



Department of  
**Justice**

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

# Stalking behaviour – Offence of Stalking

## Statutory Guidance

The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022  
and other matters as to criminal law or procedure relating  
to stalking in Northern Ireland

**Department of Justice  
October 2022**

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## **Introduction**

1. The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 received Royal Assent on 26 April 2022. The Act introduces a new specific offence of stalking which came into operation following Royal Assent. The Act also introduces Stalking Protection Orders, which the Department will commence by Order in due course.

## **Audience**

2. The information within this guidance may be relevant to assist criminal justice agencies and statutory bodies, as well as non-governmental and voluntary organisations which may be associated with victims or others affected by stalking behaviour.

3. This guidance is for the police in the exercise of their functions in relation to the stalking offence. It is designed to assist police officers to make appropriate and proportionate assessments when investigating reports of stalking.

4. This guidance will assist those taking forward criminal proceedings for the stalking offence.

## **Aims and purpose**

5. This guidance has three key functions:
- a. to provide strategic guidance to the police when investigating reporting of stalking;
  - b. to provide high level information on what stalking is and how to identify it, including the motivations behind stalking behaviour and links to other forms of abuse; and

- c. to signpost police officers to other sources of guidance on stalking, in particular regarding investigating cases of stalking; assessing and managing the risk posed by perpetrators; and safeguarding and supporting victims.

## **What is stalking?**

6. The stalking offence is at Section 1 of the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022. The offence of stalking can be made out when a person engages in a course of conduct which causes another person to suffer fear, alarm or distress. A course of conduct involves conduct on two or more occasions.

7. There is no specific legal definition of stalking. However, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as: *“A pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or alarm or distress in the victim”*.

8. 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.

9. According to the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, about 50% of people who contact the National Stalking Helpline are being **stalked by ex-intimates (i.e. ex partners)** and a further third have had some sort of prior acquaintance with their stalker.

10. In some of these cases, the stalking behaviours used by the perpetrator are a continuation of the cycle of abuse the victim experienced during the relationship.

11. Just because the victim knows or knew the stalker does not mean that the situation was their fault - it is still stalking and it is wrong.

12. Although the College of Policing APP guidance on stalking (and harassment) has been developed as a guide for the E&W stalking legislation it is also a useful guide for use in Northern Ireland. The guidance includes the F.O.U.R. acronym to describe stalking as:

- Fixated
- Obsessive
- Unwanted
- Repeated

13. Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service has indicated that there has been an increase in referrals (20-25%) from young people since March 2020. This figure was previously below 5%. Young people also tend to endure more incidents, as high as 120, before reporting stalking.

14. There is no such thing as a 'typical' stalking perpetrator or a 'typical' stalking victim. This crime disproportionately affects women and girls; however, it is important to recognise that men and boys may be victims too. Stalking affects people of all ages and gender, and victims come from a wide range of backgrounds.

15. Stalking can have an insidious and devastating impact on victims, which at its most extreme can lead to the loss of innocent lives. It can be psychologically and physically damaging to victims, with delusional and obsessive offenders often going to extreme lengths to contact, follow and monitor their victims.

16. The following quote from a victim who took part in the consultation process describes the shocking fear that stalking creates:

*“I was terribly afraid. Maybe because I was unable to predict how far the things would go before someone could stop him. He acted like a person who had lost their mind and I didn’t know when or where his next attack would happen. I didn’t feel protected enough”.*

17. Another respondent to the consultation highlighted the need for stalking legislation:

*“Without a specific offence, stalking can become hidden behind other related offences, and the sinister behaviours can be conflated with nuisance crimes and disputes”.*

18. Perpetrators will vary in the motivations driving their behaviour, the types of behaviour they engage in, and what they hope to achieve from their pursuit of the victim.

19. The **relationship** between the perpetrator and the victim, as well as the **context in which the stalking behaviour takes place**, can also vary significantly. For example, if one party in a relationship wants to end that relationship this could result in the escalation or commencement of stalking behaviours by the rejected party and could also increase the risk of harm to the victim.

20. The perpetrator’s behaviours may appear ‘harmless’ and may in themselves seem lawful, particularly if considered in isolation rather than as part of a pattern of behaviour.

