

Lewisham's VAWG COVID-19 response

Domestic violence and abuse is likely to increase during this period based on evidence from countries a few weeks ahead of us in this pandemic. In turn we want our VAWG partners to know that support is available for victims during this time.

Stalking

Stalking is a crime. You have a right to feel safe. If you or someone you know is a victim of stalking, tell someone you trust. Help and support is available

- Call the National Stalking Helpline on 0808 802 0300 run by Suzy Lamplugh Trust
- Call Paladin, the National Stalking Advisory Service on 020 3866 4107

Stalking is a pattern of persistent and unwanted attention that makes you feel pestered, scared, anxious or harassed. Some examples of stalking are:

- Regularly giving unwanted gifts
- Making unwanted communication
- Damaging property
- Repeatedly following you or spying on you
- Threats

Some of the behaviours may seem like small acts, but together they make up a consistent pattern of behaviour that is frightening and upsetting. It's important to know that stalking is a criminal offence and because of this, if you go to the police they will take it seriously. ^[1]

Types of Stalkers

A stalker could be a former or current sexual partner; an acquaintance, friend, colleague, neighbour or family member; or a complete stranger to their victim. Listed below are the different types of stalkers to help you recognise if you, or someone you know, may be being stalked;

- The Rejected stalker
- The Resentful stalker
- The Intimacy Seeking stalker
- The Incompetent Suitor

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- The Predatory stalker ^[2]

A large proportion of stalkers present with a wide variety of mental disorders, with psychosis often playing a role for those stalkers with Intimacy Seeking or Resentful motivations, while personality disorders, depression and substance misuse are common amongst those with Rejected, Resentful, and Predatory motivations. Stalkers who are classified as Incompetent Suitors (those whose stalking is an inept attempt to get a date) sometimes present with development disorders such as intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorders, with the stalking behaviour being a consequence of social skills deficits associated with these disorders. Amongst Predatory stalkers, paraphilia (disorders of sexual attraction) may play a role in motivating the stalking behaviour. ^[3]

Stalking escalating to violent crime

Stalking behaviour has been identified in 9 out of 10 murders studied by criminologists as part of research examining a link between the two crimes.

The six-month study by the University of Gloucestershire found stalking was present in 94% of the 358 cases of criminal homicides they looked at. Surveillance activity, including covert watching, was recorded 63% of the time.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which runs the National Stalking Helpline, warned that failure to take action on stalking could lead to an escalation in violence and potentially death. It called on courts to recognise stalking as a broader problem and pattern of behaviour. ^[4]

Stalking during lockdown

Stalking support services and police forces have recorded a surge in perpetrators turning to online tactics to harass their victims during the coronavirus lockdown.

Paladin, a national stalking advocacy service, and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which runs the stalking helpline, reported a surge in cyberstalking involving social media, messaging apps and emails in the first four weeks of the lockdown.

But the services and police warned there were still repeated examples of physical stalking despite the Covid-19 restrictions, including a case in which the perpetrator waited outside the victim's isolating parents' when the victim dropped off essential goods ^[5]



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Stalking and Harassment Legislation in the UK

England and Wales: Harassment was made a criminal offence under the Protection from Harassment Act (PfHA) 1997, which was subsequently amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 to include the crime of stalking. Perpetrators can be charged with either harassment or stalking under this Act. Neither of these crimes are specifically defined. The Act prohibits a course of conduct (two or more incidents) of any behaviours amounting to harassment or stalking (though exact behaviours are not defined). Stalking and harassment with fear of violence have maximum penalties of 10 years' imprisonment. ^[6]

Suzy Lamplugh Trust – National Stalking Statistics

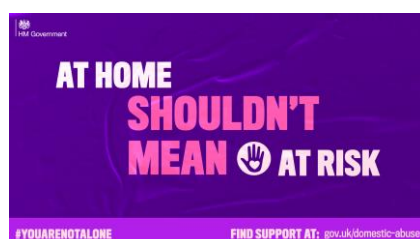
“For national figures, last week we had 20% more overall contacts than the same week last year, and 50% more contacts by email/online.

Overall since lockdown started we had an initial sharp downturn (mirrored by a downturn in reports of stalking to the police) but since then contacts have steadily risen week-on-week to now exceeding this time last year.”

