

PART D – STALKING

INTRODUCTION

Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes someone feel scared, distressed or threatened. Stalking and harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

STALKING

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, and intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim.'

Stalking can consist of any type of behaviour such as regularly sending flowers or gifts, making unwanted or malicious communication, damaging property and physical or sexual assault. If the behaviour is persistent and clearly unwanted, causing fear, distress, or anxiety then it is stalking, and nobody should have to live with it.

One in two domestic stalkers will carry out the threats to harm their victim. One in ten non domestic stalkers will carry out the threats to harm their victim

When many people hear the word stalking, they still think of a stranger lurking in the shadows or a delusional fan following a celebrity. Whilst these cover some stalking scenarios, they are by no means the majority. About 45% of people who contact the Suzy Lamplugh Trust are being stalked by ex-intimates (i.e. ex partners) and a further third have had some sort of prior acquaintance with their stalker such as having dated, married or been friends with their stalker. Just because a person knows or knew their stalker does not mean that the situation is their fault - it is still stalking, and it is wrong.

Anyone can become a victim of stalking. A report produced by Dr. Lorraine Sheridan and Network for Surviving Stalking, in which 2,292 victims of stalking were surveyed, found that victims' ages ranged from 10 to 73, they were male and female, were spread across the entire socio-economic spectrum and a large proportion (38%) were professionals. Dr. Sheridan concluded that virtually anyone can become a victim of stalking and the only way to avoid doing so would be to avoid the social world. This report found that stalking could last anywhere from 1 month to 43 years. The average length of time was found to be between 6 months and 2 years. Dr. Sheridan also found that the duration of stalking tends to increase as the stalker's emotional investment in the relationship increases. This is one of the reasons ex-intimate stalking is often considered to be the most dangerous. Stalking without violence can cause harm. The absence of violence in a stalking case does not mean the victim is unaffected. Stalking can cause severe psychological distress to a victim. Depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, paranoia, agoraphobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder are all common side effects of stalking.

There are four warning signs of stalking. If the behaviour an individual is experiencing is;

- **Fixated**
- **Obsessive**
- **Unwanted**
- **Repeated**

It can be reported as a crime. The [National Stalking Helpline](#) has further advice.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES, CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS

These procedures are intended as a guide to help understand what action should be taken if you have concerns about or encounter a case of alleged or suspected stalking.

In order to help identify a pattern of behaviour such as turning up at home unannounced, calling a person numerous times, sending gifts etc., best practice is to encourage a log to be kept of all incidents, keep notes regarding anything that could help show a pattern, anything witnessed such as flowers being delivered, an unwanted text message etc. Encourage reporting to police and encourage use of the original police incident number in any future reports in order to show that there is a pattern of behaviour emerging.

Depending on the nature of the disclosure/concern/allegation, different approaches may be needed to get the best outcome. Following this [link](#) will take you to the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour based violence website, where you are able to complete the DASH questions to check the current level of risk. More information can also be found by ringing the National Stalking Helpline on 0808 802 0300.

Residents can report stalking or harassment to Lincolnshire Police if they, or someone they know has been a victim of stalking or harassment. If it is an emergency they can call 999 or they can report [online](#) which is secure and confidential or they can call 101.