21. However, these behaviours may amount to stalking depending on:

- the **context** of the behaviour – for example the ending of a relationship, or an attempt to establish a relationship with someone who does not feel the same way
- the **motivations** driving the behaviour – for example trying to rekindle a relationship, or seeking revenge for the ending of a relationship
- the **impact** on the victim. What may seem like harmless behaviours can have a significant impact on the victim's wellbeing causing them to feel scared, or even terrified. The behaviours may cause the victim to move house or change their phone number in an attempt to get away from the stalker

## Examples of stalking behaviour

22. The Stalking Offence at Section 1 of the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022 includes the following **non-exhaustive list of examples of conduct** associated with stalking:

- Following a person
- Contacting or attempting to contact a person by any means
- Publishing any statement or other material
  - Relating or purporting to relate to a person; or
  - Purporting to originate from a person or from any other person
- Monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication
- Entering any premises
- Loitering in any place (whether public or private)
- Interfering with any property of the person or of any other person
- Giving anything to a person or any other person or leaving anything where it may be found by, given to or brought to the attention of that person, or any other person
- Watching or spying on a person
- Acting in any other way that a reasonable person, or a reasonable person who has particular knowledge of a person, would expect to cause that person to suffer fear, alarm or substantial distress.



23. Other **examples** of behaviours which in themselves may seem harmless **could amount to stalking depending on the context of the behaviour, the motivations driving the behaviour, and the impact on the victim** include but are **not limited** to:

- Contacting the victim's children, partner, other family members, friends, co-workers or other third parties.
- Stalking by proxy (stalking people connected to the 'primary' victim).
- Sending unsolicited gifts or other items to the victim (this doesn't have to be done directly by the perpetrator but can be facilitated by delivery services like Amazon, DPD, Deliveroo and Just Eat as an example of a way of intimidation. Whilst sending someone a pizza via Deliveroo may seem harmless by itself, within the context of stalking it causes distress to the victim).
- Hacking the victim's social media accounts, email, phone or computer.
- Using multiple social media accounts, email addresses or phone numbers to contact the victim, including the use of aliases.
- Information gathering on the victim, such as by contacting third parties, searching public records, stealing private documents belonging to the victim or viewing them without their knowledge.
- Impersonating the victim in order to gather information about them.
- Bringing vexatious litigation or making vexatious counter-allegations against the victim, or otherwise using official processes to perpetuate contact with the victim, cause them distress or drain their resources.

- Cancelling or procuring goods or services to the victim.
- Joining the same gym, church, medical practice, educational course, workplace, sports club or other group as the victim.
- Criminal damage or breaking in to the victim's home, garden or vehicle.
- Creating or exploiting disputes between the victim and their friends, family or wider support network, to isolate the victim and make them dependent on the perpetrator.
- Creating social media posts or websites containing malicious or personal content relating to the victim, or referencing things which would have meaning only to the victim.
- Threatening violence against the victim, physical assault, sexual assault.
- Monitoring the victim by planting tracking or bugging devices, or by installing or activating a programme or application on the victim's personal devices.
- Publishing or threatening to publish personal information or images relating to the victim (so called 'revenge porn').
- Threatening suicide or self-harm, or otherwise manipulating the victim to respond to contact.

24. The perpetrator can exhibit **a combination of any of the behaviours at paragraph 23 which the victim may or may not be aware of**. These behaviours may be carried out **online (cyberstalking), or using specific technology, or may be otherwise 'digitally-enabled'**. There may be a **combination of online and offline** behaviours.

## Examples of threatening or abusive behaviour

25. The Threatening or Abusive Behaviour Offence at Section 2 of the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022 defines behaviour as being of any kind including, in particular, things said or otherwise communicated as well as things done.

