

Network for Surviving Stalking 2017 Survey Report

Main findings

Basic Facts

- The largest proportion of victims had been stalked for more than two years.
- The largest proportion of victims were targeted by an ex-partner, followed by acquaintances, the former partner of someone close, and workplace stalkers. The smallest proportion were targeted by a stalker whose identity was unknown.

Stalking Methods

- The most commonly experienced stalking activities covered phone calls, text messages, spying and monitoring, and physical approaches.
- The internet played an important role, as many victims received e-mails, and were monitored and abused via social networking sites.
- Stalkers used third parties (who aided stalkers both wittingly and unwittingly) to harass their victims.
- Threats were made towards the victim's children and other persons associated with the victim, and in some cases people close to the victim were physically assaulted.
- Victims were sexually and physically assaulted by their stalkers, and had their property damaged and stolen.
- Differences were noted between victim-stalker subgroups. For example, ex-partner stalkers were more likely to threaten self-harm and suicide, make repeated phone calls to the victim, and physically assault the victim.

Ex-partner Stalkers

- The greatest proportion of those stalked by an ex-partner first become concerned about their ex-partner's behavior whilst the relationship was still intact. Domestic abuse often predates and evolves into stalking.
- A majority of respondents who had children with the person who became their stalker reported that the stalker tended to use their children to gain information about and access to the stalking victim.

Sources of Help

- Respondents were asked who they sought help from. Primary sources of help were family and friends and the police, followed by agencies and charities and health professionals.
- Victims of ex-partner stalkers often reported that they felt unable to seek help, or felt that their safety would be jeopardised if they did consult someone for help.
- In ex-partner cases, many family members and friends were supportive offering help and sympathy. However, many other experiences involved family members either not taking victim seriously, claiming that they were exaggerating, or insisting that this wouldn't have happened if victim had left the perpetrator earlier.

- Many victims stated that their family/friends were supportive but they did not understand the full extent of the effects and nature of stalking.
- Victims were generally happy with responses from charitable agencies, noting that these organisations provided assistance with evidence compilation, provided support, provided sources for further help, safety tips, etc.
- A majority of victims said that their health professional had recognised the negative impact of stalking.

Experiences with the Police

- Experience with the police was generally less positive, with respondents saying that investigations took a long time, and that police were of little help because they could not convict the stalker or were simply dismissive of the victim's concerns
- Of those victims who reported to police, a majority stated that the police did not recognise the situation reported as constituting stalking.
- Very few stalkers were charged with stalking.
- In many instances, victims reported that nothing was done due to a lack of physical harm/damage. Many victims felt that they could not proceed because of safety concerns and due to exhaustion caused by being stalked.
- Most victims who reported their stalker to the police said that they were not informed of how to gather evidence to assist the police investigation or for use in court, or that they could write a Victim Impact Statement or a Victim Personal Statement.
- On the whole, Restraining Orders did not make victims feel safer and were frequently breached. Police tended to investigate breaches but not all stalkers were punished for these breaches.
- Overall, most victims did not feel safer after reporting their stalker to the police.

Impact on Victims

- The majority of victims were very frightened or terrified of their stalker.
- Many victims report having breakdowns and feeling incapable of coping with the psychological effects of stalking.
- A majority of respondents reported anxiety, loss of confidence, fear, depression, loneliness and isolation, panic attacks, difficulty concentrating, sleeping problems, and problems with trust and intimacy.
- Respondents experienced financial losses due to losing wages, increasing security, repairing stolen or damaged property, counseling and medical interventions, relocating.

Background

This project has given people who've experienced being stalked the opportunity to tell us about their experiences in great detail.

Network for Surviving Stalking established "Victim's Voices" as previous research established that existing stalking agencies are simply not able to do enough; just 12% of victims surveyed by NSS in 2012 had contacted the National Stalking Helpline. Paladin is the UK's Stalking advocacy service focusing only on high risk victims. No organisations are currently effectively helping victims in the early stages,

where intervention would be of most use in reducing harm.

Existing stalking agencies are providing specialist services; helplines, case-workers for clients, or delivering specialist training. No organisations are focusing on ‘bottom up’ awareness raising, which we believe will lead to early identification of stalking behaviour and an opportunity for appropriate intervention; the best outcome in any stalking situation.

We are extremely grateful to the many people who’ve given their time to tell us about their experiences of stalking. Thanks to the huge amount of detail we’ve been given, we can now work with partners and agencies to improve and focus campaigns on their behalf, provide practical assistance to front-line service providers and where necessary hold agencies to account.

1. *Stalking status and recognition of stalking*

A majority of respondents (80.1%) believed that they had been or were currently being stalked. The remainder were unsure. This fits with what is already known about recognising stalking. Previous research shows that many victims will suffer more than 100 incidents before they realise that what they are experiencing is stalking and reporting to the police (Sheridan, 2005). This is due to the nature of stalking. Unlike many other crimes, stalking is chronic and can take place over months or even years. It can be difficult for victims and other persons to assess when a stalker’s behaviour has crossed into the realms of the criminally unacceptable (see for example, National Institute of Justice, 2012). Table 1 shows that the largest proportion of victims had been targeted for a period of more than two years. Table 2 details the point at which respondents realised that what was happening to them constituted stalking. Although the largest proportion of victims realised they were being stalked within two weeks of being targeted, for the majority of respondents, the realisation took place after two weeks and for some it was more than two years. In most cases the victim themselves realised that they were being stalked, and for others it was family and friends who recognised the situation as stalking. Some victims realised they were being stalked after contacting advice agencies and anti-stalking charities (see Table 3).

Respondents were separated into five groups based on the nature of the victim-stalker relationship. The highest proportion of victims were targeted by an ex-partner (38.9%), followed by acquaintances (33%), the ex-partner of someone close (27.4%, usually an ex-partner of the victim’s current partner), and workplace stalkers (17.1%, colleagues or clients). The smallest proportion were targeted by a stalker whose identity was unknown (17.8%). The sum of these percentages is more than 100 as some victims (of whom there were 321 in total) had experienced more than one episode of stalking.

