OUT OF SIGHT
OUT OF MIND
An investigation into the response to stalking

STALKING COUNTS
NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS WEEK 2016
18-24th APRIL

LIVE LIFE SAFE
suzy lamplugh trust

NATIONAL STALKING HELPLINE
0808 802 0300
About Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the national personal safety charity. Suzy Lamplugh Trust was launched in 1986 by Paul and Diana Lamplugh after their estate agent daughter Suzy disappeared after she went to meet an unknown client. To date Suzy's body has not been found and she was legally declared dead in 1993. Paul and Diana founded Suzy Lamplugh Trust to campaign, educate and support people to help reduce the risk of violence and aggression in society.

Over the past 30 years, Suzy Lamplugh Trust has been at the forefront of campaigning for the licensing of minicabs and protection for victims of stalking. We train organisations and individuals in personal safety through training for lone workers, published guidance and workplace support.

We work in partnership with other charities and organisations to campaign for changes in policies and laws that will improve safety. We provide support to groups at risk of violence and aggression through a range of community projects.

We have run the National Stalking Helpline since its launch in April 2010. The National Stalking Helpline is the first nationwide service in the world dedicated to providing expert support to victims of stalking. Since the Helpline was launched we have provided help to over 14,000 people.

About the National Stalking Consortium

The Consortium was formed in June 2014 and represents the collaboration of organisations working in the area of stalking and harassment. The Consortium's overall aim is to improve support to victims of stalking throughout the UK. The Consortium is committed to identifying gaps in provision and taking a pro-active, co-ordinated approach to improving stalking services across the statutory and voluntary sectors. It aims to enable more stalking victims to cope with the immediate impact of stalking and recover from the harm experienced by campaigning for more holistic support services. The Consortium's work is informed by the experiences of stalking victims and robust academic research.

The National Stalking Consortium membership is formed of the following individuals and organisations:

Network for Surviving Stalking, National Centre for Cyberstalking Research at the University of Bedfordshire, Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service, Protection Against Stalking, Suzy Lamplugh Trust, Veritas Justice, Voice4Victims, Tracey Morgan, Dr. Alec Grant, Professor Carsten Maple, Dr. Frank Farnham, Hamish Brown.

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For more information about the work of Suzy Lamplugh Trust:

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A foreword from the National Stalking Consortium

The message for National Stalking Awareness Week 2016 is Stalking Counts. This year the National Stalking Consortium is calling for action from local and national agencies to demonstrate a commitment to improving the recognition, reporting and prosecution of stalking. The Consortium would also like to see the implementation of effective intervention strategies for stalking perpetrators in order to reduce the risk of them reoffending or escalating to violence.

It has been three and a half years since the anti-stalking law was enacted in England and Wales but only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of stalking cases that have occurred during this time have been recorded by police\(^1\). A smaller number still have resulted in a successful prosecution\(^2\).

Further to this, figures released by the National Stalking Consortium today show that in most of the country, very little or no money is being spent by police and crime commissioners on providing specialist services to deal with stalking.

Stalking is a complex and serious crime. Victims are often scared to go to the police for fear that the stalker will escalate their behaviour or for fear that they will not be believed. On average, victims of stalking who do go to the police will have experienced 100 incidents\(^3\) of stalking over a period of months or years.

Stalking can cause psychological harm including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder; it can also lead to physical assault and murder\(^4\). Research conducted by the National Stalking Consortium found that stalking behaviour was present in the lead up to 27 domestic homicides in the last six years; a figure that we think is the tip of the iceberg.

Many victims of stalking require specialist help and support from trained experts who understand the nature, complexity and risks associated with the crime. The National Stalking Consortium calls for local and national government to provide services for victims of stalking which reflect the size and scale of the problem so that current demand can be met and to ensure this postcode lottery is not allowed to continue.

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\(^1\) Office for National Statistics, *Intimate personal violence and partner abuse* February 2016
\(^3\) Sheridan, L *Key Findings from www.stalkingsurvey.com* University of Leicester supported by Network for Surviving Stalking 2005
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1. Overview

Suzy Lamplugh Trust runs the National Stalking Helpline (the only dedicated helpline for victims of stalking in the UK) and over the past six years has provided expert support and information to more than 14,000 people affected by stalking. We have also trained hundreds of professionals from across the criminal justice system. This experience has shown us that many police officers, prosecutors and probation officers are unable to recognise stalking and do not understand the risks associated with stalking behaviour.

