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TAKING BACK CONTROL

Isolation and controlling behaviour from a partner are often early signs that a relationship is abusive or may become so.

Sara Williams, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor, from South Devon's Domestic Violence and Abuse Service, said: "Abusers will often try to separate the victim from friends and family and restrict activity outside the home especially if it doesn't involve the partner.

"They may be very jealous, possessive and exert control over their partner. This can take many forms such as controlling household money, the clothes their partner wears or the people their partner is allowed to see.

"Often isolation can be seen in the early stages of an abusive relationship and even if the abuse does not escalate it can be deeply traumatic and severely affect the person."

Karen, a victim who lives in Devon, found she had become isolated and controlled by her partner:

"The abuse began with him checking my whereabouts, receipts and not allowing me to answer the door," she said. "When we moved from a big city to a small town, the abuse escalated and I had no family nearby or any kind of support network. The physical assaults became very regular and my shoes were taken away from me."

Police and partner agencies say friends and family have an important part to play in spotting the signs and encouraging people to seek help.

Detective Chief Inspector Steve Parker, from Devon and Cornwall Police, said: "Often victims become isolated from their friends and family with their partner controlling every part of their life and leaving them dependent on their abuser.

"It is really important for people to understand these early warning signs and to support anyone they are worried about to prevent the abuse escalating any further."

Police advise people to ask themselves the following questions about a relationship they may be worried about:

- Is your/ or their partner jealous and possessive?
- Are you/or they being cut off from family and friends and being isolated?
- Does your/ or their partner control their life – for example, money, who they should see, what they should wear?
- Does your/or their partner monitor your/their movements?

For advice and information call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 24/7 or contact Devon and Cornwall Police by calling 101.

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Notes to editors

The media are invited to attend a briefing event for Domestic Abuse Awareness Week (Monday 21 – Friday 25 November 2011) at Middlemoor, Devon and Cornwall Police headquarters on Wednesday 16 November at 10am.

Interviews will be available with:

- Detective Chief Inspector. Steve Parker, Devon and Cornwall Police
- Detective Inspector Andy Berry and Chairman of Northern Devon MARAC, Devon and Cornwall Police
- Steven Slater, Computer Forensic Manager, Devon and Cornwall Police
- Rachel Martin, ADVA Manager
- Carolyn Southwell, Pet Retreat Manager, RSPCA

DVD and audio copies of interviews with victims will be available for TV and radio broadcast.

For further information please contact:

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