

Stalking and Harassment Experiences of Victim/Survivors: What We Need the Police to Know

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Definitions

‘Harassment is when someone behaves in a way that makes you feel distressed, humiliated, or threatened, and this has happened on at least two occasions. It could be by someone you know or a stranger’ (www.citizensadvice.org.uk).

‘Stalking can be understood as ‘repeated and persistent unwanted behaviour that is intrusive and creates fear. It may, or may not involve threats’ (www.paladinservice.co.uk). Again, this may be by someone you know, such as an ex-partner, or work colleague, or it could be a stranger’.

Relationship between victim and offender

Relationship between victim and offender	Number	Percentage
Partner/ex-partner	13	37%
Neighbour	9	26%
Acquaintance	4	11%
Stranger	4	11%
Friend	3	9%
Local children/young people	2	6%

Impact

- “I don't want to move, it's just...I have to move because of...me health reasons, because...me health's suffering through it”. (I13, Male, Neighbour)
- “And it was making me ill to be honest, I was getting more chest pain...I wasn't sleeping properly”. (I5, Female, Neighbours)

Impact

- “Every time my phone went, it made me nervous... every time the doorbell went, or there was a bang on the door, me and the children would be really scared, to the extent that my children would run upstairs and hide, screaming”. (I3, Female, Ex-partner)
- “Even this morning I've been to the local shopping centre, and me panic alarm goes in me hand when I go in the shopping centre in case he's there. And I'm like, on radar, scanning...And you don't really see somebody properly, but you see the sort of, their outline, and like, the hair type, if I see somebody that remotely looks like him, me stomach turns over”. (I14, Female, Ex-partner)

Impact

- “And you realise...people who are under this kind of stress on a- on a daily basis sometimes, I can understand how suicides occur. Because people feel that they don't know where to turn”. (I15, Female, Neighbour)
- “And, you could walk out of there and think 'I've had enough, I just want to end it all. Because I- what's the point? No one's going to help me, I'm never going to be free’” (I10, Female, Ex-partner)
- “I mean, there's been really low points for me where I've kind of said 'Do you know what? Actually, why don't I just end life?' Because- because there's nowhere to go with this” (I21, Female, Ex-partner)

Impact

- “It got to the stage when it was all happening that I wouldn't go out. I would stay in. I had to hide”. (I2, Female, Local Children)
- “I wouldn't go out the house because I was terrified”. (I17, Female, Acquaintance)
- “It's kind of very much got to the point that I don't go out the house unless I've actually got somebody with me”. (I21, Female, Ex-partner)

Impact

- “I've even had to go and speak to my employers and ask for my company mobile phone number to be changed. Um, they can't change my work land line number, but because I've moved departments, basically they've just switched me off having a land line number that can be contactable at the moment”.
(I21, Female, Ex-partner)

Impact

- “And it got to the point where I actually said to me mum one night that “Do you know what? I'm going to be a story in the newspaper. I'm going to be another one of these girls that gets murdered by her ex”. (I14, Female, Ex-partner)
- “I do live in fear of the fact that he is going to come back”. (I21, Female, Ex-partner)
- “I feel I have to worry and monitor the situation because I'm so scared... I am literally terrified. I think 'Well, y'know, is she going to turn up at the house? Is she going to...'”? (I17, Female, Acquaintance)

Decision to call police

- “Well, as long as it's me, that's okay. I'll just take it.' sort of thing. When it then started being my daughter, that's when I thought 'This has got to stop'”. (I10, Female, Ex-partner)
- “It- I started contacting the police when it escalated from just messages to the car being vandalised... And ((inhales)) she accosted me and my children in the street, and was shouting and swearing, and- and frightening my children”. (I16, Female, Friend)

Previous police involvement

- “I explained that the police had been to him before...and then it's “Oh, well why didn't you come back before?” “Well, I didn't come back before because I didn't think it worked the first time””. (I10, Female, Ex-partner)
- “And it's just...I don't know, you just- we lost all faith with the police, because of what's happened from a couple of years ago”. (I12, Female, Acquaintance)

