Report on the Super-complaint submitted by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium about the police response to stalking.

The Police Response to Stalking.

Overview

In 2022, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium, submitted a super-complaint that raised concerns around the police response to stalking in England and Wales, including identifying and investigating stalking behaviours and ensuring protections for victims.

This super-complaint was comprehensively investigated jointly by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), and a respond published in September 2024 finding clear evidence supporting the concerns they raise.

The response noted that Victims and the public must be assured that reports of stalking will be treated seriously by the police. This means that the police must be able to recognise stalking and the risks associated with this crime. They must keep victims and the public safe and pursue perpetrators by investigating reports effectively and taking appropriate action to stop offending and seek justice.

The report made recommendations that give a clear plan of action for policing to make improvements. These focus on the need for policing to take action now to make sure they are meeting the expected standards and doing the fundamentals well in their response to stalking.

They also found there is a need for greater clarity in the criminal law relating to stalking, with evidence suggesting that the government needs to change the law and guidance to provide a stronger foundation for the police response to stalking. They also recommend that the government makes changes to stalking protection orders to provide quicker options to safeguard victims and disrupt offenders.

29 Recommendations have been made in total to Chief Constables, The Homes Office, The Crown Prosecution Service, Ministry of Justice, National Police Chiefs' Council, and Police and Crime Commissioner's. They have been categorized into 3 areas;

1. **Providing a better foundation for policing to create a good service for stalking victims**: Changes to law and guidance relating to stalking would give policing a better foundation on which to operate. Policies and procedures related to crime recording and police training should be improved to help the police identify stalking more effectively.
2. **Meeting expected standards now and doing the fundamentals well**: We found examples where the police had safeguarded victims well and carried out good investigations. But this was not always the case. Poor safeguarding, victim care and inadequate investigations can leave victims at risk and perpetrators unchallenged. Policing should act now to improve the service it provides to stalking victims and the public.

3. **Implementing what works, spreading promising practice and encouraging innovation**: Some forces have already implemented some promising practices which are helping to identify stalking, support victims and manage perpetrators. These should be considered across all forces in England and Wales. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence present opportunities to further innovate to support the police response to stalking.

The recommendations relating to Chief Constables, either solely or with other agencies (15) are set out below.

You can find all the information relating to super-complaints, including a list of designated bodies, on the super-complaints section of the GOV.uk website.

It is requested that within 56 days of the publication date of this report, 22nd November 2024, forces should publish on their websites an explanation of how they have responded or will respond to the recommendations. Forces should send the National Police Chiefs' Council links to where this information can be found.

Recommendation 7. Chief Constables – RECSX5306

By 27 March 2025, where required, seek changes to their crime recording systems to enable staff and officers to document and search for crimes not recorded as the principal crime, as included classifications on crime records.
Processes should be put in place to make sure this system capability is effectively used by officers and staff.
While any necessary system changes are pending, chief constables should put alternative measures in place to make sure stalking and related offences are fully searchable. This could, for example, be the submission of intelligence reports.

Sussex Police Response – November 2024:

When this Super Complaint was initiated, the crime recording regime for cases of Stalking, Harassment, and Coercive or Controlling Behaviour required that the additional most serious notifiable offence is also recorded in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules.

In April 2023, this requirement changed due to the review. This led to a subsequent recommendation being made by the former Chief Constable of Lancashire Constabulary, Chris Rowley, who was the NPCC Lead for Crime Recording and Statistics. Mr Rowley recommended to the Policing Minister, The Rt Hon. Chris Philp, that the "double count" requirement of these offences should be withdrawn. The Policing Minister agreed and the change was initiated.

The changes created a dilemma for forces, given that the recording of these conduct offences *(Harassment, Stalking and Coercive or Controlling Behaviour)* would effectively be hidden from reports of some behavioural crime, such as serious violence and sexual offences. This was applicable in cases where the Principal Behavioural Crime was at the upper range of these two offence categories.

To counteract this risk in Sussex, we complete a weekly search which is undertaken by the Force Crime & Incident Registrar on the Niche Intelligence Portal via a Person, Object, Location, Event POLE alert. This search identifies occurrences where serious violence and sexual crime has been recorded as the Principal Crime, but behind that offence sits a conduct crime, such as Harassment, Stalking, and

Coercive or Controlling Behaviour. The POLE alert undertakes a complex but thorough trigger word search of a crime record and the investigation log.

Every week, the Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit *(CDASU)* is notified of each occurrence which falls into this category so that the risk can be understood and mitigated.

Action 1: By March 2025, we will review the current crime recording processes and widen searches and audits to better understand malicious communications and other online safety act offences in the context of stalking.

Recommendation 10. Chief Constables – RECSX5307

Chief constables should make sure that their policies and practices are reviewed and updated in accordance with the findings in the super-complaint investigation report.

By 27 March 2025, review and update their learning and training provision relating to stalking to ensure it;

- Meets the learning outcomes on stalking within the public protection national policing curriculum.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

All front-line staff and officers receive Stalking and Harassment in their initial training and through continuous personal development.

Action 2: By March 2025, our training will undergo a review against the learning outcomes in the National Policing Commitment and the College of Policing APP on Stalking and Harassment. This will ensure it is in line with current best practice, law, and guidance, and it will include the training given to investigators, supervisors, and decision makers.