26. **This offence is a lower offence to the main stalking offence and will provide an alternative charge for those cases that do not meet the threshold of the stalking offence.**

27. There is a vast range of actions that could be threatening or abusive in any given context.

- The behaviour only needs to be threatening or abusive, not both. What constitutes a “threat” or “abuse” depends on the particular circumstances of the case.
- s2(3)(a) makes it clear that the *actus reus* of this offence is “behaviour of any kind including, in particular, things said or otherwise communicated as well as things done”. So, words alone (spoken or written) could be enough.
- s2(3)(b) says that the behaviour in question can either be a single act (e.g. shouting and swearing aggressively at one’s partner during a single argument) or a course of conduct (e.g. sending several threatening letters over the course of various days or weeks).
- “likely to cause a reasonable person to suffer fear or alarm”

- “Fear or alarm” means that only one of the two is required, not both. “Alarm” suggests more than mere surprise at the behaviour; an element of concern is implied.
- The “reasonable person” part means that the behaviour is to be judged objectively. In other words, it doesn’t matter whether the witnesses to the behaviour were actually scared or alarmed by it, provided that fear or alarm would have been a reasonable reaction in the circumstances.
- “[the accused] intends by the behaviour to cause fear or alarm or is reckless as to whether the behaviour would cause fear or alarm”
- This is the *mens rea* element of the offence, and is to be judged from the particular facts and circumstances of the case. Intending to cause fear or alarm (again – only one of two is required).
- “Recklessness” is a commonly-used word in criminal law. Generally, it means the accused did not think about the consequences of their actions when they ought to have, or the accused was indifferent to (i.e. did not care about) the consequences.
- The s2(2) defence: “[to] show that the behaviour was, in the particular circumstances, reasonable.”
- Reasonableness of the accused’s behaviour depends on the facts and circumstances of the case.

28. Examples of the type of behaviour that may amount to the offence could include but is not limited to:

- Threatening violence against the victim, or actually attacking them.
- Publishing or threatening to publish personal information or images relating to the victim.
- Leaving gifts or items that cause fear or alarm to the victim.
- Threatening suicide or self-harm, or otherwise manipulating the victim to respond to contact.
- Using multiple social media accounts, email addresses or phone numbers to contact the victim, which may include the use of aliases.
- Hacking the victim's social media accounts, email, phone or computer.
- Monitoring the victim by planting tracking or bugging devices, or by installing or activating a programme or application on the victim's personal devices.
- Criminal damage or breaking in to the victim's home, garden or vehicle.
- Creating or exploiting disputes between the victim and their friends, family or wider support network, to isolate the victim and make them dependent on the perpetrator.
- Creating social media posts or websites containing malicious or personal content relating to the victim, or referencing things which would have meaning only to the victim.

## The Offence of Stalking

- A person (“A”) commits an offence of stalking where:
- “A” engages in a course of conduct (two or more occasions) that causes another person (“B”) to suffer fear, alarm or substantial distress, or
- is such that a reasonable person, or a reasonable person who has any particular knowledge of “B” that “A” has, would consider to be likely to cause “B” to suffer fear, alarm or substantial distress, and
- at least one of the further conditions applies:
- that “A” engages in the course of conduct with the intention of causing “B” to suffer fear, alarm or substantial distress;
- that “A” knows, or ought in all the circumstances to have known, that engaging in the course of conduct would be likely to cause B to suffer fear, alarm or substantial distress.
- If “A” is a UK National, or habitually resident in Northern Ireland, and their conduct consists of conduct occurring in a country outside the UK, the conduct is to be treated for the purpose of the stalking offence as if it occurred in Northern Ireland.
- A course of conduct involves conduct on two or more occasions.
- “Substantial distress” means distress that has a substantial adverse effect on “B”’s day to day activities.

### **Alternative conviction**

- **In court proceedings in respect of a charge against a person of the offence of stalking, if the facts proved against the person do not amount to the offence of stalking, they can be charged with the alternative offence of threatening or abusive behaviour, if the facts are proven.**

## **The Offence of threatening or abusive behaviour**

- **A person (“A”) commits an offence of threatening or abusive behaviour if:**
- **“A” behaves in a threatening or abusive manner;**
- **The behaviour would be likely to cause a reasonable person to suffer fear or alarm, and**
- **“A” intends by the behaviour to cause fear or alarm or is reckless as to whether the behaviour causes fear or alarm.**
- **Behaviour is described as being of any kind including, in particular, things said or otherwise communicated, as well as things done, and**
- **Behaviour can consist of a single act, or**
- **A course of conduct (2 or more occasions).**



## Motivations and behaviours driving stalking

29. **Motivation** is a **defining factor in the identification of stalking**, and what sets **stalking apart** from other harmful behaviours and crime types.