There is a high demand for our expert service and in 2015 we received over 6,500 calls and emails for help and advice. Unfortunately, the Helpline was not able to answer all calls because of limited capacity and a year-on-year increase in demand for the service.

All of our campaign work is developed based on the knowledge and experience we have gained through talking to people affected by stalking.

Our goal

To mark National Stalking Awareness Week 2016, Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the National Stalking Consortium have conducted an investigation into the local response to stalking throughout England and Wales. This has produced a detailed national picture of how many cases are dealt with by the police; the risks associated with stalking and the specialist support services available for victims.

Our approach

In order to build a detailed picture of stalking we submitted a series of Freedom of Information requests to public agencies seeking data on the response to stalking crimes in England and Wales.

Police figures

1. Suzy Lamplugh Trust contacted all police forces in England and Wales to determine the number of crimes of stalking that had been recorded in the financial years 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 1st April 2015 – 4th February 2016.

Funding for services

2. So that we could determine whether specialist services for victims of stalking were being adequately funded, Suzy Lamplugh Trust contacted every police and crime commissioner in England and Wales and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime in London. We asked them how many grants had been awarded for projects in which at least one of the outputs or outcomes was to provide services for victims of stalking.

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5 We did not receive a response from Thames Valley Police. Dyfed Powys Police said that of the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. Essex Police provided combined harassment and stalking figures and it was not possible to extract the stalking only figures.

6 This is the date the Freedom of Information Request was sent out. Figures in 2015/2016 should be considered with the knowledge they cover a 10 month period.

7 We received responses from all PCCs except the Office of Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Office of Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner.
Stalking and Domestic Homicide Reviews

3. Given the fact that experts have linked stalking and serious violence\(^8\), including murder\(^9\), we also contacted the Home Office and every local authority in England and Wales to ask them how many of the domestic homicide reviews that were carried out since 2010 have identified stalking behaviour as being present in the 12 months preceding the homicide.

This report details the findings of this investigation and makes recommendations on how to improve the experiences of victims of stalking.

Key findings

Police figures

- The number of stalking cases recorded by the police represents less than 1%\(^10\) of the cases that take place each year.
- There is an alarming discrepancy between the numbers of recorded stalking crimes across different police force areas.
- A number of police forces reported that their recorded stalking figures for 2014/2015 were lower than their recorded stalking figures for 2013/2014.

Service Provision by Police and Crime Commissioners

- Since 2013, only nine police and crime commissioners have commissioned services that specifically work with victims of stalking at any point.
- Only 0.18% of the total police and crime commissioner budget for victims' services for England and Wales in 2015/2016 was spent on stalking-specific projects.

Stalking and Domestic Homicide

- Despite experts recognising the link between stalking and domestic homicide, only 27 domestic homicide reviews in the last five years have identified stalking in the lead up to the murder of the victim. Suzy Lamplugh Trust is concerned that domestic homicide reviews are not always accurately identifying stalking behaviour. We are calling for more research on this topic.

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\(^9\) McFarlane, J *Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide* Homicide Studies 1999

\(^10\) When compared with self-reported incidents of stalking as published by the Office for National Statistics in *Intimate personal violence and partner abuse* February 2016. This research found that in the year ending March 2015 4.9% of women and 2.4% of men had been stalked. This equates to 776,000 women and 360,000 men. In the same time period our FOI response revealed 2884 stalking crimes had been recorded by police
2. About Stalking

What is stalking?

Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as repeated, unwanted contact that occurs as a result of fixation or obsession and causes the victim(s) to feel distressed or fearful.

Stalking is characterised by obsession and is therefore a crime of persistence. Victims can be stalked for years with the average case lasting fifteen months\(^1\). However, many cases last longer than this and 30% of people who contact the National Stalking Helpline have experienced stalking for over two years and a further 13% have been stalked for over five years\(^2\).

The average stalking victim experiences more than 100 incidents before they make a report to the police\(^3\).

How many people experience stalking?

New research released by Suzy Lamplugh Trust last week found that 1 in 5 British women and 1 in 12 British men have experienced stalking in their lifetime\(^4\).

The Crime Survey for England and Wales has found that 4.9% of women and 2.4% of men reported experiencing stalking\(^5\) in the last year. This equates to 734,000 women and 388,000 men each year. These figures make stalking as pervasive as domestic abuse.

