



Department of  
**Justice**

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Männystrie O tha Laa

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## REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF THE PROTECTION FROM STALKING ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2022

The Department of Justice is required by Section 20 of the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022, to prepare and publish a report on the operation of the Act (so far as the information is available to the Department).

The first reporting period should begin on the day the Act received Royal Assent (26 April 2022) and end at least two years and not more than three years after this date.

The statutory period being reported on is two years (26 April 2022 to 25 April 2024). The information covers the period up to 31 March 2024. This is the information that is available to the Department and aligns with official reporting periods for the publication of statistics. The next report will be due for publication in three years' time, to cover the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2027, and will contain any additional relevant data not available at the date of publication of the first report.

The offence of stalking and the offence of threatening or abusive behaviour commenced when the [Protection from Stalking Act \(NI\) 2022](#) received Royal Assent on 26 April 2022.

Stalking protection orders (SPOs) and the offence of breaching an SPO commenced on 19 October 2023.

The Act specifies that the Department of Justice must prepare a report on:

- the number of stalking incidents\* reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- the number of stalking crimes recorded by PSNI

- the number of threatening or abusive behaviour incidents\* reported to PSNI
- the number of threatening or abusive crimes recorded by PSNI
- broken down by policing district
- the number of files submitted by PSNI to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS)
- the number of cases prosecuted by PPS
- the number of convictions in those cases
- the number of Stalking Protection Order (SPO) applications\*\*
- the number of SPOs discharged before the end of a 2-year period
- the number of SPOs discharged at the end of a 2-year period
- the number of SPOs discharged after more than a 2-year period
- the number of applications seeking to vary, renew or discharge an SPO
- average length of time in conviction cases from recording of crime to disposal at court (disregarding the appeal processes) \*\*\*
- Conviction cases broken down by reference to behaviour or conduct that was engaged by means of the internet (a) in a keyway, or (b) in some lesser but non-minimal way, or (c) either minimally or not all. \*\*\*\*

*\* The report does not include the number of incidents of the stalking or threatening or abusive behaviour offences, as all reports of both these offences are recorded as a crime by PSNI.*

*\*\* One full SPO application has been issued during this reporting period, therefore there is no further information to report on discharges, variations, or renewals of SPOs.*

*\*\*\* The report does not include average length of time in conviction cases (from recording to disposal) as to gather this information would result in disproportionate costs.*

*\*\*\*\* The report does not include a breakdown of conviction cases that have behaviour engaged by means of the internet as this data is not available.*

**TABLES PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE OFFENCES****Covering the period 26 April 2022 – 31 March 2024****1. Stalking offence****Number of crimes recorded by PSNI broken down by policing district**

<b>Policing District</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>2023/2024</b>
Antrim & Newtownabbey	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
Ards & North Down	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>
Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>
Belfast City	<b>30</b>	<b>41</b>
Causeway Coast & Glens	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>
Derry City & Strabane	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>
Fermanagh & Omagh	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>
Lisburn & Castlereagh	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
East & Mid-Antrim	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
Mid- Ulster	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>
Newry Mourne & Down	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>154</b>

## 2. Threatening or abusive behaviour offence

Number of crimes recorded by PSNI broken down by policing district

Policing District	2022/2023	2023/2024
Antrim & Newtownabbey	0	3
Ards & North Down	2	1
Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon	5	3
Belfast City	9	5
Causeway Coast & Glens	0	1
Derry City & Strabane	4	11
Fermanagh & Omagh	0	2
Lisburn & Castlereagh	0	2
East & Mid-Antrim	1	0
Mid- Ulster	0	1
Newry Mourne & Down	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>

### 3. Files sent from PSNI to PPS

Offence Category	2022/2023	2023/2024	Total
Stalking	144	186	330
Threatening or abusive behaviour	90	29	119
Breach of a stalking protection order	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>449</b>

*The offences of stalking and threatening or abusive behaviour commenced on 26 April 2022  
SPOs commenced on 19 October 2023*

