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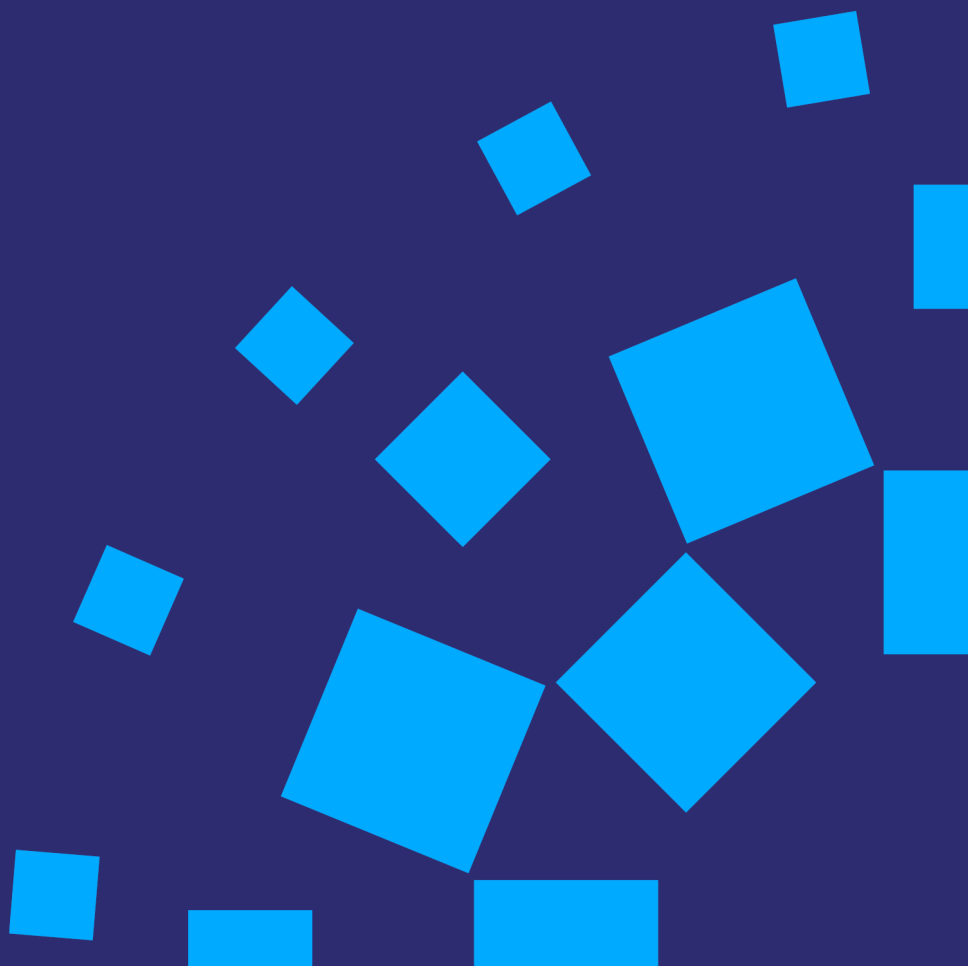
Leadership
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Stalking or harassment

Authorised professional practice (APP) – consultation

June 2026



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1. Overview

This authorised professional practice (APP) applies to all personnel involved in the response, investigation and prevention of stalking and harassment. It supports policing responders (including call handlers), investigators, supervisors and senior leaders to:

- identify and safeguard victims of stalking or harassment
- distinguish stalking from harassment and other associated offences
- understand the risks associated with stalking or harassment
- ensure that victims of stalking or harassment receive specialist support
- ensure that all reports of stalking and harassment are effectively identified, investigated and managed
- develop appropriate governance, training and partnerships to support the force response to stalking or harassment effectively

It is also relevant to:

- regional and force learning and development leads
- all operational and non-operational staff, including special constabulary officers involved in safeguarding and public protection

1.1. Definitions

The **Protection from Harassment Act 1997** (PHA 1997) covers the principal offences of harassment and stalking. The PHA 1997 includes the two categories of this offending behaviour that can be charged and provides this general description of the offence of harassment:

“a person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another, and which they know or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other”

The PHA 1997 contains four stalking and harassment-related offences. These are:

- section 2 – the offence of harassment
- section 2A – the offence of stalking

- section 4 – putting people in fear of violence
- section 4A – either:
 - stalking involving fear of violence, or
 - stalking involving serious alarm or distress

The [Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023](#) introduced a specific criminal offence to intentionally harass, alarm or distress someone in public due to their sex.

Stalking is a form of harassment. The offences of stalking and harassment both need a [course of conduct](#) and an element of oppressive behaviour. It is important to note that a statutory time limit applies to both offences of stalking and harassment under the PHA 1997, where police or prosecutors must apply for a summons from the magistrates' court within six months of the last occurrence.

1.1.1. Harassment

It is an offence to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment within [section 2 of the PHA 1997](#). In the Home Office's [crime recording rules for frontline officers and staff](#), harassment is defined as a course of conduct occurring on more than one occasion that, when taken together, is likely to cause, fear, alarm or distress.

Officers should be aware that behaviours might include:

- sending abusive text messages
- unwanted phone calls, letters, emails or visits
- bullying in the workplace or [educational settings](#)
- antisocial behaviour
- damage to property

Officers should also be aware that harassment can be carried out solely using [digital technology](#).

The following table provides a summary of harassment offences:

Section 2 – harassment without violence	Section 4 – putting people in fear of violence
A course of conduct pursued against another that amounts to harassment.	Pursuing a course of conduct on at least two occasions that causes a person to fear violence will be used against them.
The person harassing the other knows or ought to know that their behaviour amounts to harassment.	The person harassing the other knows or ought to know that their behaviour causes fear of violence.
	Where harassment amounts to aggravated harassment, causing fear of violence.

The following case law provides clarification on specific terminology:

- [R v O'Neill \[2016\] EWCA Crim 92](#) – course of conduct must be objectively oppressive and unreasonable.
- [R v Colohan \[2001\] EWCA Crim 1251](#) – the reasonable person test is strictly objective. A defendant's characteristics, such as a mental disorder, cannot be attributed to the reasonable person.

1.1.2. Stalking

Stalking is defined and criminalised in the PHA 1997, as amended by the [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#), under:

- section 2A – stalking
- section 4A – either:
 - (1)(b)(i) – stalking involving fear of violence, or
 - (1)(b)(ii) – stalking involving serious alarm or distress

Section 2A makes it an offence to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to stalking. It is stalking if it:

- meets the description for harassment (stalking is a form of harassment)
- is committed by a person who knows, or ought to know, it is harassment

- involves behaviours associated with stalking

Behaviours associated with stalking include, but are not limited to:

- frequent unwanted contact, such as:
 - hanging around a place that they know the victim visits frequently
 - driving past the victim's home or work
 - following or watching the victim
- sending letters or unwanted 'gifts' or items to the victim (including arranging for others to deliver unwanted items to the victim)
- interfering with the victim's property
- going into their home uninvited
- publishing any statement or other material purporting to originate from a person, such as identity theft (for example, signing the person up for services or buying things in their name)
- writing or posting things, or threatening to post, online about the person without their consent or knowledge
- claiming that they are aware of the location or address of other family members or children
- becoming embedded within a victim's life – for example, by contacting their friends and family (see also [Stalking by proxy](#) section of this APP)
- threats of physical harm to the victim (including sexual violence and threats to kill)

Individual behaviours may not, in themselves, amount to stalking. However, investigators should consider whether these behaviours form part of a wider course of conduct. In such cases, stalking may not initially present as the primary offence, but may emerge through effective assessment and investigation.

Annex A, paragraph six of [statutory guidance for the police on the stalking protection orders](#) provides further example behaviours.

Sections 4 and 4A of the PHA 1997 make it an offence where a course of conduct amounts to stalking and causes either:

- fear of violence from the perpetrator on at least two occasions (sections 4 and 4A), or
- serious alarm or distress that has a “substantial adverse effect” on the victim’s daily life (section 4A only)

Fear of violence does not require a specific threat of violence to be made. It is also not necessary for the fear of violence to be immediate. This could be a fear that violence will take place at a later, unspecified time and/or place. Evidence will be required nonetheless. Officers and staff should work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to identify the most appropriate stalking or harassment offence.

Home Office [crime recording rules for frontline officers and staff](#) lists behaviours used in stalking that cause the ‘level of fear’ linked to a 4A offence. Examples of behaviours that could provide evidence of a ‘substantial adverse effect’ are provided in the Home Office [circular](#).

The following table provides a summary of stalking offences:

Section 2A	Section 4A
A course of conduct pursued against another – consisting of acts, omissions or behaviours associated with stalking - – that amounts to stalking.	Pursuing a course of conduct that amounts to stalking and causes a person either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to fear violence will be used against them on at least two occasions ▪ serious alarm or distress that has a substantial adverse effect on their daily lives
The person harassing the other knows, or ought to know, that their behaviour amounts to harassment.	The person perpetrating the stalking knows, or ought to know, that their behaviour causes fear of violence or alarm or distress.

1.1.3. Course of conduct offences

Stalking and harassment are course of conduct offences, which means that a minimum of two incidents of the offending behaviour must have occurred. The specific incidents do not have to be the same. However, the [CPS legal guidance on stalking or harassment](#) states they must be “so connected in type and in context as to justify the conclusion that they can amount to a course of conduct”.

