

USER GUIDE

THE WEAPONISED ATTACHMENT WHITE PAPER

This user guide is designed as a resource for organisations working with domestic violence victims and survivors to get the most out of the White Paper on Weaponised Attachment for your activism, advocacy and victim services work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FRONTLINE PRINCIPLES FOR VICTIM SERVICES

Victim services should add the following principles to **their response and assessment criteria when assisting victims**:

- Psychological coercion alone should trigger support and safeguarding.
- Trauma-sharing by perpetrators may be a control tactic, not mutual vulnerability.
- Survivor confusion and self-blame are expected outcomes of coercive conditioning.
- Intermittent Reward and Punishment (IRP) cycles (affection/cruelty) are a core tool of domination, not ambivalence.
- Emotional captivity without physical restraint is central to coercive control.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CHARITIES, NON-PROFITS, AND NGOS

Frontline organisations can use the findings of the White Paper to:

- Strengthen risk assessment in cases where physical injury is absent by incorporating **behavioural pattern indicators** (e.g. cycles of affection/cruelty, sudden switches in behaviour, dependency formation without constraint) into risk assessment tools rather than relying on incident-based harm alone.
- Support victims experiencing confusion, self-blame, or emotional fixation by using **psycho-educational reframing**:
 - explicitly explain IRP (“the good moments are part of the control pattern”)
 - Normalising their experience (“this attachment is engineered, not a personal failure”),
 - Providing **structured detachment plans** (e.g. controlled no-contact, trigger mapping, “urge surfing” strategies adapted from addiction support).
- Improve training for police, advocates, and safeguarding teams by:
 - Training staff to recognise ‘two-faced perpetrators’ across two contexts:
 - charming, credible, and cooperative in public, but abusive in private;
 - moving between intense affection and harm or withdrawal within the relationship, with this repeated cycle creating confusion and reinforcing control over the victim.
 - Teaching **pattern recognition over incident counting** (tracking cycles, escalation, emotional destabilisation),
 - Using **case simulations** showing how high-risk cases present without visible violence.

- Inform decisions and referrals where psychological entrapment is escalating:
 - Treating **increasing emotional dependency + decreasing autonomy** as a **risk escalation marker**
 - Flagging cases where victims express: “*I know it’s bad but I can’t leave*” as **high concern**,
 - Prioritising **early intervention referrals** (IDVA, MARAC) even without physical violence.
- Push for legal recognition of psychological captivity as coercive control:
 - Submitting **evidence-based briefings** showing that control can be maintained without force
 - Using survivor testimony demonstrating **compulsion without constraint**,
 - Arguing for inclusion of **IRP, grooming, and dependency engineering** in statutory definitions.
- Counter harmful myths such as “Stockholm Syndrome” or “she chose to stay”:
 - Reframing publicly: “**This is not irrational dependency, it is conditioned attachment**”,
 - Replacing “codependency” with “**coercive control through attachment conditioning**” or “weaponised attachment”.
- Update organisational language away from victim-pathologising terms
 - Replace terms like “*codependent*,” “*vulnerable personality*,” “*failure to leave*”
With: “**coercive conditioning**,” “**engineered dependency**,” “**affective entrapment**,” “**attachment manipulation**”

LANGUAGE GUIDANCE (DO’S & DON’TS)

For organisations who may wish to update the language on their website, key talking points, and other relevant literature:

Avoid neutralising language such as:

- “relationship conflict”
- “attachment issues
- “co-dependency”
- “unstable relationship”
- “risky behaviour”

Use perpetrator-naming language such as:

- coercive control
- grooming and manipulation
- psychological entrapment
- manufactured emotional captivity
- intermittent reinforcement and punishment

Language should describe the strategy and harm clearly, not obscure responsibility.