



FATAL FIXATION: THE LINK BETWEEN STALKING AND HOMICIDE



#NSAW2026
#FatalFixation

suzy lamplugh
trust

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1. INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Suzy Lamplugh's disappearance and presumed homicide, and almost ten years since Monckton Smith et al.'s landmark 2017 report "Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide", which evidenced concerning links between stalking and homicide and underscored the need to 'identify...and take all stalking seriously' given the potential risk of escalation.¹ Suzy Lamplugh Trust has campaigned tirelessly for improved understanding of stalking, including recognition of the serious risks posed by stalkers. While our campaigning has resulted in milestone improvements in policy and legislation leading to better support for victims, risk mitigation, and perpetrator management, stalking victims continue to be let down by police and the rest of the criminal justice system resulting in their exposure to unacceptable risk.

This report is an urgent call to action: to ensure that the links between stalking and homicide, and victim suicide, are fully understood and acted upon by professionals across the criminal justice and health sectors, so that victims are seen, heard and protected, and opportunities to prevent serious harm are not missed. The report also calls for strengthened research, improved data collection, and the introduction of a dedicated stalking-related death review process, to ensure that lessons are systematically captured from stalking-related deaths and used to drive more effective prevention.

In 2022, Suzy Lamplugh Trust submitted a super-complaint on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium highlighting systemic failings in the police response to stalking, and the potentially devastating consequences² with the resulting investigation finding clear evidence to support our claims.³ As part of the investigation, the College of Policing conducted a rapid evidence review on the link between stalking and serious harm or homicide, which concluded that 'the link between coercive control and stalking behaviours and wider harm suggests this risk factor [stalking] is actionable by the police as a means of reducing further harm and

preventing escalation to homicide.'⁴ We are therefore extremely concerned by the investigating committee's findings that 'too often, police are failing to adequately identify and assess risk in stalking investigations, including risk of serious harm and homicide'.⁵

While the Trust welcomes the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) 2025 report outlining the progress made in implementing the super-complaint recommendations,⁶ as well as the College of Policing's important evidence review, **we remain concerned that the risks posed by stalking including potential escalation to homicide and victim suicide, in all contexts, and particularly those that do not fall under the definition of domestic abuse, require greater recognition and awareness nationally.**

Following a definition of stalking (section 1.1), we briefly outline the evidence underpinning this briefing, as well as key limitations in the research base (section 1.2) before proceeding to give an overview of the research and data pointing to the links between stalking and homicide, including key risk factors as identified in the literature (section 2). In section 3, we draw attention to our previous National Stalking Awareness Week (NSAW) campaign recommendations that still remain outstanding to outline the urgent need for an improved police and criminal justice response, as well as enhanced mental health support for victims, to better identify and manage risk. In section 4, we set out our concerns relating to gaps in the evidence **including the potential escalation to homicide and victim suicide.** Here we call for further research and data collection to better understand and prevent stalking related homicides and victim suicides, both within and outside the domestic abuse context. We conclude our report with recommendations for national government, the criminal justice system, the health sector and researchers (section 5).

1.1 What is stalking?

Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim. Stalking can include many types of unwanted behaviour, including in person and/or online.

Approximately 1.4 million adults (aged 16 and over) were victims of stalking in the year ending March 2025 in England and Wales.⁷ While anyone can become a victim, stalking disproportionately affects women and girls, with approximately 1 in 5 women and almost 1 in 13 men experiencing stalking since the age of 16.⁸ Although just over half of the National Stalking Helpline cases (with a recorded perpetrator relationship) in the year ending March 2026 were not perpetrated by current or ex-intimate partners or family members, stalking is often subsumed under the category of domestic abuse in the national policy context.⁹ These cases were perpetrated by stalkers with other relationships to the victim, including colleagues/ex-colleagues, acquaintances, neighbours, friends/ex-friends and strangers.

1.2 Evidence base and limitations

In this report, we draw on the College of Policing's rapid evidence review and included studies, in addition to a small number of other studies and reports which provide further important insights on the relationship between stalking and homicide. We also draw on key data from the Domestic Homicide Project's Year 4 report and data tables,¹⁰ and from the Femicide Census' analysis of 2,000 cases of women killed by men.¹¹ To highlight the urgency of an improved multi-agency response to stalking, we refer throughout to recent cases of stalking and homicide/victim suicide. These cases are heartbreaking, but we hope their inclusion will help to galvanise action and prevent further stalking related fatalities.

As highlighted in the report, a body of evidence points to the links between stalking and homicide. However, there are various limitations of the existing research base. Firstly, as the College of Policing highlight, 'the evidence indicating the extent to which stalking is a risk factor for serious harm and homicide is not clear

cut',¹² with the literature finding highly variable estimates of stalking prevalence in the antecedent (or previous) histories of homicides.^{13 14} This may be due to various factors, including issues with relying on police and criminal justice data given the frequent under-identification and under-recording of stalking, as well as differences in research methodologies, including differences in how stalking is defined.

Secondly, there are various concerning gaps in the literature. **As highlighted by the College of Policing, the existing literature has largely focused on stalking in the domestic context,¹⁵ and specifically the intimate and ex-intimate partner context,¹⁶ with the result that this report can only offer a limited discussion on the links between stalking and homicide outside of the domestic context.**

Thirdly, there is often insufficient disaggregation (i.e. breaking down) of data on stalking in the antecedent histories of homicides/victim suicides, including by perpetrator-victim relationship, as well as by the demographic categories required for an intersectional analysis. This means that the risks for specific groups of victims, such as ex-intimate victims or Black and minoritised women, are not sufficiently well understood. As discussed in section 4, these limitations highlight the critical need for further research to better protect and mitigate the risk of harm for all stalking victims.



2. STALKING, HOMICIDE AND VICTIM SUICIDE: WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

This section provides an overview of the existing evidence, including data on stalking prevalence in the histories of homicides/victim suicides, as well as risk factors for homicide in stalking cases. **Section 2.1** begins by discussing the evidence on stalking and domestic abuse related fatalities, including intimate partner and ex-intimate partner homicides, as well as domestic abuse related victim suicides. In this section, we highlight the higher prevalence of stalking in (ex-) intimate partner homicides, as well as separation as a risk factor using the lens of Monckton Smith's Homicide Timeline. **Section 2.2** then proceeds to discuss the limited data on stalking and homicide in cases with other victim-perpetrator relationships (i.e. outside of the domestic or ex-intimate partner context). Here we highlight that separation may also manifest as a risk factor in stalking cases that are not ex-intimate partner. This section also underscores the need to better understand the risk of homicide across all stalking typologies and varied perpetrator-victim relationships. Finally, **section 2.3** considers broader risk factors for homicide in stalking cases within and outside the domestic context.

2.1 Stalking and domestic abuse related fatalities

2.1.1 Higher prevalence of stalking in (former and current) intimate partner homicides as compared with other domestic homicides, and gendered/ethnic breakdown

As highlighted by the College of Policing's rapid evidence review, the links between stalking and homicide have largely only been explored within the domestic abuse context,¹⁷ including homicides by current and former intimate partners, as well as adult family homicides.¹⁸ Within this, the risks of stalking in the (former and current) intimate partner context have received particular attention, **with stalking identified as a risk factor for intimate partner homicide.**¹⁹ **Indeed, the literature finds the prevalence of stalking to be higher in the histories of intimate**

partner homicides than in other domestic homicides, such as adult family homicides. However, further research is needed to explore the prevalence of stalking within this category as well, for example, in overlaps with Honour Based Abuse homicides.²⁰ For example, the Domestic Homicide Project found previous stalking/surveillance to be a risk factor in 10% of intimate partner homicide suspects from April 2020 to March 2024, as compared with 2% of adult family homicide suspects and 2% of child death suspects.^{21 22}

Relatedly, an analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) that underwent the Home Office quality assurance process between September 2022 to October 2023 found that physical stalking accounted for 12% and digital stalking for 9% of aggravating factors in intimate partner cases (such as current and former intimate partners), whereas stalking was not found to be an aggravating factor in any familial homicides (such as (grand)parents, siblings and sons/daughters).²³ While this latter finding may reflect differences in stalking risk factors by victim-perpetrator relationship, the Trust is also concerned that insufficient knowledge and awareness of stalking among DHR (now Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR)) chairs and panels may also result in the underestimation of stalking as a risk factor in these statistics (see discussion in section 4).²⁴

Other studies analysing domestic homicides in England and Wales have also found stalking, including cyberstalking, to be present in the histories of intimate partner homicides, further indicating the risks of stalking among intimate partner victims. In their analysis of 263 DHRs also involving current or former intimate partners published between 2011 and 2020, Chopra et al. found that 24% of victims had experienced stalking and harassment in the two months prior to the homicide,²⁵ while Todd et al.'s analysis of 41 DHRs also involving intimate partners from 2011-2014 showed the presence of cyberstalking in 58.5% of cases.²⁶ Research outside the UK context also identifies stalking in the histories of intimate partner homicides. For example, in the

Portuguese context, Matias et al. analysed 75 cases of intimate partner homicide finalised/sentenced in courts between 2010-15, and found stalking to be present in 46% of cases.²⁷