- Makes appropriate use of the stalking or harassment e-learning product developed by the College of Policing.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Stalking and Harassment e-learning product is available to all our staff via the College of Policing portal. The current staff completion rate for this package is 91%. Initially, the completion of this was a mandatory requirement until good force compliance was achieved.

Action 3: By March 2025, we will seek to make this training mandatory on an annual basis. This will ensure that our compliance levels are maintained, and that relevant staff and officers are reminded of the key learning objectives and content on a regular basis.

Making this mandatory on an annual basis demonstrates our commitment to tackling Stalking. This will be monitored by all divisions through their quality assurance processes.

- Uses the skills and knowledge of local victim advocates or others from outside policing with relevant expertise.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Our dedicated Stalking support service, Veritas Justice, is supporting training delivery and other continued professional development activities to our stalking Single Point of Contact's *(SPoC's)*. Veritas Justice provides two days of training per year. This includes Stalking legislation *(Section 2a, Section4a)*, Stalking Typologies, the Voice of the Victim, and the Role of Veritas Justice. There is also a half-day input on Cyber enabled Stalking which is delivered by our force cyber expert.

Our force solicitor, Weightmans, also provides training to staff on Stalking Protection Orders.

- Includes information on relevant local policies and practice where necessary.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The current Stalking SPoC training programme includes an input on all relevant policies and practices. This is subject to regular review by those who deliver it.

Action 4: By March 2025, we will undertake a full review of our current policies and practices against the findings of the super complaint and make any amendments that are required.

- Is provided to the officers and staff who will most benefit from the learning.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We currently have 142 stalking SPoC's across the force who regularly receive training and updates via various platforms.

Our 380 Domestic Abuse Champions receive regular continuous professional development which includes inputs on stalking.

We also provide monthly 'Domestic Abuse Spotlight' training via MS Teams which are thematic and are available for all staff and officers pan Sussex. These sessions are recorded and are stored for future reference.

Our subject matter experts provide continuous professional development to PIP2 investigators and first and second-line leaders on Stalking and Harassment that includes wider Domestic Abuse issues. The Superintendents and Chief Superintendents who authorise Stalking Protection Orders *(SPO's)* also receive bespoke training packages and inputs from Weightmans throughout the year.

Recommendation 11. Chief Constables – RECSX5308

By 27 March 2025, make sure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to fully understand the scale and types of stalking behaviour within their force and the effectiveness of their response. This should align with the VAWG national delivery framework. Mechanisms should include:

- Problem profiles using police data and intelligence and other sources of information to ensure that the full extent of stalking is well understood. This could include information sharing with local victims' services and other public services and national and local statistics.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Our Intelligence and Research Analysts provide support work on specific stalking investigations and briefings. This includes assessing Stalking and Harassment in the joint force strategic assessment.

Our Neighbourhood Policing Team Analysts produce regular reports which inform directed activities for specific teams.

The intelligence analysis and research (*A&R*) have provided 2141 hours of Stalking and Harassment support over the last 3 years. Two thirds of this relates to investigations. 516 hours were provided over the last year, and of that, a fifth was comprised of the strategic assessment input.

Action 5: We will continue to optimise opportunities to utilise problem profiling, and we will share information with support service providers and our partners to better inform and drive initiatives and activities.

- Regular assurance work such as audits to better understand the force response and make improvements where appropriate, including monitoring the use of SPOs, investigation outcomes and the quality of investigations.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

In Sussex, we have an Inspection and Audit team that sits within the Corporate Development Department. The team report to and are tasked by; the Deputy Chief Constable who chairs the Performance Board.
The directed inspections can be thematic and based on examining a specific crime type, or they may focus on a specific department, function, or activity. The methodology is determined within the Terms of Reference, but most commonly they are conducted as a 'Deep Dive' or a 'Victim Services Assessment'. The VSA methodology replicates the victim-focused approach taken by HMICFRS in their VSA's.
VSA's will commonly audit a range of crime types, however they can be more narrowly focused where appropriate. The last VSA conducted in force was in May 2024. This included a sample of a number of stalking and harassment crimes. A specific stalking and harassment VSA was also completed in May 2021.
Investigative outcomes and other indicators, such as Stalking Protection Orders, are analysed through a broad range of PowerBi dashboards, and are reported into several force accountability boards which include the Force Performance Board, the Vulnerability Board, and the PCC Quarterly Performance meeting.

- Ways to regularly receive feedback from victims, such as victim surveys.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We are already aware of and are fully compliant with the Home Office statutory requirement to conduct telephone interview surveys with a sample of Stalking victims. Sussex proactively introduced a stalking and harassment telephone interview survey some years prior to it becoming a nationally mandated requirement. We also send out a high volume of SMS surveys to a large and inclusive sample of victims which include non-domestic stalking. The data from all these surveys is uploaded to a range of PowerBI dashboard products, including a specific satisfaction survey dashboard where colleagues can explore visualisations of the data and apply their own filters such as geography, crime type, or demographics etc.

The force is also implementing a Citizen Portal. This new platform will enhance our ability to seek feedback from victims in a variety of ways, including targeted sampling and bespoke questions specific to victim experiences. The portal is expected to be live from Spring 2025.