Table 1: How long have you been stalked?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
0 - 2 weeks	2.0%	2.2%	1.9%	4.2%	4.0%	2.6%
3 - 4 weeks	5.0%	4.3%	3.1%	4.2%	2.0%	4.0%
5 - 7	4.0%	6.5%	2.7%	2.8%	4.0%	3.7%

weeks						
2 - 4 months	11.9%	6.5%	9.3%	9.7%	6.0%	9.5%
5 - 8 months	13.9%	10.9%	9.7%	11.1%	6.0%	11.1%
9 months - 1 year	10.9%	13.0%	11.7%	8.3%	14.0%	11.1%
1 - 2 years	10.9%	50.0%	14.8%	12.5%	14.0%	17.7%
More than 2 years	38.6%	6.5%	42.8%	45.8%	44.0%	37.3%
Other	3.0%	2.2%	3.9%	1.4%	6.0%	3.0%

Many victims reported stalking behaviours that occurred for 3-8 years, although the stalking was ongoing for many people, and as such the duration could be longer than 8 years.

Table 2. How long before you recognised what was happening as stalking?

	Ex-partner (N = 124)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Timeframe						
0-2 weeks	27.4%	18.2%	13.6%	23.9%	27.3%	20.1%
3 - 4 weeks	10.5%	7.3%	13.6%	14.8%	15.2%	11.3%
5 - 7 weeks	8.9%	5.5%	8.7%	5.7%	12.1%	7.4%
2 - 4 months	16.1%	20.0%	9.7%	12.5%	12.1%	12.8%
5 - 8 months	4%	5.5%	7.8%	10.2%	9.1%	6.4%
9 months - 1 year	12.1%	14.5%	17.5%	18.2%	12.1%	14.0%
1 - 2 years	8.9%	1.8%	5.8%	14.8%	3%	7.3%
More than 2 years	8.1%	25.5%	21.4%	23.9%	6.1%	15.8%
Other	4%	1.8%	1.9%	14.8%	3%	5.0%

Table 3. Person who recognised stalking

	Ex-partner (N = 124)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
<i>Who</i>						
You did	57.3%	74.5%	61.5%	55.7%	66.7%	61.1%
Friends or relatives	23.4%	14.5%	20.2%	27.3%	27.3%	22.5%
The police	0.8%	0	1%	5.7%	0	1.7%
An advice agency	5.6%	1.8%	1%	2.3%	3%	3.0%
You didn't realize this was stalking until you visited www.scaredofsomeone.org	9.7%	7.3%	10.6%	6.8%	0	8.2%
Other	3.2%	1.8%	5.8%	2.3%	3%	3.5%

Although there was a wide range of recognition triggers, the most widely mentioned factor that triggered the identification of stalking was the actual persistence of the behaviour. Many victims mentioned that the person is “always there”, or “will not leave me alone”, noting that even though victims would request for the behaviour to

stop, the stalkers continued to find where the victim was (including daily activities in public areas) and would persist in harassing the victim. Prominent triggers for recognising stalking included the stalker turning up at the victim's workplace or home unexpectedly and repeatedly, occurrence of sexual, emotional, and physical harassment, extensive messaging and calling, waiting for and following the victims wherever they went, and simply being told by a friend or family member that the behaviour constituted stalking. Victims of ex-partner stalkers reported more experiences of sexual/physical/emotional harassment compared to the other stalker-victim relationship subgroups. Workplace stalkers tended to trigger stalking recognition through the amounts and types of emails/phone calls/messages they sent to their victims.

2. *Stalking behavior*

The survey asked respondents whether they had experienced various stalking behaviours. These had been identified by previous studies as commonly observed stalking activities (for instance, within Spitzberg's 2002 analysis of 103 studies of stalking). Proportions of respondents who had experienced each behaviour are shown in Table 2, broken down by stalker-victim group.

Table 4: Stalking behaviour

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Stalking behaviour						
1. Phone calls.	76.78%	43.6%	38.7%	71.6%	28.6%	57.5%
2. Text messages.	76%	30.9%	34%	69.3%	20%	52.8%
3. E-mails.	39.2%	32.7%	19.2%	45.5%	14.3%	32.4%
4. Social network sites.	48.8%	47.3%	35.8%	59.1%	34.3%	46.2%
5. Monitoring on the Internet.	35.2%	46.3%	26.4%	38.6%	25.7%	34.2%
6. Posting of information about you on the Internet.	24%	30.9%	21.7%	34.1%	25.7%	26.7%
7. Watching, spying or following you.	73.6%	74.5%	81.1%	64.8%	54.3%	72.3%
8. Turning up at your home or place of work.	70.4%	49.1%	60.4%	63.6%	34.3%	60.2%
9. Letters or gifts.	36%	29.1%	27.4%	34.1%	14.3%	30.4%
10. Ordering or cancelling goods without your permission.	6.4%	9.1%	10.4%	8%	5.7%	8%
11. Damage to possessions or property.	28%	27.3%	24.5%	23.9%	11.4%	24.8%
12. Stealing personal	22.4%	21.8%	15.1%	18.2%	8.6%	18.2%

property.						
13. Threatening to hurt you.	43.2%	36.4%	33%	45.5%	28.6%	38.9%
14. Threatening to hurt adults close to you.	17.6%	16.4%	22.6%	21.6%	11.4%	19.3%
15. Threatening to hurt your children.	17.6%	7.3%	12.3%	14.8%	11.4%	13.6%
16. Physically hurting you.	30.4%	10.9%	8.5%	23.9%	5.7%	18.6%
17. Physically hurting people close to you.	8%	7.3%	6.6%	8%	2.9%	7.1%
18. Threatening to sexually assault you.	11.2%	12.7%	9.4%	9.1%	11.4%	10.5%
19. Sexually assaulting you.	15.2%	7.3%	8.5%	11.4%	2.9%	12.7%
20. Contacting people close to you.	56%	38.2%	45.3%	51.1%	28.6%	47.4%
21. Contacting your workplace or colleagues.	28.8%	47.3%	25.5%	34.1%	20%	31%
22. Threatening suicide/self harm.	43.2%	7.3%	5.7%	31.8%	0	22.5%
23. Using other people to get to you.	57.6%	47.3%	50.9%	54.45%	31.4%	51.5%
24. Vexatious complaints being made about you to the police or via the courts.	20%	Dating app. 0	Dating app. 5.7%	Dating app. 9.1%	Dating app. 0	N/A (as different variables are examined within subgroups)
25. Other.	11.2%	16.4%	14.2%	8%	2.9%	11.1%

Table 4 reveals the most commonly experienced stalking activities covered phone calls, text messages, spying and monitoring, and physical approaches. The internet played an important role, as evidenced by the figures concerning e-mails, and monitoring and abuse via social networking sites. Stalkers are able to use third parties (who aid stalkers both wittingly and unwittingly) to harass their victims. This includes slandering the victim, threatening third parties close to the victim, and attempting to uncover information about the victim from others. Stalking rarely affects the victim alone. Threats were made towards the victim's children and other persons associated with the victim. Actual physical harm towards other persons close to the victim was seen.