This is more difficult with fewer incidents that are spread out over a long period, or which may only occur at specific times (for example, once a year on a given date). It must be clear that the series of behaviours are interconnected forming a pattern of behaviour (see *Lau v Director of Public Prosecutions* [2000] EWHC 182 (QB)). Some behaviours that comprise stalking or harassment are not criminal and/or may not seem problematic on their own. It is only when they are seen together, within – or as part of – the course of conduct, the scale of the harm to the victim becomes clearer. Officers and staff should consider engaging with the CPS when [building their case](#).

1.2. Other relevant offences

1.2.1. Domestic abuse

Stalking and [domestic abuse](#) can be intricately linked, especially when linked to ex-intimate partners. These offences may also include coercive and controlling behaviours.

- For further information, see the [Domestic abuse APP](#) and [Controlling or coercive behaviour](#).
- Other relevant advice can be found in the [Violence against women and girls toolkit](#) – for example, [Domestic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour](#).
- For guidance on when to charge controlling or coercive behaviour or stalking, refer to [Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship](#).

1.2.2. Malicious communications

Stalking or harassment often includes, or can wholly be carried out through, the victim being sent messages, images or letters that can cause them psychological

and emotional harm. [Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988](#) makes it illegal to send communication that is intended to cause distress or anxiety.

Officers and staff should consider whether to apply offence codes for malicious communication or for stalking or harassment. They should remember that for stalking, there does not have to be the requirement of “intent to cause distress or anxiety” if there has been an impact on the victim. If a course of conduct for stalking or harassment exists, then this should be the chosen offence category to charge under. For example, if one incident fits the definition of malicious communication but this forms part of a wider pattern of stalking, then the offence of stalking must be recorded.

Further related information is available in:

- [Communications Act 2003](#)
- [Online Safety Act 2023](#)

Specific guidance is available covering the [sharing photographs or film of people in an intimate state](#).

1.3. Crime recording considerations

Harassment often overlaps with other offences, including stalking, controlling or coercive behaviour, and malicious communications. Officers and staff should consider the full context and select charges that reflect the seriousness of the conduct. Where stalking criteria are met, the offence should be recorded and investigated as stalking rather than harassment (see [Distinguishing stalking from harassment](#)).

Stalking is often misclassified. Misclassification can, for example, affect the progress of the investigation and potentially lead to missed opportunities for safeguarding the victim and managing the suspect. Officers and staff should seek advice from their supervisor or force crime registrar if they are unsure about the correct offence classification.

Where a course of conduct is identified between a victim and their former partner, officers and staff should:

- record offences as stalking, unless the force crime registrar is satisfied that the matter amounts to harassment only
- apply additional consideration during the crime recording decision-making process where one or both parties is aged under 16 years, to establish if the matter amounts to stalking rather than harassment

For further advice, see Home Office guidance on [Crime recording rules for frontline officers and staff](#).

Some investigations will involve crime types that are closely linked or occur alongside stalking.

[Racially or religiously aggravated](#) versions of the PHA 1997 offences generally have higher maximum penalties than non-aggravated offences. The [Sentencing Act 2020](#) also allows for higher sentences at court for offences that are aggravated by hostility based on sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

2. Distinguishing stalking from harassment

Stalking can be difficult to recognise and discern from harassment. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and CPS [Protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences](#) use the following definition of stalking:

‘A pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress.’

Stalking is persistent, unwanted and intrusive behaviour that is usually targeted against a specific person. This concentration on the victim is what can differentiate it from harassment. The level of effort, resources and time expended by this individual in their pursuit of the victim tends to be excessive.

The following table and diagram show differences between stalking and harassment:

Criteria	Stalking	Harassment
Is the suspect’s behaviour fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated (FOUR)?	Yes	No
Is the suspect’s behaviour unreasonable and fixated on the individual or victim?	Yes	No
Is the suspect’s behaviour repeated and consuming their daily life?	Yes	No
Has the suspect changed their routines to facilitate their behaviour?	Yes	No
Would the suspect’s behaviour be likely to stop if the underlying problem was resolved?	No	Yes



2.1. Stalking typologies

Stalking behaviour is complex. The characteristics of stalking perpetrators and reasons for stalking vary, and the risk of harm varies depending on these factors. Psychological research has developed classification systems to explain different stalker typologies, based on the reason behind the stalking. These typologies can help police officers and staff to understand the risks. When used in conjunction with other information and intelligence, they can inform the response or actions required.

The most common classification system includes [five categories](#), which are used to underpin structured professional judgement risk identification and can support approaches to risk management strategies (Mullen, 1999).

For more information, including limitations of the use of typologies, see [Stalking and serious harm or homicide: Rapid evidence review to support the investigation into the super-complaint on the police response to stalking](#).

2.2. Dynamics of stalking

Victims of stalking can be stalked by individuals that are known or unknown to them. The types of relationships between a suspect and a victim can be loosely categorised as:

- Partner or former partner – including, for example, casual or intimate relationships, boyfriends or girlfriends.
- Acquaintance – the individual is known to the victim (such as a friend, associate, neighbour, family member or professional acquaintance), but there is, or has been, no intimate relationship.
- Stranger – there is no obvious connection to the victim.
- Unknown – it is unclear who the suspect is, or the victim reports multiple individuals working in a coordinated way.

In most cases of stalking or harassment, there will be some connection between the victim and the suspect, even if the victim is unaware of who the suspect is (for example, where they have only briefly met before in passing).

2.2.1. Stalking by proxy

Stalking by proxy is enacted through someone else doing the stalking, whether knowingly or not, on behalf of the person engaging in stalking. This includes:

- attempting to contact the victim via another person (for example, a friend, family member or professional acquaintance)
- forcing contact through a professional body (for example, through family courts)

Police officers and staff should consider the potential for intended, or unintentional, stalking by proxy. Offices and staff should do the following:

- Continually assess and respond to the impact on the primary victim and the actions of the suspect.
- Remain vigilant to the potential for secondary victims. Secondary victims are those who are targeted and stalked because they are involved in the life of the primary victim. These may include a new partner, a shared child, a best friend, a family member, a work colleague or someone providing professional support.

2.3. Types of harassment

There are a range of different types of harassment, which can overlap. Behaviour can range from offensive jokes, comments, and exclusion to unwelcome physical contact, threats, stalking, and digital abuse, all creating an intimidating or hostile environment. Officers and staff should consider the examples of behaviour in the table to identify the type of harassment exhibited by the offender.

Examples of behaviours	How this may fit with legislation
<p>Examples of verbal harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ threats of harm (direct or implied, for example, threatening or offensive gestures) ▪ abusive or insulting language ▪ repeated unwanted calls or messages 	<p>Use of spoken or written words intended to threaten, intimidate, humiliate or cause distress.</p>

Examples of behaviours	How this may fit with legislation
<p>Examples of physical harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ blocking someone's path or cornering someone ▪ invading someone's personal space ▪ throwing objects around 	<p>Unwanted physical contact or threatening physical behaviour that falls short of actual assault.</p>
<p>Examples of discriminatory harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ abusive language referencing group identity ▪ targeting based on perceived characteristics ▪ graffiti, symbols or messages with discriminatory intent 	<p>Harassment motivated by hostility based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity may constitute a <u>hate crime</u>.</p>
<p>Examples of third-party harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encouraging others to send messages ▪ using intermediaries to deliver threats or pressure 	<p>Using others to intimidate, contact or distress a person.</p>
<p>Examples of property harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vandalism ▪ tampering with vehicles or belongings ▪ leaving objects 	<p>Behaviour involving property damage or interference intended to intimidate or distress.</p>
<p>Examples of psychological harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ isolating, humiliating or degrading a person ▪ constantly opposing one person in particular ▪ intimidation 	<p>Persistent, unwelcome behaviour intended to humiliate, intimidate or control a person, threatening a person's dignity or psychological health.</p>

Examples of behaviours	How this may fit with legislation
<p>Examples of sexual harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inappropriate comments, catcalls or whistling, sexual comments or innuendo ▪ uninvited contact with romantic or sexual intent ▪ making an obscene, sexual or aggressive comment or gesture towards a person 	<p>Unwanted sexual advances, comments, touching or displaying sexual material that causes humiliation, intimidation or distress. See Home Office guidance for further information.</p>
<p>Examples of fixated harassment or stalking can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ following a person ▪ repeated uninvited contact ▪ sending unwanted gifts 	<p>Persistent, unwanted contact or attention that causes fear, alarm or distress.</p>
<p>Examples of online or cyber harassment can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ monitoring or threats via social media, email, messaging apps or smart technology ▪ impersonation accounts ▪ harassment in group chats or online communities 	<p>Abusive, threatening or intrusive behaviour carried out digitally.</p>

Some of these behaviours may be considered as controlling or coercive behaviour in certain relationships. For further information, see the [Controlling or coercive behaviour](#) section of the Domestic abuse APP.

3. Victim considerations

Officers and staff should develop a clear victim strategy, in line with the [Victims' Code](#), at the start of the investigation. They should continually reassess this throughout the [investigative process](#).

All officers and staff should apply the victim care approach outlined in this section at every stage of a stalking or harassment case.