While these studies tend not to provide a breakdown of the prevalence of stalking in the histories of homicides by gender or ethnicity, they show a higher proportion of female domestic homicide victims as compared with male victims, particularly among intimate partner homicides. For example, four year data (April 2020 to March 2024), from the Domestic Homicide Project shows that 82% of intimate partner homicide victims (with one victim and one suspect) were female with a male suspect.²⁸ Data from the Invisible Women report also highlights the disproportionate numbers of Black, Minoritised and Migrant (BMM) female domestic homicide victims: although BMM women constitute 18% of the population, 24% of “female domestic homicide victims recorded by the UK Government between 2020 and 2024” were BMM women.²⁹ Aligning with the wider findings on gender, Sheed et al.’s study of stalking in court-reported homicides in the Australian state of Victoria 1997-2015 provides an important disaggregation by gender, showing that 92.59% of victims of ex-intimate partner ‘stalking precipitated homicides’ were female, while 96.15% of perpetrators were male.³⁰

Studies specifically analysing femicides (women killed by male perpetrators) also provide further insights as to the gendered prevalence of stalking in intimate partner homicides, and as compared with other domestic homicides. In their analysis of 2,000 femicides, the Femicide Census found the prevalence of stalking to be higher in intimate partner femicides than in ‘Immediate/Extended Family’ femicides.³¹ Among 253 cases with stalking/harassment recorded (12.65% of total 2,000 cases), there was an intimate relationship in the majority (224), including spouses and intimate partners, as well as former spouses and former intimate partners, comprising 18.47% of total (1213) intimate femicide cases.³² This compares with six ‘Immediate/Extended Family’ cases with stalking/harassment recorded, comprising 2.11% of total (285) family cases. Relatedly, in their study of femicides, for which current intimate and ex-intimate victims

comprised the majority (71%) of cases analysed, Monckton Smith et al. found stalking to be present in an alarming 94% of cases examined, including obsession in 94% of cases, fixation in 88% of cases and surveillance/following in 63% of cases.³³ While the prevalence of stalking differs between Monckton Smith et al.’s findings and the Femicide Census’ 2,000 women data, perhaps due to methodological differences, both studies indicate concerning links between stalking and femicide, particularly with respect to intimate partner victims.

What the evidence shows:

- The literature identifies stalking as a risk factor for homicide, particularly in intimate and ex-intimate partner contexts.
- Research on stalking and homicide has primarily focused on domestic abuse settings, meaning understanding is largely shaped by intimate partner relationships.
- Evidence suggests stalking is more commonly present in intimate partner homicides than in other domestic homicides, such as adult family homicides.
- Femicide data indicates that stalking is present in a significant number of cases involving women killed by men, particularly in intimate and ex-intimate partner contexts.
- Data from Domestic Homicide Reviews may be limited by inconsistent recognition of stalking by chairs and panels.
- There is limited intersectional data on gender and ethnicity in stalking-related homicides, restricting more detailed analysis of risk patterns.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- Stalking should be treated as a key high-risk indicator in homicide prevention, particularly in intimate and ex-intimate partner cases.
- Professionals should ensure that stalking risk is not overlooked outside of domestic abuse frameworks and is consistently incorporated into risk assessment and decision-making.
- Stalking should be recognised as a potential precursor to lethal violence and considered early in risk assessment and intervention processes.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- Domestic Homicide Reviews should more consistently identify and record stalking to improve the quality of learning and reduce missed analytical opportunities.
- Gendered and ethnic data on stalking in domestic homicides should be more consistently collected and disaggregated to improve understanding of risk patterns and support targeted safeguarding responses.

2.1.2 Stalking in ex-intimate homicides: separation as a risk factor and the Homicide Timeline

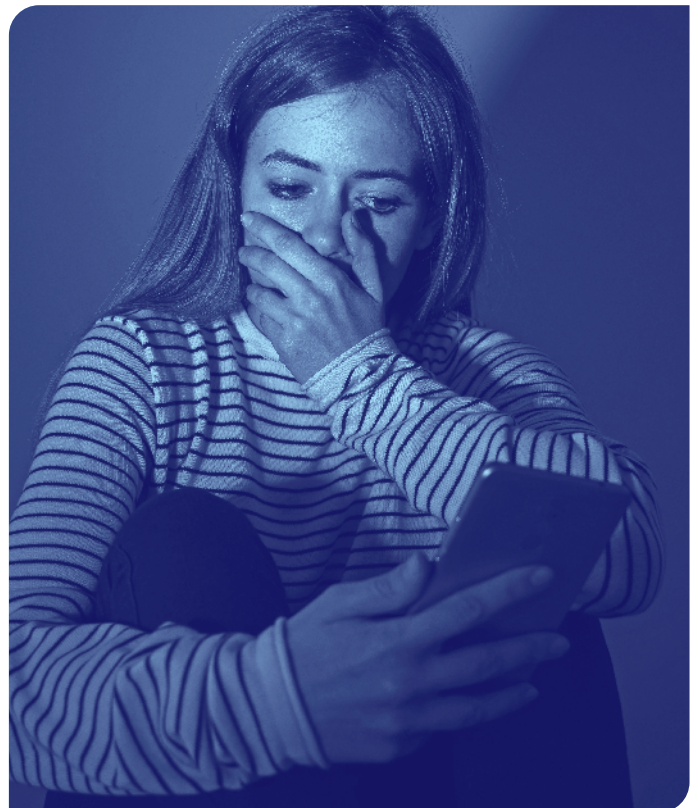
Among intimate partner cases, ex-intimate victims may be at heightened risk. While many studies do not disaggregate the prevalence of stalking between intimate and ex-intimate homicides, where this data exists, it indicates a higher prevalence of stalking in the histories of ex-intimate as compared with intimate homicides. For example, data from the Femicide Census shows a higher prevalence of stalking in the histories of ex-intimate partner victims as compared with current intimate partner victims. Among the sample of 2,000 femicide cases, stalking/harassment was identified in 122 out of 933 spouse/intimate partner femicides (13.08%) in contrast with 102 of 263 former spouse/former intimate partner femicides (38.78%).³⁴ Likewise, McFarlane et al.'s study of stalking in intimate partner femicides and attempted femicides in the US found that '69% of the femicide victims in current relationships reported stalking by the perpetrator compared to 88% of femicide victims reporting the relationship had ended'.³⁵

Sheed et al.'s study also indicates that stalking may be more prevalent in ex-intimate partner homicides as compared with current intimate partner homicides. While they define stalking only as occurring outside of a current relationship, they also look for evidence of surveillance/monitoring within intact relationships. It is notable that they find a higher proportion of stalking in ex-intimate partner homicides (63.41%) as compared with surveillance/monitoring behaviours in current intimate partner homicides (14.94%).³⁶

Aligning with the higher prevalence of stalking in ex-intimate partner homicides, **separation has been**

identified as a key risk factor or trigger for intimate partner homicide cases,³⁷ particularly where there has been prior coercive control.³⁸ For example, the Domestic Homicide Project found 'relationship ending' as a risk factor in relation to 24% of intimate partner homicide suspects from April 2020 to March 2024.³⁹ Moreover, Monckton Smith emphasises that intended separation, including the threat of separation, may be just as dangerous as actual separation given that it also threatens the perpetrator's control over the victim.⁴⁰ Indeed, Chopra et al.'s statistical modelling of DHRs showed that where stalking and harassment occurred, separation or planned separation was the greatest predictor of homicide.⁴¹ Todd et al. also found (intended) separation in 68.3% of cases.⁴² This data aligns with Mullen et al.'s influential study of stalking typologies, with 'rejected' ex-intimate stalkers found to be most likely to assault their victims.⁴³

The literature's identification of separation as a risk factor also corresponds with Monckton Smith's **temporal sequencing of domestic homicide in the Homicide Timeline, which aims to identify predictable patterns of escalating risk in abusive relationships by observing the occurrence of events in chronological order.**⁴⁴



INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE TIMELINE:

