

Press release

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[Regulating relationships: an abuse of power?](#)

The question of what is controlling abuse in a relationship and whether such abuse can be regulated by the law is the subject of a discussion by the Manchester Salon this month.

With a bill put forward by Nick Clegg proposing to include wider psychological bullying as part of the legal definition of domestic abuse, the question of how far the law should reach into personal lives is extremely relevant.

The new definition will include 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members'.

This extends abuse beyond physical or sexual abuse to include financial, psychological and emotional abuse is a big step, and although it brings the law into line with a growing trend elsewhere and represents a sea-change in thinking.

The discussion will focus on whether the changes suggested by the bill – which have been welcomed by campaigners against domestic abuse – will have unintended consequences for the functioning of family life and personal relationships.

The Home Office explanation of controlling behaviour as including acts 'designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent' by, among other things, 'exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain' or 'regulating their everyday behaviour' should set alarm bells ringing in its carte blanche approach to blurring historic boundaries between the public and private spheres. Is the category of abuse being used to allow state intrusion into areas of daily life it should not be involved in, or are the risks to us from each other so great we need nanny to help protect us from each other?

The meeting will be led by two experts on the subject, law lecturer Helen Reece and former councillor and leader of the opposition on Manchester City Council, Marc Ramsbottom.

Date: Tuesday, 19 February, 6.45pm

Venue: Three Minute Theatre, Afflecks arcade, 35-39 Oldham Street, Manchester. Tickets are (£5/£3), and should be booked in advance online or by emailing events@Manchestersalon.org.uk