Frist contact experience

- “They were very responsive and very helpful”. (I1, Female, Stranger)
- “From the moment I talked to the dispatcher when I rang 101, they listened, they took it seriously”. (I5, Female, Neighbours)
- “Really helpful, I was really surprised, actually. Because of it being mental and emotional abuse, I didn't expect them to be quite so understanding”. (I19, Female, Ex-partner)

First contact experience

- “I took the day off work, to be told that no one could see me, that I had to come back at... eight o'clock in the evening or eight o'clock the following night. Now, I was a bit devastated about this, because I'd plucked up the courage... to go to the police, and then to be told 'Oh, there's no one here that can speak to you you're going to have to come back.'...I was determined, because I thought 'I've got to get an end to this.', but if I'd have gone- if that had happened to me, the first time I'd ever done it, I wouldn't have gone back. I know that for sure”. (I10, Female, Ex-partner)

First contact experience

- “There was an awful lot of victim blaming. It wasn't her fault for sending abusive Facebook messages, it was my fault for being on Facebook...And the only way to stop these messages is if I deactivate my Facebook account, and come off social media. I didn't think that was very fair at all”. (I16, Female, Friend)

First contact experience

- “There's nothing we can do about these recurring websites. Um, you believe it's malicious, I believe that's just your feelings, and we're not here to deal with feelings. We deal in facts, not feelings.’ So basically, 'We're not going to do anything'”. (I17, Female, Acquaintance)

Follow-up experience

- “They patrolled the streets day and night, looking for these kids, and uh, they would wait outside the schools, they would wait outside my house, they would hide, and just to try and find them and catch them”. (I2, Female, Local Children)

Follow-up experience

- “It's so disheartening, it's really disheartening...I just have to keep reporting stuff basically!” (I15, Female, Ex-partner)

Follow-up experience

- “They only suggested that I close my blinds, and move my TV to another part of the room so that I couldn't see anybody going past the window when I was watching TV. And I says “That doesn't solve the problem. That- that's not an answer. That's making me even more of a prisoner and even more of a victim.” (I15, Female, Neighbours)
- “Have you thought about just not looking? Don't monitor it. Don't...’ That was their answer initially, was 'Don't look.' If you don't look, you won't know it's there” . (I17, Female, Acquaintance)

Counter-allegations

- “So she was- because she was making these false accusations back, they were treating it as a bit of tit for tat type of situation. Rather than us being the victim and her being the perpetrator, it was sort of like local women fighting going on... she would make claims back with no evidence whatsoever. And it was treated as a 'Well, she said that you're sending her messages.' 'Well, I'm not. Ask her to prove it'”. (I16, Female, Friend)

Counter-allegations

- “I mean, the day they delivered the verdict to me, um, to tell me that they weren't going to press charges for him raping me, 20 minutes later, the officer...turned up at my house and arrested me and took me in for questioning under caution, because he'd made a counter-allegation against me, and I had to go to the police station with my father, in an absolute state, and was interviewed for two hours for counter-allegations that he made, which obviously all charges were dropped, because they were just complete nonsense... and then they kind of wondered why we lost faith”. (I21, Female, Ex-partner)

Recommendations

- “So if they'd had looked at it as a broader picture, and not just on a specific event, I think it would have helped me more, and they could have helped me more in that respect”. (I13, Female, Ex-partner)
- “All they wanted was the one jigsaw piece, when the whole puzzle meant- was part of... It's a lot of a bigger picture. He was a violent husband, I left him, he stalked me for two years before that happen- before that incident on that night happened. And that wasn't allowed to be talked about in court, it wasn't allowed to be considered, and it's all part of the same picture”. (I14, Female, Ex-partner)

Recommendations

- “And I just think the police need more training in that side, where they can kind of handle the victims a little bit more delicately, I think” (I19, Female, Ex-partner)
- “They should receive training on the impact of abuse on vulnerable people - such as disabled and also understand behaviours that come from being a victim and feeling vulnerable (these can often be misread)”. (Survey Respondent, Female, Neighbour)

Recommendations

- “At least, even if they weren't able to, give me, like, a proper interview or anything, but just to just spare me ten minutes to just speak to me and say, y'know, 'Yes, we realise this is upsetting you. We're not ignoring you, we want you to come back so we can spend more time with you.'” (I10, Female, Ex-partner)

Thank you for listening

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