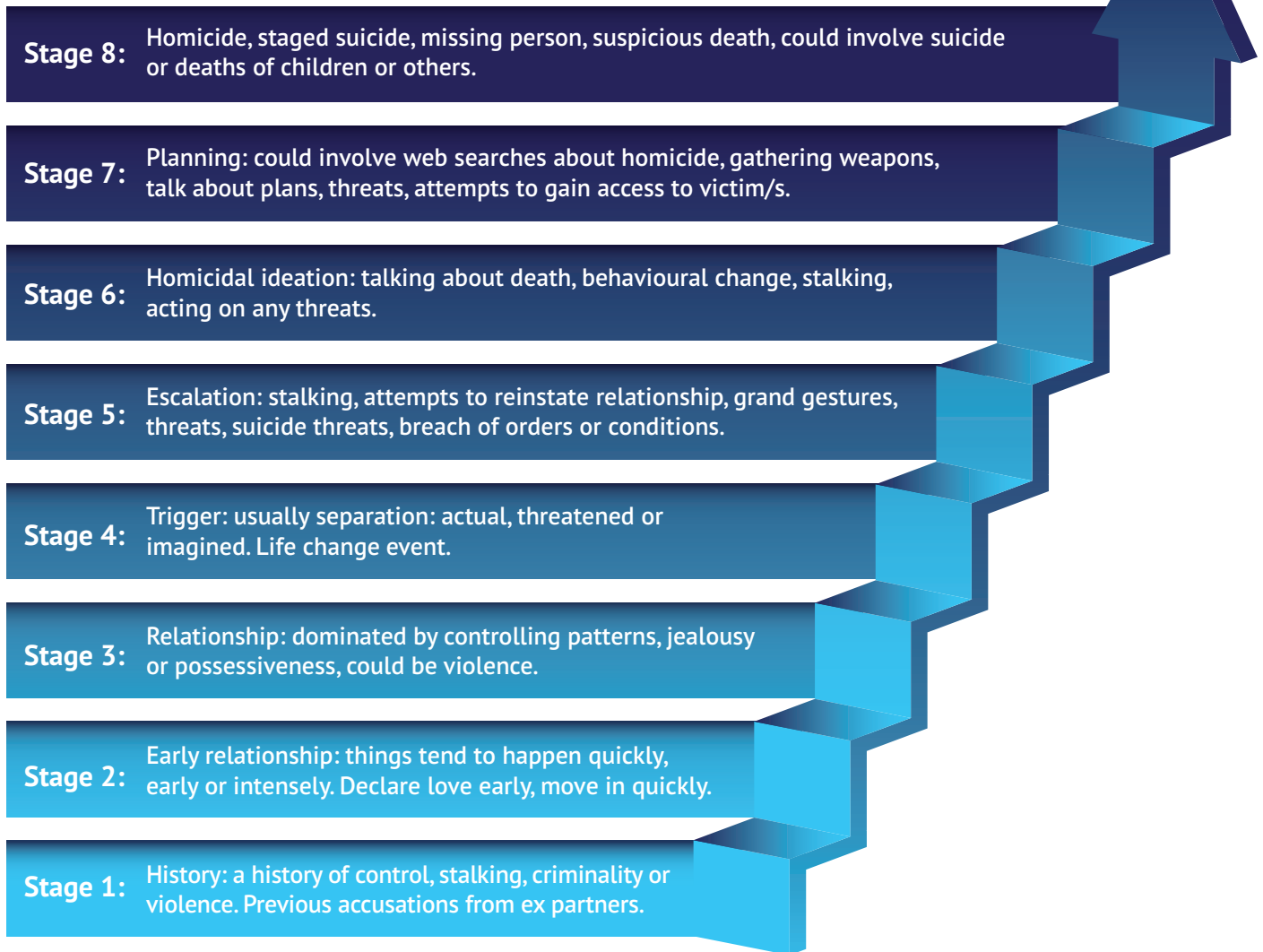


Diagram provided by Professor Jane Monckton Smith⁴⁵

Stage 1 - Starting with abusive pre-relationship histories Monckton Smith shows how abusive and controlling relationships can escalate to homicide at stage 8.

Stage 4 - Within the Homicide Timeline, separation is understood as a key trigger at stage 4, after which stalking behaviours may become more prevalent as the perpetrator's behaviour escalates at stage 5 with the aim of restoring control, demonstrating that the victim is by default at a higher risk of homicide once stalking behaviours start.

Stage 5 - The College of Policing highlight, 'stalking that starts or intensifies at stage 5 indicates an

escalation of risk.'⁴⁶ At this stage, various tactics may be used, including threats of violence and suicide. Furthermore, while travel through to stage 8 is not inevitable,⁴⁷ the literature's findings of the short average time between separation and homicide, which may amount to only one or two months, indicates the potential speed at which escalation can happen following separation.⁴⁸

Stage 6 - In this stage "last chance" thinking', where the perpetrator 'may feel there is nothing left for them', may become apparent.⁴⁹

Stage 7 - Planning is prevalent, including stalking for 'surveillance and intelligence gathering', with Monckton-Smith noting the case of a perpetrator who was found with a 'murder kit' in his car.⁵⁰

The following tragic case studies highlight the escalation of risk from stalking behaviours in the post-separation context.

CASE STUDY 1 CLAIRE CHICK

The devastating homicide of Claire Chick, 48, in January 2025 illustrates the potentially fatal risk from stalking in post-separation contexts, as well as the importance of understanding escalating risk from stalking through the lens of the homicide timeline.⁵¹

After Claire ended her relationship with Paul Butler, she suffered months of stalking, with Butler even placing a tracking device in her car. After finding out that Claire had started a new relationship, Butler went on to brutally stab Claire to death near her home in Plymouth. As Professor Monckton Smith commented following Claire's tragic murder: 'Where there is stalking after a separation...this should be seen as a serious escalation in risk and threat to the victim.'⁵²

CASE STUDY 2 KULSUMA AKTER

The horrific homicide of Kulsuma Akter, 27, by her husband in April 2024 further demonstrates the serious risk from stalking in ex-intimate cases, as well as the speed with which escalation can happen following separation.⁵³

Even though Kulsuma had fled to a refuge in January 2024 to escape the abuse of her husband Habibur Masum, Masum tracked her down and brutally stabbed her on a busy street in Bradford city centre as she pushed her baby's pram. Prior to her murder, he had sent her messages with threats to kill, fake messages from a GP practice, as well as photos and videos of his surveillance of her safe house. He had also been seen loitering in the vicinity of the safe house. In June 2025, he was convicted of murder, as well as stalking and other counts.

What the evidence shows:

- There is insufficient disaggregation of stalking in homicide histories by relationship type (intimate vs ex-intimate partner cases).
- Stalking appears to be more prevalent in ex-intimate partner homicides than in intimate partner homicides.
- Stalking following separation is associated with increased risk of escalation.
- Escalation in risk can occur quickly and should be treated as a serious warning sign.
- Understanding the sequence of behaviours over time, as outlined in Monckton Smith's Homicide Timeline, is important for identifying escalating risk in stalking cases.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- The presence of stalking following separation should be recognised as an indicator for escalating risk.
- Escalation in risk, particularly stalking following separation, should trigger urgent action.

Professionals should assess stalking as a pattern over time rather than as isolated incidents, to support earlier recognition of escalation.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- Stalking in intimate and ex-intimate partner homicides should be consistently disaggregated by relationship type to improve understanding of differing risk profiles.



2.1.3 Stalking and domestic abuse related victim suicides

Aligning with increasing recognition of the links between domestic abuse and victim suicide,⁵⁴ there is also growing evidence as to the potential links between stalking and domestic abuse related suicides.

The Domestic Homicide Project's analysis of four year data found stalking/surveillance to be a risk factor in relation to:

- 15% of 383 'suspected victim suicide following domestic abuse' suspects (91% of suspects were intimate or ex-intimate).
- 7% of 72 unexpected death suspects (67% of suspects were intimate or ex-intimate).⁵⁵

In his quantitative analysis of DHRs, Potter also found that:

- Physical stalking constituted 11% of aggravating factors in DHRs where the victim died by suicide.
- Digital stalking amounted to 5% of aggravating factors in DHRs where the victim died by suicide.⁵⁶

The case of Justene Reece indicates the concerning links between stalking and victim suicide in the domestic abuse, and specifically ex-intimate partner context.⁵⁷

While the data on stalking as a risk factor for domestic abuse related victim suicides is not disaggregated by gender or ethnicity, as with intimate partner homicides, the data shows a higher proportion of female victims as compared with male victims. For example, four year data from the Domestic Homicide Project shows that 73% of suspected victim suicides (with one victim and one suspect) were female with a male suspect.⁵⁸

What the evidence shows:

- There is growing evidence as to the potential links between stalking and domestic abuse related suicides.
- Stalking has been found to be a risk factor for suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse.
- While the data on stalking prevalence in the histories of victim suicides tends not to be

disaggregated by gender or ethnicity, the data shows that a higher proportion of domestic abuse related suicide victims were female.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- Stalking should be routinely considered in the assessment of domestic abuse-related suicide risk.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- Stalking in victim suicide histories should be more consistently disaggregated by relationship type to improve understanding of differing risk patterns.
- Data on gender and ethnicity in stalking-related cases should be more consistently collected and disaggregated to strengthen understanding of risk and support more targeted analysis.

