

The London Stalking Review

Reflections and Recommendations from London's Victims' Commissioner

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The Victim Experience	3
Barriers to reporting	3
Victim withdrawal	4
Victim care and communication	5
Victim support services	7
3. The Police Response	8
Failure to identify stalking	9
Identifying impact	10
Vulnerability and risk	11
Repeat perpetrators	12
Perpetrator intervention programmes	14
Online offences and use of technology	15
Identifying abuse of process	16
Stalking protection orders	17
Stalking Threat Assessment Centre	19
4. Legislative Reform	20
5. Conclusion	21
6. Recommendations	23

1. Introduction

Stalking is a crime of psychological terror. It robs the victim, and often their family, of their day-to-day freedoms and their sense of safety in their own home and community. Stalking has significant and long-term impacts on the health and wellbeing of victims, and children are often hidden victims of this crime.

Not only is stalking a crime of terror in itself, but [research](#) from Professor Jane Monckton Smith has identified it as one of the eight stages leading to homicide.

Having been a stalking victim myself since 2003, I have spent the last two decades determined to improve the police and criminal justice response to stalking. I was part of the launch of the first National Stalking

Helpline in 2010, instrumental in initiating the first annual National Stalking Awareness week in 2011, and campaigned for the first stalking law which came into statute in 2012. Alongside many victims and campaigners – Tracey Morgan, Tricia Bernal, Carol Faruqui, to name just a few – I have fought hard to ensure that no other stalking victim would be failed in the way we were.

“He has been stalking me and my children since 2012, and I’ve only managed to get support in 2023.

I knew I was being stalked, but all my worries and concerns were belittled by the police because he was my partner. Now my ex-husband.

They mostly took his side more than mine.”

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

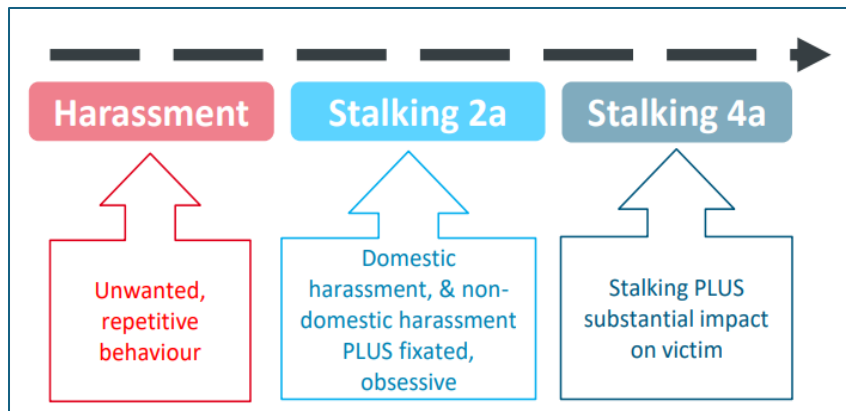
Through our work, we have begun to see progress. We saw the extension of sentencing for Stalking 4a offences to a maximum of 10 years in 2017, the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders in 2020, and the introduction of Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes housed in police forces in Cheshire, London, and Hampshire.

However, when I re-entered the criminal justice system as a stalking victim in 2021, I was dismayed not to see this hard-fought progress, with the response to stalking victims still woefully inadequate. My own experience identified serious gaps in the understanding and expertise within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and our Courts.

In my work as London’s Victims’ Commissioner, I regularly hear from stalking victims having to fight for stalking offences to be recognised; police failing to identify patterns or assess risk; substandard communication from report to court; and victims left scared and frustrated as a result of it all.

Complicating matters are the laws around stalking. Harassment and stalking, which come from the same piece of legislation, are often confused, and even stalking itself is made up of three separate offences: one known as ‘2a’ and two offences under ‘4a’. Stalking 2a is the lesser offence, carrying a maximum of six months in prison, while Stalking 4a, the more serious offence, needs to evidence that the stalking has a substantial impact on day-to-day activities or causes a fear of violence, and this carries a maximum ten-year sentence.

There is a concerning lack of data and research that evidences how the law is working in practice. This is why, in 2022, I called for the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to undertake dedicated research into the response to stalking perpetrators and victims from within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).



The resulting report from the Evidence and Insight team in MOPAC is a comprehensive review of the response to stalking victims in London between July 2015 and March 2023, and makes a number of stark findings in relation to both victims' experiences and the response they receive from the justice system.

The research shows that those reporting stalking in London are most likely to be white, female, and aged between 25 and 44, although offences reported by young people are more likely to be the most serious form of stalking. There are large gaps in demographic recording by the MPS which makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions, but it is clear there is significant underreporting among male victims, and more research is needed into this and the lower rates of prosecution for female suspects. What is also clear from victims' experiences is a lack of cultural competency in understanding the unique barriers to reporting faced by certain communities and in tailoring the response to these victims.

Where victims are reporting stalking, the research shows a failure from the police to identify vulnerability, to properly risk assess, and to progress cases through to court. Some of the most vulnerable victims are significantly more likely to have their case dropped, with domestic abuse related stalking cases ten times more likely to be dropped by police. There is also a failure by justice agencies to identify, manage, and monitor repeat perpetrators.

In preparation for this research, I held several focus groups with victims who had reported to the MPS to ensure their perspective and voices would accompany these findings. Their words are quoted in this report, and I am very grateful to them in sharing their expertise and ideas for change.

The work of MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team, alongside the experiences of victims, has enabled me to set out these reflections and recommendations.

2. The Victim Experience

Barriers to Reporting

The research found a lack of understanding and awareness of what constitutes stalking, amongst criminal justice professionals, victims, perpetrators, and the wider public. During interviews, victims told me that they were unaware that the behaviour they were experiencing was stalking. Better awareness may have led them to seek help more swiftly, possibly enabling agencies to disrupt perpetrator behaviour at an earlier stage. A public awareness campaign on what behaviour constitutes stalking would encourage victims to report and get help, but also help increase awareness amongst potential perpetrators of harmful behaviour, encouraging support intervention.

Improved awareness of stalking behaviours and the law is particularly critical for those under the age of 25, as they are at high risk of experiencing repeated, unwanted behaviours – particularly online. The research also suggests that young people are either experiencing more serious stalking or are waiting for stalking to escalate before they report, as 39% of the recorded stalking experienced by under 18s was the more serious Stalking 4a, the highest proportion of any cohort. This could indicate a concerning normalisation of stalking behaviours meaning it only gets reported once it escalates, and a lack of awareness and reporting of stalking online, which may be particularly prevalent among young people given their online presence.

