

Sussex Police Is Committed To Keeping People Safe When They Report Stalking - 18.04.18

There has been a welcome increase in stalking reports in the past two years, which we attribute to a number of factors, including increasing confidence by victims, more accurate recording by police, and increased awareness by officers and staff, following the recent tragic death of Shana Grice. These are complex issues, often involving people known to each other.

National figures show that some two-thirds of all stalking cases involve intimate or ex-intimate partner relationships, with the remainder being acquaintance or stranger cases. This picture is reflected in Sussex.

Speaking at the start of National Stalking Awareness Week, co-ordinated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, Detective Chief Inspector Pierre Serra said; "We have improved our understanding of what stalking and harassment is and what our response should be.

This is being reinforced force wide through sharing of guidance, training and reviewing stalking cases. We are absolutely aware of the consequences if our response is not the correct one, so we need to ensure that victims have confidence in how both police and the CPS will support them.

"We were one of the six forces who last year gave the Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) full access to our work and although it contained no specific recommendations for Sussex Police alone, we have been using it to further review and refine our systems and training, including the way in which we work with the CPS.

"This is a very important issue and a comprehensive policy for supporting victims is in place, updated recently following consultation with Veritas Justice and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, both of which gave us invaluable feedback on our policy.

"The force has also been carrying out extra work with Paladin, a national organisation which supports high risk victims of stalking with their specialist Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs). They have trained a selected number of officers across Sussex who will have an extra level of specialism in this area of work. They are able to advise and support our other investigators whenever needed."

"In addition, thanks to funding by Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne, community interest company Veritas Justice provide independent stalking advocacy caseworkers who are working with people affected by stalking. Veritas have also been providing extra training for officers and staff, including our call handlers, on how to spot signs of stalking. They have also delivered this training to our local statutory and voluntary partners across Sussex.

Legislation

It is against the law to stalk or harass someone. Harassment refers to any behaviour which causes a person alarm or distress or puts them in fear of violence;

To meet the definition of harassment a course of conduct must be demonstrated - showing a pattern of linked incidents;

While there is no legal definition of stalking, it relates to persistent and unwanted attention. It may appear as a series of trivial incidents when looked at individually, however when put together show a pattern of obsessive and fixated behaviour.

Impact

Harassment crimes can have a debilitating effect, and stalking crimes can be among the most dangerous and damaging to their victim;

Any behaviour which causes alarm, distress or causes you fear of violence is unacceptable.

Partnership Working

We have worked with our partners to update our approach to dealing with stalking and harassment, both Veritas and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, gave us invaluable feedback on our policy.

Our Commitment

More than 90% of our officers and staff have completed online mandatory stalking and harassment training so they can provide the right response and keep people safe;
More than 700 have had the additional training on recognising stalking and stalking behaviours;

We have received independent advice on our response to stalking and harassment from our partners which has improved our understanding of stalking as well as its impact on victims;

We are regularly reviewing our response to cases of stalking and harassment to ensure we have taken the right action and to identify learning for our staff;

More than 200 first line supervisors as well as other senior managers have had additional training so that they can identify patterns of behaviour and assess the risks posed to victims.

Signposting, Advice And Reporting

If you are being stalked or harassed it is important that you report it. Getting help early will assist in protecting you.

You can report stalking or harassment, Online by calling 101 or in person at your local police station.

Always call 999 if you are in danger. Our officers and staff will undertake a risk assessment looking at your safety.

If you would like further information about stalking or harassment, there are several organisations that specialise in providing advice and support to victims.

The National Stalking Helpline provides advice and guidance to current or previous victims of stalking or harassment. The helpline can be contacted on 0808 802 0300.

Paladin support high risk victims of stalking with their specialist Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISAC) and ensure that a coordinated community response is developed locally to protect victims. Contact them at 0207 840 8960 or online..

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust provides practical personal safety advice online - 020 7091 0014

Veritas is a local organisation which provides advocacy and support for victims of stalking - see their services online <http://veritas-justice.co.uk/contact/>

In the year April 2016 to March 2017 Sussex Police recorded and investigated 295 offences relating to stalking - 60 in Brighton and Hove, 149 in West Sussex and 86 in East Sussex. In relation to that period, there have so far been 46 charges, with two cases still under investigation, 12 resulting in formal police caution, and one dealt with by community resolution (all 13 with the consent of the victim in each case). The other cases did not result in enforcement action after investigation.

In the year April 2017 to March 2018 the force recorded and investigated 988 such offences - 240 in Brighton and Hove, 443 in West Sussex, 304 in East Sussex and one at Gatwick. In relation to that period, as of April 2018 there have so far been 116 charges, with 124 cases still under investigation, 21 resulting in formal police caution, and one being dealt with by community resolution (all 22 with the consent of the victim in each case). The other cases did not result in enforcement action after investigation.

Reasons for no enforcement action after investigation include insufficient evidence, and the unwillingness of victims to support prosecution. However even in those cases the reports have still enabled us to consider, with partners, helping to arrange appropriate safeguarding action, advice and ongoing support.

Help Us Keep Sussex Safe

Seen something suspicious or have information about a crime or incident? Please [contact us online](#), email us at 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or call 101.

Alternatively you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111, or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org