CASE STUDY 3 JUSTENE REECE

Justene Reece tragically died by suicide aged 46 in February 2017 after an unrelenting campaign of stalking by her ex-partner, Nicholas Allen, with Allen making around 3,500 contact attempts, including calls and threatening messages to Justene as well as her family, as well as breaching a non-molestation order. Tragically, Justene's suicide note explained she had 'run out of fight', with Justene also having previously been hospitalised following an overdose in January 2016. Allen was ultimately convicted for manslaughter after the first successful prosecution for suspected victim suicide following domestic abuse (SVSDA), receiving a 15-year extended sentence. In his sentencing remarks, the Judge commented that Justene 'committed suicide as a direct result of [Allen's] sustained and determined criminal actions.'⁵⁹

2.2 The links between stalking and homicide with other perpetrator-victim relationships (outside of the domestic/ex-intimate context)

2.2.1 The prevalence of stalking in other relationship homicides (outside of the domestic/ex-intimate context)

The College of Policing's evidence review suggests that (former and current) intimate partner stalking victims may be at a higher risk of harm than those stalked by strangers or perpetrators with other relationships to the victim.⁶⁰ However, **there appears to be limited research and data on the links between homicide and stalking in the case of other victim-perpetrator relationships, in contrast to a more established literature exploring the links between stalking and domestic abuse related homicides (specifically intimate and ex-intimate partner homicides). This indicates the urgent need for further research and data collection to better understand these risks** (see sections 1.2 and 4).⁶¹

Albeit limited, there is some existing data which finds evidence of stalking in homicides with other perpetrator relationships to the victim. For example, data provided by the Femicide Census indicates the presence of stalking in the histories of femicides with other (non-domestic) victim-perpetrator relationships. Among 2,000 cases of femicide analysed, 23 out of 495 victims outside of the intimate partner or family relationship context experienced stalking/harassment prior to the homicide (4.65%). This includes one case where there was 'no known relationship', as well as cases where the victim and perpetrator were 'known to each other', including acquaintances and neighbours.⁶²

In this respect, it is notable that Mullen et al. also highlighted the risk of sexual violence from predatory stalkers with no prior relationship to the victim.⁶³ Furthermore, a recent small sample study of homicides with a sexual aspect and/or a sexual motivation for the murder and stalking used Mullen et al.'s five typologies to analyse the context of the homicides (including two Rejected stalker cases, one Resentful stalker, one Intimacy seeker, one Incompetent suitor and one Predatory stalker), and

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THE RISK OF STALKING ESCALATION IS NOT CONFINED ONLY TO EX-INTIMATE PARTNER OR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, BUT MAY INCLUDE STALKING BY COLLEAGUES, NEIGHBOURS, PEERS OR STRANGERS.

CONTACT US IF YOU NEED HELP.

across varied victim-perpetrator relationships.⁶⁴ While exploratory, their research highlights **the importance of understanding the risks of stalking across all perpetrator typologies and within different perpetrator-victim relationships.**

Moreover, Sheed et al.'s study found the presence of stalking in 4.14% of 'Other [i.e. not ex-intimate partner] Relationship homicides'.⁶⁵ While this includes 10 family homicides, in addition to 15 acquaintance and 3 stranger homicides, their research is important in understanding the prevalence of stalking across varied victim-perpetrator relationships. Moreover, they also find that in 17 (out of the 28) 'Other Relationship homicides', 'the homicide victim had a (perceived) romantic interest in or was a family member of the homicide perpetrator's ex-partner'.⁶⁶ **This research indicates that the risk of ex-intimate stalking may not be confined to the ex-intimate partner (victim), but may also radiate to their wider circle of contacts.**⁶⁷ However, these wider risks may not be captured in data on domestic homicides, particularly where family and intimate partner relationships are more narrowly defined.

What the evidence shows:

- There is limited evidence on the links between homicide and stalking outside of domestic and ex-intimate partner contexts.
- Where stalking is identified in other perpetrator–victim relationships, it appears less prevalent than in intimate and ex-intimate partner homicides, although data is limited.
- Emerging evidence suggests that risks associated with ex-intimate partner stalking may extend beyond the direct victim to wider social and support networks.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- Professionals should ensure that stalking risk is considered across all perpetrator–victim relationships, not only within domestic abuse contexts.
- Risk assessment should take into account the potential for harm to extend beyond the direct victim in ex-intimate partner stalking cases, including to wider networks.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- There is a need for further research and improved data on stalking and homicide outside of domestic contexts to better understand risk across different relationship types.
- The scale and nature of stalking in non-intimate homicide contexts remains under-researched and poorly understood due to limited evidence.

2.2.2 Rejected stalkers and separation as a potential risk factor in other relationship homicides (outside of the ex-intimate context)

It is also notable that while Mullen et al. specifically highlighted the risk of violence from ex-intimate partner rejected stalkers, the rejected stalker typology also encompasses perpetrators with other relationships to the victim, including family, friends, and colleagues, indicating that the nature of the stalking is defined by the rejection, rather than the type of relationship.⁶⁸ Therefore, elements of rejection could also be present in other stalking typologies. Indeed, as highlighted by Mullen et al., the five stalking typologies ‘are not entirely mutually exclusive

groupings’.⁶⁹ For example, in their exploratory study of stalking and sexual homicide cases, Stefanska & Longpré note elements of rejection in the incompetent suitor and resentful stalker case.⁷⁰

Mullen et al.’s typology therefore highlights the need to understand the risks of rejected stalkers across different victim-perpetrator relationships, as well as aspects of rejection within other stalking typologies.

Relatedly, Monckton Smith has emphasised that given the perpetrator’s fixation and obsession with the victim, **separation or the perpetrator’s perception of separation may also occur in victim-perpetrator relationships where there has never been an intimate relationship.**⁷¹ **As Monckton Smith highlights, the escalation of risk in these cases should be considered just as dangerous as the escalation of risk in intimate partner cases,** further underscoring the need to understand and respond to the escalation of risk across all stalking cases, irrespective of the type of perpetrator-victim relationship (see section 3.1.2).

What the evidence shows:

- The rejected stalker typology is not confined to ex-intimate partner stalking and may be present across other stalking typologies.
- Stalkers may perceive separation or rejection even in the absence of any prior intimate relationship.
- Perceived rejection or separation can contribute to escalation of stalking risk across different perpetrator–victim relationships.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- Professionals should be aware that rejection-based motivations for stalking are not limited to ex-intimate partner cases.
- Risk assessment and intervention should take account of the potential for escalation linked to perceived rejection across all perpetrator–victim contexts.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- Further research is needed to better understand how rejected stalker dynamics operate across different perpetrator–victim typologies and non-intimate contexts.

2.3 Other risk factors across all (domestic and non-domestic) stalking cases

In addition to separation, the evidence base points to further risk factors or 'red flags' that may indicate an escalation of risk across all stalking cases, so both domestic and non-domestic. For example, Sheed et al. identify perpetrator suicidal ideation, planning, trigger events and last resort thinking as potential 'dynamic risk factors' which could be helpful when managing risk.⁷² Other risk factors for escalation identified in the literature include perpetrator 'breaches of protective orders, failure to stop when instructed, failure to act in their own best interests and persistence',⁷³ and threats to kill.⁷⁴ Furthermore, as Sheed et al., note, some of their identified dynamic risk factors are consonant with the findings of Monckton Smith's homicide timeline, underscoring **the importance of understanding stalking risk through temporal sequencing, including attention to escalating patterns of perpetrator behaviour.**⁷⁵

Moreover, Monckton-Smith also highlights that 'low level stalking actions', such as surveillance and following can be considered high risk depending on the perpetrator motivation and wider pattern of behaviour.⁷⁶ Indeed, new research by Webb (2025) highlights the importance of understanding the perpetrator's goals for the stalking behaviour, whether to obtain a relationship, create fear, or for reconnaissance, with the latter being the most dangerous goal.⁷⁷ In addition, **this research underscores the importance of attention to perpetrator behaviour in terms of the level of boldness and time investment, and whether the threats are becoming more specific.**

In addition to risk factors focusing on perpetrator behaviour, Sheed et al. highlight 'victim vulnerability', notably where 'victims lacked supports and resources', as a further dynamic risk factor, particularly in 'Other Relationship' homicides, which the researchers suggest highlight the need for more stalking support services for non-domestic stalking cases (in the Australian context).⁷⁸ The relevance of victim vulnerability as a risk factor also relates to the findings of Chopra et al. who highlight victim help-

seeking as the second greatest predictor of homicide following stalking.⁷⁹

What the evidence shows:

- Effective understanding of stalking risk requires attention to patterns of behaviour and "red flags" across all stalking cases.
- Stalking risk and escalation are better understood when incidents are considered in chronological order rather than in isolation.
- Perpetrator motivation, goals, level of persistence, risk-taking behaviour, and specificity or detail in threats are important indicators of risk.
- Victim vulnerability and patterns of help-seeking may be associated with increased risk in stalking cases.

Implications for practice and safeguarding:

- Professionals should be aware of stalking-related "red flags".
- Perpetrator behaviour, including motivation, persistence, risk-taking, and the nature of threats, should be actively considered in risk assessment and decision-making.
- Victim vulnerability and help-seeking behaviours should be recognised as potential indicators of heightened risk and considered within safeguarding responses.

Evidence gaps and further research needs:

- Further research is needed to better understand how specific behavioural indicators (such as perpetrator motivation, threat detail, and risk-taking) interact to influence escalation in stalking cases.
- More evidence is required on the relationship between victim vulnerability, help-seeking behaviour, and risk escalation across different stalking typologies.

3. URGENT NEED FOR IMPROVED CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND HEALTH RESPONSE TO ALL STALKING VICTIMS

Collectively, the implications identified in the previous section highlight the need for a more consistent, structured and behaviourally informed approach to stalking risk across practice settings. However, the evidence also suggests that these issues are not solely the result of individual professional judgement, but reflect broader systemic and procedural challenges within policing and the wider criminal justice response. The following section therefore considers how these gaps manifest across key areas of practice, including the identification and investigation of stalking, the consistency of police response across case types, the handling of cases involving victim suicide, the use of stalking protection orders, sentencing and perpetrator management following conviction, and the interface between stalking and mental health provision. **It is vital that the police, wider criminal justice and healthcare response is improved for all stalking victims. It is imperative that victims receive a timely and trauma-informed response when they reach out for help.** It is also important to note that we have made many of these recommendations previously but they have yet to be actioned. We believe they are pivotal to the prevention of escalating stalking behaviours.