- Force management statements which reflect current and future demand from stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

As part of the Force Business Planning Cycle, an annual Force Management Statement is produced and submitted to the HMICFRS. In preparation for this planning cycle, all portfolios participate in bespoke workshops to inform the process. The 2023/24 Force Management Statement specifically references the protection of vulnerable people which includes Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Violence Against Women and Girls, and it confirms our current demand, capacity, capability, performance, plans, mitigations and any residual demand/risk. Alongside this, the FMS outlines how we manage offenders via the Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit. The 2024/25 Planning Cycle is already underway, and the next FMS will reflect on our previous year's performance and our priorities for future demand management.

Recommendation 12. Chief Constables – RECSX5309

By 27 March 2025, take steps to make sure that risk identification, assessment and management is effective in all stalking and breaches of orders cases, including by:

- Considering implementing the stalking screening tool to support the identification of stalking and the risks associated with stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

In 2010, we became a pilot force for the Stalking Screening Tool. This tool provides stalking indicators and is designed to assist in identifying the risk and stalking crime type to ensure the right response and safeguarding measures are put in place. The tool has been fully embedded into our policies and processes. We have also shared our experience of using this tool with the national project team and assisted other forces in their implementation of it.

- Having clear policies and procedures in place for assessing and managing risk in all cases. And where appropriate, embedding recognised risk assessment tools in force systems so that it is easy for officers to access, use and document their consideration of risk and safeguarding.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Our police staff and officers make full use of all available risk assessment tools, which include DASH *(Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment)*, Stalking Screening Tool, Stalking Risk Profile, Stalking Protection Orders *(SPO)* and RARA *(**R**emove, **A**void, **R**educe, **A**ccept)*. This is reflected in our current Stalking and Domestic Abuse Policies. We make good use of templates and automated prompts to ensure these assessments are used. The appropriate use and completion of these assessments is reviewed during Stalking clinics and in the Stalking and Domestic Abuse Learning panels.

RARA is an assessment tool which underpins the core values in our Code of Ethic's on which we base our values and professional standards. RARA stands for **R**emove - the risk by arrest or remand. **A**void - the risk by placing victim in a safe refuge/location. **R**educe – the risk through joint intervention/victim safety planning/target hardening/utilising protective legislation. **A**ccept – and manage the risk through multi-agency planning/support and consent of the victim/target offender with proactive assessment and multi-agency public protection panel format. This model assists in creating a Risk Management or Safeguarding Plan which is specific to the individual needs of the investigation/incident and is proportionate to the risk of harm to a person. The RARA is commonly used alongside the DASH *(Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment)*, which is a risk assessment tool designed to prevent homicide and identify serial perpetrators and escalating behaviours by applying an evidence-based approach.

Sussex Officers and Staff are taught the F.O.U.R mnemonic as a simple reminder of the four main types of stalking associated behaviour's – ***F**ixated, **O**bsessive, **U**nwanted, **R**epeated.*

All cases of Stalking are investigated by a PIP2 level investigator to ensure that the right level of skill capability is matched to enable effective risk identification, assessment, and management.

In Sussex, we introduced an in-house monthly Stalking guidance and support clinic service. This offers investigators the opportunity to book an appointment with Stalking offence professionals that include; Police, CPS, Cyber Stalking experts, and Victim Support who can offer proficient advice on assessing and managing risk.
All reports of Stalking are referred to Veritas Justice, our independent victim support service. We work closely and collaboratively with Veritas Justice who provide victims with independent specialist services and up to date safeguarding advice. They also have their own cyber security expert to advise on digital safeguarding.

Next Steps:
We are in the process of delivering a new IT system in Force called SIGNS2. This will replace SCARF and DASH risk assessment tools with SIGNS and DARA *(Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment)*. DARA has a greater focus on perpetrator behaviour which will improve risk assessing the behaviours associated with stalking offences. We have, and we will continue to consult with our partners and service users to maintain good collaborative working as we transition to the new system. The roll out for SIGNS2 is expected to be complete by Spring 2025.

There are useful and informative documents available to officers and staff on our internal intranet guidance pages. This is regularly reviewed and updated.

- Recognising (in policies, guidance and training) the heightened risk associated with breaches of protective orders and measures.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Action 6: By March 2025, we will review our policies to ensure that the heightened risk associated with order breaches is reflected, and that training materials are updated to educate officers and staff in the increased risk.

- Implementing screening and checking processes to support the early identification, assessment and management of high-risk cases. This may require stalking and breach of order cases to be considered at daily management meetings.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Stalking cases are currently reviewed during daily management meetings chaired by a Divisional Command Officer. They are monitored using daily briefing sheets to ensure they are allocated appropriately and progressed expeditiously

Breaches of Stalking Protection Orders are reviewed and actioned by a Detective Sergeant within our dedicated Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit. Domestic Violence Protection Orders are also monitored in daily management meetings, and actions are tasked to the appropriate teams.

Action 7: By March 2025, we will include breaches of civil orders such as Restraining Orders and Non-molestation orders in this process. This will ensure they are effectively managed and responded to in the same robust way.

Recommendation 13. Chief Constables – RECSX5310

By 27 March 2025, take steps to make sure that force strategies, structures and processes are in place so that police consider an SPO in every stalking case, and apply for an SPO where relevant and appropriate to prevent harm and further offending.

To achieve this, chief constables should review, and revise where necessary:

- Local training and guidance on SPOs, including training and guidance for supervisors.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Action 8: By March 2025, we will ensure that guidance on Stalking Protection Orders has been updated.

Action 9: We will ensure that Stalking Protection Order training and guidance is included in dedicated training inputs for Sergeants and Supervisors, and we will utilise planned training days and DA Spotlight professional development sessions.