### 4. Prosecutions

Offence category	Number of prosecutions 2022/23	Number of prosecutions 2023/2024	Total prosecutions
Stalking	42	92	134
Threatening or abusive behaviour	15	50	65
Breach of a stalking protection order	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>199</b>

*The offences of stalking and threatening or abusive behaviour commenced on 26 April 2022  
SPOs commenced on 19 October 2023*

## 5. Convictions

Offence category	Number of convictions 2022	Number of convictions 2023	Number of convictions 2024 (Jan – Mar)	Total convictions
Stalking	*	#	#	40
Threatening or abusive behaviour	*	#	*	17
Breach of a stalking protection order	N/A	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	*	<b>37</b>	#	<b>57</b>

*The offences of stalking and threatening or abusive behaviour commenced on 26 April 2022  
SPOs commenced on 19 October 2023*

*\* Represents a figure of less than 3 and has been treated under rules of disclosure*

*# means a figure of 3 or more has been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere.*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

## 6. Training

The following information outlines the number of personnel (who have responsibilities for dealing with stalking cases) that took part in training. The full statement published by the Department can be viewed [here](#).

Detail of training relevant personnel	Number of personnel who participated in initial training
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	4,544 police officers and staff
Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS)	135 prosecutors

## **7. How court business is arranged**

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) list all applications on the requested court date and, following a hearing, will result and issue any relevant court orders to the PSNI and respondent in a timely fashion. The NICTS internal service register is updated to ensure an accurate record of orders issued is maintained.

## **8. Experience of witnesses at court**

The Northern Ireland Victim and Witness Survey (NIVAWS) which is run every 3 years currently collects information only on the criminal justice experiences of victims and witnesses of the more general types of crime – this is a telephone interview survey and excludes victims and witnesses of the more sensitive cases of domestic and sexual abuse (which could include stalking).

## **9. Information about review or revision of guidance**

The Department published statutory guidance on the use of the [Stalking offences](#) on 19 October 2022 and [Stalking Protection Orders](#) (SPO) on 19 October 2023. The SPO guidance was amended on 29 May 2024 to reflect a change to the burden of proof for SPOs, from the criminal standard of proof to the civil standard of proof to reflect current caselaw.

## **10. Steps taken by DoJ to raise public awareness of the behaviours addressed by the Act**

The Department ran a public awareness campaign from 26 September 2022 to 31 March 2023 on digital/social media platforms and radio, to raise awareness of the new offence, as well as how to recognise stalking behaviours and how to report stalking behaviour to police.

A dedicated page on [NI Direct](#) was also established to raise awareness and signpost victims to support services.

The Department also promotes awareness of stalking through its social media channels on X and Instagram throughout the year and especially during National

Stalking Awareness Week in conjunction with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April every year.

## **11. Activities undertaken by DoJ in supporting the operation of the Act**

The Department held an event on 16 November 2023 to mark the full implementation of the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022 and to enhance awareness of the availability of Stalking Protection Orders, which came into operation on 19 October 2023.

Professor Clive Ruggles from the Alice Ruggles Trust spoke movingly about his daughter Alice, who was murdered in 2016 by an ex-boyfriend. Alice had been subjected to a relentless campaign of stalking and was aged just 24 when she died.

Allison Morris, Belfast Telegraph Crime Correspondent, gave a courageous account of her experience of being stalked by an ex-partner. Allison spoke openly of her experience with the criminal justice system.

Detective Sergeant David Thomason from the Harm Reduction Unit at Cheshire Constabulary gave a presentation on stalking typologies and motivations for stalking.

The event was attended by representatives of a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations across the health and justice sectors.

## **12. Any further information DoJ considers appropriate**

The Stalking Implementation Working Group (SIWG) which is chaired by DOJ and comprises criminal justice partners in Police Service NI (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), NI Courts & Tribunal Service (NICTS) NI Prison Service (NIPS), and NI Probation Board (NIPB) continues to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the stalking legislation.