Victims were sexually and physically assaulted by their stalkers, and had their property damaged and stolen.

Differences were noted between victim-stalker subgroups. For example, ex-partner stalkers were more likely to threaten self harm and suicide, make repeated phone calls to the victim, and physically assault the victim. This supports previous

research that has identified ex-partner stalkers as the subgroup most likely to harm their victims (see for example McEwan, Mullen, MacKenzie, & Ogloff, 2009).

Those who outlined stalker behaviours others than those provided in our list reported mild intrusive behaviours such as banging on windows or knocking on doors and then running away, and following and appearing at the places the victims was attending, to more extreme intrusive behaviours such as killing the victim's pet, threats to abduct victim's children, and hacking online materials and accounts. Many participants noted that the perpetrators began either following or trying to make contact with the victim's children as a way of accessing and threatening the victim.

3. *The stalker's abusive history*

Table 5 provides information concerning whether the victim was aware of any history of stalking, harassment, violence and domestic abuse that their stalker had engaged in. For some, this only became apparent when the police became involved in their cases. These figures are likely lower than the reality, as many victims were unable to say whether their stalker had a history of abuse.

Table 5: Stalker's history of stalking and other related crimes

Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
History of abuse or violence?					
47.2%	18.2%	23.1%	50%	15.2%	37.8%
History of harassment?					
24.8%	40%	8.5%	28.4%	8.6%	22.1%
History of stalking?					
13.6%	10%	6.6%	21.6%	11.4%	13.1%
History of domestic abuse?					
32.8%	10%	6.6%	29.5%	0	19.7%
History of violence?					
30.4%	18.2%	11.3%	27.3%	11.4%	21.2%
History of other?					
7.2%	40%	5.7%	5.7%	0	10.4%

Table 6 details whether the victim had awareness of whether the historical abuse, stalking or violence was known to the police.

Table 6: Has the historical abuse, stalking or violence been reported to the police?

	Ex-partner (N = 59)	Work (N = 10)	Acquaintance (N = 52)	Ex of someone close (N = 25)	Person unknown (N = 9)	All groups combined
Yes	57.6%	80%	70.8%	63.6%	60%	61%
No	20.3%	10%	12.5%	13.6%	0	13.9%
Don't know	22%	10%	16.7%	22.7%	40%	20.1%

4. *Ex-partners*

The greatest proportion of those stalked (57.6%) by an ex-partner first become concerned about their ex-partner's behavior whilst the relationship was still intact. This relates to domestic abuse, and it is well known that a clear link exists between

domestic abuse and stalking (see for instance Norris, Huss & Palarea, 2011). Domestic abuse often predates and evolves into stalking. Other victims of ex-partner stalkers became concerned about their ex-partner's behavior whilst the relationship was ending (25.6%), immediately after the relationship ended (26.4%), six months after the relationship ended (8%), or more than a year after the relationship ended (6.4%).

Those respondents who were stalked by a former partner were asked whether they had children with this person. More than a quarter did (26.4%). Of these, 75.8% believed that child contact arrangements had featured in the stalking campaign against them. These victims reported that the stalker tended to use their children to gain information about and access to the stalking victim.

5. *Fear and tipping points*

The vast majority of respondents reported that they were scared of their stalker's behavior, as detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Fear

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	93.6%	83.6%	90.4%	93.2%	93.9%	91.4%

How scared?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
1 Not scared at all	1.6%	0	2.8%	2.3%	0	1.7%
2	0.8%	1.8%	2.8%	0	0	1.4%
3	4%	10.9%	4.7%	2.3%	2.9%	4.7%
4	3.2%	3.6%	2.8%	5.7%	2.9%	3.8%
5	4.8%	9.1%	4.7%	6.8%	5.7%	6.1%
6	9.6%	5.5%	4.7%	11.4%	11.4%	8.6%
7	9.6%	16.4%	19.8%	10.2%	11.4%	13.5%
8	16%	16.4%	16%	15.9%	25.7%	16.9%
9	8.8%	9.1%	8.5%	12.5%	14.3%	10.3%
10 Terrified	40%	27.3%	26.4%	31.8%	17.1%	31.1%

Table 7 shows that the majority of victims were very frightened or terrified of their stalker. Previous research indicates that level of victim fear is a primary indicator of risk (see Sheridan & Lyndon, 2010).

Respondents were asked whether there were any particular events that made them realise that they needed to seek help from the police or other parties. Table 8 details the responses we received. Although personal safety was a factor, the most important factor was the realisation that the stalker was not going to stop his/her campaign. Other important factors were escalation and fears for the safety of others.

Table 8: Tipping points

Was there a 'tipping point' which made you seek help?						
	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	83.2%	83.6%	89.4%	86.4%	87.5%	85.8%
Was the 'tipping point' when - you realised this person was not going to stop?						
Yes	42.4%	49.1%	50.9%	55.7%	57.1%	47.9%
Was the 'tipping point' when - you realised this person's behaviour was getting worse and happening more often?						
Yes	38.8%	56.4%	49.1%	40.9%	54.3%	45.6%
Was the 'tipping point' when - threats of violence were made?						
Yes	13.6%	23.6%	19.8%	20.5%	17.1%	18.7%
Was the 'tipping point' when - you were frightened for your own safety?						
Yes	43.2%	38.2%	41.4%	45.5%	54.3%	43.4%
Was the 'tipping point' when - you were frightened for the safety of an adult or adults close to you?						
Yes	11.2%	29.1%	19.8%	14.8%	34.3%	18.6%
Was the 'tipping point' when - you were frightened for the safety of your child or children?						
Yes	27.2%	14.5%	17%	34.1%	28.6%	24.6%
Was the 'tipping point' when – Other?						
Yes	4.8%	7.3%	6.6%	4.5%	8.6%	6.1%

A prominent concern noted by victims was physical and verbal abuse, especially in cases involving ex-partner stalkers. Victims reported that they became scared when their stalkers were abusive, and engaging in behaviours such as reckless driving, emptying a rubbish bin over the victim's head, and causing violence related injuries to the victim (e.g. from strangling).