Action 10: We will ensure Stalking Protection Order knowledge is disseminated to all staff and first line supervisors via a Video Log (Vlog), and we will continue to look for ways to use continuous professional development opportunities to educate our officers.

Action 11: We will review all training, ensuring it is up to date and that it covers the relevant points.

- Mechanisms for supporting investigating officers to identify cases where SPOs would be appropriate and assisting them with SPO applications. This could be through dedicated teams or roles and/or through daily management meetings considering risk and safeguarding.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Sussex Police have a dedicated Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit (CDASU) who are responsible for writing and compiling the Stalking Protection Orders. This provides a central repository to ensure consistency is maintained. The CDASU has regular and ongoing discussions with Veritas Justice to share information and provide updates for victims. Veritas Justice are able to raise any cases they believe are suitable for a Stalking Protection Order. The CDASU SPO Applications Officer is then intrusive into these investigations and will commence the Stalking Protection Order process.

The CDASU chair monthly Stalking Clinics. These cases are identified by SPoCs, OIC requests, Veritas Justice, or through PowerBI and ONS scores or a combination. In those clinics, we have a representative from legal services who will also advise on the Stalking Protection Order.

A named DS is responsible for the review and the submission of the Stalking Protection Order and onward management. They attend PIP2 Supervisor Courses, PIP1 Investigators courses, MSTeams CPD days where SPO messaging is re-enforced. This input is regularly updated in line with any legislative changes and new conditions.

Stalking investigations are highlighted on the Divisional Daily Management Meeting sheets where they are reviewed and considered for a Stalking Protection Order.

All stalking investigations must have a completed Stalking Supervisors Review Template. This template contains a prompt which asks if a Stalking Protection Order has been considered.

Every stalking Investigation should be subject to a SPoC review which prompts a Stalking Protection Order discussion. All the SPoCs have received a dedicated input on Stalking Protection Orders within their training, and it is refreshed in the quarterly meetings and through continuous professional development days.

We have requested that the new SIGNS2 system will automate a tasking to a SPoC when a Stalking Screening Tool is completed. This will ensure that every stalking is subject to a SPoC Review.

Action 12: By November 2024, the current Stalking learning Review panel will include audits of Stalking SPoC Reviews and Stalking Supervisor Reviews to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 14. Chief Constables – RECSX5311

By 27 March 2025, take steps to make sure stalking victims receive the rights they are entitled to under the victims Code. Chief constables should make sure:

- Victim needs assessments are always completed.

Sussex Police Response November 2024
Our compliance with the Victims Code is reviewed in a monthly Stalking and Domestic Abuse Scrutiny panel meeting and in audits.

Action 13: By Autumn 2025, we will have reviewed our Victims' Rights under the Victim Code which is shared with victims of Stalking. This will include when the information is given to the victim, and we will explore digital opportunities to automate this process.

- Their force has appropriate processes to make sure all stalking victims are told about their rights under the victims' code.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Sussex Police Single Online Hub (SOH) contains information on victim rights which is externally published on the Sussex Police website here.

We are due to commence a pilot scheme called the Citizen Portal which will see us implement a crime relationship management platform in Force. This will enable us to send personalised updates to victims at key points during the investigation. It will also assist us in ensuring that victims are provided with the information they are entitled to under the Victim Code of Practice, and it will provide key updates throughout the course of the investigation. Some victims will be able to sign up to a secure online account where they will be able to view updates on their case, as well as being provided with a two-way communication channel between the victim and the investigating officer. This will not replace the importance of face-to-face contact with victims, but it will provide reassurance that the case is progressing. Depending on the findings from the pilot, the Force intends to extend the automated updates to all crimes, which will include Stalking once the proof of concept is achieved on low risk/low vulnerability crimes.
The Citizen Portal is due to be rolled out in Spring 2025.

Action 14: By Spring 2025, we will increase opportunities to advertise and sign-post victims of Stalking to their rights through our external social media channels and our partners.

- Information about the national and specialist stalking support services available in their force area is easily available to police officers and staff, victims and the general public.

Sussex Police Response:

We have a team of Stalking support experts (SPoCs) located throughout Sussex who are strategically placed to provide officers and staff with support. They signpost staff to the most relevant support service.

Our Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit (CDASU) are a specialist team that provides Stalking advice and support clinics to officers and staff who are involved in Stalking cases.

Police Officers and Staff have access to Stalking guidance and a list of support service contacts on their hand-held devices which can be accessed on scene.

There is an internal *'How do I?'* intranet page which contains a list of all Sussex and National Support Services.

Victims and the Public: We have an external facing Stalking and Harassment Service page can be found on the Sussex Police Single online home (SOH) platform. This provides a simple online reporting service and advises what police and partner support is available.

Here is a link to our Stalking Guidance leaflet which is on the Sussex Police website. This contains safety advice on telecom, online, and home security, and the contact details for stalking support services which include the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and Veritas Justice.

We are introducing a new IT system called SIGNS2 that will automate stalking referrals into our support service partner, Veritas Justice. This will ensure that referrals are consistently and compliantly submitted on all applicable cases.

Action 15: We will direct our Disclosure and Review Team *(who manage the disclosures and referrals)* to monitor the use of SIGNS2, and to ensure referrals are directed to the right support service.