Officers and staff should do the following:

- Communicate clearly and professionally with the victim, including being clear about the seriousness of stalking.
- Inform the victim of the [protective measures](#) available.
- Validate the victim's concerns and do not dismiss the behaviour as trivial or "just attention-seeking". Explain that the victim is not at fault.
- Demonstrate [respect and empathy](#) at all times.
- Engage positively to build trust and [establish a rapport](#).
- [Assess the victim's needs](#) in accordance with the [Victims' Code](#) from the outset. Continue to review these as the investigation progresses and new information emerges. For example, do they need a female or male interviewer, an intermediary or an interpreter?
- Ensure that the victim can access independent and specialist emotional support, [safety planning](#) and [safeguarding](#). This includes working effectively with [partner agencies](#) and referral to a stalking advocate as early as possible.
- Involve the victim in decisions by explaining the [investigation process](#) and agreeing an [action plan](#). Victims should be kept informed throughout, especially with any release from custody or bail, to allow for safety planning.
- Advise the victim that they may be eligible for an [enhanced service](#) under the [Victims' Code](#), if they are vulnerable or intimidated or persistently targeted over a period of time. This is particularly relevant if they are a victim of sustained campaign of stalking or harassment. Enhanced service includes, for example, ongoing needs assessments, specialist support and special measures.
- Regularly review with the victim if they wish to give a [victim personal statement](#), which can be provided at any time during the investigation. A victim personal statement will be important to show the impact of the crimes on the victim and their family to the court. It may help to inform the decision making on issues such as bail, sentencing and any orders. The impact of stalking on the victim should be recorded in the witness statement.

Victim care should be:

- proactive
- consistent
- in accordance with statutory obligations under the [Victims' Code](#)
- considered throughout the criminal justice process, including at key decision points such as arrest and charge

If the CPS decide not to charge or end all proceedings in their case, they should also inform the victim of their right to have the case reviewed as part of the [Victims' Right to Review scheme](#).

The following resources provide further guidance:

- [Victim and witness care](#) in the Prosecution and case management APP
- College of Policing's [guidance on the Victims' Code](#), including the section on the [Victims' Code for policing](#)
- guideline on identification of [clues for vulnerability-related risks](#)
- [Victim care and support](#)
- [APP on Working with victims and witnesses](#)
- [Victims' Code of Practice: Delivering a good quality of service](#)
- [Victims' Code of Practice: Enhanced rights – VIPS](#)
- National Centre for Violence Against Women & Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP): [Using the experience of victim/survivors to improve police practice: Strategic overview](#)

3.1. Trauma-informed approach

Victims often experience high levels of fear and psychological harm, even when the suspect's behaviour may appear minor (College of Policing, 2024). Officers and staff should be aware that trauma can make it difficult and distressing for victims to remember and recall events and can lead to re-traumatisation.

For further advice, see the [Trauma-informed code of conduct for all professionals working with survivors of human trafficking and slavery](#).

Officers and staff should adopt a [trauma-informed approach](#) to avoid misinterpretation. They should ensure that victims are appropriately supported to enable them to speak about their experience. This includes:

- using empathy and non-judgemental communication to build trust and confidence
- recognising that trauma can influence memory and behaviour and not equating inconsistencies with dishonesty
- not using victim-blaming language or attitudes

Taking a trauma-informed approach can foster better engagement with victims, support their recovery, and help ensure accurate and effective investigations. Examples of trauma-informed approaches being explored by forces are shared in the College of Policing [practice bank](#) (levels of independent evaluation vary).

3.2. Vulnerability factors

3.2.1. Children and young people

The PHA 1997 applies to victims of any age, including those under the age of 18 years.

In the case of a stalking investigation, investigators must provide information to support a referral to children's social care and to a multi-agency safeguarding meeting. A referral must be made where information obtained gives reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, thereby triggering [statutory child protection processes](#) under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. Any decision not to refer must be based on assessment of risk and recorded with clear rationale.

Stalking or harassment can affect children and young people, either directly or indirectly. They can be:

- primary victims of stalking or harassment, targeted by peers, adults or strangers
- secondary victims, experiencing harm when a parent, carer, or sibling is targeted (for further information, see [Domestic abuse APP](#))

Children and young people's vulnerability to stalking or harassment is heightened by developmental, contextual and digital factors. Their cognitive, emotional and social

functioning are undergoing rapid changes, which may shape how behaviours emerge or are interpreted (Roberts, Tablou-Shams and Madera, 2019).

This does not reduce the seriousness of the behaviour or its impact on the victim. Instead, investigators should take this into account when analysing intent, context and risk without minimising harmful or escalating patterns. Investigators should remain cautious not to misinterpret impulsive behaviour as harmless or to misclassify serious conduct as normal developmental ‘acting out’.

Investigators should also consider that applications or platforms can be used to coerce children into providing information that could be used to control the victim.

If the suspect in a stalking investigation is a child, then investigators should consider the nature and severity of the offending. They should also consider whether:

- it would be in the public interest to pursue a criminal case against that child, or
- a partnership approach should be taken to divert and support the child away from their offending

For further guidance, see:

- [Voice of the Child](#) when engaging with children and young people
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Child abuse APP](#)
- [Victims' Code of Practice: Enhanced rights – VIPS](#)

3.2.2. Older and vulnerable adults

Policing responders and staff should understand that older and vulnerable adults may be targeted due to their perceived or real vulnerabilities, such as:

- physical or social isolation
- physical limitations and/or limited mobility
- health issues and reliance on medication and health care
- mental illness or impairment
- memory loss
- more limited proficiency with technology

Policing responders and investigators must also take into account their statutory obligations under [section 42 of the Care Act 2014](#) to cooperate with local authorities and other agencies to safeguard adults at risk of abuse or neglect. For further guidance, see [Adults at risk APP](#).

Stalking or harassment in older and vulnerable victims may co-occur and intersect with other forms of abuse. Policing responders and investigators should do the following:

- Take into account that the full scope of a victim's experience may include behaviours that can accompany other abuse (for example, elder abuse or domestic abuse).
- Make and review safety and safeguarding plans, taking into consideration that older and vulnerable victims may be unable to leave or disengage from the abuser due to caregiving requirements. This may also make them reluctant to report any abuse from caregivers because they provide essential support.

Actions and behaviours that provide a course of conduct in older people may include, but are not limited to:

- false imprisonment or preventing from leaving
- sabotaging dietary restrictions
- withholding or sabotaging medication, medical care or assistance with activities of daily living
- tampering with assistive devices (for example, deflating their wheelchair or removing the batteries from their hearing aids)
- publicly shaming, embarrassing, humiliating and/or objectifying the victim
- invading their privacy (for example, watching the victim, hacking into their accounts, or planting or accessing cameras or recording devices)
- convincing or blackmailing the victim to change their will, power of attorney, health care directive or other legal documents
- changing passwords, moving items around in the house, and/or lying to make the victim doubt their memory and state of mind
- hacking into accounts and spending or moving money without permission

- stealing or withholding finances the victim is entitled to (for example, pension or benefits)
- extortion using family members (for example, withholding access to grandchildren unless paid a certain amount)

Offenders may be family members, caretakers or even strangers who identify and exploit these vulnerabilities. The victim or suspect may excuse these behaviours as caregiving or concern about the victim.

3.2.3. Elected representatives and candidates

Elected representatives and candidates can be victims of stalking or harassment.

Officers and staff should seek support from the relevant specialist roles and functions that support the safety and security of elected representatives and candidates at a force level. These include:

- **force elected official advisers**
- **Operation Bridger force coordinator**

These roles and functions can also link with national functions, such as:

- Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team
- Fixated Threat Assessment Centre

3.3. Victim support services

The provision of practical and emotional support for victims is important, as stalking and harassment have profound effects on victims' daily lives and wellbeing. Victims often suffer harms, including:

- psychological trauma
- physical injury
- needing to make significant changes to daily routines to stay safe (for example, limiting where they go or staying inside their home, moving house, changing jobs, or being unable to visit friends or family)
- negative financial consequences

Further examples of the [impact of stalking](#) on victim's daily life are explained in the statutory guidance. The cumulative and intrusive nature of stalking can make the effect on the victim distinct from some other offences.

Victims can have a wide range of support needs over long periods of time. Many victims may have experienced ongoing or multiple abusive behaviours before they report or may have been scared to report. Information about national support services for stalking and harassment is given in the [References and supporting resources](#) section.

Responding officers and investigators should:

- provide clear explanations of services available and how they may support safeguarding the victim
- identify the support service (or services) appropriate for the specific needs of the victim
- explain the role of the services to the victim
- discuss the outcome (or outcomes) required with the victim
- refer the victim to relevant [support services](#), ensuring that the necessary consent has been obtained
- follow up to ensure that a successful referral has been made
- maintain contact with the case officer

There are factors that may influence the type of support a victim needs, such as:

- victim demographic factors
- the relationship between a victim and the suspect
- the behaviours of the suspect

Victims may be unfamiliar with the role of specialist support services and may find policing professionals intimidating or difficult to speak to. When working with victims, responding officers should consider the following prompts to identify the [relevant support](#) needed:

- Would the victim benefit from psychological support?
- Does the victim require practical safety advice?

- Does the behaviour include online behaviours? If so, does the victim require specialised online practical safety advice, such as [Digital Breakup](#)?
- Is the suspect an intimate partner or previous intimate partner of the victim? If so, does the victim require referrals to a domestic abuse support service or multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), if within [specific criteria](#)?
- Are there additional safeguarding concerns that the victim may need support with? For example, this may include the impact of the behaviour on any children, or advice and support for friends and family targeted by the suspect.
- Does the victim require support with accessing advice or services, such as legal services, financial support or housing?
- Would the victim benefit from a specialised support service for young people?
- Does the victim have communication needs? For example, they may require Easy Read, interpreters (spoken or signed language), intermediaries, translators or other aids to communication.

3.4. Multi-agency and partnership working

Investigators should, at an early stage, consider taking a multi-agency approach in the investigation of stalking or harassment. Effective collaboration with other agencies (such as social care, health, probation and victim advocacy) can increase the effectiveness of harm reduction, safeguarding and victim safety strategies.

Failure to engage partners early may leave victims at serious risk and allow perpetrators to escalate their behaviour unchecked.