30. To understand the **level of risk the perpetrator's motivations have on a victim**, the police could consider **the five stalker types**. This relationship-based typology can be a useful starting point for thinking about the **kinds of risks and management strategies** that might be appropriate in a stalking situation.

- ***The Rejected Stalker*** - *Rejected stalking arises in the context of the breakdown of a close relationship. Victims are usually former sexual intimates; however, family members, close friends, or others with a very close relationship to the stalker can also become targets of Rejected stalking.*
- ***The Resentful stalker*** - *Resentful stalking arises when the stalker feels as though they have been mistreated or that they are the victim of some form of injustice or humiliation. Victims are strangers or acquaintances who are seen to have mistreated the stalker.*
- ***The Intimacy Seeking stalker*** - *Intimacy seeking stalking arises out of a context of loneliness and a lack of a close confidante. Victims are usually strangers or acquaintances who become the target of the stalker's desire for a relationship. Frequently Intimacy Seeking stalkers' behaviour involves delusional beliefs about the victim, such as the belief that they are already in a relationship, even though none exists.*

- **The Incompetent Suitor** – *The Incompetent suitor stalks in the context of loneliness or lust and targets strangers or acquaintances. Unlike the Intimacy Seeker, however, their initial motivation is not to establish a loving relationship, but to get a date or a short term sexual relationship. Incompetent Suitors usually stalk for brief periods, but when they do persist, their behaviour is usually maintained by the fact that they are blind or indifferent to the distress of the victim.*
- **The Predatory Stalker** - *Predatory stalking arises in the context of deviant sexual practices and interests. Perpetrators are usually male and victims are usually female strangers in whom the stalker develops a sexual interest. The stalking behaviour is usually initiated as a way of obtaining sexual gratification (e.g., voyeurism targeting a single victim over time), but can also be used as a way of obtaining information about the victim as a precursor to a sexual assault, the most dangerous leading to serious attack.*

More detail on the typologies can be found at the link below to the Stalking Risk Profile:

<https://www.stalkingriskprofile.com/what-is-stalking/types-of-stalking>

31. Even though the actual behaviours exhibited may vary between perpetrators, these behaviours will often share a consistent set of characteristics.

32. Consider the College of Policing acronym **F.O.U.R.** Are the behaviours **Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and Repeated<sup>1</sup>.**

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<sup>1</sup> College of Policing (2019) Stalking and Harassment Guidance  
<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/appref/Stalking-or-harassment-guidance.pdf>

33. Perpetrators tend to focus solely on the victim, becoming obsessed with them by contacting them or watching them, even though the attention is unwanted.

34. Stalking perpetrators can be particularly adept at exploiting professionals, agencies and systems and may use a range of tactics in order to perpetuate contact with and control over the victim, including:

- Deliberately targeting people who might be vulnerable.
- Manipulating a person's mental health (for example, making them think that they are 'going mad').
- Causing or creating vexation, or using the system against the victim by making false or vexatious allegations.
- Making counter-allegations against the victim e.g. calling in false reports or claiming to be a victim of the stalking behaviour of the actual victim.
- Attempting to frustrate or interfere with the police investigation.
- Using threats in order to manipulate the victim. For example, by telling the victim that they will make a counter-allegation against them; that the victim will not be believed by the police or other agencies; that they will inform social services; or that they will inform immigration officials where the victim does not have permission to be in NI.

35. Police should examine whether any of the behaviours described above have been a feature in previous relationships where the perpetrator is a former intimate partner.

## Stalking and domestic abuse

36. Stalking is often a characteristic of **domestic abuse**, particularly once a **relationship has ended**. A study<sup>2</sup> of female homicides that occurred as a result of male violence found that stalking behaviours were present in 94% of cases and in 71% of cases the victim and perpetrator were in, or had previously had, an intimate relationship.

37. Stalking behaviour can be carried out online, therefore potentially combining online and offline behaviours. It is important to note that men and children can also be victims, and women can be perpetrators of stalking.

38. In light of the overlap between stalking and domestic abuse (particularly when a relationship ends and stalking behaviours may escalate), police may also refer to the [Departments guidance on Domestic Abuse](#)

39. Police may also refer to the [College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on investigating domestic abuse](#), which states that “A manipulative perpetrator may be trying to draw the police into colluding with their **coercive control** of the victim. Police officers must avoid playing into the primary perpetrator’s hands and take account of all available evidence.”