- Victims who would like to receive support are referred to an appropriate service in a timely manner.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Action 16: By the end of the summer 2025, We will undertake an audit to test and confirm that our processes are operating efficiently, and that referrals are being made and received in a timely manner.

Action 17: We will continue to work with Veritas Justice to ensure there are no issues in receiving referrals, and that there are no blockers impacting on referrals being responded to.

- They monitor the number of stalking victims who are referred to specialist support services and take action when referral numbers are low.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The number of referred Stalking victims is monitored in the regular contract meetings that take place between the Police, the PCC office, and Veritas. Veritas informs us if referral numbers are low, and this is compared to reporting numbers so any blockages can be identified.

The Stalking support service contract is reviewed using quarterly data. This is collated in line with the data monitoring requirements set by the Ministry of Justice. The data includes the number of referrals, feedback from survivors, and the service quality. This is scrutinised in the quarterly meetings that are chaired by the PCC Victim Service Team which is attended by the Sussex Police Stalking Lead and the Director of Veritas Justice – the commissioned provider of the stalking service. This meeting provides overarching governance and scrutiny to ensure that the referral process is functioning as it should, and that Veritas and Sussex Police are meeting their statutory obligations.

The PCC office also completes an end of year evaluation to assess the demand against the terms of the contract and ensure value for money.

Recommendation 15: To police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and their mayor equivalents – RECSX5312

By 27 March 2025, review whether the right specialist services have been commissioned to support stalking victims in their area, including provision of trained independent stalking advocate caseworkers (ISACs).

PCCs and their mayor equivalents should provide the necessary services where they do not exist and should consider collaborating across force boundaries to provide services if it would be efficient and effective to do so.

Sussex PCC Response November 2024

In 2014, Sussex PCC Katy Bourne was one of the first PCCs to commission a service exclusively for victims of stalking. Listening to victim/survivor feedback, she recognised the importance of employing a local service and, thanks to her exclusive funding, Veritas was established as Sussex's first and hyper-local stalking advocacy service.

The Sussex Police & Crime Plan includes support for victims of stalking as a priority. The existing stalking service is delivered on a five-year contract (awarded in March 2021) with an option to extend for a further two years beyond March 2026. The service is funded via the Ministry of Justice's Core Victim Grant and the annual contract value is £233,871.00 - the total value over five years being £1,110,742.00.

The stalking service offer includes information, support and advice to all Sussex residents affected by stalking, whether or not a crime has been reported to the police. It also encompasses trained, independent stalking advocate caseworkers (ISACs) providing direct, tailored, person-centred advocacy, with digital, 'phone and face-to-face channels available to suit the person's needs, priorities and goals.

In addition to the stalking service contract, the Sussex PCC also provides funding to Veritas to:

A) run a 'Volunteering for Change' project giving an opportunity for individuals to improve access to help and advice as well as raising community awareness through the sharing of knowledge and expertise
B) the provision of safety equipment to victims targeted by 'stranger stalkers'
C) support to the Sussex Stalking Clinic and High Harm Perpetrator Programmes;
D) and a Survivor Stalking Group.

The total Sussex PCC funding provision for stalking services in the current financial year of 2024/2025 is £391,608.00.

Recommendation 16. Chief Constables and PCC's - RECSX5313

By 27 March 2025, work together to review commissioning arrangements and make changes as soon as possible to ensure they embed collaborative working and information sharing between policing and services providing victim support to stalking victims.

Sussex PCC response November 2024

The PCC is the lead commissioner of the existing pan-Sussex stalking service and there is a range of collaborative working and information-sharing to support the delivery of this contract. These arrangements are reviewed in line with the contract term and the existing, five-year contract ends in March 2026, with an option to extend for a further two years. The service will be fully reviewed prior to any decision being made regarding contract extension.

The police-led Disclosure and Referral Team (formerly known as The Victim Hub) assess and manage referrals in consultation with the stalking service provider, Veritas. The stalking service contract is monitored through quarterly data collection points in line with templated data monitoring requirements set by the Ministry of Justice. This data, which includes numbers of referrals, feedback from survivors and service quality, is monitored through PCC-led quarterly monitoring meetings that are attended by Sussex Police's Stalking Portfolio Lead and the Director of Veritas, the commissioned provider of the stalking service. This meeting also allows for the opportunity to ensure that referral processes between Sussex Police and Veritas are functioning correctly, along with any other operational aspects that require additional scrutiny and where necessary action should be taken, such as specific cases that require an intervention to ensure compliance with the Victims Code of Practice.

The stalking service provider attends a variety of multi-agency meetings that include:

A) High Harm Perpetrator meeting - a sub-group of the pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
B) The Victim and Witness Group - a sub-group of the Sussex Criminal Justice Board
C) Stalking Clinic - where individual cases are discussed
D) Scrutiny Panel – a multi-agency evaluation of specific stalking cases including the support provided to victims of stalking
E) Monthly Stalking Protection Order Management Meetings.

Recommendation 17. Chief Constables – RECSX5314

By 27 March 2025, make sure the new College of Policing investigations APP content on case allocation is reflected in the relevant policies relating to the allocation of stalking and breach of order cases for investigation. Force policies should support the allocation of stalking cases to officers with the right skills and experience, taking into account the potential risk and complexity involved in stalking and breach of order cases.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Our policy currently states that if a subject is identified as having committed further offences during the period of time they are being managed by the Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit *(CDASU)*, the investigation of those offences will not by undertaken by CDASU, they will be undertaken by the normal department, those being SIU, RIT or CID *(Safeguarding Investigations Unit, Response Investigation Team, Criminal Investigation Department)*. The only exception is if the order has been breached. This will then be managed by CDASU.