3.1 Need for improved police and criminal justice response

3.1.1 Need for improved stalking identification, risk assessment and charging

Building on the previous section's emphasis on recognising stalking as a high-risk, behaviourally escalating pattern, there remains a clear need to strengthen the consistency and accuracy of stalking identification, risk assessment, and subsequent charging decisions within policing practice. As outlined in detail in the super-complaint, as well as the investigating committee's response, **stalking victims are often let down by the police and CPS who fail to adequately recognise, investigate and charge stalking.**⁸⁰ As the super-complaint highlighted, police often fail to recognise the pattern of behaviour that

constitutes stalking, treating the behaviours as one-off incidents rather than a course of conduct. **It is vital that training of professionals on stalking highlights the need for professional curiosity to look for wider patterns of behaviour including through a wide range of behaviours both in person and facilitated by technology.** However, if stalking is not correctly identified at an early stage, this may allow the fixation and obsession that characterises the crime to embed further, with potentially catastrophic consequences for the victim.

The failure of police and CPS to adequately respond to stalking can be illustrated by concerning statistics on the attrition in stalking cases through the criminal justice system. In the year ending March 2025, there were approximately 1.4 million victims of stalking.⁸¹ However, of the 135,590 reports of stalking to the police in the same time period, only 11,221 were charged/summonsed,⁸² amounting to only 8.3% of all reported cases and only 0.8% of total estimated stalking cases. It is extremely concerning that several years on from our super-complaint, the proportion of stalking cases reaching a charge remains low.

As we mention in 1.2 above, and as highlighted by the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) and Imkaan,⁸³ as well as the Invisible Women Campaign by Killed Women and Southall Black Sisters,⁸⁴ **Black, minoritised and migrant women may be further let down by police owing to intersectional discrimination and racial stereotypes that invisibilise or misrepresent the abuse and risks that they face.** For example, CWJ and Imkaan highlight the case of Dawn (Leeds), a Black British woman, who was killed by her ex-partner in a car park after ongoing stalking and harassment. They suggest that the failure of a range of agencies, including police, to adequately respond to her case and provide Dawn with appropriate support was likely to be due to negative racialised tropes. Furthermore, police failure to identify escalating risks from stalking may also be compounded in honour-based abuse cases by a lack of understanding of this specific crime.⁸⁵

CASE STUDY 4

THE CASE OF ALICE RUGGLES

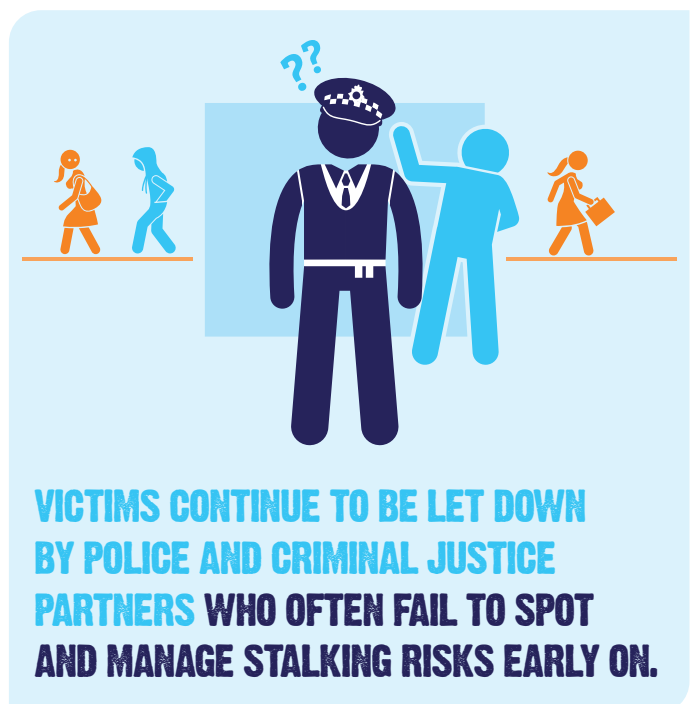
Alice was killed by an ex-partner at the age of 24 following a severe campaign of stalking. The triggers were the separation (which she instigated on discovering he was cheating on her) and, later, the perpetrator finding out Alice was entering another relationship. The Domestic Homicide Review found that ‘the perpetrator’s obsession with Alice and his persistent behaviour escalated in the weeks leading up to the homicide in October 2016.’⁸⁶ Alice reported a number of stalking behaviours to the police during that month, including loitering near her home, unwanted gifts being left at her doorstep and suspected hacking of social media. The perpetrator even drove over 100 miles from Edinburgh to see her, further evidencing his fixation and obsession, also leaving a voicemail on her phone where he discussed not wanting to kill her eleven times. The latter should have been a red flag and warning of risk of homicide. However, despite Alice reporting the behaviour to the police, they did not identify or record the offence as stalking (but rather as harassment), and did not put any protections in place. The Domestic Homicide Review found that ‘this was significant in setting the course of events that followed... impact[ing] on the decision-making, risk assessment and risk management of the situation.’⁸⁷ Alice was violently murdered in her own home on October 12th. The IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) investigated the officers in question for a case of misconduct on the basis that they failed to identify stalking, failed to comply with the force’s procedure on stalking, failed to take positive action, dealt with Alice in a discourteous manner and failed to conduct an appropriate investigation. Had the force listened to Alice when she reported stalking and responded appropriately to the concerning risk markers that the perpetrator was demonstrating, she may be alive today.

As the investigating committee’s response highlighted, **police too often fail to recognise red flags and escalating patterns of risk, including risk of homicide, which may have devastating consequences for the victim.**⁸⁸ As Clayton et al. found in their thematic analysis of 32 stalking-related homicide and attempted homicide cases in the UK, USA, The Netherlands, and Australia, inadequate police action was common within the cases analysed, including failure to carry out adequate risk assessments.^{89,90} The murder of Alice Ruggles is a tragic reminder of a case where the lack of early identification by police, as well as inaction in response to risk factors, including threats to kill and escalation following separation, can have fatal consequences.

3.1.2 The need for improved police response across all stalking cases

In line with the findings in section 2 highlighting the importance of recognising stalking beyond domestic abuse frameworks, there is a need for a more consistent and effective police response across all stalking cases, regardless of relationship context or

categorisation. The case of Gracie Spinks, who was stalked by a former colleague, highlights the potentially fatal risk of stalking outside of the domestic/ex-intimate context, as well as the devastating consequences of police failure to act.



CASE STUDY 5

GRACIE SPINKS

Gracie, 23, was found fatally injured in a field in Derbyshire, in June 2021. The perpetrator, who killed himself shortly after, was a supervisor of hers at work, and she had reported him for stalking 4 months prior to her murder. As detailed in the Coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths Report, the perpetrator had become fixated and obsessed with Gracie after she had made it clear that she did not want a relationship.⁹¹ The IOPC investigation that took place after Gracie's death found that five officers had a case to answer for misconduct following numerous red flags and reports being dismissed in the months leading up to her murder.⁹² Furthermore, following national recognition of the concerning omissions by police, the Coroner's report highlighted serious failures in how the police dealt with Gracie's case, including no action being taken against the perpetrator after police gave him 'words of advice'.⁹³ In addition, even though a stranger reported finding a bag of weapons near to the field where Gracie kept her horse, this was not investigated. It was only after Gracie's death a few weeks later in the same nearby field that the bag was traced to the perpetrator. In his report, the coroner underscored various issues of concern, including the need for better knowledge and understanding of stalking investigations by police officers, as well as the importance of completing comprehensive and dynamic risk assessments. The Coroner also highlighted his concern regarding failures in police note taking/record keeping, as well as other areas for improvement including linking geographical locations to suspects (as recommended by the IOPC) and the importance of stalking advocates.

Furthermore, while we welcome Raneem's law, we are concerned that this important initiative makes no mention of stalking. Raneem's law, which places Domestic Abuse specialists in 999 control rooms, was developed in the memory of Raneem Oudeh and her mother Khaola Saleem, who were tragically killed by Raneem's ex-husband in 2018, after the police failed to respond to her calls for help.⁹⁴ Despite Raneem having been separated from her husband for several months before her murder, the scheme does not require stalking specialist knowledge by the domestic abuse specialists within control rooms. Also concerning is that the Coroner's Report to Prevent Future Deaths does not mention stalking as part of the behaviours leading to her homicide despite stating that there were multiple reports by Raneem to the police of harmful behaviours in the months after her separation and that on the day of her murder; 'Raneem and Khaola attended the Rotana Shisha Lounge in Birmingham where Raneem was meeting a potential new partner. [Her ex-husband] turned up and an altercation ensued where he slapped Khaola... At just after midnight [her ex-husband] murdered Raneem and Khaola outside Khaola's home address. He was subsequently convicted of both murders.'⁹⁵

3.1.3 The need for improved police response in victim suicide cases

Reflecting the previous section's discussion of stalking as a potential precursor to both lethal violence and suicide, the **urgent need for improved police response to stalking is vital not only to prevent escalation to serious violence or homicide, but also victim suicide.** In the case of Justene Reece (see section 2.1.3 above), as many as 34 incidents were reported to the police, however police didn't recognise the risk posed by stalking and failed to act, with the perpetrator only charged with stalking after her death. The risks of poor police/CPS response to stalking victims is also illustrated by the tragic case of Alicia, who sadly took her own life after a campaign of stalking by her ex-partner.⁹⁶