Officers and staff should provide other agencies with a clear explanation of the case and the role of the police, including:

- the scope of their involvement
- any limits to their remit
- identification of responsibilities and where these transfer to other agencies
- how information sharing will be managed and any confidentiality issues

Officers and staff should also obtain this information from the agencies and professionals they are working collaboratively with. The partners that are routinely involved might include:

- Liaison and Diversion
- housing or the local authority
- [multi-agency public protection arrangements](#) (MAPPA)
- multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)
- multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)
- multi-agency stalking intervention programmes (MASIPs)
- victim advocacy services

A case example of how a multi-agency partnership works can be found in the [Independent stalking advocate statutory guidance](#).

3.4.1. Independent stalking advocates and caseworkers (ISA/Cs)

Stalking victims should have access to support that is independent from the police and is provided by professionals with advanced understanding of the victim's complex needs. It should be available at all stages of the criminal justice system.

ISA/Cs are specially trained to provide:

- support that is trauma-informed and considers all of a victim's needs (for example, practical, emotional, legal and financial)
- a voice for the victim in criminal justice settings and information about navigating these systems
- assessment of risk and an individually tailored safety plan that aims to empower them

ISA/Cs also develop and advocate for specific prohibitive or positive requirements to be included in a stalking protection order (SPO).

At the earliest opportunity, officers and staff should offer contact details and/or referrals to external stalking advocates for every victim of stalking. This includes where the stalker is a previous intimate partner.

The investigating officer should maintain regular contact with ISA/Cs throughout the investigation. This includes providing any updates on the case to the advocates, as well as the victim, so that they can perform their advocacy duties effectively.

The investigator should consider working collaboratively with ISA/Cs to elicit the effect of stalking on the victim – for example, within their personal [victim personal statement](#). The impact of stalking on the victim should be recorded in the witness statement.

For further information, see [Independent stalking advocate statutory guidance](#).

3.5. Single point of contact for stalking or harassment cases

Single points of contacts (SPOCs) within forces, sometimes known as champions or stalking champions, are specially trained officers or members of staff. They should:

- provide specialist support and guidance to investigators to improve the quality of investigations and outcomes for victims
- support investigators to signpost victims to an appropriate specialist victim support service, either nationally or locally, where available
- ensure that stalking cases are not treated as isolated incidents, but as part of a dangerous, persistent pattern

4. First response

The first response is critical when stalking or harassment behaviours are reported or come to the attention of the police. Early intervention can prevent escalation of these behaviours, protect victims and secure vital evidence. Research shows that [stalking can escalate to homicide](#) if not recognised and addressed promptly (College of Policing, 2024).

The term ‘policing responders’ is used in this guidance to refer to all police officers, staff and volunteers who may initially encounter or identify a victim of stalking or harassment. This includes call handlers taking the initial report or disclosure.

The person taking the report will need to understand the investigative actions required to establish what has happened, and/or understand what further police actions might be necessary and the urgency for those actions.

Some responders, such as call handlers, will be responsible for only certain types of actions. However, the responsibilities for those actions remain in place until the case is formally handed over to a specialist or other investigating officer.

Other first responders are likely to be responsible for the initial investigation, risk identification and assessment, as well as for developing an immediate safety plan.

It is important that **policing responders** correctly identify stalking or harassment at the earliest opportunity and understand what actions they need to take. This has important implications for all subsequent decisions and actions. Some of the potential consequences of not correctly identifying the offence may include:

- the perpetrator not receiving interventions or not being prevented from further offending behaviour
- behaviours by the perpetrator escalating and increased risk of harm to the victim
- lack of appropriate safeguarding for the victim – for example, where stalking is not identified, an SPO cannot be applied
- the victim not being referred to specialist support services
- the recorded offence not accurately reflecting the risk of further harm to the victim
- offenders not being brought to justice

4.1. Initial actions

Policing responders should prioritise the victim's immediate safety and wellbeing and the risk of harm posed to the victim by the suspect.

Police responders should adopt a trauma-informed **victim-centred approach** when responding to reports of stalking or harassment and should consider the effect of **trauma on the victim**.

The policing responder should gather as much information as possible by actively listening to and recording the victim's **initial account**. The victim may not realise that the behaviour of the offender amounts to stalking or harassment, as some behaviours can appear innocuous on their own. Responders should consider that fear and harm may be downplayed, masked or hidden. Victims may not verbalise their fears due to fear of repercussions or embarrassment. Behavioural indicators, such as the following examples, should be considered:

- avoidance
- altered routines
- absenteeism
- withdrawing from activities
- social changes (for example, changes in peer groups)
- increased anxiety or isolation
- changing phone numbers or repeatedly blocking accounts

When engaging with victims, policing responders should use age-appropriate or everyday language to elicit and document the behaviours experienced by the victim. Victims may not identify their experience as stalking or define behaviours using formal terms.

The policing responder should do the following:

- Advise the victim to keep a log of incidents and retain the evidence, if it is safe to do so.
- Avoid advising victims to contact suspects to tell them to stop. A suspect may perceive any contact from a victim positively, so they may increase their offending, even when the contact from the victim is telling them to stop.
- Avoid advising victims to block stalking suspects. Blocking a suspect may lead them to look for other ways to satisfy their fixation on the victim and increase the risk (for example, by attending victim's home or workplace, or by using covert digital means).
- Avoid advice that might isolate victims or make them feel they are to blame (for example, telling them to come off social networking sites or change their phone number). Encourage victims to restrict any location tracking.
- Advise the victim to change passwords to remove unauthorised access to apps or digital devices.
- Advise the victim to try to minimise access to personal information that is publicly available, such as the electoral roll, school and employment records, estate agents, and so on.

- Advise the victim to shred or properly destroy any waste containing personal details (such as bank statements and bills).
- Advise the victim to contact organisations such as phone providers or utility companies, to help ensure that their data protection is robust with no third-party access (ex-partners).

Police responders should use **professional curiosity** to better understand the circumstances and experiences of the victim, in particular:

- their view about the suspect's behaviour
- the impact of this behaviour on the victim
- the context of the offence

This will help to:

- support initial decision making
- identify what offence is most likely to have been committed
- inform a **risk-based assessment** and safeguarding considerations
- manage any **counter-allegations**

Delayed reporting or reports of non-recent behaviours are not uncommon. Victims should be reassured by policing responders that:

- their case will be taken seriously
- their reasons for not reporting earlier are understood and will be recorded

When engaging with victims, responding officers should recognise **victim-blaming attitudes**, as this can lead to a perception that officers and staff may be minimising or trivialising stalking or harassment offending behaviours. Such attitudes can:

- have a significant impact on the experience of the victim
- lead to misunderstanding of the level of risk that a suspect poses
- provide inadequate safeguarding and investigative inaction

The following resources provide further guidance and training:

- The IOPC guidance **Violence against women and girls: Guidance on ending victim blaming**

- College of Policing’s online training on [stalking or harassment](#), discussing the offence and the impact on the victim with supervision or local force specialist stalking officers.

Responding officers should also be aware that some victims may be more likely to report online. Responders should routinely follow up online submissions with direct contact to clarify concerns, gather full details and assess risk immediately. Reports made online should be taken as seriously as telephone reports, and should be responded to within the same [timeframes](#).

4.2. Risk identification and assessment

Policing responders should conduct an initial risk assessment, referring to their force’s recommended or appropriate screening tool to support their assessment (for example, the NPCC [screening tool](#)). When policing responders encounter individuals who may be at risk of harm, this presents a crucial opportunity for protection. Evidence stresses the importance of maintaining high levels of [professional curiosity](#) during an initial risk assessment.

High professional curiosity should be exercised, alongside the use of any supporting tools to guide the assessment, such as checklists and risk assessment tools.

Maintaining professional curiosity allows practitioners to think outside the box and consider circumstances more holistically. An example is understanding any discrepancies between a risk assessment tool outcome and professional judgement. The lack of evidence relating to effectiveness of frontline-focused risk assessment tools further highlights the importance of professional curiosity.

Responders should do the following:

- Engage with the victim early to understand their perception of risk, understanding that victims may not recognise all behaviours as stalking or harassment. Use this information to inform the risk assessment and safeguarding decisions.
- Understand and assess:
 - the victim’s vulnerability
 - the nature of all the incidents
 - the circumstances and experiences of the victim

- the impact of the suspect's behaviour on the victim
- that **stalking can escalate to homicide** if not recognised and addressed promptly (College of Policing, 2024)
- Consider how personal or situational factors may increase the number of reported acts. Assess behaviour, intent and frequency to determine culpability.
- Avoid misinterpreting incidents as 'mutual contact' – for example, incidents resulting from attending the same institution or travelling on the same routes.
- Take prompt safeguarding action, where required, to protect the victim and manage the suspect. This includes considering the most appropriate **protective measures**, or combination of measures, to prevent further harm. This may involve arresting a suspect where grounds exist.
- Ensure that safeguarding the victim and reducing the risk of harm takes priority over pursuing a criminal justice outcome.
- Take a holistic view of the suspect's behaviour. Reports should not be considered in isolation. Policing responders should seek to understand the risk of harm to the victim through any patterns of behaviour demonstrated by the suspect. They should record these relevant acts and patterns of behaviour.
- Use the risk identification and assessment to inform **safety planning** and **risk management** initially.
- Continually reassess and frequently review the risk to reflect changes in circumstances, for example, release on bail, service of an SPO charge, during an investigation - particularly as stalking can escalate quickly. Early and accurate risk identification, and risk ongoing management is essential.

Policing responders should seek advice from public protection specialists if they have any concerns in relation to the safety of the victim, children, other family members or friends.

Victim safety and support gives guidance on the tools available to prevent offending and keep victims safe.

For further information see the **Safeguarding** section of this APP and **Public protection practical menu of options** (available via College Learn, login required).