However, if an order is breached and the breach involves further stalking behaviours that amount to a course of conduct, this will be treated as a new stalking investigation and it will be referred immediately to SIU - High risk cases, RIT - Section 2a cases, CID - Section 4a cases for recording, a risk assessment, and the implementation of appropriate safeguarding options and investigation. This is in line with the CMS (Crime Management Strategy).

A subject who breaches an order or an interim order without reasonable excuse is recognised as having committed a criminal offence. An application for a SPO (Stalking Protection Order) may also be a trigger for escalation by the stalker. It is crucial that we understand these risks, are proactive in the management of the subject, and that we take urgent action in cases where orders are breached.

The default action is to arrest the subject where there are grounds for, and where it is necessary to arrest. Interviewing a subject using the voluntary attendance process is only exercised under exceptional circumstances. The Offender Manager will also consider whether any further stalking offences and behaviours have occurred.

Supporting document – CDASU management of Stalking Protection orders V 10 (appendix to Stalking Policy)

Recommendation 18. Chief Constables – RECSX5315

By 27 March 2025, take steps to improve the quality of stalking investigations by taking a victim centered, suspect focused and context led approach. Chief constables should make sure:

- Their workforce has the capacity and capability to undertake effective stalking investigations and can apply new and innovative investigation techniques to pursue digital lines of enquiry.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We recognise that Stalking cases are complex and that they should be dealt with by investigators with the appropriate skillset and support.

Our Force Stalking and Harassment policy confirms which skilled unit is the most appropriate to manage the type of Stalking investigation.

- Section 2a crimes are allocated to a PIP 1 Investigator within the Response Investigation Team. This crime type will not remain with the Neighbourhood Response Team.
- Section 4a crimes are allocated to a CID PIP 2 investigator.
- Any cases that are identified as a 'High Risk' are allocated to the SIU (Safeguarding Investigations Unit), irrespective of it being a domestic abuse case or otherwise.
- All reasonable lines of enquiry are pursued, supported by good supervision.

In force we have developed and utilise a *'Stalking Supervisory Review'* Template, and the *'SPoC Guidance Review'* template which are embedded into our core IT system – Niche. These templates have been designed to support and guide our first line leaders and investigating officers to ensure that all aspects of the crime are considered and investigated, and the templates signpost officers to the right unit for help and support. These templates are aligned to our Force Policy. This includes the direction to arrest, interview, and search in all cases.

In addition, these templates are linked to the CPS Protocol Checklist which ensures that all lines of enquiry are considered.

- Arrest and search powers are used to gather evidence from and about suspects.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Our current Stalking and Harassment policy clearly sets out the expectations in terms of the arrest of those suspected of stalking offences and states;

Police officers and police staff will take positive action to protect victims and maximise the opportunities to secure and preserve evidence of the offence. Whilst using their powers appropriately, police officers will arrest suspects or ***record a clear justification on the OEL if they decide not to do so.*** *Locating a suspect nearby may provide vital evidence linking them to a course of conduct.*

Failure to identify and robustly deal with stalking or harassment behaviour at the earliest opportunity allows suspects to continue their behaviour. This may leave victims exposed to escalating risk, including assaults and homicide. The risks to victims must therefore be carefully considered in these cases. This is not only in respect of the direct risk from the suspect to victims, but also regarding anyone else connected to victims, i.e., their children, dependents, family members and friends.

Action 18: By Spring 2025, we will conduct an audit of Stalking offences to ensure compliance with this policy, and ensure arrests are made in all relevant cases.

- The impact on victims is evidenced in witness statements, so it can be used to inform charging decisions and improve the likelihood of successful investigation outcomes.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We recognise the importance of including the level of impact on the victim in witness statements. There are good examples where this is done, however, this is not consistent enough yet, therefore we will implement a governance process which will monitor and drive improvement, and we will work with our investigating officers to develop their knowledge in this key area.

Action 19: We will work with our partners to obtain examples of best practice, and we will consult with them to ensure that the training and guidance we provide to our officers and police staff is inclusively informed.

Action 20: We will work with our CPS to understand what they need us to include in witness statements to authorise charges for section4a and CCB (Controlling Coercive Behaviour). This will be communicated to all staff who are responsible for taking statements.

Action 21: We will update our Stalking and Harassment policy and guidance to confirm that the impact on the victim must be included in all initial statements.

Action 22: We will update our NICHE supervisor stalking review templates to prompt this to be actioned.

Recommendation 20. Chief Constables – RECSX5316

By 27 March 2025, take steps to improve how their force effectively recognises and responds to online elements of stalking. This should include making sure:

- The scale and nature of online stalking behaviours informs their strategic understanding of, and the response to, stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We recognise the importance of having a good understanding of what the online elements of Stalking are and how to address them.

It is acknowledged that this is a growing area of concern as technology changes and grows. We need to remain vigilant about those changes and ensure the most up to date information is shared amongst those carrying out the investigations and with our Stalking SPoC network.

To achieve this, we have Digital Investigation Safeguarding Unit *(DISU)* representatives who attend the Stalking Clinic. They devise a digital strategy. If it is identified as a complex case, they will remain involved in that investigation and offer the OIC ongoing support.