Recommendation: A national stalking awareness campaign is needed to raise awareness of the behaviours that constitute stalking.

In the last mayoral term, I worked with the Mayor of London to ensure that his [Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Toolkit](#) for schools included a section on stalking behaviours. I'm pleased to see this is now a permanent feature of this work and I will call for stalking to be a prominent aspect of MOPAC's VAWG Strategy and wider long-term prevention work.

Whilst the research has shown that women are disproportionately affected by stalking, and the majority of offenders are male, the under reporting of stalking among male victims in London must be recognised and further explored. More work is needed to understand the barriers for male victims in reporting – such as shame and stigma – alongside the reasons why cases with female perpetrators are not obtaining the same justice outcomes.

From my interviews with victims, I also heard of specific barriers faced by individuals from minoritised communities, yet there is little research to understand these perspectives. I welcome the MPS VAWG Action Plan's commitments to improve engagement with

"They think 'oh well, he's a 6-foot 3 black guy who can look after himself - this woman doesn't present any risk'. There's been a complete lack of understanding and acknowledgment of the real risk, and the impact."

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

Black and minoritised women, as it is clear that more can and should be done by justice agencies to better understand and respond to minoritised victims, through greater levels of cultural competency.

“Kurdish women are frightened to talk about their suffering. They are afraid that if it comes to the police or they are referred to a social worker, they will take the children away from them. That's why they keep quiet. They suffer in silence.”

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

Victim Withdrawal

Too many stalking victims are withdrawing from the criminal justice process, both in London and across England and Wales. The research in London identified that 45% of cases end in victim withdrawal and that victims whose cases were classified as the more serious offence of Stalking 4a were twice as likely to withdraw. Police actions are critical to prevent victims from disengaging; if a suspect is arrested or interviewed, if the case has witnesses, or if the case file records that the victim is fearful for their safety, victims are far less likely to withdraw.

This finding was mirrored by the victims I spoke to who all said that it was at moments when the criminal justice response was weak, and they felt the risk wasn't being taken seriously enough, that they considered withdrawing.

“I actually did consider withdrawing at one point when I was at my absolute lowest. This is when he was calling my work, turning up everywhere, getting away with everything. He'd breached his bail and the police just kept saying that they're going to put it down as bad character. They wouldn't keep him in jail. They kept letting him out. Within an hour of being bailed he was outside my house again...so it was absolute torture...”

He's a very large, abusive person and I just don't feel safe anymore. I was so mentally drained from the whole thing I actually did send an e-mail to the investigating officer and I said, “I can't do this anymore, I'll just drop it.”

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

A lack of understanding of why victims withdraw is evident among justice agencies and is clearly present in this research and in previous pieces of work such as the London Rape Reviews. For this reason, I called for further research into victim withdrawal across crime types in the MPS, and this will be published by MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team in the Autumn of 2024; with stalking featuring as part of this research. This should provide further insight into why almost half of stalking victims are withdrawing from a police investigation.

Victim Care and Communication

The focus groups I held with victims have left me concerned that care and communication continue to be woefully inadequate. The [MPS' VAWG Action Plan](#) committed to "improve support and care for victim survivors of domestic abuse and other VAWG offences through the criminal justice process to ensure a consistent and compassionate service", but this is far from being realised with stalking, which remains a highly gendered crime.

"Communication is so shocking. I know that the police are overstretched but I can chase and chase and I don't hear anything. It's a miracle if I get an update."

- *Stalking Victim-Survivor*

Victims I spoke to were confused about their case, received inconsistent updates, and found police communication uncoordinated and chaotic. This ranged from a total lack of updates on the case, to police and support services calling from withheld numbers and so causing the victim additional distress. This inconsistent communication is not providing stalking victims with the reassurance they need to stay engaged in the justice process, and can further exacerbate their trauma.

"As we talk, his phone rings. It's a withheld number. John never answers withheld numbers. Later we find out it was the witness support service at Westminster Magistrates court. Shouldn't they know that a stalking victim is never going to answer a withheld number? It's yet another example, he says, of how the system fails to acknowledge the reality of what has happened to him."

- *Extract from Times article*

Their rights under the Victims' Code were also not consistently upheld, including the right to be understood. In the below example, the victim reported fifteen times before a family friend interpreted and she could finally convey her fear and the risk posed to herself and her children. After this, the perpetrator was finally arrested.

"I was trying with the amount of English that I know to tell them what was happening, and I was begging them "please, please, because of the language barrier, can you provide me with an interpreter?" and they kept telling me "no, no, your English is good, you can tell us". And they didn't provide me with an interpreter."

- *Stalking Victim-Survivor*

It is critical that the MPS have consistent use of interpreters, and officers that work on stalking, including frontline responders and investigators, require cultural competence. A [2023 report from the End Violence Against Women and Girls coalition](#) found that nationally, over half of victims had experienced a failure of the police to communicate at an appropriate level, and a quarter had not been provided with an interpreter when requested. While engagement with minoritised communities is a commitment in the MPS VAWG

Action Plan, more needs to be done to increase cultural understanding and embed this in policing practice. Stalking is a known risk for post-separation homicide and [minoritised victims are overrepresented](#) in domestic homicide, specifically black women.

The advice given to victims can also be contradictory and can mean key pieces of evidence aren't obtained. One victim we spoke to was advised by officers "*don't photograph or film him because then you're harassing him*", despite this evidence later being crucial to the success of the court case. Some organisations have guidance and frameworks available to follow in stalking cases, though the unique nature of these crimes makes it important for officers to link in to specialist advice where possible. Officer training and experience is also crucial in enabling them to provide the correct advice to victims, but currently training is often focused on specific roles – such as the Stalking SPOC (Single Point of Contact) for an area. I am pleased that training developed through MOPAC has already been delivered to over 400 officers, with e-learning currently being developed to reach officers more widely.

Victim feedback is also a valuable tool to develop and train officers, and the MPS and MOPAC must urgently address the gap in gathering feedback from those who have reported high harm offences such as sexual offences, domestic abuse, and stalking. Whilst [a survey](#) is available, the MPS have not effectively distributed it, leading to very low response rates. The MPS has introduced its My Met Service feedback mechanism, but this is short and consists of multiple-choice answers, so does not give victims the space to leave meaningful feedback. This leaves the complaints system as the only real vehicle for victims to provide their views, and if this isn't addressed the commitment on hearing victims' voices and feedback made in the MPS VAWG Action and New Met for London Plans will not be realised.