Stalkers whose identity was unknown seemed to cause fear in the victim through less physical approaches, with victims reporting that their stalker followed them everywhere, which led victims to fear being alone, and being unable to go anywhere without being watched or followed.

Many stalkers who were acquaintances made their victims feel uncomfortable due to the pursuit of a relationship that was unwanted by the victim, with stalkers needing constant attention from their victims. Victims described their stalkers as misinterpreting friendliness and becoming needy, using the victim's family and friends to find out information and gain access to their victim.

Victims of work related stalkers reported receiving unwanted gifts and "complimenting" behaviour that was unwelcome. Some victims reported more escalated behaviour such as aggression and threats by the stalker to harm the victim and themselves.

Other tipping points described included the negative effects of the threatening behaviour on the victim, and feeling like they were going mad. In some instances it wasn't one particular factor or event, it was a number of things and their cumulative effects on the victim's wellbeing. Many victims report having breakdowns and feeling incapable of coping with the psychological effects of the persistence of the threatening behaviour.

6. Seeking help: Overview

Respondents were asked who they sought help from. Primary sources of help were family and friends and the police, followed by agencies and charities and health professionals. Tables 9 and 10 detail the relevant figures.

Table 9: Sources of help

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Friend or family	59.2%	61.8%	62.3%	62.5%	51.4%	60.1%
Agencies	23.2%	21.8%	19.8%	15.9%	20%	20.3%
Phone company	2.4%	5.5%	7.5%	4.5%	5.7%	5.1%
Police	49.6%	45.5%	49.1%	54.5%	57.1%	50.8%
Internet provider	1.6%	7.3%	6.6%	5.7%	2.9%	4.9%
Social media site	4.8%	14.5%	4.7%	9.1%	17.1%	8.2%
Solicitor	15.2%	12.7%	8.5%	20.5%	5.7%	13.7%
Health professional	16.8%	25.5%	18.9%	19.3%	11.4%	18.6%
Work management/Human Resources	7.2%	56.4%	11.3%	9.1%	11.4%	15.4%
Union	0	10.9%	1.9%	0	2.9%	2.3%
Other	16%	21.8%	19.8%	0	11.4%	14%

Table 10: Which agency or agencies did you seek help from?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
National Stalking Helpline	4.8%	14.5%	9.4%	3.4%	5.7%	7%
Paladin	0.8%	5.5%	2.8%	3.4%	11.4%	3.5%
Women's Aid	11.2%	3.6%	2.8%	8%	2.9%	6.7%
Refuge	2.4%	1.8%	1.9%	1.1%	0	1.6%
Victim Support	7.2%	10.9%	6.6%	5.7%	0	6.7%
Other	10.4%	10.9%	8.5%	2.3%	5.7%	7.8%

Victims of ex-partner stalkers often reported that they felt unable to seek help, or felt that their safety would be jeopardised if they did consult someone for help.

Victims of unknown identity stalkers contacted sources that were easy to reach, such as suspected workplace of stalker, university services, or online helplines.

Acquaintance stalker victims consulted sources of help such as university bosses, political members, and work colleagues.

Workplace stalker victims tended to seek help from health professionals such as therapists and medical officers.

Overall, a large proportion of victims from all groups reported that they did not seek any help.

In ex-partner cases, many family members and friends were supportive in terms of hearing about the stalking behaviour, and offered help and sympathy. However, many other experiences involved family members either not taking victim seriously, claiming that they were exaggerating, or insisting that this wouldn't have happened if victim had left the perpetrator earlier. Many victims stated that their family/friends were supportive but they did not understand the full extent of the effects and nature of the threatening behaviour.

Overall, reactions ranged from being dismissive and not understanding why the victim wasn't flattered, to shock and disbelief from family. Many victims reported

that they were mostly supported and that their family was worried about the victim and wanted to take matters into their own hands. However a moderate proportion of victims mentioned that their family became angry with the victim and did not offer help.

Victims were happy with responses from charitable agencies, noting that these organisations provided assistance with evidence compilation, provided support, provided sources for further help, safety tips etc. Experience with the police was generally less positive, with respondents saying that investigations took a long time, and that police were of little help because they could not convict the stalker or were simply dismissive of the victim’s concerns

7. The police

Respondents were asked how they first made contact with the police and most called the police by phone. Other called in to a police station in person and a small proportion first contacted the police via an agency or via an online form.

Table 11: How did you make first contact with the police?

	Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
By calling 999	37.1%	0	11.5%	29.2%	0	20.7%
By calling the non-emergency 101	30.6%	56%	55.8%	39.6%	55%	44.8%
By visiting a police station	27.4%	32%	21.2%	27.1%	30%	26.4%
Online	1.6%	4%	3.8%	2.1%	15%	3.9%
Via an agency	3.2%	8%	7.7%	2.1%	0	4.5%

The survey asked whether victims first spoke to a civilian member of staff or a sworn officer. Most were unsure, as detailed in Table 12.

Table 12: Did you first speak to a civilian member of staff?

Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes: 19.4%	Yes: 28%	Yes: 30.8%	Yes: 27.1%	Yes: 35%	Yes: 26.4%
No: 29%	No: 28%	No: 26.9%	No: 25%	No: 45%	No: 28.9%
Don't know: 51.6%	Don't know: 44%	Don't know: 42.3%	Don't know: 47.9%	Don't know: 20%	Don't know: 44.7%

Tables 13 and 14 show that in a majority of cases, a stalking risk assessment was not conducted.

Table 13: Did the first person you spoke to carry out a stalking risk assessment?

Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes: 14.5%	Yes: 12%	Yes: 0	Yes: 10.4%	Yes: 0	Yes: 8.3%

No: 67.7% Don't know: 17.7%	No: 80% Don't know: 8%	No: 84.6% Don't know: 15.9%	No: 72.9% Don't know: 16.7%	No: 80% Don't know: 20%	No: 76.1% Don't know: 16.1%
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Table 14: Did anyone else carry out a stalking risk assessment?

Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 16)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes: 14.3% No: 76.2% Don't know: 9.5%	Yes: 5% No: 95% Don't know: 0	Yes: 2.3% No: 93.2% Don't know: 4.5%	Yes: 11.4% No: 85.7% Don't know: 2.9%	Yes: 12.5% No: 81.3% Don't know: 6.3%	Yes: 8.9% No: 85.6% Don't know: 5.5%

Table 15 shows that in a majority of cases, the police did not recognise the situation reported as constituting stalking. Of course, it is not known how many of the cases did constitute stalking in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Table 15: Did the police recognise the situation as stalking?

	Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes – immediately	17.7%	12%	13.5%	16.7%	15%	15.7%
Yes - but I had to report it more than once	19.4%	20%	11.5%	25%	20%	18.7%
No	50%	56%	63.5%	54.3%	65%	56.6%

Table 16 reveals that very few stalkers were charged with stalking.

In many instances, victims reported that nothing was done due to a lack of physical harm/damage. Many victims felt that they could not proceed because of safety concerns and due to exhaustion caused by being stalked. In many experiences, the police did not consider the behaviour as stalking, and there was little further investigation due to lack of evidence, often lack of physical harassment.

Table 16: Was your stalker charged with stalking?

Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
4.8%	1.8%	0.9%	12.5%	0	4.6%

Tables 17 and 18 show that in most cases, victims said that they were (i) not informed of how to gather evidence to assist the police investigation or for use in court, and (ii) that they could write a Victim Impact Statement or a Victim Personal Statement.

Table 17: Were you told how to gather evidence to assist the police investigation or for use in court?

	Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
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Yes	38.7%	28%	28.8%	41.7%	75%	38.6%
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Table 18: Were you told you could write a Victim Impact Statement or a Victim Personal Statement?

	Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 55)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	37.1%	12%	19.2%	33.3%	25%	27.1%

In those cases where the stalking was reported to police, almost a fifth of those involving an ex-partner stalker or a stalker who was the ex-partner of someone close saw a Restraining Order being served. Unsurprisingly, no Restraining Orders were put in place in cases where the identity of the stalker was unknown. On the whole, Restraining Orders did not make victims feel safer and were frequently breached. Police tended to investigate breaches but not all stalkers were punished for these breaches.

Table 19: Restraining Orders (R.O.s)

	Ex-partner	Work	Acquaintance	Ex of someone close	Person unknown	All groups combined (N = 321)
R.O. in place?	22.6% (N = 62)	16% (N = 25)	11.5% (N = 106)	22.9% (N = 59)	0 (N = 20)	18.5%
Made victim feel safer?	21.4% (N = 14)	16.7% (N = 6)	50% (N = 4)	9.1% (N = 11)	N/A	24%
R.O breached?	71.4% (N = 14)	33.3% (N = 6)	75% (N = 4)	63.6% (N = 11)	N/A	59.3%
Police investigate breach?	80% (N = 10)	75% (N = 4)	100% (N = 3)	28.5% (N = 7)	N/A	75.4%
Stalked punished for breach?	30% (N = 10)	75% (N = 4)	33.3% (N = 3)	66.3% (N = 7)	N/A	58.2%

Overall, less than a quarter of stalkers were issued with a Police Information Notice (PIN) or Harassment Warning. Where these were issued, they did not stop or decrease the stalker's activity in most cases. Tables 20 and 21 provide the relevant figures.

Table 20: Was the stalker issued with a Police Information Notice (PIN) or Harassment Warning?

Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 52)	Ex of someone close (N = 48)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes: 25.8% No: 45.2% Don't know: 29%	Yes: 20% No: 60% Don't know: 20%	Yes: 19.2% No: 57.7% Don't know: 23.1%	Yes: 22.9% No: 39.6% Don't know: 37.5%	Yes: 30% No: 55% Don't know: 15%	Yes: 23.1% No: 50.4% Don't know: 27%

Table 21: Did the PIN or Harassment Warning change the stalking behaviour?

Ex-partner (N = 16)	Work (N = 5)	Acquaintance (N = 10)	Ex of someone close (N = 48)	Person unknown (N = 6)	All groups combined (N = 321)
No: 37.5% It stopped: 18.8% It increased: 25% It decreased: 18.8%	No: 60% It stopped: 20% It increased: 20% It decreased: 0	No: 40% It stopped: 10% It increased: 50% It decreased: 0	No: 36.4% It stopped: 18.2% It increased: 18.2% It decreased: 27.3%	No: 33.3% It stopped: 33.3% It increased: 33.3% It decreased: 0	No: 40.6% It stopped: 17.8% It increased: 30% It decreased: 11.6%

The survey asked respondents whether any other police measures were taken to deal with the stalker's behaviour, including bail and licence conditions being imposed, Criminal Behaviour Orders, and officers speaking directly with the offender. In just less than half of cases reported to the police, other measures were taken. The most frequently observed measures were officers speaking directly with the offender and bail conditions being imposed.

Table 22: Were any other measures taken to deal with the stalker's behavior?

	Ex- partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 25)	Acquaintance (N = 52)	Ex of someone close (N = 48)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Bail conditions being imposed	17.7%	4%	7.7%	10.4%	5%	10.2%
Licence conditions being imposed	3.2%	0	0	2.1%	0	1.4%
Criminal Behavior Order	0	0	1.9%	4.2%	0	1.4%
Officers said they would 'have a word'	24.2%	32%	40.4%	37.5%	40%	29.3%
No other measures were taken	46.8%	44%	50%	39.6%	0	36%
Other	8.1%	20%	0	6.3%	55%	8.5%

Overall, most victims did not feel safer after reporting their stalker to the police. See Table 23. Many police officers did not take the victim's experiences seriously and were dismissive, unless an "actual crime" happened. Most experiences were negative, and some victims were even told that if they continue writing down every instance of harassment, this may itself be deemed as harassment. Victims felt that the police were too busy with "more serious matters", as well as limited by the legal system itself, and many victims tended to use powerful descriptions such as "useless", "shockingly awful", "not trained in this area".

Many victims wanted "low level" behaviours to be taken more seriously, rather than only considering the victim's situation to be serious if there was physical injury. There also seemed to be an agreement that there is a lack of education as to the effects of stalking and also what constitutes stalking. Victims wanted unambiguous support and advice on what to do if they experience stalking behaviour, but most importantly, they wanted to be taken seriously if they decided to seek help.

