

## **PART D – STALKING AND HARASSMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes someone feel scared, distressed or threatened. Stalking and harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. There are different types of stalking and harassment and anyone can be a victim of this.

### **HARASSMENT**

Harassment is defined as unwanted behaviour that has happened more than once. It may include;

- Sending abusive text messages
- Cyber stalking (using the internet to harass someone)
- Unwanted phone calls, letters, emails or visits
- Sending unwanted gifts
- Anti-social behaviour
- Bullying at school or in the work place

Sexual harassment is unlawful as a form of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 which says that sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour which;

- Violates someone's dignity
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (including the digital environment online)

### **STALKING**

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, and intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim.' Stalking is similar to harassment but is more aggressive and the stalker will have an obsession with the person they are targeting.

Stalking can consist of any type of behaviour and can include;

- regularly sending flowers or gifts
- making unwanted or malicious communication
- damaging or interfering with property
- regularly following someone
- repeatedly going uninvited to their home
- checking someone's internet use, email or other electronic communication
- hanging around somewhere they know the person often visits
- watching or spying on someone
- identity theft (signing-up to services, buying things in someone's name)

If the unwanted behaviour has happened more than once and causes fear, distress, or anxiety then it is stalking.

One in two domestic stalkers will carry out the threats to harm their victim. One in ten non domestic stalkers will carry out the threats to harm their victim

About 45% of people who contact the Suzy Lamplugh Trust are being stalked by ex-intimates (i.e. ex partners) and a further third have had some sort of prior acquaintance with their stalker such as having dated, married or been friends with their stalker. Just because a person knows or knew their stalker does not mean that the situation is their fault - it is still stalking, and it is wrong.

Anyone can become a victim of stalking. A report produced by Dr. Lorraine Sheridan and Network for Surviving Stalking, in which 2,292 victims of stalking were surveyed, found that victims' ages ranged from 10 to 73, they were male and female, were spread across the entire socio-economic spectrum and a large proportion (38%) were professionals. Dr. Sheridan concluded that virtually anyone can become a victim of stalking and the only way to avoid doing so would be to avoid the social world. This report found that stalking could last anywhere from 1 month to 43 years. The average length of time was found to be between 6 months and 2 years. Dr. Sheridan also found that the duration of stalking tends to increase as the stalker's emotional investment in the relationship increases. This is one of the reasons ex-intimate stalking is often considered to be the most dangerous. Stalking without violence can cause harm. The absence of violence in a stalking case does not mean the victim is unaffected. Stalking can cause severe psychological distress to a victim. Depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, paranoia, agoraphobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder are all common side effects of stalking.

There are four warning signs of stalking. If the behaviour an individual is experiencing is;

- **Fixated**
- **Obsessive**
- **Unwanted**
- **Repeated**

It can be reported as a crime. The [National Stalking Helpline](#) has further advice.

## **RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES, CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS**

These procedures are intended as a guide to help understand what action should be taken if you have concerns about or encounter a case of alleged or suspected stalking.

In order to help identify a pattern of behaviour such as turning up at home unannounced, calling a person numerous times, sending gifts etc., best practice is to encourage a log to be kept of all incidents, keep notes regarding anything that could help show a pattern, anything witnessed such as flowers being delivered, an unwanted text message etc. Encourage reporting to police and encourage use of the original police incident number in any future reports in order to show that there is a pattern of behaviour emerging.

Depending on the nature of the disclosure/concern/allegation, different approaches may be needed to get the best outcome. Please complete a [DASH Risk Assessment](#) to check the current level of risk. More information can also be found by ringing the National Stalking Helpline on 0808 802 0300.

Residents can [report stalking or harassment to Lincolnshire Police](#) if they, or someone they know has been a victim of stalking or harassment or they can call 101. If it is an emergency and risk of immediate danger please call 999.

Please contact the Safeguarding Lead Officer for advice and to report and record any concerns internally.