40. An example of this is where the perpetrator is reporting to police that they are threatening to kill themselves unless they can speak to the victim, and police may then view the perpetrator as the greater risk in that moment. Stalking perpetrators may also use these tactics to manipulate the courts and other criminal justice agencies.

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<sup>2</sup> Monckton-Smith et al., [Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide](#), 2017

## Impact of stalking behaviour

41. Being stalked can adversely affect all aspects of the victim's daily life, as well as their physical and mental health. It can lead to depression, anxiety, and even post traumatic stress. The impacts of stalking can vary in each circumstance and can be severe and long lasting. They can continue to affect the victim after the period of direct victimisation has ended due to the cumulative effect of the ongoing unwanted behaviour.

42. The devastating impact of stalking was highlighted in a survey carried out by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust which found that 94% of respondents said that their mental health had been impacted by stalking.<sup>3</sup>

43. Victims of stalking may experience:

- Feelings of helplessness, isolation, anger and distrust
- Sleep disturbance/ insomnia
- Stress-related symptoms
- Symptoms of anxiety
- Symptoms of depression
- Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- The exacerbation of existing health conditions
- Adverse health impacts as a result of increased use of drugs, alcohol or cigarettes to cope with their situation<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/unmasking-stalking-a-changing-landscape-report>

<sup>4</sup> MacKenzie, McEwan, Pathé, James, Ogloff, & Mullen, 2011.

44. Being stalked may force the victim and their family and friends to make significant changes to their day to day activities, including **but not limited to**:

- Deleting or stopping using social media accounts.
- Changing their phone number.
- Buying new personal devices.
- Carrying a personal attack alarm.
- Changing their usual travel times or routes.
- Changing their mode of transport or buying a new vehicle.
- Changing their working pattern.
- Stopping regular activities such as socialising, exercising, walking pets or shopping, or doing these at different times or locations.
- Not leaving their home, or not leaving their home without being accompanied.
- Taking sick leave from work.
- Changing the locks in their home.
- Installing security equipment in their home, such as cameras, alarms or lights.
- Moving their children to a different school.
- Leaving their job.
- Ending a relationship with a partner.
- Moving house or living elsewhere temporarily.

**45. Equally, the victim may decide that they do not want to or should not have to make changes to their own life because of the stalker's behaviour.**

46. There is no such thing as a typical victim. Some victims may not show fear or alarm from the actions of their stalker; however, the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022 takes this into consideration by using the 'reasonable person' test in Section 1(1)(b)(ii) and the intent of the perpetrator at Section 1(2)(a) and (b).

47. The impacts outlined above may adversely affect the victim's ability to socialise, maintain their support network or form relationships, which can significantly increase isolation and vulnerability to further victimisation. Some of the impacts can lead to financial instability due to loss of income or costs incurred by the victim, including legal costs.

48. All the impacts outlined above can also indirectly affect the victim's partner, children, wider family members, friends or co-workers.

## Working with victims

49. On average victims may suffer up to **100 incidents** of stalking before reporting to the police. This may be due to:

- feeling they may be overreacting and won't be taken seriously
- not realising that it is a case of stalking and the risk that they face
- a past experience resulting in a fear or dislike of the police
- lack of faith in the criminal justice system
- threats or fear of repercussions from the stalker
- not wanting to make matters worse if they call the police
- not being sure if the police can help<sup>5</sup>.

50. It is, therefore, crucial that when victims do go to the police, their cases are recognised as stalking and dealt with and investigated appropriately.

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<sup>5</sup> Dr Lorraine Sheridan (2005)



## Factors for consideration

51. Women are predominantly the victims and men the perpetrators of stalking in ex-intimate partner cases (the group identified as the 'rejected' typology). These victims may also have previously been subjected to domestic abuse, but not in every case and the lack of previous abuse is not a protective indicator.

52. For the other stalking typologies, the gender split is less clear and needs more research. It is the case that there are both female and male victims and underreporting is an issue across the board. Lack of recognition by law enforcement and professionals can also impact the accurate reporting of stalking offences.