Aligned with the MPS VAWG Action Plan commitment to hear victims' voices and seek more victim-survivor feedback, the MPS have established a Victim Voice Forum, and has plans to set up more, to obtain views and insights to help reform the Met's response to victims. It is imperative that these forums include stalking victims. The experience of stalking victims in London should also be incorporated into learning and training materials for the police, to underscore the importance of police communication for maintaining victims' trust and confidence and the importance of upholding the Victims' Code.

Since being in this role, I have [repeatedly documented how victims' rights within the Victims' Code are not upheld](#), and countless inspections since have drawn the same conclusions. With the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 now in legislation, all criminal justice agencies will soon be legally required to raise awareness of the Victims' Code and report on their compliance. The MPS has made efforts to drive up compliance with the Code over time, such as through the expansion of the Victim Focus Desks, but in order for these and other measures to be a success, the MPS must implement robust training across the force on how to comply with the Victims Code. I am pleased this training is currently being developed with a target to roll out later this year. We are working with the MPS on this to ensure victims receive good care and communication, and that there is a focus on areas of the Victims' Code that we know are often not delivered to victims, such as the interpreter services referenced above.

Finally, I will continue to call for a [Victim Care Hub in London](#). A Hub is not intended to replace existing specialist support services, but instead would act as a navigator-type role, building a team of people around the victim and acting as a point of contact for victims who do not have specialist advocates. The goal of a Hub would be to ensure victims are both well-supported and prepared for the justice process, and would alleviate the burden on individual criminal justice agencies who are currently each resourcing their own victim care provision in silo, without collectively addressing the fragmentation and confusion which retraumatises victims.

Recommendation: MOPAC and the MPS should deliver a Victim Care Hub in London to ensure victims have a dedicated, highly trained advocate to improve victim-centred communication throughout their justice journey.

Victim Support Services

I have worked closely with stalking victim support services for many years, and with many victim-survivors who have greatly benefited from the independent expertise and trauma-responsive support they provide. Research from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust has shown that one in four victims with an advocate saw their stalkers convicted, compared to around one in 50 overall, showing the huge value that an advocate can bring.

Unfortunately, within the small number of victim-survivor interviews I conducted for this research, the feedback on the support they received was disappointing. Victims were not clear on the purpose of their stalking advocate, as they did not proactively advocate for them with criminal justice agencies. Others were frustrated that the advocate struggled to get the required updates from criminal agencies as much as they did. What was clear from these victims' experiences is that an advocate's success in providing support can hinge on their integration with the police and other justice agencies. Clear ways of working and escalation routes are needed to provide a consistent level of support for stalking victims.

I am aware that services, much like the police, are experiencing a recruitment and retention crisis. In March 2024, [VAWG organisations wrote](#) to the previous Government to formally express their concerns about the workforce challenges in the sector causing burnout and stress, fuelled by the increased cost of living, more complex cases, an increase in overheads, and a reduction in statutory services. London services experience this more acutely due to high rental costs faced by workers and organisations who need accessible and confidential office space to meet with victim-survivors.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Justice should review the current state of victim support funding and the viability of the frontline workforce – including stalking support services – and take forward any recommendations needed to ensure quality specialist support for victims.

Mental health services in London are also acutely oversubscribed, and often not equipped to support victims of stalking, meaning that victim support services are increasingly depended on by clients who have intensive mental health and trauma needs. One study that examined the effect of stalking on the children of victims found that 85% of children aged 7-11 met the PTSD diagnostic criteria, and yet children are often forgotten as victims and left out of traditional victim service provision. From interviews with victims, it is clear that there is little support offered to address the psychological impacts and trauma from stalking, especially when this is not related to domestic abuse. The focus on VAWG, and particularly sexual violence, can often mask the needs of non-domestic abuse stalking victims. Early psychological first aid and continued therapeutic support to cope with trauma should be available to them in parallel to the criminal justice process, and primary care providers such as GPs and IAPT services should be upskilled to be able to provide this to victims.

Recommendation: The NHS should ensure services are upskilled and equipped to provide specific support to victims of stalking.

Following my interviews, I am also concerned that victim advocates in support services may not receive the level of training required to effectively advocate for victims and their rights under the Victims' Code. With the Victims and Prisoners Act now in statute, criminal justice agencies have new obligations to comply with the Victims' Code, and victim support organisations need more robust training to hold these agencies to account.

Recommendation: MOPAC should set the expectation that its commissioned services must mandate training on the Victims' Code.

3. The Police Response

Recorded stalking has increased 11-fold from 2016/17 to 2022/23, yet rates of recorded stalking are lower in London (6.98 offences per 1,000 people) in comparison to England and Wales (11.71). It is unclear whether this is because of underreporting or because there are higher rates of harassment recorded instead of stalking. The research did not analyse harassment data and we therefore need more data on the scale of harassment reporting in the Met to assess this.

Reported stalking has seen a significant increase in the MPS and nationally, though this is largely attributed to changes in Home Office rules that meant all domestic harassment cases were to be recorded as Stalking 2a. While this led to a large increase in the overall number of cases, the proportion with a judicial outcome (such as a charge or caution) decreased from 22% in 2017/18 to 9% in 2022/23. While this is higher than the rate for England and Wales, it still represents a large decline and suggests confusion over the legislation.

Failure to Identify Stalking

Police continue to treat incidents as single events, meaning stalking goes unrecognised and patterns of behaviour are not properly understood. Escalation was noted in half of the cases looked at, but in a quarter of these, whilst the victim stated there was escalation, the police did not, demonstrating a failure to properly understand and identify stalking behaviours and how they develop. Across the cases examined, eight in ten were initially not identified as stalking, with the majority initially recorded as harassment (41%) or a domestic incident (24%). We have heard throughout the review that frontline police find it difficult to determine whether what a victim is experiencing is stalking or harassment, and which one of the five total offences is applicable in the Protection from Harassment Act. To ensure they are receiving the appropriate level of response and support from the MPS, more needs to be done through training and the reviewing of cases to ensure high harm serious stalking cases are not being misclassified as harassment.

In the research, 26% of stalking offences in 2022-23 were ultimately recorded as Stalking 4a offences, though since April 2023 the MPS have driven up their performance, and Stalking 4a now accounts for 40% of recorded offences. In my view however this remains low, as stalking almost always involves fear of violence, alarm, and distress. A Stalking 2a charge should therefore only be applied in a minority of cases, and the MPS must help officers to navigate the confusing landscape of legislation.

