause fear or distress in victim (similar behaviour on two or more occasions) (4, 5 or 11)	Harassment	6 months
Using phones or email to cause fear, offence, anxiety etc (9, 10)	Improper or malicious use of	6 months and/or fine up to £5000
Illegally preventing someone from leaving a place, even with threats rather than actual physical violence (8, 12)	False imprisonment	Unlimited maximum penalty

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

The Serious Crime Act 2015 Section 76 introduces the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, specifically to capture abuse in an ongoing relationship where the parties are personally connected.

It can include acts which amount to criminal offences in their own right, or acts which fall short of criminal offending but nevertheless have a “serious effect” on the victim, causing them to fear that violence will be used against them on “at least two occasions”, or that it has had a “substantial adverse effect on the victims” day to day activities. It closes a gap in the law around psychological and emotional abuse that stops short of physical abuse. Some of the following acts of coercion could be criminal in their own right, however, now a victim has more protection in such circumstances.

Emotional Coercion:

Dominating shared space (playing loud music when your victim is reading)

Invading the victim’s quiet time (talking to him/her when s/he wants to be alone)

Disregarding the victim’s privacy (opening her mail)

Prohibiting the victim’s social contact (no contact with family or friends)

Ignoring boundaries (being affectionate when s/he said no)

Being silent or ignoring the victim

Interrupting the victim’s sleep, or eating

Interrupting his/her sentences or activities

Last-wording (always having to have the last word in a discussion or argument)

Verbal Coercion

Belittling your victim (You’re too stupid)

Being right about what was said (That’s not what you said)

Being right about what was done (That’s not what you did)

Being right about what happened (That’s not what happened)

Being right about what was seen (That’s not what you saw)

Being right about other’s experience (That’s not what you felt)

Warping reality (I know I said it, but it’s not true)

Demanding agreement

Defining the truth (You don’t know what you’re talking about)

Defining your victim’s motivations (defining why your victim did or said something)

Defining why your victim does things (You’re not mad at me, you’re just...)

Blaming something else for what you say (I just said it because you’re mad at me)

Blaming something else for what you do (I just lost my job/I just started a new job)

Blaming something else for what you feel (I was up too late)

Blaming someone else for what you do (If you hadn’t left...)

Blaming someone else for what you feel (You hurt me)

Being sarcastic, patronizing, laughing, smirking, joking or mimicking your victim (imitating your victim’s tone of voice when s/he is angry)

Criticizing or putting the victim down (You’re the worst mother, you’re a lousy driver)

Repeating what you say to the victim (as if the victim was too stupid to understand)



Threatening words to increase dominance over the victim
Dismissing (That's stupid)
Swearing and cursing at the victim
Shouting and screaming at the victim
Threatening the pet(s), children, or threatening to call the child protection services
Threatening a victim's legal status
Threatening to throw, hit, destroy something or threatening to hit the victim
Threatening to have an affair, to leave the relationship/marriage
Threatening to take the children away from the victim
Threatening to restrain or to restrict the victim's physical movements (I'll make you sit)
Threatening to prohibit your victim's social contact (I won't let you go out)
Threatening to throw or maim the victim or threatening the victim with a weapon

Physical Coercion:

Thumping, pounding or slapping objects in front of your victim
Throwing things close to your victim
Shoving and tipping furniture
Destroying objects or the victim's personal things
Smashing the victim's mobile phone or ripping the phone from the wall
Determined pacing
Stomping out of the room or slamming doors
Making abrupt forceful body movements in your victim's presence
Using punch bags or other equipment within earshot of the victim in the midst of an argument
Punching holes in the wall
Using physical coercion to assert dominance over the victim
Restricting the victim's physical movements (sitting him/her down)
Prohibiting the victim's social contact (locking him/her in the house)
Touching the victim when s/he says not to
Pushing, restraining, grabbing, shoving or carrying, wrestling, slapping, biting, scratching, punching, choking, strangling, kicking, burning, maiming, the victim
Beating the victim unconscious
Using a weapon to attack the victim