Action 23: By March 2025, we will review data and information around online stalking and review policies, processes and responses based on those findings.

- Examples of online stalking are included in locally produced training and guidance material about stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Digital Investigation Safeguarding Unit receives local training inputs which discuss online Stalking.

Action 24: By March 2025, we will review all locally produced training and guidance documents to include up to date examples of online stalking.

- Clear online safety advice is available to officers and staff, drawing on the College of Policing (CoP) APP on stalking or harassment when it is developed.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Digital Investigation Safeguarding Unit *(DISU)* has an internal access page with user guides around individual applications. This identifies how best to address security settings and capture evidence.

Action 25: We will Police will review our current online safety advice to include any updates from The College of Policing *(CoP)* Authorised Professional Practice *(APP)*, along with advice and guidance from subject matter experts and partners.

- Appropriate tools, technologies and support services to digitally safeguard victims are procured and officers and staff use these resources when appropriate.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Digital Investigation Safeguarding Unit *(DISU)* has secured Guardian Technology in all three areas *(East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton)*. Stalking SPoCs have been trained in how to use this to identify malware on victim devices. Veritas Justice have also been given their own unit, and they have been trained to assist in this process. If any malware is identified, it is immediately referred to the OIC for a full phone download to be completed.
Veritas Justice offer their own digital safeguarding advice to victims as part of their services.

Digital Safeguarding is addressed in the Stalking SPoC guidance template and officers are directed to the internal DISU pages.

DISU has recently updated their safeguarding interventions form. This has been presented in the SPoC and DA continued professional development training, and it has been recorded to share with those unable to attend.

In Sussex, we have Digital Dogs who have been used in several searches in relation to perpetrators that are under active investigation and those who are subject to Stalking Protection Orders. A Digital Dog is able to identify items in a suspect's address post arrest, or in a victim's address/vehicle. This ensures that all safeguarding measures have been completed and there are no hidden digital devices present.

Action 26: We will review our Stalking SPoC guidance template to ensure all links work, and that there are links to the updated College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice.

Action 27: We will continue to include a digital input in all Stalking continued professional development training. This will ensure our officers and staff are kept up to date and are informed of the latest changes, challenges, and advances in technology.

Action 28: We will continue to look for ways in improving our knowledge and response to online Stalking behaviours.

Action 29: We will work with our partners to produce an external media campaign to raise awareness on digital and cyber safety.

Recommendation 22. Chief Constables – RECSX5317

By 27 September 2025, using the information collated by the NPCC lead under recommendation 21, to consider whether and how dedicated stalking officers and staff, or other subject matter experts, can be used to add value and support the force response to stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

In Sussex, we have a Detective Chief Inspector tactical lead for Stalking who is supported by a Detective Sergeant. This DCI is the Stalking SPoC for all associated national meetings and is responsible for disseminating information received from the NPCC leads.

When information is disseminated in force, it is shared to a network of 142 Stalking SPoCs. They then impart this information to their colleagues. The information is also shared via the Teams channel, in the quarterly meetings, and at Continued Professional Development days *(2 scheduled per year)*. Our guidance documents and policies are all updated accordingly where necessary.

Action 30: Any relevant information from the National Police Chief's Council will be shared amongst that network. Depending on the size of this, it may have a dedicated input.

Recommendation 23. Chief Constables – RECSX5318

By 27 March 2025, implement a mechanism for early screening of crimes to improve the identification, recording and management of all stalking cases.
Forces should consider screening crimes similar to stalking, or where stalking behaviours may be present as part of a course of conduct, like harassment, malicious communications and breaches of orders.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

A weekly search is currently undertaken by the Force Crime & Incident Registrar on the Niche Intelligence Portal via a POLE alert, to identify where serious violence and sexual crime has been recorded as the Principal Crime, but behind that offence sits a conduct crime such as Harassment, Stalking and Coercive or Controlling Behaviour *(CCB)*. The POLE alert undertakes a complex but thorough search of a crime record, including the investigation log *(OEL)* for trigger words.

Action 31: By March 2025, the Force Crime registrar will look at producing a similar report to cover Malicious Communications and other notifiable offences under the Online Safety act. This will be shared with Public Protection who will monitor these offences to ensure they are investigated correctly.

Recommendation 25. Chief Constables and PCC's – RECSX5319

By 27 March 2025, explore opportunities to improve how their force works with partners to contribute to a multi-agency response to stalking. This should include considering:

- How the force works in partnership with healthcare, the CPS, probation services and other criminal justice partners to manage stalking perpetrators and address their behaviour.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

The Sussex Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination group *(MATAC)* has been in place since October 2023, and its purpose is to target the most harmful perpetrators of domestic abuse. There are three monthly MATAC meetings in place across each of the three divisions, each chaired by a Chief Inspector.

In each divisional MATAC meeting, the four highest harm perpetrators are identified by the Complex Domestic Abuse Unit *(CDASU)* for targeting, multi-agency problem solving, and intervention. The membership of the meeting comprises of decision makers or managers from Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Housing, Mental Health and our substance misuse support service partner; Change Grow Live. Tactics are used to educate, prevent, divert, disrupt, and enforce to reduce the risk of harm.
Aims:

- Change offender behaviour
- Safeguard victims and families
- Reduce re-offending of the most harmful and serial perpetrators
- Reduce demand by targeting partnership resources at the cases of most concern.

