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Staple Hill Man Jailed After Abusing Seven Women in Series of Controlling Relationships

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— Categories: *Crime*



A 23-year-old man from Staple Hill has been jailed for nearly five years after admitting to controlling and coercive behaviour towards seven women, in what police described as a calculated and prolonged pattern of domestic abuse.

Joshua Kelly received a sentence of four years and eight months at Bristol Crown Court last month, police announced recently. He was also issued a 10-year restraining order banning any contact with his victims, all of whom were aged between 20 and 24.

Kelly's relationships with the women overlapped between 2020 and 2024. Officers said he initially gained their trust through flattery and attention, only to quickly shift into controlling and manipulative behaviour. He would often move into their homes and isolate them from friends and family.

Abusive Behaviour

Detective Constable Matilda Dowsing, who led the investigation, said Kelly repeatedly accused his partners of being unfaithful, despite being involved with several of them at the same time.

“Kelly has been sentenced after subjecting not just one victim, but seven victims, to a domestic reign of terror,” she said. “He constantly accused them of being unfaithful, when in fact it was him who was juggling relationships with the women.”

“He has systematically controlled each of his victims and played one off against another. His victims have told us about how he has affected their lives, and some feel they will not be able to trust people again,” DC Dowsing added.

She praised the bravery of the women who came forward, acknowledging that although the sentencing marked a step toward justice, the emotional damage may be lasting. “I am grateful to the seven victims for coming forward, and I hope they are proud that their courage to report what happened has led to Kelly being jailed; however, this conviction will never undo the trauma that he has caused,” she said.

DC Dowsing also highlighted the difficulty in recognising coercive control, stating that domestic abuse is not always physical but often centres around manipulation and dominance. “Controlling behaviour can be quite hard to measure, but that is the fundamental part – domestic abuse is about power.”

Police, along with domestic abuse charity Women’s Aid, have urged the public to be aware of the signs of controlling relationships. These can include being isolated from support networks, regular belittling, monitoring of personal activity, and intimidation. Other signs may involve financial control, being pressured into unwanted acts, or being restricted from seeking medical help.

Authorities are encouraging victims to report abuse by calling 101, using online services, or visiting a police station. For emergencies, the public should always dial 999.

Support remains available through the Somerset Domestic Abuse Service (SDAS), which operates a confidential helpline on 0800 69 49 999 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.