4.3. Early investigative actions

Policing responders should identify the correct offence and **take responsibility for the initial investigation**. They should:

- identify what **investigative actions** are needed – these actions need to inform the correct hypotheses and support appropriate relevant lines of enquiry
- clearly identify stalking or harassment and distinguish them from each other and/or other offences, such as malicious communications
- **record offences accordingly**
- respond as soon as possible to a victim's initial report

Policing responders should use their body-worn videos to capture vital information, including the victim's demeanour, to show the impact of the behaviour on them. This can be important in case building, establishing patterns of behaviour and recording impact for CPS charging decisions. This is especially relevant for section 4a offences – causing fear of violence or suffering serious alarm or distress.

In addition to the actions already set out, policing responders should do the following:

- Ensure that an **assessment of the immediate risk** to the victim has been carried out and that immediate safeguarding activity is instigated if required.
- Ensure that the victim is made aware of how they can contact the police officer dealing with their case. Where possible, assign a named officer or single point of contact to reduce the victim having to constantly repeat details of their victimisation.
- Explain the investigation case progression process to the victim and keep the victim informed – including where suspects are arrested, charged or bailed – as required by the **Victims' Code**. Victims who are entitled to enhanced rights under the Victims' Code should be informed of an arrest within one working day.
- Consider how contact is made with the victim. Repeated calls from an unknown number may make the victim particularly fearful.
- Respond to messages and emails from the victim, even if it is to inform them that there has been no change in their case.

- Consider **proportionate next steps**, such as referring for further investigation.

4.3.1. Intelligence checks

The policing responder must initiate background checks for information and intelligence, including checks:

- on force and national intelligence and information databases, such as:
 - Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) or Police National Computer (PNC)
 - Police National Database (PND)
 - Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR)
- for any markers or alerts, including:
 - any record of current or previous **MARAC** involvement with the victim
 - previous reports on the suspect or between the parties
- for bail conditions and the presence of **protective orders**
- for child protection information

They must take the required actions if **breaches of protective orders** are reported.

5. Investigations

Investigations of stalking or harassment can be complex and protracted, and victims may be traumatised. They require investigators to use the correct investigative mindset, skills and knowledge to investigate such serious and complex crimes safely and effectively. Investigators of stalking should, where possible, be **PIP 2 qualified investigators**.

Investigators should do the following:

- Build on the actions carried out by the **policing responder**.
- **Identify and understand the risks** of harm to the victim. The risk assessment should be continually re-assessed, as risk remains dynamic and will change according to circumstances (for example, release on police or court bail). They should take positive action to **safeguard the victim**.
- Carry out appropriate **victim engagement** for the wellbeing of the victim and collecting evidence.

- Consider any escalation in the suspect's behaviour, either in frequency or severity, and take positive action as soon as possible. An example is if the suspect has breached an order or official protection.
- Consider applying for an SPO in all cases of stalking. Document the rationale at the start of every investigation.
- Check wider sources of information. Some behaviours and activities may be obvious, while others will be subtle and may initially seem harmless. The victim is highly unlikely to be the sole source of information. Other sources, such as friends, family and social network, should be considered to better understand the course of conduct and context of the behaviour.

Investigators should conduct a **suspect-focused investigation** and take a holistic view of the suspect's behaviour. Incidents should not be considered in isolation.

Investigators should do the following:

- Pursue all possible lines of enquiry to identify the suspect.
- Investigate the suspects behaviour, history of their behaviour and any escalation of this behaviour to better understand the risk to the victim.
- Record all incidents, even if individually they appear minor. The victim may not be aware of all the activity that is being carried out.
- Record the relevant history and context of the suspect's behaviour over time, including any wider offending, taking previous offending history and behaviours into account. For example, the suspect may have shown similar behaviour to other individuals. Consider what has happened on previous occasions, rather than focusing on a single incident, to identify any patterns of behaviour.

When investigating cases involving young people, investigators should do the following:

- Liaise with schools, colleges and universities, as young victims can report concerns to pastoral or welfare teams first rather than directly to police.
- Establish information-sharing pathways with designated safeguarding leads, pastoral services and welfare teams to:
 - obtain information on attendance patterns, requests for schedule changes and behaviour logs

- establish whether any internal complaints exist about the suspect
- Make a referral into specialist stalking advocacy, including services with provision for young people.

5.1. Investigative strategy

Investigators should follow the guidance in the [Investigations APP](#) to develop their wider investigative and interview strategies. They should ensure that the investigative strategy includes deadlines for the completion of tasks and clearly sets out relevant lines of enquiry to be pursued. In particular, the strategy should consider the following:

- Strategies relating to scenes, forensics, search, interviews, victim and witnesses, intelligence, communications, covert methods and the suspect, as appropriate. For further information, see [Investigation APP – investigative strategies](#) and [Investigative interviewing](#).
- Relevant information is available to any officers required to attend further reports involving the same suspect or offender.
- Setting out whether any specialist staff have been – or will become – involved, as well as their role.

The investigator should explain to the victim how the case will be investigated. They should:

- agree a plan on how often and via what mechanism the victim will be [updated](#) on the case
- Inform the victim of how they can raise any concerns
- must provide information on the [Victims' Code](#) and the [Victims' Right to Review scheme](#).

The investigator should consider whether a search is necessary to gather evidence to support the investigation. Where there is no standard power of search, they should consider [section 2b of the PHA 1997](#) for section 2A stalking offences. This provides the power to enter and search premises if there are reasonable grounds for believing that an offence of stalking has been committed. A warrant from a magistrate is required to use this power.

Where mental ill health could be a factor, investigators should follow the guidance set out in the [Mental health APP](#). One of the benefits of a MASIP is that psychologists can be co-located, providing local referral pathways into such panels or teams.

Further guidance on investigating stalking offences is contained in:

- [Protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences between the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Crown Prosecution Service](#).
- [Identification, assessment and management of serial or potentially dangerous domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators](#).

5.2. Police-perpetrated incidents

Investigators should respond robustly to allegations of police-perpetrated stalking or harassment. Investigators should be aware that police perpetrators may do the following:

- Use their police knowledge, access to police systems, status, position or authority and powers to harass, monitor and intimidate the victim and/or deter them from making a report to the police.
- Undermine the victim's confidence in reporting, by trying to make them believe that they will not be taken seriously or that the complaint would go nowhere.
- Try to emphasise that they would be believed by default, rather than the victim, because they are a police officer.

The investigator should inform their professional standards department (PSD) immediately of all police-perpetrated incidents. The PSD will carry out an assessment on whether the alleged perpetrator has breached the standards of professional behaviour, and will investigate where appropriate. For further information, see [schedule 2 of The Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2020](#) and the [Police Staff Council standards of professional behaviour for police staff](#).

Where the victim and the offender are both police officers or staff, the investigator should consider that the victim may be concerned that their report could be investigated by:

- friends of the offender
- other people known to the victim and/or offender

All officers and staff should encourage victims to use formal reporting lines to ensure that the victim is properly safeguarded and receives the support they need.

For further guidance relating to police-perpetrated domestic abuse offences, see [Domestic abuse APP – specific management consideration when dealing with police perpetrators of domestic abuse](#).

5.3. Safeguarding

The investigator should consider using a range of [safeguarding interventions](#). This should be proportionate to the behaviours or risk posed. They should take positive action in all cases to safeguard the victim and keep them safe (for example, by providing emergency mobile phones or installing covert cameras).

[Safety planning](#) actions could include advising the victim, where appropriate, to:

- consider alerting friends, family or employers to the risks they are facing
- consider using a personal panic alarm, for example, [Hollie Guard](#)
- contact the neighbourhood or [cocoon watch](#)
- consider accessing specialist support services

The investigator should ensure safeguarding actions are consistent with the [Victims' Code](#) and any [enhanced service](#) identified (see the [Victim considerations](#) section).

The investigator should apply for appropriate bail conditions or [protective measures](#).

5.4. Protective orders

Investigators should consider applying for relevant [protective orders](#) (for example, domestic violence protection orders and stalking protection orders). Protective orders:

- can provide victims with immediate protection
- are flexible and can be used to:

- stop harmful behaviour at an early stage
- prevent escalation of harmful behaviour
- address patterns of harassment, including stalking-related conduct and anti-social behaviour
- can be tailored to the circumstances of the case, ensuring that conditions directly relate to the harm caused and the risk posed by the individual
- should form part of safeguarding actions to protect the victim
- are an important component of a wider safeguarding and risk management strategy for victims

Investigators should assess which order best meets the needs of the victim and the circumstances of the case. They should inform the victim about the purpose of the protective order, its conditions and how to report breaches. For further information, see [protective measures and civil orders](#).

Where appropriate, investigators should liaise with [partner agencies](#) to gather supporting evidence and ensure that any conditions within the protective order are practical and enforceable. They should also monitor compliance of relevant protective orders with partner agencies.

A [breach of a protective order](#) could be a criminal offence. This makes any breach an important component of an investigation and a wider [safeguarding strategy](#) for victims of harassment and related behaviours. This is particularly relevant where criminal thresholds are not yet met but risk is escalating.

Where a breach has occurred, the investigator should:

- respond promptly
- fully explore all offending behaviour (not only the breach), as the victim may not be aware of the full extent of the breach
- arrest, where a power of arrest is attached or where breach constitutes a criminal offence
- record breaches accurately
- consider escalation to criminal proceedings
- reassess risk and update safeguarding plans

- consider it as part of a course of conduct

Breach penalties can include fines, arrest, prosecution or imprisonment, demonstrating the seriousness of compliance.