Helen Burrows - Suzy Lamplugh trust

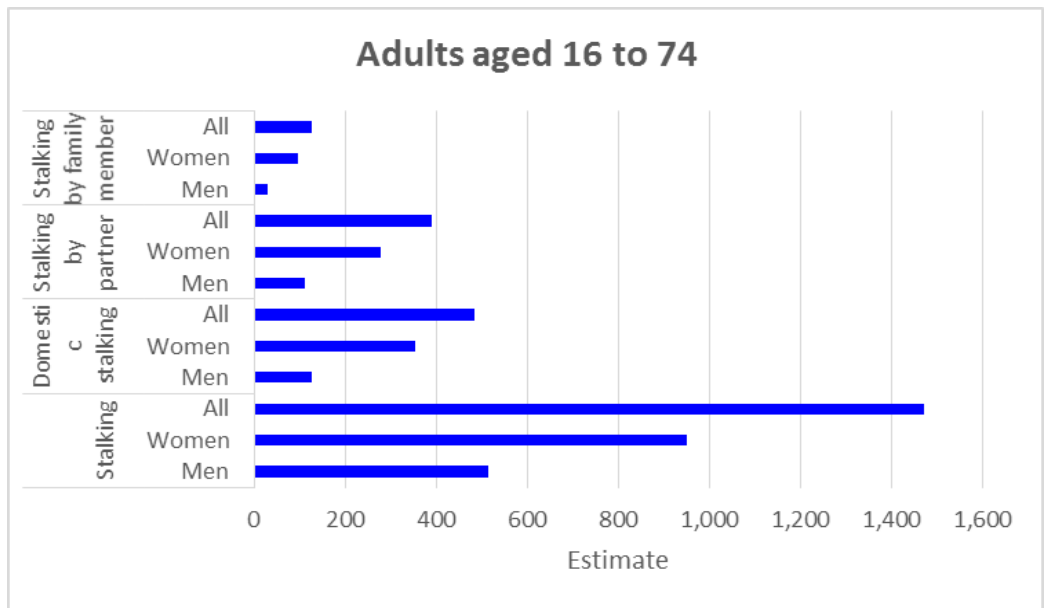
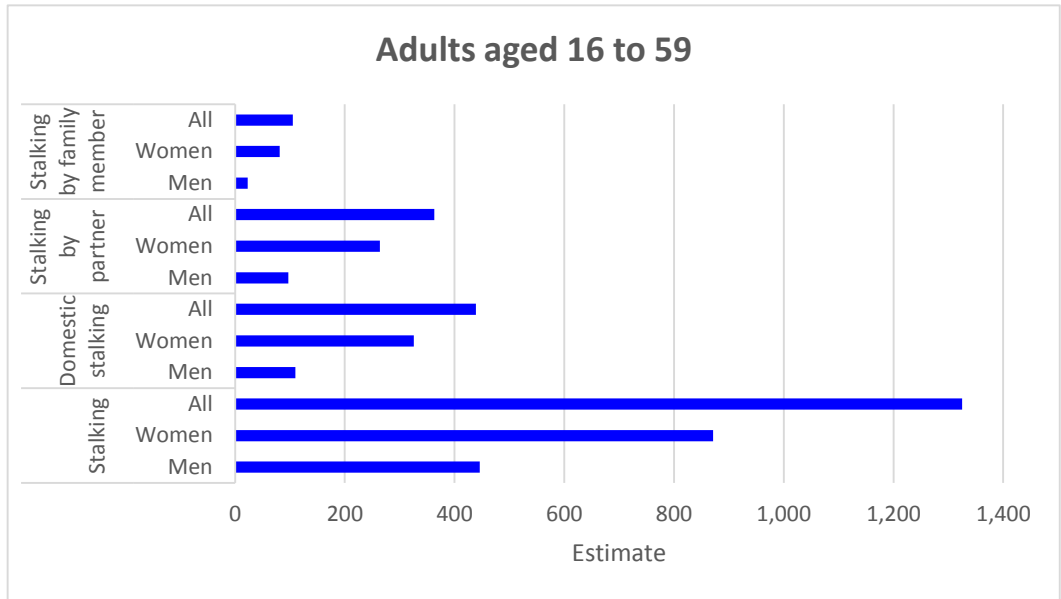
The national rates of stalking last year 2019 ^[7]

Estimated numbers of victims of stalking in the last year, year ending March 2019 CSEW



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Useful help and advice on Stalking

Paladin, the National Stalking Advisory Service has the following advice for victims:

- Trust yourself and your instincts
- Report it as early as possible to the police and tell others what is happening
- Get advice from Paladin or the Suzy Lamplugh Trust
- Keep evidence of what's happening, try writing a diary

If you need help:

- Call the National Stalking Helpline on **0808 802 0300** run by Suzy Lamplugh Trust
- Call Paladin, the National Stalking Advisory Service on **020 3866 4107** ^[8]

National resources for guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse

Apps to support those experiencing domestic abuse

www.hestia.org/brightsky

COVID-19/Coronavirus: Safety Advice for Survivors

www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors

Domestic abuse and COVID-19

www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19

National campaign to raise awareness of the Silent Solution system

www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system

Useful numbers and websites

Athena



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Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse
Helpline: 0808 2000 247
www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena
www.refuge.org.uk

Early Years Alliance - Lewisham Children's and Family Centres
www.lewishamcfc.org.uk

The Deaf Health Charity – Sign Health www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/
Text: 07970350366

RASASC (Rape and sexual abuse centre)
0808 802 9999

African Advocacy Foundation
www.africadvocacy.org
020 8698 4473

Rights of women:
rightsofwomen.org.uk

National stalking helpline – Suzy Lamplugh Trust
www.suzylamplugh.org
0808 802 0300

Respect Helpline for men
0808 8010327
respectphoneline.org.uk/help-for-domestic-abuse-victims

Women's Aid live chat
This is an online chatting service which is ideal for victims who are self-isolating and do not want to be heard.
chat.womensaid.org.uk
www.womensaid.org.uk
0117 944 44 11

GALOP National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline
0800 999 5428
www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse



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Future bulletins

Please let me know if there is anything you would like to feature or promote within these bi-weekly bulletins.

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References

- [1] <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/stalking/>
- [2] <https://northyorkshire.police.uk/staying-safe/personal-safety/stalking-and-harassment/types-of-stalkers/>
- [3] <https://www.stalkingriskprofile.com/what-is-stalking/stalking-and-mental-illness>
- [4] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/24/stalking-behaviour-murders-study-shows>
- [5] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/08/coronavirus-surge-stalking-victims-seeking-help-during-uk-lockdown>
- [6] <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0592/POST-PN-0592.pdf>
- [7] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/stalkingfindingfromthecrimesurveyforenglandandwales>
- [8] <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/stalking/>