CASE STUDY 6

THE CASE OF ALICIA⁹⁷

Alicia, 34, tragically took her own life in June 2021 after being subjected to domestic abuse from two previous partners, Simon and Mark.⁹⁸ Mark also perpetrated a relentless campaign of stalking against Alicia from March 2020 until her death, with Alicia's DHR characterising Mark as best fitting the typologies of the 'rejected' and 'resentful' stalker, with Mark's stalking involving vexatious complaints, including to Alicia's employer, resulting in her resignation. The DHR notes that the stalking had a significant impact on her life, including Alicia fleeing at one point to a refuge with her children. While the police submitted a file to CPS, significant delays from CPS resulted in great frustration for Alicia as to how her case was being handled, and with Alicia also submitting a complaint. Moreover, despite all agencies concluding that Mark's complaints were unfounded, Alicia was still investigated by the police and Children's Social Care, likely causing further distress. Furthermore, rather than applying for a Stalking Protection Order, which could have contained positive protections for Alicia, the police instead placed the responsibility on Alicia by suggesting she apply for a non-molestation order (NMO), which does not allow for the possibility of positive protections; in any case, this was something Alicia could not afford. Alicia's case shows how an inadequate criminal justice response can compound the mental health impacts of stalking, underscoring the urgent need for an improved response to all stalking victims.

3.1.4 The importance of Stalking Protection Orders

Consistent with earlier implications regarding escalation and the importance of timely intervention, the role of stalking protection orders becomes critical as a preventative tool requiring more consistent and proactive application in practice. As highlighted by Alicia's case and in our super-complaint, **there are ongoing police failures in applying for Stalking**

"WHAT IS STALKING?"

"FIXATION AND OBSESSION"

THE HOMICIDE TIMELINE



POLICE MUST RECEIVE MANDATORY INDEPENDENT SPECIALIST TRAINING TO RECOGNISE, INVESTIGATE, RECORD AND RESPOND TO STALKING AS AN ESCALATING RISK.

Protection Orders (SPOs). SPOs, which came into force in January 2020, enable police to apply for positive requirements to protect the victim as well as imposing restrictions on the perpetrator. However, FOI request data obtained by the BBC show that only 1,439 SPOs were issued 2020-2023 by 40 forces who responded.⁹⁹ Given that there were 129,076 stalking offences recorded by police in the year ending March 2024 alone, the number of SPOs issued is concerningly low.¹⁰⁰ **Failure to put in place an interim or full SPO at the earliest opportunity puts victims at risk of further acts of stalking which increases the potential psychological and physical harm they are likely to suffer.** For example, in the case of Claire Chick (see section 2.1.2), despite concerning risk markers as highlighted by Monckton Smith, including Butler's history of abusive behaviour towards other women, as well as threats of suicide and violence, in addition to surveillance and following, including Butler tracking her car, it seems that the police did not apply for an interim SPO, but rather released Butler on bail without charge after his arrest for stalking.¹⁰¹ The police handling of Claire's case is now the subject of an IOPC investigation, with the IOPC recently serving 18 misconduct notices to the police force.¹⁰²

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE POLICE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE:

- Given concerning evidence on police failures to respond to stalking, including in homicide and victim suicide cases, police forces must receive enhanced training on recognising and responding to stalking, including risk markers, the homicide timeline, and the early implementation of SPOs.
- Given the potentially fatal risks posed by stalkers, stalking cases must be allocated to or overseen by a police officer with sufficient seniority, training and experience to handle the complexity of stalking cases and potential escalation of risk.
- Given evidence from Centre for Women's Justice and Imkaan, as well as Killed Women and Southall Black Sisters' Invisible Women Campaign report, that Black, minoritised and migrant female victims of abuse are being failed by police due to intersectional discrimination and racial tropes,¹⁰³ police forces must receive enhanced training on tackling racial stereotypes and discrimination, including in stalking cases
- Given the urgency of improving police response to stalking victims, all the super-complaint recommendations must be implemented without delay.

3.2 Sentencing and the management of perpetrators post-conviction

Findings from the research in section 2 emphasise the need for understanding persistence, motivation, and escalation over time, therefore there is a need to strengthen sentencing approaches and post-conviction management to more effectively disrupt stalking behaviours and reduce the risk of reoffending and ultimately the potential of the risk of escalation of homicide. While early identification and charging of stalking is crucial to protect victims, the Trust is also concerned that in many cases the management of perpetrators is insufficiently robust to manage the specific risks from stalking. As outlined in our super-complaint, **it is vital that perpetrators are managed via multi-agency stalking intervention programmes in order to ensure that correct and stalking-specific risk management is put in place to pre-empt the fixation and obsession escalating.**¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, **recent changes to the management of offenders post-conviction as introduced by the Sentencing Act 2026 may leave victims dangerously at risk, including the presumption against custodial sentences of less than a year.**¹⁰⁵ The average sentence length for those convicted of stalking currently stands at 13 months, with many more receiving a sentence of under 12 months which will now be largely managed in the community. However, due to the fixated and obsessive nature of stalking and high rates of reoffending, there is a high risk of continued offending. While judges will retain the power to hand down custodial sentences of 12 months or less in exceptional circumstances, such as where a court order has been breached or where a suspended sentence would pose a significant risk to the victim, we are concerned that these safety nets will be inadequate to mitigate the risk to stalking victims. This also needs to be considered in conjunction with the potential lack of consistent specialist training in stalking dynamics informing judicial sentencing decision. Also while the government has given assurance that many perpetrators, including stalkers, will be monitored through an electronic tag, this is still reliant on a victim to report a breach of the tag conditions and will not deter online stalking which forms a significant part of the vast majority of stalking cases. For example, we know that stalking risk is often inadequately assessed and misunderstood, while stalking protection orders (SPOs) are woefully underutilised.

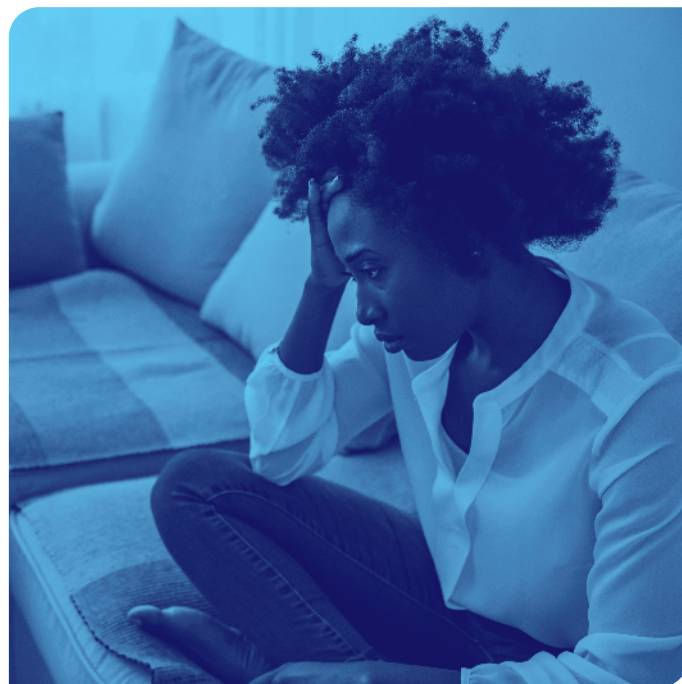
RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE PERPETRATOR MANAGEMENT:

- Stalking perpetrators must be managed via a multi-agency approach as exemplified by MASIP which has been noted by the NPCC super-complaint progress report which states 'the MASIP model currently stands as the most robustly evaluated model available' in regard to a multi-agency approach to stalking.'¹⁰⁶
- Due to the serious risk posed by stalkers and a high rate of reoffending, all convicted stalkers must primarily be given custodial sentences to ensure that the risk from stalking, including online, is properly managed.

3.3 Victim suicide and the need for improved mental health provision for stalking victims

Section 2 highlights the significance of victim vulnerability and help-seeking behaviours as indicators of heightened risk. There is an urgent need for improved mental health response to stalking victims and we continue to raise concerns about stalking not being included in the health strand of the government’s Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. Indeed, the data on victim suicide links with longstanding findings of survey research pointing to the concerning mental health impacts of stalking. For example, Pathé and Mullen found that 83% of stalking victims surveyed reported heightened anxiety, with 74% reporting chronic sleep disturbance, 55% reporting ‘intrusive recollections and flashbacks’, and 24% suicidal thoughts.¹⁰⁷ A recent survey carried out by Short et al. also found that victims’ mental health severely deteriorated after the stalking began.¹⁰⁸ While 30% of victims reported psychological or mental health problems before the stalking began, this increased to 95% of victims following the stalking. A study from 2023 analysing a sample of 258 victims seeking help from the National Stalking Helpline also evidences the deleterious impacts of stalking on victims’ mental health, with 91.5% of victims reporting ‘psychological and substance abuse-related impacts’, including ‘anxiety, depression,



difficulty managing emotions, panic attacks, anger, PTSD, and suicidal ideation’.¹⁰⁹

While the literature underscores the importance of a supportive and trauma informed health response to victims,¹¹⁰ we know that **victims often struggle to access the help they so urgently need.** For example, Taylor et al found that only 28% of stalking victims who accessed healthcare services specifically because of the stalking ‘felt that their experience of asking for support from the healthcare system was positive overall, or that their healthcare practitioner was able to offer appropriate help’.¹¹¹ Furthermore, as highlighted by the tragic case of Alicia (see section 3.1.3), **victims may struggle to access integrated multi-agency support, including health support, victim advocacy and criminal justice response, particularly where victims face intersecting vulnerabilities.** As highlighted by Alicia’s DHR, in addition to the risk factors from the domestic abuse and stalking, Alicia had compounding vulnerabilities. She been given a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder (BPD) in January 2020 and was known to mental health services. She also had children from both abusive relationships, with her older children from her relationship with Mark having been taken into care at a young age. Indeed, Alicia’s DHR explicitly draws out the links between insufficient criminal justice and mental health response and Alicia’s suicide:



HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS MUST BE TRAINED ON THE SIGNS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF STALKING, INCLUDING SELF-HARM AND SUICIDAL IDEATION, TO ENSURE PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT.

