

Women's

SAID

North Ayrshire

# FOCUS ON STALKING AND HARRASSMENT



Stalking is often misunderstood. Stalking behaviours taken in isolation can appear innocuous but when taken together demonstrate a course of conduct intended to terrify and intimidate. Understanding stalking better is essential to challenging the stalker's behaviours and supporting victims.



[www.nawomensaid.com](http://www.nawomensaid.com)



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# STALKING IS A CRIME

Stalking is a serious criminal offence under Section 39 of the Criminal Justice and Licensing Act (Scotland) 2010. There is a wide range of behaviours that can be classed as stalking.

The legislation states that: "An offence occurs when a person engages in a course of conduct on at least two separate occasions, which causes another person to feel fear or alarm, where the accused person intended, or knew or ought to have known, that their conduct would cause fear and alarm."

This means that if someone targets another person in a way that is repeated and unwanted where the intention or outcome is to cause distress, then they could be guilty of stalking.

Individual incidents on their own may appear harmless. But police and courts will look at them together and may decide they form a 'course of conduct' that intended to cause, or resulted in, fear and alarm

# RECOGNISING **STALKING** BEHAVIOURS

Stalking behaviours can often be identified by certain characteristics. A key question to ask is, are the actions of the person:

**F**ixated  
**O**bsessive  
**U**nwanted  
**R**epeated?

Bombarding you with compliments.

Sending unwanted emails or text messages.

Delivering unwanted gifts to your workplace or home

Waiting outside your home or workplace

Following you.

Spying on you.

# COMMON STALKING BEHAVIOURS

Stalkers try to intimidate their target through one or more of these types of actions. However, stalking is highly individual and some actions may appear innocuous to others, but be significant to the stalker and the person they are targeting.

Contacting your employer.

Sending unwanted letters or cards.

Making threats.

Making public accusations

Posting information publicly about you.

Posting about you on social media sites.

Sharing intimate pictures of you without your consent, for example by text, on a website, or on a social media site.

Making unwanted phone calls.

Contacting you through social media and messaging apps.

Creating a website to attack you.

Hacking into your computer, including installing tracking apps or devices.

Taking control of your social media profiles.

# CYBER STALKING

Stalking can be offline, online or a mixture of both. Online stalking, also known as cyber-stalking (or technology-assisted stalking), can include some of these actions.

Care should always be taken in the digital world. Reduced inhibitions online have been linked to offending behaviour. People form relationships more quickly, causing them to disclose more information than they normally would, which can pose a risk if someone is being untruthful about themselves and their intentions.

Tracking your social media accounts.

Accessing your phone to view personal information.

Sharing or threatening to share photos, videos or personal information

Using your image online.

Attacking someone's relatives online.

Making unwanted calls, sending unwanted texts or messages.

Posting about you on social media sites.

Impersonating you or your online identity and attacking others.

TAKE stalking seriously and trust your instincts.

CALL 999 if you are in immediate danger.

TELL people you can trust – family, friends, work colleagues.

CHECK your privacy settings and change passwords regularly

# WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT STALKING?

If you feel like something is wrong or unsafe then it is time to take note. The sooner you report to the police, and the more support you can get, the better it will help you cope.

KEEP a diary of any incidents – date, time, what happened, when and where, any witnesses, and how it made you feel.

COLLECT as much evidence as you can, such as screenshots, photographs, voice messages, emails, gifts, and anything material left by your stalker.

SEEK professional advice and support – North Ayrshire Women's Aid can signpost you to other sources of support, too.

REPORT to the Police as soon as you can. Keep a record of who you speak to and any crime reference numbers.

DO NOT block your stalker on social media, mobile phone etc. If you block communication channels from the stalker you may lose valuable evidence and the stalker may escalate their behaviours in an attempt to reach you.

DO NOT interact with or respond to your stalker unless it is unavoidable.

# HELP FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING STALKING

There are lots of organizations to help women in Scotland who have experienced domestic abuse, including stalking.

**In an emergency, call 999.**

## **Refuge's Digital Break-Up Tool**

Refuge have a brilliant new Digital Break-up Tool that helps you secure commonly used apps on your phone, laptop, or tablet.

**[refugetechsafety.org/](https://refugetechsafety.org/)**

## **North Ayrshire Women's Aid**

A specialist local service that provides emotional and practical support to women affected by domestic abuse.

**01294 602 424**

**[nawomensaid.com](https://nawomensaid.com)**

## **Scottish Women's Rights Centre**

Free and confidential legal information affected by gender based violence such as domestic abuse.

**08088 010 789**

**[scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk](https://scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk)**

## **National Domestic Abuse Helpline**

Free 24-hour helpline for women who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, with all female advisors.

**0808 2000 247**

**[nationaldahelpline.org.uk](https://nationaldahelpline.org.uk)**

## **The Revenge Porn Helpline**

Supports all adult victims of intimate image abuse in the UK.

**0345 6000 459**

## **Victim Support Scotland**

Provides information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system.

**0800 160 1985**

**[victimsupport.scot](https://victimsupport.scot)**

# THE IMPACT OF STALKING

A recent Scottish Government survey\* asked people who had been stalked what impact it had on them:

- 94% said they made changes to their life or work patterns
- 53% said they changed or left jobs
- 39% said they moved home
- 83% reported increased anxiety
- 75% felt powerless
- 74% had experienced disrupted sleep
- 55% said they suffered fatigue
- 55% had flashbacks and intrusive thoughts
- 24% had suicidal thoughts.

\*Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2018