Table 23: Do you feel safer after reporting the situation to the police?

	Ex-partner (N = 62)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 52)	Ex of someone close (N = 59)	Person unknown (N = 20)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	30.6%	24%	17.3%	27.1%	25%	27.8%

Respondents indicated which police force they had contacted and information differentiated by police force could be extracted from the data. However, given the wide geographical spread of respondents around the UK, numbers pertaining to each force are low.

8. *The responses of legal and health professionals and the workplace*

Victims were asked about the actions taken by solicitors, and health professionals. Only a minority of respondents said they had contacted a solicitor. Of those who did, the most common actions were letters and injunctions.

Table 24: Solicitor actions

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Saw solicitor, no action	5.6%	7.3%	3.8%	4.5%	0	4%
Sent a letter	4%	0	0.9%	9.1%	2.9%	3.7%
Injunction	4%	0	0.9%	4.5%	2.9%	2.8%
Other	3.2%	5.5%	3.8%	3.4%	0	2.6%

The survey asked about whether general practitioners and other health professionals recognised stalking as impacting on the victim's health and wellbeing. A majority of victims said that yes, their health professional had recognised the negative impact of stalking. Many victims reported that their health professional referred them on to someone else for further assistance.

Table 25: Did a GP or health professional recognise stalking as impacting on your health and wellbeing?

	Ex-partner (N = 21)	Work (N = 14)	Acquaintance (N = 21)	Ex of someone close (N = 19)	Person unknown (N = 4)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes:	61.9%	50%	75%	76.5%	75%	68.4%

Where respondents sought advice from work management or Human Resources professionals, more than half found the information provided or the actions taken to be helpful. Unsurprisingly, those targeted by clients or work colleagues were most likely to seek help from these sources.

Table 26: Did you find your work management or Human Resources department helpful?

	Ex-partner (N = 9)	Work (N = 38)	Acquaintance (N = 12)	Ex of someone close (N = 12)	Person unknown (N = 1)	All groups combined (N = 321)
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Yes:	66.6%	52.9%	41.7%	50%	Yes: 0	56.2%
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9. *The impact of stalking*

Respondents were asked about the impact of stalking on their finances, their work, their physical health and their mental health and emotional well-being. Tables 27-30 detail the findings.

Table 27: Has the stalking impacted your finances?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
I have lost wages due to sick leave, leaving my job or changing career	33.6%	36.4%	29.2%	37.5%	20%	32.6%
I have had the expense of increasing my home and personal security	33.6%	38.2%	36.8%	35.2%	37.1%	35.8%
I have paid out to repair property damage	24.8%	20%	23.6%	21.6%	2.9%	21.5%
I have had to pay for psychological counselling and medical treatment	20.8%	23.6%	22.6%	23.9%	17.1%	22.2%
I have had to pay for the expense of relocating	28.8%	20%	23.6%	28.4%	11.4%	24.7%
I have had to pay to attend court	16.8%	10.9%	2.8%	14.8%	5.7%	11.2%
My finances have not been affected	27.2%	29.1%	28.3%	27.3%	40%	28.6%
Other financial impact	10.4%	12.7%	14.2%	13.6%	17.1%	12.9%

Respondents experienced financial losses due to losing wages, increasing security, repairing stolen or damaged property, counseling and medical interventions, relocating. Overall, under a quarter said that being the target of a quarter had had no impact on their work or course of study.

Table 28: Has the stalking affected your professional life (work or study)?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
No	25.6%	9.1%	17.9%	25%	25.7%	21.4%
Work performance deteriorated	41.6%	50.9%	37.7%	40.9%	37.1%	41.5%
Took sick leave	29.6%	29.1%	33%	35.2%	25.7%	31.4%

Had to change job	17.6%	23.6%	24.5%	20.5%	8.6%	20.5%
Dropped out of college/uni.	5.6%	3.6%	7.5%	3.4%	5.7%	5.6%
Other	12%	29.1%	18.9%	12.5%	14.3%	16.5%

A small minority reported no impact on their physical and mental health. A majority reported experiencing physical effects of stress.

Table 29: Has stalking had an impact on your physical health?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
It has not affected my physical health	13.6%	12.7%	9.4%	10.2%	14.3%	11.7%
I experience(d) physical effects of stress such as headaches	70.4%	52.7%	70.8%	71.6%	51.4%	66.8%
I had/have stomach problems	31.2%	32.7%	33%	37.5%	37.1%	33.8%
Conditions I already had got worse - e.g. asthma, skin rashes	40.8%	20%	31.3%	17%	28.6%	29.4%
I experience(d) dizziness and/or shortness of breath	19.2%	30.9%	42.5%	39.8%	37.1%	32.9%
My health worsened due to increased use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes	20.8%	18.2%	20.8%	17%	22.9%	19.9%
I experience(d) heart palpitations and sweating	52%	47.3%	51.9%	50%	37.1%	49.6%
I experience(d) sexual dysfunction - e.g. loss of libido	23.2%	18.2%	22.6%	25.5%	14.3%	22.2%
Other	9.6%	14.5%	11.3%	12.5%	14.3%	11.9%

A majority of respondents reported anxiety, loss of confidence, fear, depression, loneliness and isolation, panic attacks, difficulty concentrating, sleeping problems, and problems with trust and intimacy. All these issues were directly linked by respondents to the stalking.