5.4.1. Other protective measures

Even when a defendant is acquitted in a stalking or harassment case, orders can still be issued to protect the victim from further unwanted behaviour (for example, **restraining orders**). Investigators should consider the likelihood of concerning patterns of conduct continuing or escalating. They should assess whether an appropriate order is needed to safeguard the victim's safety and wellbeing.

5.4.2. Stalking protection orders (SPOs)

SPOs are a civil order that can be used to protect any person, regardless of age, who is experiencing stalking. This includes the victim, as well as anyone connected to the victim who may also be at risk of being stalked. No prior conviction for stalking offences is required to apply for an order to be issued for an offender. SPOs can:

- enable early, pre-conviction intervention
- be used alongside criminal proceedings, but should not be used in place of charging
- be used regardless of the age of the offender, including **children aged 10 years or older**

The officer applying should consider applying for an SPO:

- whenever a stalking offence is reported
- at the **start of every investigation**
- where relevant and appropriate to prevent harm and further offending
- where it appears that the following **criteria** have been met:
 - the suspect has carried out acts associated with stalking
 - the suspect poses a risk of stalking to any person, and
 - an order is reasonably believed to be necessary to protect that person from risk – the person to be protected does not have to have been the victim of the acts mentioned above

A court will not make an order unless it is satisfied that all three of these **required criteria** are met.

Before making an application, the officer applying should do the following:

- Consider the needs of the victim and obtain their views on the most appropriate conditions to request within the application and their view about changing risk.
- Review the risk assessment to develop as detailed a picture as possible, to inform decisions throughout the SPO process.
- Consider the risk posed by the suspect. An application for an SPO may itself be a trigger for a suspect to escalate their behaviour towards the victim.
- Consider seeking specialist advice about the **conditions** they want to include.

The officer applying should also ensure, where possible, that **any conditions do not conflict** with the following, where these are unrelated to the offending behaviour:

- the suspect's religious beliefs
- times when they would normally attend work or education

For further information and guidance, see:

- **Stalking and Protection Act 2019**
- **Home Office statutory guidance for the police on stalking protection orders**

For further information on SPOs, see the **Appendix** of this APP.

5.5. Risk management

The investigator should review the **risk identification and assessment** carried out by the policing responder. They should ensure that the risk has been accurately identified and appropriately managed, and should take action to address any gaps in the process. Consider, where appropriate, seeking expert advice or support from local risk management teams, such as:

- **integrated offender management team**
- the management of sexual and violent offender units
- other multi-agency risk management panels/processes

The investigator should:

- consider putting preventative measures in place to monitor communities and/or area to reduce opportunities for the suspect to stalk or harass the victim
- consider informing local neighbourhood teams to ensure they play a role in local checks and patrols
- discuss and develop an appropriate risk management plan or safety plan with the victim

The investigator may consider a [problem-solving approach](#) useful in some cases of harassment, such as:

- boundary disputes
- employer and employee disputes
- landlord and tenant disputes

However, cases of harassment may potentially escalate. Investigators should consider the necessity for further checks, victim support and risk assessment if the behaviour continues.

The investigator should be familiar with, and appropriately use:

- local information-sharing protocols with [partner agencies](#)
- referral pathways
- risk assessment and management processes for safeguarding adults and children

5.6. Case building

Investigators should engage with the CPS early during their investigation to establish the appropriate course of conduct offences and ensure that evidential thresholds are met. Evidence should focus on the overall behavioural patterns and not individual actions in isolation.

Investigators should fully investigate the history of incidents and conduct proactive investigation to discover, where relevant, evidence of behaviours that the victim may not have been aware of. This should be used by them to develop a timeline and evidence the pattern of behaviours required to build a case. Victims and those affected by the stalking behaviour can also provide evidence. For example, this

could take the form of diaries, which can be added to the investigative timeline and assist with capturing the impact of the stalking.

The investigator should use the [Joint NPCC and CPS stalking or harassment evidence checklist](#) in the preparation of the case material.

The investigator should consider contacting any local police stalking or harassment [SPOCs](#) and the CPS for early investigative advice:

- where it is unclear or uncertain whether the behaviour is stalking or harassment
- where stalking is involved
- where the case is complex or involves challenging issues
- to assist in relevant lines of enquiry
- on the [most appropriate charge](#)

They should evidence:

- the impact that the incident has had on the victim, both physically and psychologically
- how the behaviour may have affected their daily life

The investigator should treat the need for safeguarding measures as evidence to support a “substantial adverse effect” in cases of [stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress](#). This includes, for example, where police interventions have changed a victim’s daily routines.

The investigator should comply with the [Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996](#) responsibilities. They should include the provision of any completed risk assessment in the case file as sensitive material.

For further guidance, see:

- [Charging and case preparation APP](#)
- [Director’s guidance on charging](#)
- [National file standard](#)

5.6.1. Evidence-led prosecution

The investigator should consider pursuing an [evidence-led prosecution](#), where necessary. This will help significantly in circumstances where the victim, for whatever

reason, is **unable to support (or continue supporting) a prosecution**. In these cases, they should:

- consider the threat of future harm to the victim and ensure they safeguard them from risk
- ensure that, as far as possible, the victim's needs are met before they leave police care and that they are **signposted to sources of support**
- record the reasons why the victim may not wish, or no longer wish, to support a prosecution

5.7. Digital strategy

The vast majority of stalking and harassment cases involve the use of digital technology or the internet to carry out and/or facilitate stalking or harassing behaviours.

Digital and online-enabled stalking or harassment may include:

- repeated or persistent messages, emails, comments or calls
- monitoring someone's internet use, email or other electronic communication
- unsolicited sending or showing of sexual images or videos of genitals to another person without their consent
- getting access to someone's email and social media accounts without permission
- spamming
- sending viruses
- stealing someone's identity or creating false profiles to target the victim
- threatening to share private information, photographs or copies of messages (also known as doxing)
- abusive messaging, bullying or posting harmful content
- using online tools to humiliate, harass, manipulate, gaslight or isolate the victim
- adding tracking software or accessing someone's devices

Digital and online-enabled stalking or harassment can be an extension of offline offending, involving unwanted, repetitive, intrusive, threatening and harassing behaviours that causes fear, alarm or distress. Victims may, however, be less aware

or likely to report online behaviour. Some victims may not recognise some **technology-assisted stalking** as stalking behaviour. As a result, investigators should use **professional curiosity** and wider, proactive evidence collection strategies to discover behaviour that the victim may not be aware of or may not have considered reporting. They should take into account the following:

- Messaging patterns (for example, multiple rapid messages) are not automatically indicators of obsession. They should consider the victim's normal digital behaviour when assessing or interpreting behaviour.
- Messaging and social media apps may be interconnected and automatically shared across platforms. The victim may use several different digital platforms to communicate and maintain multiple profiles across different platforms.

5.7.1. Requesting a victim's phone

Where it is necessary to request a victim's phone for digital analysis, investigators should consider that for many victims, this may be their only means of:

- contacting emergency services
- communicating with support networks
- accessing information, safety planning tools or refuge services

Removing this resource, even temporarily, may increase their vulnerability and expose them to further harm.

Investigators should:

- ensure that victim safety takes priority over pursuing a criminal justice outcome
- ensure there is an evidential need
- complete the relevant **digital processing notices** (DPNs):
 - **DPNa**
 - **DPBb**
 - **DPNc**
 - **DPNd**
- provide victims with a temporary or emergency replacement handset while their own device is examined where possible, using schemes such as **TecSafe**

- ensure that the victim understands how to use the replacement device
- confirm that emergency calling capability is active

5.7.2. Digital investigative support

Digital and online-enabled offending, as well as the skill of perpetrators in the use of technology, is increasingly prevalent in stalking or harassment cases. Investigators should do the following:

- Explore opportunities for digital evidence retrieval from the victim and suspect digital devices, including the use of safeguarding tools, where available, to scan for spyware, malware, tracking devices or stalkerware.
- Seek support from force digital media investigation teams, cybercrime teams and/or digital analysts, where required, to ensure that robust evidence collection is being used that is suitable for the specific technology or social media platform.
- Ensure that all avenues are explored for collecting and recording digital content (for example, by taking screenshots or photographs with date and time stamps), recognising that digital content can be easily altered or deleted.
- Work with digital media investigation teams and/or cybercrime teams to anticipate adaptation and preserve digital evidence. Suspects may try to circumvent safety measures – for example, by creating new or burner accounts, using shared devices or indirect contact via mutual acquaintances.
- Work with digital media investigation teams and cybercrime teams to map every platform used by both the victim and the suspect, so that privacy settings, account security and potential exploitation points can be thoroughly understood.
- Work with victims when recommending changes to settings, to understand how this could affect them. For example, for some people, social media platforms are tied to financial incomes. Making settings private may therefore not be feasible.
- Consider the suspect's online monitoring or contact of the victim or their associates – for example, accessing location services.
- Provide up-to-date [victim safety advice](#) that is tailored to the specific application or platform being used.

- Use SPO conditions to clearly specify any restrictions on internet and social media use. Include powers to examine the suspect's phone, devices and browser history.
- Refer to CPS [guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media](#) and [cyber and online crime prosecution guidance](#).

5.7.3. Preserving digital evidence

Investigators should seek to [preserve digital evidence](#) at the earliest opportunity.