When professionals minimise or trivialise stalking and fail to see the wider pattern and impact, it deters victims from reporting repeat incidents and encourages withdrawal. Action at the early stage of stalking is crucial to disrupting a perpetrator's behaviour, or evidencing a case if the stalking continues.

"'Just let it go', the police told me many times. They gave him a chat and he just went on his merry way. Then the pattern would be repeated. It's luck if you get a policeman that understands and truly believes you and where they think that there's a case moving forward."

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

Victims are forced to be persistent in order to have stalking recognised by the police and have its impact taken seriously. The police need enough professional curiosity to consider whether there is a pattern of behaviour. Instead, the MPS made a 'no further action' (NFA) decision in 41% of cases, citing a lack of evidence in 57% of these. This is a concerning finding, given the contact which can often be evidenced in stalking cases; the research found 66% of stalking cases involved phone calls or texts.

Scrutiny panels have been usefully implemented as part of efforts to improve rape prosecutions, and I welcome the commitment in the Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan to create new guidance to support joint local case scrutiny panels, although I would like to see stalking made a specific panel as not all stalking is domestic abuse related. I also welcome the MPS' recent announcement that they will conduct VAWG scrutiny panels which will incorporate stalking. These panels are due to commence in October 2024 and I

hope they will ensure that when stalking cases are scrutinised, the panel includes representatives from across agencies with sufficient expertise in stalking.

Identifying Impact

As has already been highlighted, more needs to be done to support frontline officers, as identifying stalking within existing legislation necessitates evidencing victim impact. In the cases examined, victim emotional distress or mental toll was recorded in 31% of the cases and the victim being frightened or fearing safety was recorded in 42% of cases. However only 28% of these cases were eventually classified as Stalking 4a. Perhaps most concerningly, the impact on the victim in the Victim Personal Statement was referred to in less than 10 cases, though this analysis did not look at witness statements, where the CPS need the evidence of impact to be recorded.

A failure to identify impact is one of the reasons why I called for stalking awareness training for MPS officers at all levels, which is now being implemented through a collaborative programme designed by the STAC team, St. Mary's University Twickenham, Alice Ruggles Trust, and supported by MOPAC. I strongly welcome this development but would like to see a formal evaluation of the impact. I also hope to see the MPS better incorporating the lived experience of victims into their regular training and development opportunities on stalking.

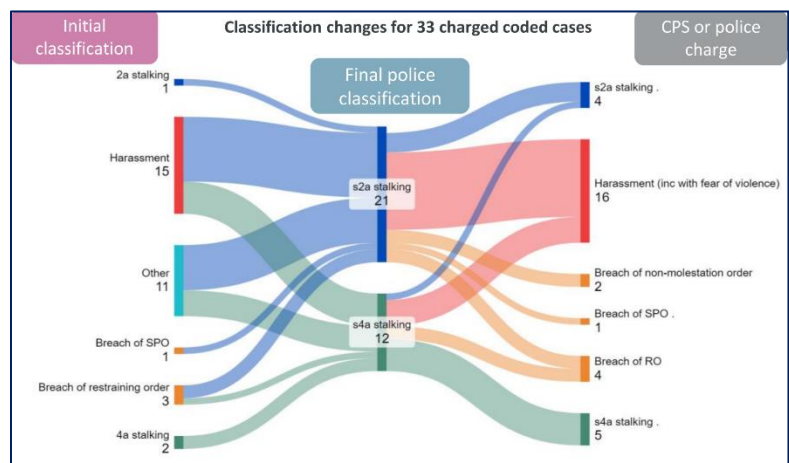
"I was really devastated because he got charged with Stalking 2a and not 4a, which I couldn't believe because at this point he was waiting outside my house and tailing me."

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

External advice from specialists can greatly support policing in its handline of stalking cases, and the MPS have also worked with the NHS to devise a 'checklist' of psychological and physical symptoms, and changes to daily routine and quality of life, to help frontline officers identify more serious stalking. Colleagues from the NHS

have also offered their support for officers in approaching conversations with victims appropriately to understand impact. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust also offers 'Victim Focused Reviews', where a team of experts go in to listen to calls, watch body-worn video, look at the victim contact that has happened in a case, and look at the safety and risk assessment tools available and how they are being implemented. This review and its recommendations support the force in improving its practice.

A lack of data from the CPS on how many Stalking 4a cases are subsequently charged as Stalking 2a or Harassment, and a lack of data on convictions, makes it difficult to know how well prosecutors understand and respond to stalking cases. The lack of data is a result of the CPS' inability to accurately "flag" cases on their systems due to the complexities of the current legislation and the variety of different offences being prosecuted in relation to stalking.



This research found that of 376 cases only 42 were sent to the CPS, and of those only 33 were charged. CPS also reclassified stalking offences at the point of charge in 25 out of the 33 charges, with only 10 cases resulting in an actual stalking charge. It is unclear if this downgrading at the point of charge is because of poor police files, or due to decisions taken by the CPS. Concerningly, my office has also heard from a number of victims and advocates of stalking cases involving plea bargaining by the CPS, minimising the impact of stalking on the victim. If the CPS hope to realise their ambitions in the DA Joint Justice Plan, they must have a better understanding of their data and include stalking in their quarterly statistics. Only then can best practice be appropriately applied to stalking, identifying offenders known to other agencies and at a local level and building a comprehensive approach to disruption and diversion. For these reasons, I believe we need a dedicated inspection on the CPS response to stalking.

Recommendation: HMCPSI should undertake a national inspection of the CPS response to stalking.

Vulnerability and Risk

The research found that officers are often failing to assess and record vulnerability. Half of victims in our sample had previously been a victim of crime, but despite a large proportion of stalking victims clearly being vulnerable to repeat victimisation and the [significant psychological impacts of stalking](#), only 10% of victims were recorded as having mental health needs and only 14% of victims were classed as vulnerable. Assessing victim need and perpetrator risk is crucial, and relevant fields should be made mandatory on the MPS 'Connect' system, to ensure officers are completing it.

Shockingly, the research found that if victims are identified as vulnerable or having mental health issues their case is seven times more likely to be NFA'd. This suggests there may be an issue with how the police perceive victim credibility, and so suspects targeting vulnerable victims may be more likely to continue their actions and avoid consequence. This is particularly disappointing to see, given I first raised concerns about victim credibility driving NFA decisions in the 2019 London Rape Review, and work to train officers on understanding the impact of trauma has been committed to over a number of years. I am pleased to finally see this included in new MPS training, and hope this will have a positive impact.