Who stalks?

Stalkers are most likely to target someone known to them. The largest group of stalkers is ex-partners, accounting for 45%\(^6\) of all cases. The smallest group is strangers, with only 10% of people being stalked by someone they have no prior relationship with. Other groups of stalkers include acquaintances of the victim (22%), colleagues/ex-colleagues of the victim (5%) and members of the victim’s family (4%).

80% of victims who contact the National Stalking Helpline are female and the majority of their stalkers are male. Stalkers can be any age and the Helpline has dealt with cases where the stalker was under 18 years old and others where the stalker was over 70 years old.


\(^{12}\) National Stalking Helpline 2015

\(^{13}\) Sheridan, L Findings from www.stalkingsurvey.com University of Leicester supported by Network for Surviving Stalking 2005

\(^{14}\) James, D. & Persaud, R., *The Stalker In Your Pocket* 2016

\(^{15}\) Office for National Statistics, *Intimate personal violence and partner abuse* February 2016

\(^{16}\) National Stalking Helpline 2015
What are the effects of stalking?

The consequences of stalking for victims can be physical, psychological, social and economic\(^\text{17}\). Victims can develop anxiety, depression and agoraphobia. Between 30 and 40% of stalking cases are estimated to involve physical violence\(^\text{18}\).

Many victims feel so concerned or fearful about what is happening that they feel the need to change their behaviour in order to feel safer.

Research released by Suzy Lamplugh Trust has revealed that:

- 28% of people who had been stalked felt concerned about going out in public
- 1 in 5 reduced their social outings
- 1 in 10 moved home\(^\text{19}\)

No one should have to live in fear because of a stalker, especially when there is a law in place specifically to protect victims of stalking.

Legislative protection

Whilst the stalking law in England and Wales is only three and a half years old\(^\text{20}\), the first piece of legislation designed to deal with persistent unwanted distressing behaviour, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997\(^\text{21}\), was passed almost twenty years ago.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust and others who successfully campaigned for the first act have continued to fight for all victims of stalking to get the protection and justice they need from the criminal justice system as well as expert support to deal with the life-changing impact that stalking can have.

Over the last 20 years, these campaigns have been led by the voices and experiences of victims of stalking and their families.

As a result of this tireless work there have been some significant steps forward including:

- The inclusion of stalking data in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (formerly British Crime Survey) in 2005
- The creation of the National Stalking Helpline in 2010
- The introduction in 2012 of a law naming stalking as a criminal offence (as distinct from harassment)
- The development of e-learning packages about stalking by the College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service in 2012 and 2013
- The inclusion of stalking as a crime type that entitles victims to additional support in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in 2013

\(^{17}\) Mullen, P., & Pathe, M. *The Impact of Stalkers on their Victims* British Journal of Psychiatry 1997


\(^{19}\) James, D., & Persaud R. *The Stalker In Your Pocket* 2016


3. Police figures: what do they really tell us?

Stalking is under-reported

Research has found that only 26.6% of stalking has been reported to the police\(^\text{22}\) and of those who have made a report to the police 43.3% found the response not very helpful or not helpful at all.\(^\text{23}\)

We also know from talking to victims of stalking on the National Stalking Helpline that when a victim does make a report to the police, their complaint is not always recorded as stalking. A report may be recorded as harassment or a police officer may focus on one aspect of the stalking such as criminal damage, or they could be told that nothing can be done to help them and it is not a police matter.

We are therefore concerned that stalking is both under-reported by victims and under-recorded by the police.

In order to find out exactly how many cases of stalking are recorded by the police we sent Freedom of Information requests to all police forces in England and Wales.

How many stalking cases are reported?

A total of 4,147\(^\text{24}\) cases of stalking were recorded between April 2013 and March 2015 by all forces in England and Wales. This is less than 1% of the hundreds of thousands of stalking cases that the Crime Survey for England and Wales reports take place each year\(^\text{25}\). The low recording figure suggests either that stalking is not being identified when it is reported or that that victims do not feel confident coming forward.

Some police forces are doing better than others

As well as the overall number of recorded cases being startlingly low, there was also an alarming discrepancy between the numbers of recorded stalking crimes across different police force areas. For example, Lincolnshire Police reported that 22 cases of stalking had been recorded in the same period of time that Bedfordshire Police, a force serving a population of a similar size, recorded 179 cases.