They should advise victims to do the following:

- Document everything by taking screenshots showing URLs, timestamps, usernames and messaging history. Logs, metadata, message headers and chat transcripts should also be preserved. These may prove vital in tracing the source of harassment and provide useful evidence if the harassment escalates. It also ensures that a copy exists if the perpetrator deletes their posts and profile.
- Report the abuse to the social media or communication platform, or to [Report Harmful Content](#), which will support them to do so.
- Change all passwords for social media and email accounts. Use two-factor authentication as an additional security measure.
- Review the amount of personal information that exists online, removing content that is personal or sensitive immediately (such as addresses or contact details).
- Engage with [National Cyber Security Centre](#) for technical advice and/or access digital safety advice (for example, from the [The Cyber Helpline](#)).
- Contact specialist [victim support charities](#) for additional support.
- Engage with specialist [take-down services](#) once evidence has been preserved.

Investigators should determine whether a [hate crime](#) has been committed for online harassment that demonstrates, or is motivated by, hostility based on:

- race
- religion
- disability
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity

Any use of non-consensual intimate imagery, doxing or hate-based language should be treated as an indicator of increased risk. Investigators should increase the investigative priority and referral to specialist support.

Investigators should also follow the guidance in:

- [Extraction of material from digital devices APP](#)
- [Extraction of Information from Electronic Devices: Code of Practice](#)
- [Information management APP – Data protection](#)

6. Supervision

Supervisors should ensure that reports of stalking or harassment are thoroughly investigated and effectively managed by teams and individuals with the appropriate skills and experience, in accordance with the guidance contained in this APP. They should proactively support an investigation and provide guidance and direction to investigators.

Supervisors should ensure that policing responders have access to relevant force guidance, understand it and know how to implement it to provide an effective response to incidents of stalking or harassment. Supervisors should [allocate](#) stalking or harassment investigations to investigators who can demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge to investigate serious and complex crimes safely and effectively.

They should:

- Agree an [investigative strategy](#) and carry out regular reviews of stalking or harassment investigations with the individual officer or investigation team.
- Make sure that there is robust supervision in place for staff.
- Make sure that a quality assurance process is in place that provides checks and balances that staff are correctly identifying the offences and risks. This is to take account of the potential risk and complexity involved in investigating incidents of stalking or harassment and breaches of orders.
- Work in partnership with the CPS to ensure that incidents of stalking or harassment are dealt with effectively. This includes ensuring that appropriate charges are brought against the suspect.

- Review all reasonable lines of enquiry, with explicit consideration of digital, behavioural and pattern-based evidence.
- Ensure specialists are utilised, where appropriate, to progress the investigation – for example, digital and intelligence specialists.
- Proactively support and build relationships with peer agency supervisors and relevant partners to ensure that relationships are in place and are effective, prior to any stalking or harassment investigation starting.
- Encourage critical reflection among the team to share expertise, learning from cases and to facilitate escalating any concerns. Critical reflection is also important for the wellbeing of staff dealing with such cases.

Supervisors should follow guidance in the [Conducting effective investigations guidelines](#) and [Effective supervision guidelines](#).

7. Governance

Senior leaders and force leads for stalking and harassment should ensure that [appropriate governance](#) is in place, so that the force can understand, prioritise and respond to incidents effectively. This includes the following:

- Embedding stalking and harassment as priorities within force control strategies and force strategic threat, risk and harm assessments to drive resourcing.
- Ensuring that officers and staff can respond effectively to stalking or harassment, including online. This includes having the [capability](#), capacity and appropriate supervision to undertake high-quality investigations and deliver appropriate outcomes to victims and the public.
- The provision of stalking or harassment SPOCs or champions within their force, ensuring that frontline staff and investigators know how to contact them, where available.
- Establishing appropriate performance management arrangements, including arrangements to measure compliance with national recommendations, audit findings and Victims' Code. These arrangements should provide for force, regional, partnership and OPCC (or equivalent) scrutiny and improvement activity.

- Ensuring resources are available to provide data, analysis and insight, which can be used to understand and improve performance. These should include, as a minimum:
 - mechanisms to monitor how effective their force is in its response to stalking – for example, by reviewing how many SPOs have been applied for and how many applications have been successful and unsuccessful (with the reasons)
 - developing and using data dashboards to track stalking cases, SPO usage and outcomes, supporting effective trend analysis and resource allocation

Senior leaders should ensure that:

- there is an offence code (opening code) within recording systems available for call handlers to code for stalking
- standard operating procedures for call handlers include specific keywords for stalking, to assist them in asking questions to reveal a course of conduct
- infrastructure is in place to check that victims reporting via [internet self-report](#) do not receive a lower level of service
- screening mechanisms are in place for all crime types where stalking behaviours are commonly present (for example, harassment or malicious communications) and misidentification
- systems are in place that empower officers to use the appropriate protective measures to keep victims safe – for example, prevention orders and target hardening
- relevant cases are included in daily management meetings for enhanced strategic oversight, to anticipate demand and resource requirements
- regular audits are conducted examining compliance with stalking recording standards, risk assessment completion, SPO usage and investigation quality

Senior leaders should ensure that governance and policies in relation to the provision of support to victims of stalking is centred on stalking-specific services and separated from the governance provided for domestic abuse or sexual abuse.

They should ensure that processes are in place so that:

- the number of stalking victims that are referred to specialist services are monitored and regularly reviewed
- victim feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or scrutiny panels, are in place to monitor service quality and identify areas for improvement

7.1. Training and development

Senior leaders should ensure that all relevant staff:

- complete the [stalking or harassment e-learning](#) (available via College Learn, login required)
- are provided with specialist training that meets the requirements of the stalking learning outcomes within the public protection national policing curriculum

They should also ensure that investigators of stalking should, where possible, be **PIP 2 qualified investigators**.

Learning from stalking investigations should be captured and used to continuously develop understanding of, and approaches to, stalking or harassment. This includes applying new and innovative investigation techniques to pursue digital lines of enquiry.

They should also ensure that information on relevant local policies and practices is included in their force learning and training. These should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Wherever possible, senior leaders should engage with victim support organisations to co-deliver training and provide specialist input into case management.

7.2. Intelligence, information and risk management

Senior leaders should make sure that appropriate processes and systems are used at strategic, regional and tactical levels, to ensure the following:

- Stalking or harassment investigations are properly resourced and prioritised based on the harm they pose. This includes equipping officers and staff with tools, strategies and resources to gather necessary and proportionate evidence from victims and from suspects.

- Stalking behaviours are identified at the earliest opportunity, preventing misclassification as lower-level offences.
- Officers and staff can record and search for stalking-related behaviours not recorded as the principal crime on crime recording systems. Where possible, interim solutions should be in place until system updates allow full searchability of related behaviours.
- A proactive intelligence collection plan is in place to support regional and national intelligence needs, and to identify patterns and trends for operational and strategic intelligence reporting and plans.
- An intelligence picture is developed regarding repeat perpetrators and how this can fit into wider perpetrator management processes.

7.3. Multi-agency partnerships

In addition to the following guidance set out in the [effective implementation of problem-oriented policing](#), senior leaders should ensure that strategic partnership arrangements are in place for the following reasons:

- Ensuring that governance leads and stalking or harassment partnership groups understand the national, regional and local threat picture to inform responses to emerging risk and harm.
- Establishing strong working relationships with partner agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and charities. Most police forces have stalking partnership forums that meet regularly and are attended by the major partners and local NGOs.
- Embedding multi agency partnerships (for example, MASIPs) to bring together police, probation, health and specialist stalking advocates to manage risk and support offender rehabilitation.
- Ensuring that commissioning arrangements are in place for specialist services, including ISA/Cs or advocacy services, and ensuring consistent availability across force areas.
- Maintaining strong working relationships with specialist victim advocacy services, with partnership engagement at both operational and strategic levels.

- Local perpetrator intervention tactics are developed and used, such as SPOs, the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\)](#), conditional bail, perpetrator programmes and stalking clinics.
- Improving data sharing between agencies to identify patterns of behaviour and inform risk assessments.
- Using scrutiny panels and early-advice clinics, involving CPS and probation, to ensure that investigative decisions are robust and victim-focused.

8. References and supporting resources

- British Psychological Society. (2022). [Stalking typologies](#). In [Working with individuals who have engaged in stalking: A resource for psychologists](#)
- College of Policing. (2024). [Stalking and serious harm or homicide: Rapid evidence review to support the investigation into the super-complaint on the police response to stalking](#)
- CPS. (2018). [Stalking or harassment](#)
- HMICFRS. (2024). [The police response to stalking](#)
- HMICFRS, IOPC and College of Policing. (2022). [Super-complaint on the police response to stalking](#)
- Ministry of Justice. (2020). [Code of Practice 2020 for Victims of Crime in England and Wales](#)
- NPCC and CPS. (2018). [Protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences](#)
- NCVPP. (2025). [Using the experience of victim/survivors to improve police practice: Strategic overview](#)
- Police Staff Council. (2008). [Guidance Note 9 – Standards of Professional Behaviour](#)
- Roberts K, Tolou-Shams M and Madera K. (2016). [Adolescent versus adult stalking: A brief review](#). Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice, volume 16(4), pages 236-252
- United Kingdom. Parliament. (1997). [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)

- Witkin R and Robjant K. (2018). [The trauma-informed code of conduct for all professionals working with survivors of human trafficking and slavery.](#)
Helen Bamber Foundation

This APP should be read in conjunction with the following College of Policing guidance and resources:

- [Conducting effective investigations guidelines](#)
- [Conflict management skills](#) (especially the section ‘Practical advice from the front line – mental health and capacity, and neurodiversity’)
- [Domestic abuse APP](#)
- [Investigation APP](#)
- [Managing effective investigations APP](#)
- [Obtaining initial accounts guidelines](#)
- [Practice bank](#)
- [Vulnerability-related risks guidelines](#)

8.1. National victim specialist support services

The following national organisations provide support for stalking victims. Any officers or staff providing safety advice to victims should refer to the guidance given by these organisations.

