

Stand Against Stalking: National Stalking Awareness Week

This week (24 – 28 April) marks National Stalking Awareness Week, a campaign run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to raise awareness of the issue of stalking and the importance of personal safety.

In the UK, around 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men will experience stalking in their lifetimes.

We recognise the trauma and distress that stalking and harassment causes and are committed to taking action to put an end to it, ensuring that victims are kept safe and increasing the number of perpetrators being brought to justice.

What is stalking?

Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviour that can cause someone to feel distressed or afraid. It can be perpetrated by men or women. The four key signs of stalking are when someone becomes:

- Fixated
- Obsessive
- Shows unwanted behaviour
- And repeats that behaviour

The impact this behaviour has on people can be life-changing. They may be forced to take a different bus, change childcare pick up and drop off times or locations, change jobs, or even move house – all to avoid the offender.

Stalking can happen with or without a fear of violence. This means that if you are receiving persistent unwanted contact that is causing you distress, but the person has never threatened you, this is still stalking and is not acceptable. Similarly, it can also take place online, this is known as cyberstalking.

We have ways we can support people as soon as they are affected by or become aware of stalking behaviour to protect victims from further harm and distress – this includes the Stalking Protection Order. This is a civil order, which places specific requirements on the offender, such as no-contact with the victim both on or offline, reporting to a police station regularly, or attending rehabilitation courses. The order lasts for a minimum of two years but can be enforced for up to 10 years'. Any breach of the order is a criminal offence and can result in up to five years' imprisonment.

Detective Chief Inspector Roger Doxsey, Avon and Somerset Police lead for stalking said, "We will do everything we can to pursue the perpetrators of stalking and seek justice for those who are having to live in fear. We have a strong and immediate tool we can use

with the new Stalking Protection Orders, so I urge people to come forward and ask for help if they are experiencing unwanted patterns of repeated behaviour from anyone that is causing them to feel worried or scared.

“Stalking can happen to anyone, although women and girls are more likely to experience it. It is defined by the perpetrator having a fixed obsession on the person they are targeting. It could be someone you know, such as a former partner, or it may be a stranger. Either way – it is an offence. We are here to enable people to live their lives safely, and free from harm.”

Within Avon and Somerset, 81 per cent of stalking offences are domestic-related, carried out by a partner, ex-partner, family member or co-parent. In these cases police have additional civil orders such as Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN) and Domestic Violence Prevention Orders (DVPO) that they can put in place to safeguard and reassure victims.

Anyone who suspects they are being stalked or harassed can report it [online](#), or by contacting 101. If you are in immediate danger, call 999. There is also support available from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust through the [National Stalking Helpline](#) on 0808 802 0300 or via the [Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service](#) on 020 3866 4107.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust seeks to offer training and education to people, businesses and organisations on the importance of personal safety and raising awareness of the dangers of stalking. They are offering free online training to anyone to join to be empowered to know what they can safely do if they witness street harassment in order to stop it happening: <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Events/Category/events>