This is available to those who are subject to a Stalking Protection Order *(SPO)*, and/or have committed Domestic Abuse Stalking offences. Subjects who have been referred to MATAC are considered for a Stalking protection Order. This is one of the disruption/prevention tactics that can be used to help robustly manage individuals.

Action 32: By March 2025, the results of an independent evaluation of the MATAC process *(funded by the PCC)* will be completed. We will then use the findings to inform best practice in the management of stalking offenders.

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- Whether and how they should collaborate with other forces to effectively and efficiently contribute to multi-agency partnerships on stalking.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

We are responsible for chairing the Southeast Regional Stalking Working Group which is attended by our neighbouring forces (*Kent, Hampshire, Surrey and Thames Valley)*. The purpose of this group is to share best practices, learning and ideas.

Action 33: We will discuss ways to effectively and efficiently contribute to multi-agency partnerships on stalking.

- How multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are being used to effectively manage stalking offenders.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Stalking offenders are currently managed through the Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Hub.

Our dedicated Offender Managers look after perpetrators who are subject to a Stalking Protection Order, and they respond robustly when breaches are identified.

We have three multi-agency meetings to manage Stalking perpetrators which are;

Sussex Stalking Clinic - These Clinics are chaired by the Complex Domestic Abuse Sergeant or Inspector and were devised to provide officers with access to specialist expertise to improve the quality of our investigations, and to create a better service and outcome for victims. The clinics take place once a month and are attended by:

Veritas – this ensures the voice of the victim is heard
CPS – they provide investigative advice.
Legal Services – they advise on the Stalking Protection Order.
Probation – they share any current or previous information they hold on the subject.
Digital Investigation Safeguarding Unit *(DISU*) – they provide the OIC with Digital advice, support, and a strategy to work through. Where applicable, they will stay involved with the investigation and continue to support the OIC

The papers are sent to the partners a week before the clinic to ensure that an efficient and meaningful discussion can be held within the allotted time. The OIC's are given the minutes of the meeting, and a three-month review date is set to ensure the actions are being carried out as directed by the clinic. This is to make sure the investigation is progressing in a timely manner, and that the victim remains the focus of that investigation.

The Stalking Protection Order Management Meeting is chaired by the Complex Domestic Abuse Unit Sergeant. This is where the subjects of Stalking Protection Orders are discussed.

This is a two-hour monthly meeting which is attended by the CDASU Offender Managers, Probation, Legal Services, Weightmans, Veritas Justice and Intervention Alliance. Interventions Alliance facilitates and provides the Compulsive Obsessive Behaviour Intervention Program (COBI). The subjects of COBI are discussed as well as those who are High Risk, those that are new to orders that month, and those that are about to expire.

The CDASU Detective Sergeant has a bi-monthly meeting with other Stalking coordinators across the southeast region. This is attended by the National Police Chief Council lead assistant when available. The team has a chat function where good practice and practical advice is shared amongst forces.

The MATAC *(Multi-Agency Tasking And Coordination*) has been operating since October 2023 and it manages harmful DA perpetrators. They take place monthly, with one on each of the three divisions, and they are chaired by a Chief Inspector. The purpose of the MATAC is to proactively target high harm perpetrator behaviour in a multi-agency problem solving and intervention setting. Th MATAC focuses on the 4 highest harm subjects for 4 months. The meeting is attended by Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Housing, Mental Health Services, 'Change-Grow-Live' (our independent substance misuse support service) and IDVA support (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor). This is a joint targeted approach to problem solving associated behaviours, and creating diversionary pathways to help address the issues that may be contributed by a person's health and living circumstances through education, prevention, diversion, disruption and enforcement tactics to reduce the risk of harm. The details of these individuals are shared in our divisional hub intelligence meetings to inform and direct activity.

The MAPPA *(Mult-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)* is a process which see's Police, Probation and Prison Services work together with other agencies to discharge their statutory responsibilities, share information, assess, and deliver a coordinated joint response on individuals that have been convicted of serious violent and sexual offences perpetrators who are living in our communities. MAPPA subjects can be managed through a range of tactic's which are most appropriate to reducing the risk of harm to the public, for example; suitable and approved accommodation, intensive supervision, compliance in attending accredited intervention programmes, and imposing licensing conditions, no contact with a named individual, and exclusion zones.

The meeting which identifies and manages violent and sex offenders. At present there are no clear pathway or process in place to ensure that stalking offenders are being included for discussion and consideration.

Action 34: By Autumn 2025, we will have explored opportunities to use MAPPA processes to better manage Stalking offender's post-conviction.

Recommendation 27. To all bodies subject to recommendations – RECSX5320

By 22 November 2024 (56 days from publication), write to HMICFRS, the IOPC and the College of Policing setting out their response to the recommendations made to them. Chief constables should direct their response to the NPCC which should provide a collective response on behalf of all police forces. PCCs and their mayor equivalents should direct their response to the APCC which should provide a collective response on their behalf.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Action 35: The Action Plan Template received from NPCC will be updated and shared along with this document

Recommendation 28. Chief Constables – RECSX5321

By 22 November 2024 (56 days from publication), publish on their force website an action plan which explains what their force will do in response to each of the recommendations made to them and send the NPCC a link to where this action plan can be found.
By 27 March 2025 (six months from publication) provide an update to the NPCC describing the progress they have made against their action plans.

Sussex Police Response November 2024

Action 36: This document will be published by 22 November 2024.