A number of police forces (Cheshire, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Durham, Gwent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire and North Wales) reported that their recorded stalking figures for 2014/2015 were either the same as or lower than their recorded stalking figures for 2013/2014.

Given that the recorded figures are such a small proportion of the total number of stalking cases in any one year, it is worrying that forces are not doing more to encourage more victims to report.

\(^{22}\) James, D., & Persaud R. *The Stalker In Your Pocket* 2016

\(^{23}\) ibid

\(^{24}\) An earlier version of the report gave the number of 5,365 however this figure included combined harassment and stalking figures from Essex Police which have since been removed.

However, a number of police forces showed significant improvements in their yearly figures, which is very positive. For example, Staffordshire Police recorded 139 stalking cases in 2014/2015 compared to 116 in 2013/2014 and Sussex Police improved its reporting figures threefold from only 30 in 2013/2014 to 95 in 2014/2015.

**What do these figures tell us?**

Whilst it is often difficult to make direct comparisons between police forces because of the varying sizes of their workforce and differences in the population covered by each area, these figures show us that even in similar sized police forces there are huge differences in the number of stalking cases being recorded. The total numbers are also disproportionately low compared to the prevalence rate.

**Why is this happening?**

Based on our experience of supporting victims of the National Stalking Helpline, we believe that it is likely that this is happening for three key reasons:

1. Victims of stalking are unaware that they can get help
2. Victims of stalking do not have the confidence to come forward
3. Police officers and staff do not recognise stalking when it is reported to them

We are very concerned that, considering how few victims feel able to report, when they do, they are far from guaranteed a helpful response. Victims of stalking should be confident that as a result of making a report to the police they will both be and feel safer. It is unacceptable that 43.3% found the response from the police not very helpful or not helpful at all.

It is critical that the police improve the knowledge of stalking of frontline officers and staff.

Police forces should also take steps to improve victim’s confidence to make a report and to make it clear that stalking will be taken seriously.

**How police can become part of the solution**

Many victims of stalking are concerned that they will be laughed at or be called dramatic if they say they are being stalked. We know from our work on the National Stalking Helpline that, instead of saying to a police officer ‘I am being stalked’, many victims are more likely to describe repeated, unwanted contact that is making them feel angry, worried or scared.

For police to address this difficulty all police officers and civilian staff should be able to identify when stalking is being described to them and to respond appropriately. This includes training all police officers and civilian staff to understand the difference between stalking and harassment. This means understanding that a stalker’s fixation and obsession with their victim, which distinguishes stalking from harassment, makes this a persistent and dangerous crime.

We also need far more investment in specialist services for victims of stalking. Support needs to be available for victims from the time they decide to make a report to the police through to the conclusion of any court case. For most people, navigating the criminal justice system is a new, complicated and intimidating prospect. The support of experienced, empathetic experts can make a huge difference to a victim’s experience.
4. A Postcode Lottery: Police and Crime Commissioners

What is the role of a Police and Crime Commissioner?

Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) were introduced by the coalition government in 2012. The vision for police and crime commissioners was that a democratically elected, impartial individual would take a central role in making police more locally accountable.

There are 41 police and crime commissioners across England and Wales; in London the powers of a police and crime commissioner sit with the mayor. The first PCC elections were held in November 2012 and the next election is less than three weeks away on 5th May 2016.

Police and crime commissioners’ responsibilities include:

- Commissioning victims’ services
- Setting the strategic direction and aims for the police force through the police and crime plan
- Appointing the chief constable
- Setting the police force budget
- Ensuring that local priorities are joined up

The decentralisation of funding

Police and crime commissioners hold the budget for local victims’ services and very few services for victims of crime are now commissioned centrally. The Home Office currently provides a grant to the National Stalking Helpline of £50,000 per year and as far as we are aware this is the only central government funding for any specialist support services for victims of stalking.

Commissioned services since 2013

Since police and crime commissioners took control of the victims’ services budgets in 2013, only nine police and crime commissioners have commissioned services that specifically work with victims of stalking. These are the PCCs for Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Gwent, Hampshire, Northumbria, Nottinghamshire, Thames Valley, South Wales and Sussex.

Of those, only two (Hampshire and Sussex) have commissioned specialist services over more than one financial year.

