***Breaking the silence; Protect yourself from Stalking or Harassment***



***What is Stalking or Harassment?***

 ***Stalking or harassment are two criminal offences in England and Wales. Harassment***

***involves unwanted, repeated behaviour that causes you alarm, stress or fear of***

***violence. Stalking is more serious and involves stalking plus repeated behaviour that***

***causes you a fear of violence or serious harm or distress. These behaviours can***

***take many forms and the examples below cover either harassment or stalking.***

- **Repeated contact**; Phone calls, texts, emails, or social media messages.

- **Following or monitoring**: Being followed, watched, or tracked (e.g., through GPS or spyware).

- **Unwanted visits**: Turning up at your home, workplace, or places you frequent.

- **Online harassment**: Posting about you online, sharing privileged information, or creating fake profiles.

- **Threats or intimidation**: Direct or indirect threats to harm you, your family, or your property.

***Safety Plan***

Create a safety plan in case of an emergency. This could include having a safe place to go, keeping important documents and phone numbers handy, and informing your workplace or school.

***Practical steps to protect Yourself***

- **Keep a Record**: Document every incident, including dates, times, locations, and what happened. Save any evidence, such as messages, emails, photos, or voicemails.

- **Tell Someone**: Inform trusted friends, family members, or colleagues about the situation. They can provide support and act as witnesses if needed.

- **Secure Your Home:** Consider installing security cameras, changing locks, or using a personal alarm.

- **Online Safety**: Change passwords for your online accounts, enable two-factor authentication, and block the perpetrator on social media.

***Your Legal Rights***

***UK law provides strong protections against stalking and harassment. The key laws include:***

**1. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997:**

 **- This law makes it a criminal offence for someone to harass or stalk you.**

 **- The perpetrator can be prosecuted, and if found guilty, they could face up to 6 months in prison or a fine.**

 **- If the behaviour causes you serious distress or fear of violence, the penalties can be more severe, including up to 5 years in prison.**

 **2. The Stalking Protection Act 2019:**

 **- This law allows the police to act more quickly by asking the court to issue a Stalking Protection Order. (SPOs).**

 **- An SPO can restrict the perpetrator’s behaviour, such as banning them from contacting you or coming near your home or workplace.**

 **- Breaching an SPO is a criminal offence.**

 **3. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021:**

 **- This law recognises stalking by a former partner as a form of domestic abuse.**

 **- allowing you to act in the form of a community order or a restraining order – this will ensure the accused isn't permitted to go near address or specific location.**

***Legal remedies you can take If you are being stalked or harassed, there are several legal steps you can take to protect yourself:***

 1. Report to the Police

 - You can report stalking or harassment to the police by calling 101(non-emergency) or 999(emergency).

 - The police can issue a harassment warning or apply to the Magistrates court for a Stalking Protection Order (SPO).

 - If the case goes to court, the perpetrator could face fines, restraining orders, or imprisonment. These can be up to 6 months for harassment and 12 months for stalking with an unlimited fine leveed.

 2. Apply for a Restraining Order

 - A restraining order is a court order that prohibits the perpetrator from contacting or coming near you.

 - You can apply for a restraining order if the perpetrator has been charged with a crime related to stalking or harassment.

 - Breaching a restraining order is a criminal offence.

 3. Non-Molestation Order

 - If the perpetrator is a former partner or family member, you can apply for a Non-Molestation Order through the family court.

 - This order prevents the perpetrator from using or threatening violence, intimidating, or harassing you.

 - Breaching a Non-Molestation Order is a criminal offence.

 4. Civil Injunction

 - A civil injunction is a court order that can be used to stop the perpetrator from harassing you.

 - Breaching an injunction is a criminal offence.

***Alternative Forms of Resolution***

- Mediation: In some cases, mediation can help resolve disputes, but this is not recommended if you feel unsafe or threatened. Mediation is only appropriate if both parties are willing to participate voluntarily.

- Support Groups: Joining a support group can help you connect with others who have experienced similar situations. Organisations like Survivors of Stalking ([www.survivorsofstalking.org](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.survivorsofstalking.org)) offer support groups and resources.

***Costs and Financial Support***

- Legal Aid: You may be eligible to cover legal costs of a lawyer if you are on a low income or receiving benefits. Legal Aid can help with applications for restraining orders, Non-Molestation Orders, or injunctions.

- Court Fees: Applying for a court order may involve fees, but these can be reduced or waived depending on your financial situation. - Free Advice: Many charities and organisations offer free legal advice and support, such as Citizens Advice ([www.citizensadvice.org.uk](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.citizensadvice.org.uk)) or Rights of Women ([www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)).

**Where to Get Help**

- National Stalking Helpline: 0808 802 0300 ([www.suzylamplugh.org](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.suzylamplugh.org))

- Refuge0808 2000 247 ([www.refuge.org.uk](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.refuge.org.uk))

- Victim Support: 0808 1689 111 ([www.victimsupport.org.uk](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.victimsupport.org.uk))

- Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service: 020 3866 4107 ([www.paladinservice.co.uk](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.paladinservice.co.uk))

Women’s Aid: 0808 2000 247 ([www.womensaid.org.uk](https://word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/www.womensaid.org.uk))

