

The stalking clinic

Providing a specialist response to stalking through a multi-disciplinary team clinic.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Stalking and harassment Investigation
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Region	South West
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Local authority
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Victims Workforce
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Aim

To provide a service that:

- supports victims of stalking
- changes the culture around identification, patterns of behaviour and robust management of stalking
- provides investigative guidance and support to officers
- provides advice and guidance on stalking cases to partner agencies
- improves trust and confidence in the police from victims of stalking
- provides dedicated legal advice on stalking protection order (SPO) applications
- ensures a continuous programme of stalking training is available

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to provide:

- dedicated stalking clinic for support, guidance and risk management/assessment
- improved multi-agency response to stalking and harassment
- increased victim support and safeguarding
- improved training for officers working on stalking and harassment
- improved detection rates/outcomes
- an increased application and use of protective orders
- an enforcement of orders

Description

The force recognised the serious psychological and physical effects that stalking and harassment has on victims, acknowledging that these offences are often precursors to other crimes being committed. The force launched their stalking clinic following a successful trial of a stalking clinic in

2017.

The stalking clinic consists of multiple services including:

- the stalking clinic which holds bespoke multi-agency meetings where high risk referrals are assessed and where the team look at stalking behaviours, the motivations behind them and the history and mental health of the offender
- identifying and sharing organisational learning and feeding back into learning and development
- delivering a comprehensive programme of stalking and harassment training for the constabulary
- checking police logs for crimes tagged as stalking
- providing a capability to profile offenders by using a well-respected international risk assessment tool
- providing feedback and advice to officers to ensure robust management of stalking
- providing referrals to the independent stalking advocacy caseworker (ISAC) and partner agencies for high risk stalking
- facilitating case discussions with the ISAC, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and force stalking tactical lead
- ensuring victim support and safeguarding
- dedicated legal advisor to support the application of SPOs and advocating for their use
- co-ordinating cross-border support to stalking cases as required
- the provision of two independent stalking advocacy workers who support victims
- leading 80 internal police domestic abuse and stalking champions and six enhanced champions who support all functions of the stalking clinic as required
- promoting the force approach to stalking, through presenting at the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) conference in 2021 about the force approach to stalking

Stalking clinic roles

Dedicated coordinator:

- checks logs for stalking tagged crimes and reviews risk
- provides advice and guidance on stalking cases
- assesses risk using the stalking risk profile
- links to tactical lead for investigative guidance
- facilitates referrals to ISAC and partner agencies for high risk stalking

- facilitates case discussions with ISAC, CPS, probation services and the tactical lead
- convenes full multi-agency stalking clinic meetings for high risk cases
- deputises for tactical lead where required
- assists with all internal and external stalking training requirements

Tactical lead:

- provides investigative oversight on high risk stalking cases
- chairs all multi-agency meetings
- supports the co-ordinator in all stalking clinic functions

Dedicated solicitor:

- advises on all SPO applications
- takes applications to court
- provides operational advice
- attends all stalking clinic meetings

Independent stalking advocacy caseworkers (ISACS):

- listens to what victims have been experiencing
- aims to understand the bigger picture
- completes a specialist stalking risk assessment
- shares the risk assessment with police and other criminal justice agencies via Gloucestershire's multi-agency stalking clinic
- completes specialist safety planning
- explains the law on stalking and victim's rights
- represents the victim's voice to other agencies

Training from the stalking clinic

In January 2020, specialists from the stalking clinic carried out 18 sessions of face-to-face training with 80 supervisors and staff in the force control room (FCR). The sessions focused on risk and early intervention using the stalking mnemonic FOUR: fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated.

In May 2022, 50 police supervisors and above received stalking and harassment training.

In October 2022, advanced training was created for neighbourhood, local policing officers and inspectors.

The force also introduced mandatory stalking and harassment training for all front line officers in neighbourhood and local policing teams. This included 207 neighbourhood policing officers, eight officers from district councils and officers working on SOLACE (a multi-agency team working together with communities to prevent, investigate and tackle antisocial behaviour). An additional 239 local policing officers have also attended the training.

Overall impact

Since training began, referrals to the stalking clinic have significantly increased. As of March 2023, it now receives approximately 50 cases a month. In addition, tagged stalking incidents have quadrupled. Officers emailing the stalking clinic for support has also quadrupled.

The force are running drop-in sessions for officers investigating stalking. At these sessions the force's subject matter expert (SME) attends along with an ISAC. a dedicated solicitor is also on hand to discuss SPO applications. The force have received very positive feedback. This increased the numbers of officers contacting the stalking clinic directly for support and guidance.

Learning

- stalking is still not easily identified by victims and officers
- the force emphasise the importance of having a dedicated coordinator
- the force emphasise the importance of having a dedicated solicitor within the stalking clinic
- continuing professional development (CPD) is required for the stalking clinic to run effectively and needs to be a continuous process
- the force have encountered some capacity issues within the stalking clinic arising due to the increased numbers of cases referred for support

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Tags

Crime reduction