Commissioned services in 2015/2016

In the financial year 2015/2016, police and crime commissioners had a combined budget of £63m for providing services to victims of crime. Of this money only £115,555 (0.18%) was spent on stalking-specific projects, across five police force areas (Bedfordshire, Gwent, Hampshire, South Wales and Sussex). £76,055 of this total was distributed by the police and crime commissioner for Hampshire.

**Commissioning post 2016**

This investigation looked at commissioned services between the financial years 2013/14 and 2015/2016. We have been made aware that some police and crime commissioners will be commissioning services in the 2016/17 financial year.

**Stalking: Low on the list of priorities**

A number of police and crime commissioners told us in their Freedom of Information request responses that they did not fund stalking-specific services because they did not fund services according to crime type. They said that, instead they provide services based on an assessment of victims’ needs and that therefore all the services they commissioned were open to victims of stalking. However, these same police and crime commissioners have commissioned specific services for other serious and complex crimes, such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and hate crime.

For example, the office of one police and crime commissioner said in its response that “the PCC has focused on commissioning of services to support victims on the basis of need rather than the category or type of crime” however their website refers to specific projects to help victims of modern slavery and sexual abuse. Similarly, another said that “The needs of victims of crime are considered on an individual basis and appropriate support provided” however, their website also makes references to projects that are specific to certain crime types including domestic abuse.

These responses do not provide an answer as to why specialist stalking services have not been commissioned.

**Good practice**

There have been some excellent examples of good practice from the PCCs who have commissioned services that specifically address the problem of stalking. These are:

- **Bedfordshire police and crime commissioner**

  Commissioned services to assist in the development of a cyberstalking risk assessment protocol.

- **Cheshire police and crime commissioner**

  Commissioned Vodafone Foundation to provide technological devices to victims of stalking.

- **Gwent police and crime commissioner**

  Commissioned Network for Surviving Stalking to develop of a multi-media campaign and film to raise awareness about the dangers of stalking by an ex-partner.

- **Hampshire police and crime commissioner**

  Commissioned the ‘Hampshire Stalking Consultancy Clinic’ for three years. The clinic is a multi-agency specialist group that fully assesses the risk involved in a stalking case. The group works to explore options for protecting victims of stalking and intervening with the...
offender. The clinic is made up of members from the probation service, police, mental health agencies and specialist victim support services.

**Northumbria police and crime commissioner**

Commissioned services from Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service, they have used some of this commission to employ a stalking and harassment lead within their service.

**Nottinghamshire police and crime commissioner**

Commissioned services from a charity Equation which used a proportion of the money to host a stalking seminar for 80 local professionals.

**South Wales police and crime commissioner**

Provided funding for their independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) and independent sexual violence advocates (ISVAs) to complete a training course to accredit them as independent stalking and harassment advocates (ISACs). The ISAC course has been created by Paladin the National Stalking Advocacy Service and is accredited through the University of Brighton.

**Sussex police and crime commissioner**

Provided three grants to two organisations since 2014. Suzy Lamplugh Trust and Veritas Justice provide specialist stalking services. Veritas Justice was commissioned to develop an advocacy and support service for victims of stalking.

Sussex police and crime commissioner has also commissioned Suzy Lamplugh Trust to provide training on stalking for local frontline agencies and to carry out workshops with people at higher risk of experiencing stalking, such as women who have experienced domestic abuse.

**Thames Valley police and crime commissioner**

Commissioned services from Suzy Lamplugh Trust to provide specialist training on stalking to representatives from local frontline agencies. These agencies included the police, Crown Prosecution Service and local domestic and sexual abuse services.

**Changes are urgently needed**

These figures show us that victims of stalking do not have access to the same level of support or expertise across England and Wales. A victim of stalking in Hampshire does not have access to the same level of support as a victim of stalking in Humberside. Stalking is a nationwide issue that does not change depending on where you live, especially as more than a third of stalking cases involve contact via social media and email\(^{27}\), which can cross regional and even national boundaries. Where you live should not determine what services you are able to receive. All victims of stalking deserve safe, specialist services no matter where they are in the country.

\(^{27}\) James, D., & Persaud R. *The Stalker In Your Pocket* 2016
We are calling on all police and crime commissioners to make a commitment to providing specialist services for victims of stalking in their local area. This should include access to a professional that has knowledge and understanding of stalking, especially regarding risk factors.