Although seven out of ten cases involved victim and perpetrator as ex-partners, only 14% of cases were referred to MARAC and only 7% used an S-DASH (stalking risk assessment). The failure of police to complete risk assessments in the vast majority of cases when half are repeat victims is of great concern. The College of Policing has developed a Stalking Screening Tool to assist first responders in identifying cases and taking appropriate action, which the MPS should utilise to ensure a consistent approach.

These risk assessments should then be submitted to the CPS to provide them with a holistic view of the level of harm and risk posed by the suspect. Risk assessments should also be updated by the MPS throughout the life of a case to reflect key changes, such as when bail for a suspect has been granted. I would urge that it become mandatory for all risk assessment documents to be sent to the CPS in stalking

cases. This could be done via an amendment to the current joint protocol, which I understand is already planned for review under the Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan.

Recommendation: MPS should utilise the College of Policing Stalking Screening Tool to improve the frontline response to stalking, in conjunction with secondary risk assessment tools in non-DA stalking, and that officers are trained to use these.

Recommendation: The NPCC and CPS should update their protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences to make it mandatory that all risk assessment documents are sent to the CPS in stalking cases.

Repeat Perpetrators

One of the most striking findings from this research is the high levels of repeat offending. 62% of stalking suspects have previous allegations of another crime, with 29% having previous stalking or harassment-related allegations.

“Why can’t they figure out that this report and that report and all those other reports all relate back to the same perpetrator? Why are they not able to pull that together? I’m so worried that he’s going to get acquitted and not held accountable for what he did.”

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

Police are not doing basic intelligence checks to help them understand the history and appropriately join cases together when suspects are offending against multiple victims. Victims expressed their concern that this could weaken the criminal case but also impact the assessment of risk, as the full offending behaviour was not being correctly identified. Unfortunately the police response received by victims I spoke to reflected an “incident focused” mindset of officers, which has also been [identified as a problem in the policing response to rape](#).

“To get actual justice the threshold of what you have to suffer is so high. It seems like the system is arranged so a victim has to suffer many, many instances before that case is even taken forward. I can see that a lot of victims could give up because it’s very hard to explain what is going on.”

- Stalking Victim-Survivor

A context and suspect-focused approach – as has been developed for rape investigations through Operation Soteria – is needed in stalking investigations to effectively identify and tackle offenders. Otherwise, victims must suffer an extraordinary amount before any action is taken, and the onus is on them to keep reporting.

If we are serious about preventing violence against women and girls, the police must greatly improve their identification of repeat patterns of behaviour. The new MPS ‘Connect’ database will aid in this, and I would

welcome a further update on the difference it is making in the next VAWG Action Plan Update, however, it still relies on officers' professional curiosity to join the dots and make the connections. My focus remains on reinforcing the need for thorough intelligence checks to be conducted across all systems, and I welcome that this issue is being addressed in an up-coming stalking awareness e-learning module for MPS officers.

Identifying repeat and high-risk perpetrators is deeply complex, as we know predatory stalkers can move location and from victim to victim. The new Government committed within their manifesto to relentlessly target the most prolific and harmful perpetrators of VAWG and to improving and standardising the IT systems being used by the Police. While the MPS is working to better understand what patterns of offending comprise harm and repetition, I believe national coordination and investment – informed by academia – is needed to develop a consistent algorithm-based system that can be utilised by all forces to target the most harmful stalking perpetrators.

This would be a powerful tool to aid policing, though given the dynamic nature of risk and offending behaviours I am also clear that it is not a solution in itself, and any system must be accompanied by a strong understanding of stalking among officers along with the relevant techniques to investigate cases that involve a course of conduct over time.

Recommendation: Government should research the benefits of an algorithm-based system to identify repeat and high-risk stalking offenders.

I welcome the MPS “V100” initiative - which proactively manages the 100 men who pose the biggest risk to women in London – and Operation Griffin in STAC - which manages high risk stalking offenders including non-convicted suspects who would fit under the College of Policing definition of ‘[potentially dangerous perpetrators](#)’, however a consistent national approach is needed. The ‘V100’ cannot be relied upon to capture stalkers of high concern, and ‘potentially dangerous perpetrators’ guidance needs to be updated to explicitly include stalking offenders. We also know that, due to volume, STAC can only review Stalking 4a cases, but any framework used to identify high harm stalking offenders must look beyond Stalking 4a cases and examine linked offences such as Stalking 2a, harassment, malicious communications, and other offences such as criminal damage.

There have also been the long-standing calls for a “domestic abuse and stalking register”, so that convicted serious domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators are incorporated into a Multi-Agency Public Protection Register and are made to register their details with police, in the same way convicted sexual offenders are. This would help to manage convicted offenders more robustly, however, there must be better identification of repeat perpetrators for any register to be effective due to the low number of convictions currently.

Perpetrator Intervention Programmes

High levels of repeat offending amongst stalking perpetrators demonstrates the need for robust, targeted intervention and change programmes. Probation data shows us a wide range of vulnerability among stalking offenders, with 28% on medication for mental health problems, and 53% having had serious psychological problems or depression. I understand that STAC's perpetrator intervention work, developed in partnership with clinical psychologists in the NHS Mental Health Partnership and probation, are working well, and I strongly welcome plans to further expand this work utilising the positive requirements which can be enforced via an SPO.

The Early Stalker Intervention Programme, funded by the NHS and part delivered through MOPAC, is multiagency intervention delivered by Police, NHS and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to those on Stalking Protection Orders, with an aim to address stalking behaviours at an early stage, using tools and strategies to manage emotional and social skills that are contributing to their offending behaviour. We look forward to an evaluation of this programme in the near future.

Health provider stakeholder statement regarding the impact of mental health and psychological interventions with individuals who engage in stalking.

"As psychologists and health practitioners at STAC we can report the impact of interventions in three key ways:

1. In direct psychological interventions with offenders, the observed and self-reported outcomes of individuals engaged in stalking is evidence of progress on a range of measures that relate directly to the drivers for the stalking behaviour; for example improvement in emotion management and cognitive flexibility.
2. Initial longer term outcome measures suggest that there is a significant reduction in reoffending for those who have fully completed the psychological intervention.
3. Co-working with mental health services for those individuals receiving psychiatric treatment has increased teams' understanding of stalking behaviours, risks and impacts which has directly influenced clinical management and thus mitigated risks of further harm to the victims."