53. What the research does indicate is that risk of violent behaviour is linked more to the ex-intimate partner who engages in stalking behaviour. The risk of psychological harm spans all typologies of stalking, and is significant<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McEwan, T., Mullen, P.E., & Purcell, R. (2007) Identifying risk factors in stalking: a review of current research. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 30,1-9

## **Understanding victim behaviours**

54. Officers should not make judgements about victims who do not follow safety advice. Victim responses and behaviours can vary according to the victim's circumstances.

55. This does not mean that the victim is being 'uncooperative' – they are behaving in a way which they believe will keep them safe. It is important to understand that victims' levels of resilience and coping mechanisms may vary.

56. It is crucial to engage with the victim in order to understand what measures they are taking to keep themselves safe, and why.

57. Police might consider the reasons as to why a victim may not want to start and/or continue criminal investigations.

58. While it is ultimately for the police to decide if a criminal investigation takes place, they should seek to explain the merits of pursuing a prosecution and should seek to reassure the victim about their concerns.

## Victim Charter

59. Victims of crime in Northern Ireland are entitled to receive services under the Victim Charter.

60. When they report a crime to the police they are entitled to have the police automatically pass their details to a victim support service provider so that they can be offered information on support services and information schemes that are available to them.

61. There is, however, no obligation to use the services. The information leaflet that they are given, or told about, by the police when a crime is reported also provides details of specialist support services that are available.

62. The Victim Charter can be found at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/victim-charter>

## Special Measures

63. Those subject to the stalking offence are automatically eligible for consideration of special measures when giving evidence, which could include the use of live links or screens in proceedings.

64. However, **each case will be decided upon individually and it will be the decision of the judge as to whether special measures will be granted.** The accused is also prohibited from cross examining their victim in a criminal court, where this relates to a stalking offence.

65. Together these provisions can help victims to give the best evidence in court and also reduce the number of victims disengaging from the criminal justice system.

## Collecting and preserving evidence

66. It is essential to gather appropriate evidence to investigate a case fully and to understand the behaviours of the stalker. To do so, police officers should try to provide guidance for victims on how they can collect and preserve evidence, especially electronic evidence.

67. The following guidance, devised by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, could be provided for victims: <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/forms/how-to-record-incidents-and-collect-evidence-leaflet>

68. Officers should also advise victims:

- Not to tamper with or dispose of a mobile phone or its SIM card without first consulting the investigating officer.
- Keep any stored messages, including text messages, or telephone numbers that have been received on a mobile phone or caller ID unit.
- Compile a journal that is a chronological summary of events.
- Keep originals in a safe place and a copy of everything in another location.
- Take pictures of and/or keep unwanted gifts.

Not all victims may comply with all of the above advice if they feel threatened or scared. However, this should not deem that the victim is being uncooperative.

## Stalking Support Services

69. Police should provide supportive action for the victim and consideration should be given to provide access to support services as listed below:

<p><b>National Stalking Helpline</b> Tel: 0808 802 0300 Operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust Website: <a href="#">Suzy Lamplugh Trust</a></p>
<p><b>Victim Support NI</b> Tel: 02890 243133 or 02871 370086. Live Chat (9am – 5pm) on Website: <a href="http://www.victimsupportni.com/about-us/contact-us">www.victimsupportni.com/about-us/contact-us</a></p>
<p><b>Cara-Friend</b> Tel: Belfast Office: (028) 9089 0202 Tel: Foyle Office: (028) 7128 3030 LGBT Switchboard: 0808 8000 390 Email: <a href="mailto:admin@cara-friend.org.uk">admin@cara-friend.org.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.cara-friend.org.uk/">www.cara-friend.org.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>Men's Advisory Panel (MAP)</b> Tel: Belfast - 028 9024 1929 Tel: Foyle - 028 7116 0001 Email: <a href="mailto:info@mapni.org.uk">info@mapni.org.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.mapni.co.uk">www.mapni.co.uk</a></p>
<p><b>24hr Domestic &amp; Sexual Abuse Helpline</b> Tel: 0808 802 1414 (Freephone) Email: <a href="mailto:help@dsahelpline.org">help@dsahelpline.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.dsahelpline.org">www.dsahelpline.org</a> (webchat)</p>

## **Women's Aid Federation NI**

Tel: (028) 9024 9041

Email: [Info@womensaidni.org](mailto:Info@womensaidni.org)