Table 30: Has stalking had an effect on your mental health and emotional well-being?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
It has not affected my mental health/emotional well-being	6.4%	1.8%	6.6%	4.5%	5.7%	5.5%

I have experienced a loss of confidence	69.6%	60%	69.8%	63.6%	48.6%	65.6%
I was/am frightened to be on my own	57.6%	47.3%	49.1%	50%	4.9%	47.9%
I feel/felt depressed	60.8%	67.3%	69.8%	60.2%	54.3%	63.3%
I feel/felt isolated and lonely	63.2%	61.8%	58.5%	56.8%	34.3%	58.1%
I have experienced panic attacks	56%	45.5%	50.9%	54.5%	60%	53.5%
I have/had difficulty concentrating	56.8%	58.2%	59.4%	58%	48.6%	57.2%
I have/had difficulty sleeping	69.6%	67.3%	66%	67%	60%	67.1%
I have problems with trust, difficulties with intimacy	64.8%	47.3%	50%	59.1%	45.7%	55.8%
I feel my personality has changed	50.4%	38.2%	46.2%	42%	28.6%	43.8%
I have - or continue - to self-medicate using alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, prescribed medications	21.6%	18.2%	25.5%	21.6%	22.9%	22.6%
I had/have problems with eating disorders	16%	16.4%	24.5%	21.6%	20%	20%
I have had suicidal thoughts - and/or made suicide attempts	29.6%	23.6%	30.2%	27.3%	22.9%	27.9%
I feel - or have felt – anxious	83.2%	83.6%	81.1%	83%	80%	82.4%
Other	1.6%	3.6%	2.8%	1.1%	5.7%	2.7%

The survey asked whether respondents believe that an intervention programme for stalkers would be beneficial. More than half said yes. Many participants seemed to be sceptical as to whether a treatment programme would work in practice however, although most admitted they had never really thought about it.

Table 31: Would a treatment programme of psychiatric intervention for stalkers be helpful in your opinion?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	56.8%	58.2%	62.3%	59.1%	65.7%	59.6%
No	32%	29.1%	23.6%	34.1%	17.1%	28.7%
Other	11.2%	12.7%	14.2%	6.8%	17.1%	11.7%

9. Respondent demographics

Tables 32-38 provide demographic information for respondents.

Table 32: Gender identity

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)

Female	87.2%	70.9%	82.1%	86.4%	85.7%	83.3%
Male	12%	25.5%	16%	12.5%	11.4%	15%
Transgender	0.8%	1.8%	0	1.1%	0	0.8%
Prefer not to say	0	1.8%	1.9%	0	2.9%	

Table 33: Sexual orientation

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Heterosexual or 'straight'	90.4%	87.3%	88.6%	94.3%	85.7%	89.5%
Gay or lesbian (homosexual)	2.4%	1.8%	1%	1.1%	2.9%	1.6%
Bisexual	6.4%	3.6%	3.8%	2.3%	2.9%	4.1%
Other/Prefer not to say	0.8%	7.3%	6.7%	2.2%	8.6%	4.3%

Table 34. Age

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
16 – 19	5.6%	5.5%	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%	5.6%
20 – 24	9.6%	7.3%	4.7%	13.6%	5.7%	8.8%
25 – 29	8.8%	9.1%	13.2%	6.8%	8.6%	9.6%
30 – 34	14.4%	18.2%	12.3%	18.2%	17.1%	15.1%
35 – 39	10.4%	16.4%	10.4%	12.5%	2.9%	10.9%
40 – 44	16.8%	5.5%	17.9%	11.4%	14.3%	14.2%
45 – 49	11.2%	12.7%	12.3%	9.1%	11.4%	11.1%
50 – 54	12.8%	14.5%	8.5%	12.5%	20%	12.6%
55 – 59	7.2%	9.1%	8.5%	8.0%	8.6%	7.9%
60 – 64	3.2%	0	5.7%	2.3%	2.9%	3.2%
65+	0	1.8%	0.9%	0	2.9%	1.1%

Table 35: What is your highest academic qualification?

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Post-graduate degree	23.2%	25.5%	17.9%	19.3%	25.7%	21.5%
Degree	28.8%	29.1%	31.1%	31.8%	25.7%	29.9%
Higher Education qualification	18.4%	21.8%	18.9%	20.5%	17.1%	19.4%
A Level	11.2%	9.1%	7.5%	11.4%	14.3%	10.2%
GCSE	10.4%	5.5%	12.3%	12.5%	8.6%	10.5%

No qualification	4%	0	6.6%	1.1%	2.9%	3.5%
Other	4%	9.1%	5.7%	3.4%	5.7%	5.1%

Table 36: Chronic health condition

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
Yes	26.4%	30.9%	50.9%	30.7%	25.7%	34.2%

Table 37: Ethnicity

	Ex-partner (N = 125)	Work (N = 55)	Acquaintance (N = 106)	Ex of someone close (N = 88)	Person unknown (N = 35)	All groups combined (N = 321)
White UK	83.2%	67.3%	77.4%	79.5%	74.3%	77.9%
Traveller	0.8%	0	0.9%	0	0	0.6%
Other white	10.4%	14.5%	9.4%	13.6%	8.6%	10.4%
Indian	0.8%	3.6%	2.8%	0	0	1.8%
Pakistani	1.6%	0	0	2.3%	2.9%	1.3%
Bangladeshi	0.8%	0	0.9%	0	0	0.6%
Chinese	0	1.8%	0	0	0	0.3%
Other Asian	0	3.6%	0.9%	0	2.9%	
Arab	0	0	0	0	5.7%	0.8%
Black African/Caribbean	0.8%	5.4%	2.8%	1.1%	0	2.4%
None of these	1.6%	3.6%	2.8%	3.4%	5.7%	3.4%

Respondents were located across the United Kingdom and all regions were represented. Figures specific to regions are available on request but note that small numbers within each region will skew the data.

10. Final note

We have accepted all responses at face value. As with all surveys where people self identify as having lived a particular experience, we have based the findings in this report solely on what our respondents told us. The survey was anonymous and no attempts could be made to verify accounts. We had no reason to suspect that any of the accounts were not genuine.

Victims and survivors: Experiences in their own words

Stalking behavior perpetrated by ex-partners

“Dog killed, perimeter damage, message via social media via proxy names, work intrusion, friend intrusion and stalking, family stalking, on social media continually day and night and uses others to continue to stalk by telling lies and coercion to avoid detection. Targets my work especially and stalked my ex-partner to the point he walked away from me. Now stalking my daughter.”

“Financial using the children. Playing mind games - gaslighting me to confuse me. But I have become very aware of it, it has made me scared and has made to keep explaining myself - and no one listens, it has made me very sad and angry and kept me from my children. Being made to feel I can't cope when I can. Being disrespected as the mother of our children. Scared for my children, worried that they will think I don't care about their feelings and feeling generally restrained within society.”

“Getting paid employees to watch me and report back to him and him sitting on the drive or the road watching the house all night.”

Recognising the situation as stalking

“At first I just thought he was upset and trying to get me back as I had left the relationship - I did not realise he was following me or was creating stories to get what he wanted - for example he said he needed the house key as he had forgot something and wanted to get it...later I realised that he had taken the key to get it copied.”