'The reality is that Alicia's experience of stalking was not taken as seriously as they should be, the impact on her mental health was not understood, and the response was so slow she never saw justice, because by the time Mark [the perpetrator] was convicted Alicia was already deceased.' ¹¹²

Despite the importance of a trauma-informed health response to stalking, as highlighted in our 2025 report, **stalking is often going unrecognised by health care professionals, indicating the need for vastly improved knowledge and response on stalking.** ¹¹³

Drawing on our 2025 campaign, we make the following recommendations, which have yet to be acted on.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH RESPONSE TO STALKING:

- The NHS Integrated Care Boards must commission independent specialist stalking training for healthcare practitioners to identify and respond to victims of stalking.
- The NHS Integrated Care Boards must commission **locally embedded Independent Stalking Advocates (ISAs)** in health settings who can work with and take referrals from healthcare professionals.
- The public and private health sector must consult with specialists to develop national guidance for healthcare professionals to identify and respond to patients who are victims of stalking.
- The government must include stalking within the 'Steps to Safety' element of the VAWG Strategy, being rolled out by the Department for Health and Social Care from April 2026, in addition to the domestic abuse and sexual violence referral service across Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).



4. GAPS IN DATA COLLECTION

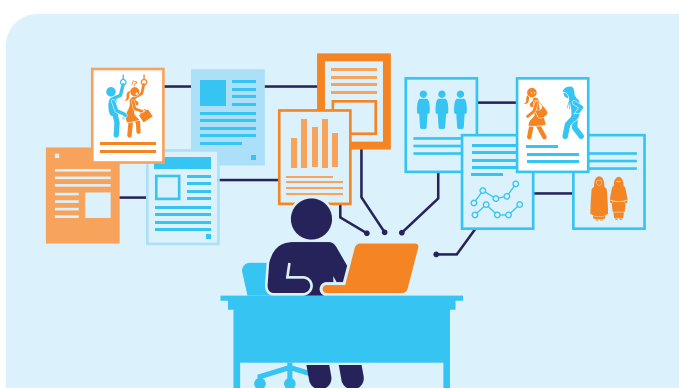
Building on the findings from section 2, this section examines some of the pertinent issues and gaps in the evidence base and makes recommendations for improved national data collection and further research on the links between stalking and homicide.

While the available evidence base already points to the need for an improved response to all stalking victims, a stronger, more robust evidence base, with better understanding of ‘dynamic’ risk factors, would help to strengthen our campaign to ensure that victims of stalking receive appropriate, timely and targeted help and support to mitigate the risks of harm and reduce the impacts of stalking.¹¹⁴

4.1 Gaps in police data

As highlighted by the literature, retrospective studies generally rely on police or other criminal justice system data, however the quality of this data may be affected by the under-recording of stalking and the potential that large amounts of stalking are still being classified as harassment or malicious communications.

It is therefore essential that stalking is accurately recorded by police, which requires enhanced training and systems to improve the identification and recording of stalking, including outside the domestic abuse context and in sexual violence.^{115,116}



POLICE SHOULD COLLECT AND ANALYSE DATA TO IDENTIFY STALKING VICTIMS WITH INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES AND ENSURE APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE POLICE DATA:

- Given the importance of accurate police data for researching and preventing the escalation of stalking to homicide, as well as the urgent need to improve the police response to stalking, police forces must receive enhanced training to accurately identify and record stalkings.¹¹⁷
- Drawing on recommendations by the Centre for Women’s Justice and Imkaan, as well as Killed Women and Southall Black Sisters’ Invisible Women Campaign report, as to the need for more consistent recording of ethnicity by police and the wider criminal justice system in domestic abuse and VAWG cases, police must improve the recording of ethnicity in all stalking cases (both within and outside the domestic abuse context), and HMICFRS must inspect the recording of ethnicity across police forces.¹¹⁸

4.2 Gaps in DHR/DARDR data

As highlighted by Rowlands and Bracewell, issues around lack of identification of stalking also pervade research using Domestic Homicide Reviews (now Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews).¹¹⁹ As they explain, DHRs are not a simple recording of ‘fact’, but are instead complex documents, which are produced through various ‘layers of interpretation’, including by the agencies feeding into the DHR, such as the police, as well as the DHR review panel and chair. At each stage of the process, the stalking may or may not be recognised and identified (according to the person interpreting the documents), with implications for whether stalking is ultimately included in the DHR, and whether lessons relating to the stalking are analysed and learnt. This includes by researchers using the DHRs for data generation, and who provide another layer of analysis which forms the final ‘interpretative layer’.¹²⁰

While the Trust welcomes the inclusion of stalking as an aggravating factor in the analysis section of the DHR toolkit in the 2024 draft DHR statutory guidance (awaiting final version following the government’s consultation),¹²¹ we are concerned and disappointed



ALL DOMESTIC ABUSE RELATED DEATH REVIEW (DARDR) PANEL CHAIRS MUST BE TRAINED ON STALKING.

that stalking is only explicitly mentioned once in the whole guidance. Given the evidence outlined in this briefing, it is vital that consideration and identification of stalking, particularly in the ex-intimate context, features throughout the whole DHR process.

In addition, the Trust is concerned that some DARDR chairs may not have sufficient awareness of stalking, and that stalking is not currently mandatory in the training of DARDR chairs. Moreover, given the unique nature of stalking, drawing out lessons learned about its prevalence and risk requires specialised knowledge from experts who understand the fixation and obsession that drives the perpetrator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE DHR/DARDR DATA:

- Given concerns that DARDR chairs may lack adequate knowledge of stalking to identify stalking behaviours and draw out learning, the forthcoming updated statutory guidance on DARDRs must ensure training on stalking is mandatory for all DARDR chairs.
- Given the need for specialised knowledge of stalking on DARDR panels, the forthcoming updated statutory guidance on DARDRs must mandate the involvement of stalking experts/specialist sector when conducting a DARDR on a case where stalking was present.
- Given the importance of robust national learning from DARDRs, we support the DAC call for 'Funding for the continued piloting and national roll-out of the Domestic Abuse- Related Deaths Accountability and Oversight Mechanism to develop an evidence-based strategic response to DHRs'.¹²²

4.3 Gaps in detail of data: ex-intimate homicides and gender/ethnicity

While important strides have been made in collecting data on stalking and homicide, particularly in the domestic context, gaps remain in data disaggregation.

Firstly, as highlighted by Monckton Smith, it is crucial to recognise and identify the change in the perpetrator's motivation following separation; otherwise, we will fail to identify a drastic change in risk to the victim, and this failure will undoubtedly lead to a loss of life.¹²³ Given the change in risk, **it is vital to have a clear understanding of stalking prevalence in ex-intimate partner homicides/victim suicides, with the data for current intimate partner cases and former intimate partner cases.** Otherwise, if cases are analysed together, the risks of stalking specifically in ex-intimate partner cases could be underestimated, and this could have concerning implications for risk assessment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE DATA DISAGGREGATION:

- Given the need to better understand the risks of stalking escalation by victim-perpetrator relationship, the DHR/DARDR reporting form for Home Office data collection must capture detailed, clear and consistent data on these relationships, including whether intimate partner homicides were current or ex-intimate.
- Given the need for a more robust evidence base on the links between stalking and homicide in the ex-intimate partner context, we encourage researchers investigating the links between stalking and homicide in the domestic abuse context to clearly disaggregate between stalking in the current intimate partner context and stalking in the ex-intimate partner context.
- Given evidence that BMM women may be further let down by police due to racial discrimination, it is vital that data on the prevalence of stalking in the antecedent histories of homicides and victim suicides be disaggregated by gender and ethnicity to ensure intersectional learning on victim experiences, risk markers, and police response.¹²⁴



THE GOVERNMENT MUST ESTABLISH A STALKING RELATED DEATH REVIEW PROCESS TO CAPTURE CRUCIAL LEARNING FROM NON-DOMESTIC HOMICIDES.

4.4 Gaps in data: non-domestic stalking

As indicated by the above overview of existing research, **there is limited research on the links between stalking and homicide outside of the domestic abuse framework, and specifically outside of the intimate partner context.** The Trust is therefore concerned that the risks for stalking victims outside of the domestic context are not well understood. This is a significant gap in the data given that a large proportion of stalking victims are not stalked by an intimate partner or adult family member (see section 1.1).