Support service	Contact	Services offered
Action Against Stalking	<u>actionagainststalking.org</u> 0800 820 2427 <u>support@actionagainststalking.org</u> <u>Online referral form</u>	Supports victims of stalking and campaigns for victims’ rights. The service is based in Scotland but works throughout the UK.
The National	<u>suzylamplugh.org/pages/category/national-stalking-helpline</u>	Offers advice and support to victims and

Support service	Contact	Services offered
Stalking Helpline	0808 802 0300 <u>BSL Interpreter</u> <u>Online enquiry form</u>	professionals. Operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.
Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service	<u>paladinservice.co.uk</u> 020 3866 4107 <u>info@paladinservice.co.uk</u> <u>Online referral form</u>	Offers a trauma informed service for high-risk victims of stalking in England and Wales. The team are accredited independent stalking advocacy caseworkers. Has a Young People's Team for victims aged 16 to 24 years.
Protection Against Stalking	<u>protectionagainststalking.org</u> <u>support@protectionagainststalking.org</u>	Provides support and protection to victims through a network of local specialist advocacy services.
The Cyber Helpline	<u>theycyberhelpline.com</u> <u>Online enquiry form</u> <u>Chatbot</u>	Provides expert help for victims of cybercrime, digital fraud and online harm.
The National Cyber Security Centre	<u>ncsc.gov.uk</u>	Offer advice and guidance on improving online security.

8.1.1. Young people

Support services and resources available for young people include:

- [Stalking advice – Alice Ruggles Trust](#)
- [Paladin – Young People Services](#)
- [Children and young people – Victim Support](#)
- [Young People 16-24 – Action Against Stalking](#)

8.2. Harassment support services

- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Acas – discrimination-based](#) and [sexual harassment](#).

9. Appendix – SPOs

9.1. Types of SPOs

There are two types of SPO:

- **A full SPO** is intended to offer long-term protection to victims. It is granted when a court is satisfied, after a full examination of the evidence, that the order “is necessary to protect another person” from the risk of stalking. The length and **duration** of full SPOs can vary but offer a minimum of two years’ protection.
- **An interim SPO** is a temporary order and is effective for a fixed period as specified in the order. It ends automatically if the main SPO application is decided (granted or refused) before the interim period ends. The officer applying should consider **an interim SPO** when both of the following criteria apply:
 - there is an immediate risk of harm
 - further information is required to meet the criteria to obtain a full SPO

The officer applying can apply for an interim order at the **same time** as the full application, or where the full application has been made but not yet decided. These applications must be made by the same police force.

Applications for SPOs must be made by the force covering the location where the suspect resides, is believed to be residing, or is intending to reside.

9.2. Authorisation requirements

An application for an SPO must be **authorised by an officer of superintendent rank or above** (including acting or temporary superintendents). The authorising officers is responsible for ensuring that:

- the SPO is necessary and proportionate to protect the victim or others from the risk of stalking
- the views of the victim on risk have been considered – victim consent is not always required for an SPO
- the application form is completed and is justified based on the offender's behaviour and risk they pose

- a thorough risk assessment has been conducted informed using a screening tool and professional judgement
- the rights of the victim and offender have been considered – for example, their right to private and family life

9.3. Conditions of an SPO

Conditions of an SPO should be designed to reduce or remove the identified risk to the safety of the victim. For example, the officer applying should carefully consider whether it is safe to include the victim's address on the order without putting them at risk. The conditions in an order are intended to protect the victim (or other named person) from any future stalking or harassment or fear of violence, rather than to punish the offender.

The officer applying can request [conditions for inclusion in an SPO](#) to protect the victim from the risk of stalking. Conditions must be clear, specific and proportionate to the circumstances, and should be aimed at reducing or removing the identified risks. The [Stalking protection orders: Statutory guidance for the police](#) provides a list of prohibitions and positive requirements that the officers applying for an SPO can request.

Examples of [prohibitions](#) can include the following:

- Contacting, alarming, distressing or molesting the victim and others directly or indirectly by any means.
- Sending, or soliciting to send, any correspondence whatsoever.
- Interacting or engaging with the victim or the victim's network by any social media means. This includes 'liking' posts, following profiles or reposting comments.
- Knowingly approaching within the boundary of any premises where the victim (and others as appropriate) reside, work or frequent. Investigators should consider attaching a copy of an annotated map to clarify the parameters.
- Retaining, recording or researching – by any means – private, confidential or personal facts, or information relating to the victim and others as appropriate.
- Using a different name or changing their name without immediately notifying the court or investigating officer.

Examples of **positive requirements** can include the following:

- Attending specialised intervention programmes (for example, multi-agency stalking intervention programmes).
- Undergoing mandatory mental health assessments and drug or alcohol rehabilitation programmes.
- Surrendering devices, such as mobile phones or laptops.
- Providing police with access and passwords to social media and email accounts.
- Specific **notification requirements** may also be required from the suspect.

The officer applying for the SPO should consider what actions may be necessary if the **offender appeals against the SPO**. Specialist advice from a **force SPOC** or an **ISA/C** should be sought, where appropriate.

9.4. Children

SPOs can protect children **under the age of 18 years** directly or as connected persons. Investigating officers should ensure that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- any conditions do not conflict with family court orders
- any exceptions for child contact are narrowly defined (for example, contact only via solicitors or as directed by the family court)
- safeguarding duties under **section 11 of the Children Act 2004** are met

SPOs can impose conditions on the perpetrator to restrict contact and online behaviours, which is particularly relevant for young victims targeted via social media. Officers should follow Home Office statutory guidance when applying for SPOs and build these measures into existing child safeguarding arrangements. Early consideration of SPOs and tailored conditions for educational and online environments is required to prevent escalation and to protect victims effectively.

Conditions in an SPO should be proportionate and tailored to the young person's environment. Examples of conditions could include:

- restricting or limitations on digital contact (including specific apps or platforms)
- school premises exclusion zones

- restrictions on shared transport routes
- prohibiting indirect contact via third parties or peer groups
- requirements for the perpetrator to undergo interventions

These adaptations increase the practicality and enforceability of SPOs. The officer applying should ensure that, where relevant, the [Youth Justice Service](#) (YJS) is consulted early in the application process. The application should be supported by a record of the contact with the YJS.

9.5. Varying the conditions of an SPO

The officer applying can apply to:

- [vary the conditions](#) of an SPO
- [renew](#) or extend an SPO's duration
- discharge an SPO

The suspect or applying force can [appeal](#) against the making of an order to vary or discharge the SPO.

9.6. Recording and monitoring

The officer applying must do the following:

- Record all SPOs and interim SPOs on the LEDS or PNC. This allows any relevant party with LEDS or PNC access to access the details and any conditions imposed to manage the subject.
- Update other relevant force and national IT systems (for example, PND and ViSOR), noting all relevant risk factors.
- Apply the relevant markers so they are visible to frontline responders and call handlers.
- Inform the victim or victim advocate of the details in the SPO.
- Maintain an up-to-date risk management plan aligned to order duration and review points.

9.7. Breach of an SPO

A person who breaches an SPO or an interim SPO without reasonable excuse **commits a criminal offence**. A pattern of behaviour is not required to breach a SPO – a single incident is a breach of an order. Investigators are required to manage subjects of SPOs and respond to **breaches**.

Breaches should be treated as urgent and investigated promptly and thoroughly. Consideration should be given to arrest where necessary and to the possibility of further stalking offences. Investigating officers should:

- fully investigate all offending behaviour (not only the breach), as the victim may not be aware of the full extent of the breach
- record the breach as another stalking offence
- reassess risk and update safeguarding plans

Investigating officers should take into account the risks posed by persistent stalkers and cases where behaviour is likely to escalate. Key indicators of this include:

- breaches of protective orders
- failure to stop when instructed
- failure to act in their own best interests
- persistence

Research has shown that breaches of stalking protection orders are one of a number of significant risk factor in domestic homicides.

9.8. Transferring an SPO

A victim may experience stalking behaviour **in more than one police force area** – for example, if they live in one force area, work in another and experience stalking in both. The suspect may also move or change force area, in which case the SPO must be transferred from one force to another. Where it becomes known that a suspect intends to move away from the area that currently manages them, transfers will need to be brought to the attention of the force area where the perpetrator will reside. The suspect's force is responsible for sharing details of any SPOs with all the relevant forces.

The officer in charge at the original force should do the following:

- Manage the transfer process where it becomes known that a suspect intends to move away from their local force area. The transfer will need to be brought to the attention of the force area where the suspect will reside, or plans to reside, in the future. The subject of the order will be reminded of their requirement to notify their local police station.
- Ensure that all transfers of those subject to an SPO are properly planned and managed.
- Complete a transfer form, which should include:
 - the new address
 - the circumstances of the case
 - the person (or people) identified at risk and their safety plan
 - the conditions of the SPO
 - the latest risk assessment and/or risk management plan
 - any additional flags and/or warning markers
 - any relevant police and/or partner information including details of any advocates
- Contact the new force area to identify who will take responsibility for the ongoing management of the SPO.
- Arrange a meeting between the two forces to ensure that a robust plan is in place to respond to the transfer.
- Ensure that the most appropriate conditions are requested or remain appropriate.

The receiving area should formally accept the transfer request within seven days and should complete its own risk assessment.

9.9. Examples of SPO forms

Example forms are available for the application, variation, renewal and discharge of SPOs. These can be used to inform and guide local force processes:

- Complaint for a SPO application form
- Complaint to vary, renew or discharge a SPO

- SPO bundle checklist for magistrates' court
- SPO notification requirement form
- SPO witness statement form
- Superintendent's authorisation to make an application for a SPO

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