“Breaking in my house. Rape. Threatening me. I had to flee from my home. Put me on social media. Manipulated me so they could carry on the abuse.”

“Continuous breaching of restraining order, multiple phone calls and hanging round places I was likely to be.”

“He was in places I didn't expect. When I put petrol in car he would be at petrol station, when I walked my dog he would turn up, when I was shopping in Sainsbury's he turned up.”

“He was violent and abusive during our 15-month relationship (which I recognised at the time and tried hard to escape) and the misery did not end when the relationship did. I expected some backlash when I ended it, but it just kept going, for two years.”

“The fact that he was committing crimes against me on an almost daily basis (approx. 40 within 3 months); he was everywhere I went; I kept finding that he had been in my house whilst I was at work; my property was constantly being destroyed; my employer was threatened, etc., etc.”

Child contact arrangements

“Being allowed to constantly text me about seeing his child. Using the court as another way to intimidate me and trying to get them to allow him to have contact with me.”

“He had no interest in our child only to use as way of getting at me, he played awful mind games with our child which years later made our child have psychological problems, he would take her from school without permission. He went for full custody but got every other weekend, it was a very difficult time.”

“I moved away and ceased his contact. Within weeks I was summonsed to court. Fortunately when he couldn't find me he went to the school and was abusive so they saw his true colours and provided evidence to the court. The judge caught him

out with lying in the family court. I then had to endure him having supervised contact before retuning to court and he backed out of the case so it folded. He was advised to back out by his solicitor and then my kids had group therapy from the NSPCC where we discovered he had in the previous few months, abused his then wife (boys step mum) while drunk and threatened my boys with a knife.”

Seeking help from family and friends

“I didn’t seek help, I just hid away until it stopped.”

“I was too terrified to seek help.”

“Most only know a small amount of it. Close friends were supportive but some played it down. He had launched a smear campaign against me, making me appear to be unstable to others, therefore when I finally had the courage to speak out, I felt doubted. Most people just don’t understand.”

“Unless friends have witnessed it, they don’t tend to believe it’s happening and think I am making it up for attention, so I have stopped talking about it now and just keep a logbook for my own sanity. Even friends who have witnessed it don’t think it could still be happening after all this time, I think that’s why I have cut off from socialising as it is easier to deal with on my own (with my partner).”

“My family didn’t seem particularly concerned and said I should just ignore him and he will eventually stop. My best friend offered to take care of myself and my daughter and we moved into his home because he had no idea where he lived.”

Seeking help from charitable agencies

“Domestic abuse agency and police were great. Social services and CAFCAS made abuse and stalking worse. One social worker put my address on court documents. Another social worker drove my ex past where I was living and response was how would she know I could be near my house. Both were told address is safe address. Couldn’t use refuge as had older teenage son.”

“Full support immediately.”

“National Stalking Helpline were excellent.”

“The best support as National Stalking Helpline, followed by Women’s Aid - for the stalking. The Police and Victim support were great at the beginning.”

“Women’s Aid were so so brilliant. Immediately understood, named what was happening to me, 100% supportive. Can’t praise them enough.”

Why the stalker was not charged

“Because it has all been done anonymously, with no criminal damage (other than to my cat). I think if there had been visible damage the police would take it seriously.”

“I didn’t press charges because I didn’t want to anger him. During the last incident the police offered to help me attain a restraining order but I was only days away from leaving my home so I decided not to.”

“I have no idea, he would break into my house and watch me sleep and they would just arrest him then let him go, he was arrested numerous times but let go, he was a master liar and manipulator, but the police had my house on quick response list, gave me window and door alarms, I never understood why he never got in trouble.”

“I just wanted it to stop, due to his job if he was charged he would have lost his position at work. So the police discreetly visited him at work and said if it continued he would be charged. This had the desired affect so it didn’t need to be

taken further.”

“Police asked me if I wanted him charged, or to receive a visit and verbal warning. They told me that often the warning is a sufficient scare for them to make them stop. I agreed though I told them if that didn't work I would want further action taken against him.”

“Police officer told me there was nothing 'scary' about flowers and chocolates being left outside my home and that I should pursue it as a civil matter as 'nothing they could do'. His family members were also in contact with the police due to harassment from him but this was also not followed up.”

“Stalked online for years, still am. Police say they can't identify it as the perpetrator.”

“The police told me that because he hadn't hit me there wasn't much they could do and it wouldn't be worth it to file a harassment order. They also didn't log anything. (I have since complained and they have apologised and made proper records of behaviour).”

Response of police

“Appalling. Made me feel stupid and like I was wasting their time: actually questioned why I had reported it. This meant that I have lost faith in them entirely. They told me to just block him and didn't listen when I said there were multiple accounts trying to contact and harass me.”

“I felt that their hands were tied unless an 'actual crime' was committed. I also felt that since I had had a relationship with the stalker the police didn't take it as seriously as they might have if it were a stranger.”

“I felt they did not appreciate the risk at all, and did not really take it seriously.”

“Initially not sympathetically. But this last time thanks to National Stalking Helpline's Involvement they were brilliant and my ex partner got a harsher sentence as a result.”

“Mediocre. Some were really supportive and ensured a DASH was completed, others invalidated the stalking and made me feel as though I was making it up! When I questioned why it was only being processed as harassment, rather than stalking, they told me stalking causes fear, harassment is just an annoyance. I'm that fearful that I've moved jobs and to another part of the country.”

“They have not communicated with me and I constantly have to chase them. No one seems to be taking responsibility for my complaint. I feel that as a man I am not being taken seriously.”

“They seemed to try their best. I felt heard.”

“They were very understanding when I thought I would have to do more and prove more before they took my case seriously. I was actually very happy about the way in which they dealt with my case.”

“Woman police officer was taken in by him and it was her behaviour was really distressing but subsequent male officers were keen to prosecute him. However by that time I was worn out.”

Impact of stalking

“I felt I had no way out. I overdosed. I woke up in hospital, and asked that he never be allowed to see me. Then I passed out. When I woke up, he was at my bedside with a bunch of roses. He had convinced the nursing staff to let him in. I realised there was no escape.”

“I felt continually let down and incredibly alone and scared at this time. It eventually stopped but only when he met someone and moved away.”