We need to see further investment in these programmes to enable them to reach a greater number of perpetrators. Unfortunately, national funding pots for stalking perpetrator intervention programmes have tended to also include funding for DA perpetrator interventions or DA-specific stalking. For example, within the recent Home Office Domestic Abuse and Stalking Perpetrator Intervention Fund 2023 65% of awards in this grant were solely for DA interventions with no stalking provision, 20% included DA stalking only and only 15% addressed all forms of stalking.

Recommendation: Government should seek to prioritise and protect funding for stalking perpetrator intervention programmes.

Online Offences and Use of Technology

The criminal justice response to stalking is still geared towards more traditionally understood behaviours such as following, loitering, and threats of violence, and I am concerned that online forms of stalking are viewed as less harmful or ignored. The National Stalking Helpline found that 100% of cases involve some form of cyber abuse, and yet in the MPS cases in the research only 23% referenced any cyberstalking, suggesting under-identification and a need for further training and support for officers, who aren't keeping up with the challenges of cybercrime. Confusion can also arise when it comes to identifying offences and the legislation under which they should be charged, as online fraud for example can form part of stalking.

'Cyber stalking' and 'stalking' are often spoken about separately, when in reality technology is just a conduit for stalking. This issue is further exacerbated by a lack of basic understanding of technology and social media among officers, in terms of how these can be used to commit offences and how a victim may fear their use. The Cyber Helpline identified ~70% of victims believing they have some form of spyware on their device, when in reality 1% do. This fear among victims can be perceived as a credibility issue, rather than police understanding that stalking causes its victims to be hypervigilant and fear for their security.

"My stalker hacked accounts, hacked social media, hacked emails, sent malicious text messages, in excess of about 800, Addison Lee bookings, everything kept coming through. It was like everything was just happening at once online. So we were like "What do we do?". You know, go to the police... explain to them what was going on. They were lost themselves. They didn't have a clue because it was cyber."

- *Stalking Victim-Survivor*

The report highlights that there are also failings in retrieving evidence from devices, as potential technology evidence was mentioned in 40% of cases but victim technology was only provided in 17% of cases and suspect technology in 13% of cases. I understand that officers encounter many challenges in retrieving technological evidence from social media and certain devices and that technology companies, who are not currently compelled to cooperate with police on investigations, can present a block to accessing this evidence.

The research only covers the period up until March 2023, but since then the MPS has invested in Digital Media Investigator training for STAC officers so that they can appropriately advise on complex digital evidence involved in cyberstalking. They have also delivered Operation Atlas which puts specialist investigators into public protection teams with access to sophisticated software to swiftly process digital evidence. This helps officers easily present appropriate digital evidence for charging, including the location of perpetrators in proximity to victims and the full extent of offending patterns. This has led to an impressive charge rate increasing from 12% to 66% in stalking cases in the East Area BCU and 96% of those cases led to a conviction, with 88% entering guilty pleas. Importantly, the time taken to investigate has reduced from 137 to 92 days.

These improvements will have hugely benefited victims, who have to wait less time for a positive outcome and are less likely to be called to give evidence in a trial. The MPS have now begun rolling this out further, and this innovative model should be carefully considered by other forces and the Home Office for its potential to improve national charge and conviction rates in stalking cases.

Identifying abuse of process

In correspondence with victims and professionals, I have repeatedly heard how stalkers can utilise civil, criminal, and family court procedures to perpetrate stalking. Unfortunately, this is rarely considered as part of investigations and prosecutions. When malicious and unmeritorious applications for civil or family proceedings are made as part of a course of conduct of stalking, and victims report this to the police, they will often be told that it is a 'civil matter' and not a police matter, even though such applications are part of a course of conduct.

This was recognised in case law following my own experience in 2011, where my stalker repeatedly breached the terms of his restraining order by using the civil court process to make vexatious claims against me. I reported this matter to the police, but the CPS dropped the charges against him arguing that it was his human right to access the civil courts. In 2011, [I took the CPS to judicial review](#) and the court maintained that the right of access to the courts under Article 6 of the European Convention is not an absolute right and can be restricted to achieve a legitimate social objective, including the prevention of persistent harassment. I would like to see this case law far more frequently referenced and incorporated in training so criminal justice professionals are aware that this is a common tactic of stalking perpetrators that can still be pursued with criminal sanctions.

The abuse of family court process was identified in the [Government's Harm Panel Report in 2020](#). We have also seen the helpful introduction of section 91(14) orders brought in as part of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 so that judges have the power to screen and dismiss unmeritorious and vindictive applications, without automatic proceedings being initiated that force the victim into contact with the perpetrator. However, we still rarely see these applications being used as evidence of stalking within a criminal investigation.

This abuse of process can also be an issue within the criminal justice system, for example through false reports to the police. In our research, 4% of stalking victims had previous allegations of stalking or protective orders issued against them and 26% of stalking suspects who were interviewed by police made counter allegations of stalking. The abuse of legal process is a common tactic of a persistent stalker. Stalkers can manipulate the system by intentionally delaying court proceedings or refusing to pay court-awarded compensation, maintaining a link between offender and victim. A stalker may also repeatedly seek to amend the terms of their restraining order, or breach their order in such a way that it can be viewed as trivial or unintentional to the court, even though the breach is meaningful to the victim. These behaviours are rarely identified as part of the stalking conduct or accounted for in sentencing. These tactics by stalkers to use the court system as a vehicle to manipulate victims must be better identified and

addressed, as it can prolong the impact and be gratifying and rewarding to the stalker as evidenced in the case below.

“He has managed to get the case adjourned on ten consecutive occasions that were all accepted by the CPS. This included him claiming disputes with his law firm, not turning up to court or claiming illness. I have personally turned up every time with my family to support me all the way from Scotland with travel costs that cannot be recovered. My case has now been in and out of court now for over 2 years, meanwhile he has breached his bail close to 100 times. He was remanded temporarily but then managed to get released on a technicality. He is a seriously dangerous person who has been allowed to manipulate and orchestrate this case from day one.”

- *Stalking Victim-Survivor*

Professor Jane Monckton Smith has cautioned that the nature of the breach can become the focus for the criminal justice system when the focus should be on the fact that a breach of a protective court order can indicate risk and escalation. This is why I believe training for prosecutors, barristers and the judiciary on stalking behaviours and typologies is essential, so that they can identify where perpetrators are utilising civil, family or criminal justice processes to maintain contact with their victim and further their campaign of stalking.

Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs)

The MPS have issued the highest number of SPOs of any force, and have further increased these by [9% in the last 6 months](#). This research has found that, despite this, when compared with the number of stalking offences, the number that are obtained are still very low. In cases from 2022, SPOs were obtained in just 1.4% of cases - below the target of 2% - whilst non-molestation orders were obtained in 7%.