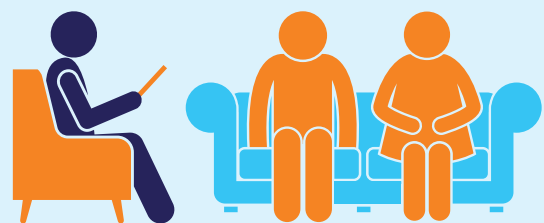
Furthermore, **we are concerned that the lack of research on stalking and homicide outside of the domestic context reflects a lack of attention to non-DA VAWG crimes in the UK policy context.** For example, **while domestic homicides and victim suicide cases are eligible for the DHR (now DARDR) process, there is no comparable fatality review process for stalking related deaths outside of the domestic abuse context.** This means that, notwithstanding learning from a possible coroner's Preventing Future Deaths Report, local and national learning from these cases is not systematically collected, or implementation monitored. Moreover, **while the Domestic Homicide Project collects and analyses vital data on domestic homicides, unexpected deaths and suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse, there is no comparable national project or dataset to**

systematically collect data on stalking homicides/ suspected victim suicides perpetrated outside of the domestic abuse context. For example, the Home Office Homicide Index as published by the ONS doesn't capture data on stalking.¹²⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IMPROVE DATA ON NON-DOMESTIC STALKING AND HOMICIDE/ VICTIM SUICIDE

- Given that DARDRs only capture learning from domestic abuse homicides/victim suicides, the government must establish a stalking related death review process to capture crucial learning from stalking related homicides/victim suicides outside of the domestic abuse context. Within this there must be a structure for identifying risk markers for stalking and guidance/principles for the fatality review.
- Given the potential importance of coroner's reports in preventing future stalking-related homicides/ victim suicides, all coroners must receive mandatory training on stalking.
- Given the urgent need for national data collection on stalking as a risk factor for all homicides, including those perpetrated outside the domestic abuse context, the government (Home Office) must consider the possibility of including stalking within the Homicide Index as published by the ONS.
- Given the importance of strengthening the evidence base on stalking and homicide, the government must fund research into the links between stalking and homicide outside of the domestic context.



FURTHER RESEARCH MUST BE CARRIED OUT IN CONSULTATION WITH VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO FURTHER UNDERSTAND PERPETRATORS' BEHAVIOURS, AND RISK MARKERS.

4.5 Gaps in data: victims' experiences

In addition to using police and criminal justice data, **the experiences of victims (in attempted homicide/victim suicide cases) and victims' families also provide an important source of data on stalking prevalence, as well as dynamic risk markers and escalation.**¹²⁶ For example, in their research with (attempted) intimate partner femicide victims and their families in the US, McFarlane et al. found a high prevalence of reported stalking episodes in the 12-months prior to the attempted homicide (85%) or homicide (76%).¹²⁷ While not directly comparable, it is notable that the prevalence of stalking is much higher in McFarlane's data based on interview questionnaires with victims and victims' families than in datasets using police recorded data, such as the Domestic Homicide Project. Furthermore, McFarlane found that only 54% and 46% of the femicide and attempted femicide victims respectively had reported the stalking to the police.¹²⁸

This indicates not only the importance of improving police identification and recording of stalking (see above), but also the importance of research with victims and victims' families,¹²⁹ including through an intersectional perspective to understand the experiences of black and minoritised women.¹³⁰

RECOMMENDATION

TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES:

- Given the importance of embedding the voices of victims, families and stalking advocates in the evidence base, the government must fund research into lived experiences of (attempted) stalking-related homicides and victim suicides. This research must include stalking-related homicides within and outside of the domestic abuse context, and take an intersectional perspective to ensure that diverse voices are heard.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in this briefing, the Trust is concerned that the risks posed by stalking in both the domestic and non-domestic context, including potential escalation to homicide and victim suicide, require greater recognition and awareness nationally, as well as further data collection. Given these concerns, we make the following recommendations in the hope that they will lead to an improved response to all stalking victims, as well as enhanced understanding and management of risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE POLICE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Given concerning evidence on police failures to respond to stalking, including in homicide and victim suicide cases, police forces must receive enhanced training on recognising and responding to stalking, including risk markers, the homicide timeline, and the early implementation of SPOs.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Given the potentially fatal risks posed by stalkers, stalking cases must be allocated to or overseen by a police officer with sufficient seniority, training and experience to handle the complexity of stalking cases and potential escalation of risk.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Given evidence from Centre for Women's Justice and Imkaan, as well as Killed Women and Southall Black Sisters' Invisible Women Campaign report, that Black, minoritised and migrant female victims of abuse are being failed by police due to intersectional discrimination and racial tropes,¹³¹ police forces must receive enhanced training on tackling racial stereotypes and discrimination, including in stalking cases.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Given the urgency of improving police response to stalking victims, all the super-complaint recommendations must be implemented without delay.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PERPETRATOR MANAGEMENT:

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Stalking perpetrators must be managed via a multi-agency approach as exemplified by MASIP which has been noted by the NPCC super-complaint progress report which states 'the MASIP model currently stands as the most robustly evaluated model available' in regard to a multi-agency approach to stalking'.¹³²

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Due to the serious risk posed by stalkers and a high rate of reoffending, all convicted stalkers must primarily be given custodial sentences to ensure that the risk from stalking, including online, is properly managed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH RESPONSE TO STALKING:

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The NHS Integrated Care Boards must commission independent specialist stalking training for healthcare practitioners to identify and respond to victims of stalking.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The NHS Integrated Care Boards must commission locally embedded Independent Stalking Advocates (ISAs) in health settings who can work with and take referrals from healthcare professionals.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

The public and private health sector must consult with specialists to develop national guidance for healthcare professionals to identify and respond to patients who are victims of stalking.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

The government must include stalking within the 'Steps to Safety' element of the VAWG Strategy, being rolled out by the Department for Health and Social

Care from April 2026, in addition to the domestic abuse and sexual violence referral service across Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).

GAPS IN DATA COLLECTION: RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE POLICE DATA:

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Given the importance of accurate police data for researching and preventing the escalation of stalking to homicide, as well as the urgent need to improve the police response to stalking, police forces must receive enhanced training to accurately identify and record stalking.¹³³

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Police must improve the recording of ethnicity in all stalking cases (both within and outside the domestic abuse context), and HMICFRS must inspect the recording of ethnicity across police forces.¹³⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE DHR/DARDR DATA:

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Given concerns that DARDR chairs may lack adequate knowledge of stalking to identify stalking behaviours and draw out learning, the forthcoming updated statutory guidance on DARDRs must ensure training on stalking is mandatory for all DARDR chairs.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Given the need for specialised knowledge of stalking on DARDR panels, the forthcoming updated statutory guidance on DARDRs must mandate the involvement of stalking experts/specialist sector when conducting a DARDR on a case where stalking was present.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

Given the importance of robust national learning from DARDRs, we support the DAC call for 'Funding for the continued piloting and national roll-out of the Domestic Abuse- Related Deaths Accountability and Oversight Mechanism to develop an evidence-based strategic response to DHRs'.¹³⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE DATA DISAGGREGATION:

RECOMMENDATION 16:

Given the need to better understand the risks of stalking escalation by victim-perpetrator relationship, the DHR/DARDR reporting form for Home Office data collection must capture detailed, clear and consistent data on these relationships, including whether intimate partner homicides were current or ex-intimate.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

Given the need for a more robust evidence base on the links between stalking and homicide in the ex-intimate partner context, we encourage researchers investigating the links between stalking and homicide in the domestic abuse context to clearly disaggregate between stalking in the current intimate partner context and stalking in the ex-intimate partner context.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

Given evidence that BMM women may be further let down by police due to racial discrimination, it is vital that data on the prevalence of stalking in the antecedent histories of homicides and victim suicides be disaggregated by gender and ethnicity to ensure intersectional learning on victim experiences, risk markers, and police response.¹³⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE DATA ON NON-DOMESTIC STALKING AND HOMICIDE/VICTIM SUICIDE

RECOMMENDATION 19:

Given that DARDRs only capture learning from domestic abuse homicides/victim suicides, the government must establish a stalking related death review process to capture crucial learning from stalking related homicides/victim suicides outside of the domestic abuse context. Within this there must be a structure for identifying risk markers for stalking and guidance/principles for the fatality review.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

Given the potential importance of coroner's reports in preventing future stalking-related homicides/victim suicides, all coroners must receive mandatory training on stalking.

RECOMMENDATION 21:

Given the urgent need for national data collection on stalking as a risk factor for all homicides, including those perpetrated outside the domestic abuse context, the government (Home Office) must consider the possibility of including stalking within the Homicide Index as published by the ONS.

RECOMMENDATION 22:

Given the importance of strengthening the evidence base on stalking and homicide, the government must fund research into the links between stalking and homicide outside of the domestic context.

RECOMMENDATION TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES:

RECOMMENDATION 23:

Given the importance of embedding the voices of victims, families and stalking advocates in the evidence base, the government must fund research into lived experiences of (attempted) stalking-related homicides and victim suicides. This research must include stalking-related homicides within and outside of the domestic abuse context, and take an intersectional perspective to ensure that diverse voices are heard.



6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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