Further to this we call on all police and crime commissioners to emulate the Hampshire stalking consultancy clinic model so that measures are in place nationally to identify and manage the high risk behaviour of stalking offenders before it escalates.
STALKING IN ENGLAND AND WALES

- **Total Number of Stalking Cases Recorded**
- **Total Number of Specialist Stalking Services Commissioned by PCCs**
5. Tip of the Iceberg: Domestic Homicide Reviews

What is a domestic homicide review?

Domestic homicide reviews should take place following a homicide in which the perpetrator is a current or ex-partner or a family member of the victim. They are usually conducted by local authorities and they should have multi-agency input and the input of the friends and family of the victim where appropriate. The purpose of a domestic homicide review is to find out if any lessons can be learnt from the death of the victim in order to try and reduce the risk of future abuse and harm. There have been over 400 domestic homicide reviews since they were put on a statutory footing.

The link between stalking and homicide

Research in America found that 76% of females murdered by their ex-partners were stalked in the lead-up to their deaths28; however comparative research does not exist in the United Kingdom.

To build a more detailed picture of stalking and homicide, we sent Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities in England and Wales and asked them how many of the domestic homicide reviews that had been carried out since January 2010 had involved stalking.

We also sent a Freedom of Information request to the Home Office to ask whether they were able to tell us how many domestic homicide reviews identified stalking as being present in the twelve months preceding the victim’s murder.

Stalking and homicide in Britain

We found that 27 domestic homicide reviews in the last five years have identified stalking behaviour as being present in the lead-up to the murder of the victim. This is a stark and important reminder that stalking can lead to murder, however we believe that this number is just the tip of the iceberg.

From our experience of talking to individuals who have been involved in supporting families through the domestic homicide review process, we are concerned that stalking is often not being identified by those writing the review. They may instead use terms like ‘harassment’ or simply describe the behaviour, for example referencing the fact that the victim had told friends and family about being followed prior to their death.

Home Office Response

The Home Office was unable to respond to our request because the cost of doing so would be in excess of the £400 cap that can be applied to Freedom of Information Act requests.

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28 McFarlane, J Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide Homicide Studies 1999;
The cost of not knowing

Homicides have been estimated to cost at least £1 million\(^{29}\) to investigate and respond to. This means that at least £27 million has been spent on investigating the murders of people whose cases involve stalking since 2010. This is in stark contrast to the £220,000 spent by police and crime commissioners since 2013 on providing specialist stalking services, and the £300,000 invested by the Home Office (£50,000 per year) in the National Stalking Helpline since 2010.

An incomplete picture

All those engaged in the domestic homicide review process should be trained to recognise stalking behaviour when it is described to them.

The Government should analyse all domestic homicide reviews that have been conducted to date in order to build a comprehensive picture of the risk that stalking presents and to learn the lessons from previous murders.

\(^{29}\)Brand, S. & Price, R. *The economic and social costs of crime* 2000
6. Recommendations

In order to save lives, stalking has to be treated as a priority alongside other complex and serious crime.

Next year will mark 20 years since the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Since the act was passed, there have been improvements in the recognition of stalking in top-level policies, such as the Home Office’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. However, these policies are too often not being translated into practice.

Victims of stalking are still under-supported due to a lack of commissioned services, and professionals are under-trained. Until both of these problems are addressed, stalking will continue to be a problem that for many is out of sight and out of mind. We make the following recommendations in order to improve the experience of victims of stalking.

Improved staff training

All police officers and civilian staff should be able to recognise stalking when it is being described to them by a victim and to respond appropriately.

Specialised services

Victims of stalking across the country should have access to specialist help and support from trained experts who understand the nature, complexity and risks associated with the crime.

Commitment from police and crime commissioners

We are calling on all police and crime commissioners to make a commitment to providing specialist services for victims of stalking in their local area.

Best practice models

All police force areas should emulate the Hampshire stalking consultancy clinic model so that intervention and management strategies can be put in place for high risk and repeat offenders.

Improving Domestic Homicide Reviews

Any professional involved in a domestic homicide review should be trained to recognise stalking

The Home Office should analyse all domestic homicide reviews to date to find out how prevalent stalking is in the lead-up to murders perpetrated by ex-partners and family members. This information should be used to inform strategies to reduce the risk of stalking escalating to serious physical harm.