The comparative success of the Met in their SPO application rate is partly down to the introduction of a network of twelve SPO Coordinators, who screen cases suitable for an SPO, support investigators to prepare a file of evidence for the court application, and attend and apply for the SPO. These roles are highly valued, as SPO applications are complex and sometimes described as an additional investigation. With current SPOCs overwhelmed, further resource is needed if the MPS wish to support more victims obtain this form of protection.

The police also encounter challenges in having SPOs approved as stalking behaviours are not always well understood in court and the burden of proof was often wrongly assumed to be criminal. As a result of these challenges, the MPS championed efforts to lower the burden of proof in SPO applications, and this change was recently made by a revision to the statutory guidance. This should improve the number of SPOs issued nationwide.

When bail conditions are in place, judges can be reluctant to approve an SPO, despite the positive intervention requirements that an SPO can provide. There is limited data to know if this is a systematic issue but nevertheless a lack of judicial understanding about SPOs and stalking generally [has been highlighted as an area of concern](#). I am aware that there is no formal training for judges on stalking behaviours and this is very much needed alongside judicial training on the benefits of SPOs and what positive requirements can involve.

Though the charge rate for SPO breaches (62.9%) is strong, I regularly hear from victims that protective orders (particularly non-molestation orders and restraining orders) are poorly enforced and pursued. A [2021 HMICFRS report](#) made a series of robust recommendations for Chief Constables, the NPCC, the CPS and Government to address the lack of data, the poor enforcement and lack of communication with victims around conditions for orders, all of which are putting victims at risk. I welcome the commitment within the recent Domestic Abuse Joint Justice plan that the CPS will, from the outset, consider what protective orders and measures are available to victims and their children and make timely and accurate applications and hope that this will be applied across all forms of stalking. This Government has made calls to strengthen the use of SPOs, and so I hope they will revisit these recommendations and report on their implementation.

Any reported breach of an SPO is automatically flagged to STAC, but SPOs make up only 15% of the order breaches that they review; 70% being restraining orders. Currently, SPOs cannot be granted at the end of a criminal case like a restraining order, meaning stalking victims are not always obtaining the correct form of protection.

SPOs offer enhanced protections for victims and incorporate positive requirements for perpetrators, meaning they that they are legally required to undergo an approved intervention, for example a psychological assessment or drug rehabilitation programme. The Government could improve the level of protection offered by SPOs by legislating for them to become a bespoke ancillary order able to be issued at sentencing, which would permit a more tailored and appropriate response to stalking perpetrators. This would rely on effective communication and collaboration between those writing pre-sentence reports and those proposing SPOs at the point of conviction, to ensure the best package of measures is imposed to promote victim protection and positive change. London has led the way on GPS tagging requirements, including an upcoming pilot focused on non-DA stalking, and this could be utilised as a national requirement of SPOs for all types of stalking, mirroring their current use for Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders.

Recommendation: The Government should legislate to make Stalking Protection Orders a bespoke ancillary order that judges can issue at the point of sentencing, focusing the court's attention on requirements which would ensure the safety of crime victims.

The Stalking Threat Assessment Centre (STAC)

Stalking is best pursued by those with specialist understanding of the crime. That is why the MPS introduced STAC in 2018: a small multi-agency centre that includes police, probation, NHS, and stalking support advocates. This approach to a Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programme (MASIP) is recognised as the best way to approach stalking, and the engagement of and resourcing from all partners in the model is crucial to its success. The centre has been credited with recent improvements in the response to stalking, such as increasing the percentage of recorded Stalking 4a offences to 40% and a comparatively high use of Stalking Protection Orders.

STAC currently does not have capacity to hold and run investigations but instead provides advice and guidance to the Community Safety Units (CSU) and Criminal Investigation Departments (CID) who are holding these investigations. MOPAC's research has found that, although the work undertaken by STAC is excellent, there was only evidence of officers in charge (OICs) of stalking cases actively engaging with STAC officers in 6% of cases and with STAC partners in 1% of cases. Furthermore, although STAC scans and reviews all live Stalking 4a investigations to see where assistance can be provided to OICs, it does not have capacity to review Stalking 2a cases or Harassment cases meaning that high-risk cases misclassified as Stalking 2a or Harassment, won't receive this expert advice.

To help address the gap between STAC and the BCUs, I called for the MPS to increase the number of Single Point of Contact (SPOC) roles on stalking from one for the whole of the MPS, to one for each BCU area. In 2022 the MPS introduced a Detective Inspector as a Stalking Lead and a Detective Sergeant as Stalking Deputy on each BCU to help ensure correct classification, oversee high risk and complex cases and disseminate understanding and knowledge of stalking. Unfortunately, the research found that up until March 2023, the use of these SPOCs was varied and there was evidence of input from a stalking SPOC in only 30% of cases MPS wide. The MPS must review these roles and ensure that they have the capacity and expertise they need to advise colleagues appropriately and do more to encourage OICs to utilise this resource.

Recommendation: MPS to review the roles of BCU Stalking Leads and SPO SPOCs ensure that they have the capacity they need to advise colleagues and drive excellence in the response to stalking.

I understand that an uplift in resource for S-TAC is incoming, which is to be strongly welcomed. Some investigative capacity for high-risk cases should be considered to help ensure that the most serious cases are dealt with by an expert centralised team working closely with other agencies. With stalking prevalent in domestic homicide cases and the Met's current commitment through the VAWG action plan to "target the 100 men who pose the most risk to women" and prioritise "interventions to have the biggest impact" a more proactive specialist unit could play a pivotal role in delivering this ambition.

4. Legislative reform

In 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI), undertook a joint inspection of the policing and prosecution of stalking called "[Living in Fear](#)". This inspection found that police and CPS struggle to separate the two offences of harassment and stalking, which form part of the same piece of legislation. It also found that there was an absence of a single, consistent definition of stalking, meaning the offending was responded to as isolated incidents instead of seen as a pattern of behaviour. It recommended a review of the stalking legislation.

Six years later, no review has taken place, and this research clearly evidences that reform is urgently needed. It is clear that a lack of understanding and training among justice agencies has impacted the success of the current legislation, but it also must be acknowledged that there are fundamental issues with the legislation that prevent it from protecting all stalking victims.