Website: [womensaidni.org](http://womensaidni.org)

### **Local Groups:**

#### **Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey (ABCLN) Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 2563 2136

Email: [reception@ABCLNwomensaid.org](mailto:reception@ABCLNwomensaid.org)

Website: [Womens-aid.org.uk](http://Womens-aid.org.uk)

#### **Armagh Down Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 3025 0765

Email: [Admin@womensaidarmaghdown.org](mailto:Admin@womensaidarmaghdown.org)

Website: [womensaidarmaghdown.org](http://womensaidarmaghdown.org)

#### **Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 9066 6049

Email: [Admin@Belfastwomensaid.org](mailto:Admin@Belfastwomensaid.org)

Website: [belfastwomensaid.org.uk](http://belfastwomensaid.org.uk)

#### **Causeway & Mid Ulster Women's Aid**

Causeway Office

Tel: 028 7035 6573

Mid Ulster Office:

Tel: 028 8676 9300

Email: [Admin@cmuwa.org.uk](mailto:Admin@cmuwa.org.uk)

Website: [causewayandmidulsterwomensaid.org.uk](http://causewayandmidulsterwomensaid.org.uk)

#### **Fermanagh Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 6632 8898

Email: [admin@Fermanaghwomensaid.com](mailto:admin@Fermanaghwomensaid.com)

Website: [fermanaghwomensaid.com](http://fermanaghwomensaid.com)

**Foyle Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 7141 6800

Email: [info@foylewomensaid.org](mailto:info@foylewomensaid.org)

Website: foylewomensaid.org

**North Down & Ards Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 9127 3196

Email: [info@ndawomensaid.org](mailto:info@ndawomensaid.org)

Website: ndawomensaid.org

**Omagh Women's Aid**

Tel: 028 8224 1414

Email: [info@omaghwomensaid.org](mailto:info@omaghwomensaid.org)

Website: omaghwomensaid.org

## Overlap with other forms of abuse

70. Stalking behaviours may share characteristics with other forms of abuse, including but not limited to malicious communications, domestic abuse, rape and other sexual offences, harassment and so-called “honour-based” abuse.

71. It is crucial that the perpetrator’s behaviours are considered **in context and as part of a pattern of behaviour** in order for stalking to be correctly identified and recorded at the earliest opportunity and for appropriate risk assessment and risk management interventions to be put in place.

72. Stalking behaviours can be a continuation of **coercive control** when an abusive intimate partner relationship has ended, and/or the perpetrator and the victim are no longer living together.



## Stalking or harassment?

73. Harassment usually involves disputes over an issue such as a neighbourhood grievance and can escalate if the issue is not resolved. However, if the dispute or issue is resolved between parties, then the behaviour should stop.

74. This is a key difference, and officers should start every investigation with the question – **is this stalking?**

75. When officers are investigating reports of stalking they should note that the key feature which **distinguishes stalking from harassment** is that the perpetrator's behaviours are **motivated** by **fixation and obsession**.

76. **Think stalking first**, and consider the College of Policing stalking acronym: **F.O.U.R.** Are the behaviours **Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted, Repeated.**

77. The impact of stalking behaviour on the victim is crucial, and should always be considered and documented. In cases of harassment, review and reconsider **why the case does not meet the description of stalking**.

78. Key points for police to consider:

- Focus on risk first – your primary task is to make people safe. Risk is dynamic and needs continual reassessment.
- Investigate fully – make sure you understand the full history and any escalation.
- Listen to the victim, especially their view about changing risk.
- The motivation of the suspect and the context and effect of the behaviour on the victim are important factors to understanding and helping with your decision making.
- Stalking behaviours suggest greater risk of harm and require greater consideration of risk management.

**Consider if a case meets the description of stalking:**

- Stalking will often focus on a **person**, whereas harassment will often focus on **disputes**
- Is there evidence to suggest if the problem was resolved, the behaviour will stop?
- Consider the stalking mnemonic **FOUR**.
- Are the behaviours: **F**ixated, **O**bsessive, **U**nwanted, **R**epeated.

## Further guidance on stalking

79. Other non-statutory guidance and information on stalking, which will be a useful tool in addition to this guidance, are provided at the links below:

- [College of Policing](#)
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)
- [Stalking Risk Profile](#)