This research finds that the two-tier stalking offence is leading to failings in the identification of high-risk and serial stalkers which leaves victims at risk. Frontline police continue to find it difficult to determine whether what a victim is experiencing is stalking or harassment, and which one of the five course of conduct offences is applicable in the Protection from Harassment Act. With most stalking cases initially identified as other, or indeed 'none', offences, the confusion and lack of clarity and precision with the legislation is obvious. The police, CPS, and courts need a much clearer legal description of stalking as a standalone offence.

The current legislation also places far too much onus on the victim to evidence the impact that the crime has had on them. Stalking has three separate offences - 2a and two offences under 4a - with the latter being the more serious offences which require victims to evidence that the stalking has had substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities or that the conduct meant they were fearful of violence. They must also demonstrate that this impact is related to the incident that they are reporting. This means that the more serious 4a charges are not applicable in cases where stalkers carry out extreme covert surveillance, and even plot to kill their victim yet their victim is unaware. Furthermore, the impact in a Stalking 4a charge must be evidenced as the result of the stalking incidents themselves, rather than of past stalking offending, so the cumulative impact may also not fit a Stalking 4a charge. The legislation narrows the cohort of victims it can protect substantially, resulting in low charge and convictions rates and missed opportunities to safeguard high risk victims and pursue dangerous and serial perpetrators.

In my experience, the structure of the legislation does very little to protect the stalking victim from future victimisation; instead, it colludes with stalkers and encourages repeat behaviour. Victims must show that they are weak and fearful to obtain the right conviction, and this gratifies the stalker and proves how successful they have been. The legislation punishes victims who resist and reject their stalkers oppressive behaviour, who are stoic and do not change their day-to-day activities and who hide their trauma to help them carry on or perhaps to minimise the impact on their children. This phenomenon of 'moving forward' or 'threat management' strategies are well-recognised in the academic stalking literature, but are

weaponised against victims who are often blamed for not being the 'perfect' victim. We need legislation that uses an explicit reasonable bystander perspective and accepts that this form of oppressive behaviour is done by the stalker with the intention to cause fear, alarm, or distress but that does not rely on the victim proving that the stalker has achieved their aim.

Criminal justice agencies must pivot stalking investigations and prosecutions towards a suspect-focused lens, but we cannot do this without legislative reform.

Recommendation: Stalking legislation must be reformed to ensure it is working to protect victims. The Government should create a standalone stalking offence that provides a clear definition of stalking to simplify investigations and prosecutions and remove the onus on the victim to prove the impact of the behaviour which is at too high a threshold.

5. Conclusion

I want to thank MOPAC's Evidence and Insight Team for this piece of research, which has provided the most comprehensive review of stalking in the Metropolitan Police to date, and I hope goes some way to shining a light on a crime whose unique behaviours result in such high levels of repeat offending, and in such significant trauma and risk for its victims.

The insights from this work has laid bare not only the impact that stalking has on its victims, but also the difficulties that justice agencies face – in supporting victims, identifying stalking behaviours, carrying out thorough investigations, and crucially in understanding and applying the complex legislation.

There is a significant amount of learning identified in this report, which I hope will aid all those who interact with stalking victims, from preventative work at an early stage through to support after a justice outcome may have been achieved. This report is intended to act as a blueprint to drive positive practice in London, but also holds lessons for England and Wales.

I also anticipate the response to the National Stalking Consortium's Supercomplaint, expected later this year, which I hope will support many of these findings, and I know will contain many further interesting insight.

In closing, I would like to thank the many organisations and individuals who have contributed their insight and expertise to this work, including:

- Metropolitan Police Service
- Crown Prosecution Service
- National Health Service
- Stalking Threat Assessment Centre
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust
- Paladin
- The Cyber Helpline
- National Police Chiefs Council

- The Home Office
- DS David Thomason, Cheshire Harm Reduction Unit
- National Victims' Commissioner
- Domestic Abuse Commissioner
- Julian Roberts, The Sentencing Council
- Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
- Stalking Supercomplaint team
- Professor Jane Monckton Smith
- HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
- The Ministry of Justice

My thanks in particular go to the victims and survivors who gave up their time to speak about their experiences, with the aim of building a better system that will benefit others. And finally, thank you to my team for their incredibly hard work in developing this report.

Recommendations

For Government and the Ministry of Justice

1. A national stalking awareness campaign is needed to raise awareness of the behaviours that constitute stalking.
2. Stalking legislation must be reformed to ensure it is working to protect victims. The Government should create a standalone stalking offence that provides a clear definition of stalking to simplify investigations and prosecutions and remove the onus on the victim to prove the impact of the offences.
3. The Ministry of Justice should review the current state of victim support funding and the viability of the frontline workforce – including stalking support services - and take forward any recommendations needed to ensure quality specialist support for victims.
4. Government should research the benefits of an algorithm-based system to identify repeat and high-risk stalking offenders.
5. Government should seek to prioritise and protect funding for stalking perpetrator intervention programmes.
6. The Government should legislate to make Stalking Protection Orders a bespoke ancillary order that judges can issue at the point of sentencing, focusing the court's attention on requirements which would ensure the safety of crime victims.

For the MPS

7. MPS should utilise the College of Policing Stalking Screening Tool to improve the frontline response to stalking, in conjunction with secondary risk assessment tools in non-DA stalking, and that officers are trained to use these.
8. MPS to review the roles of BCU Stalking Leads and SPO SPOCs ensure that they have the capacity they need to advise colleagues and drive excellence in the response to stalking.

For MOPAC

9. MOPAC and the MPS should deliver a Victim Care Hub in London to ensure victims have a dedicated, highly trained advocate to improve victim-centred communication throughout their justice journey.

10. MOPAC should set the expectation that its commissioned services must mandate training on the Victims' Code.

For the NHS

11. The NHS should ensure services are upskilled and equipped to provide specific support to victims of stalking.

For the NPCC and CPS

12. The NPCC and CPS should update their protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences to make it mandatory that all risk assessment documents are sent to the CPS in stalking cases.

For the Inspectorates

13. HMCSI should undertake a national inspection of the CPS response to stalking.

Further Research

In addition to the above recommendations, further research is needed on:

1. The barriers to reporting for male victims and a review of a selection of cases involving female perpetrators to ensure they are being investigated fully.
2. MOPAC and NHS London should work together with stalking support services to understand the increasing pressures placed on support services as a result of overwhelmed mental health services.
3. Further research is needed on the scale of harassment reporting in the MPS to understand if stalking is under reported or under recorded.
4. The MPS and CPS should work together to understand the barriers to effectively linking cases and ensure that officers are provided with appropriate guidance.
5. How perpetrators abuse civil, family or criminal justice processes to continue to stalk.