The Police Response to the Stalking Super-Complaint Recommendation 29

Report on the progress made by Police Forces

Background and Statement of Purpose

In November 2022, a super-complaint was submitted by Suzy Lamplugh Trust, on behalf of the National Stalking Consortium. The substance of this super-complaint was that public bodies across England and Wales are failing in their duties to protect victims of stalking and, following an investigation by HMICFRS, College of Policing and the IOPC, 29 recommendations were made in the Police Response to Stalking report.

Of the 29 recommendations, 15 were specifically made for consideration of Chief Constables of respective forces in England and Wales. The purpose of these recommendations is to identify ways in which police forces can improve their response to stalking, and to ensure a more co-ordinated and consistent approach to stalking investigations across all police forces in England and Wales.

In November 2024, each police force published a bespoke action plan in response to the super-complaint, detailing their current practice and future plans to meet the recommendations. In March 2025, each force provided a 6-month update to their action plans to demonstrate the progress they have made. These updates were supplied to the NPCC and form the basis of this report.

The purpose of this report is to collate and disseminate an executive summary of the response to the 15 recommendations within force action plans, covering common themes, best practice, and areas for further improvement. As an executive summary, this report will not provide extensive detail of every individual force action plan; for this, please refer to the relevant police force action plans which should be available via their website.

It should also be noted that not all forces responded to every element of each recommendation and therefore approximate or generic language will be used i.e.: "almost all forces…", "most forces…", "some forces…". Please be aware that this does not mean that certain forces have not complied with the recommendation, but rather that this cannot be commented on from the content of their updates.

Executive Summary of Responses by Recommendation

Recommendation 7
By 27 March 2025, where required, seek changes to their crime recording systems to enable staff and officers to document and search for crimes not recorded as the principal crime, as included classifications on crime records.

Processes should be put in place to make sure this system capability is effectively used by officers and staff.

While any necessary system changes are pending, chief constables should put alternative measures in place to make sure stalking and related offences are fully searchable. This could, for example, be the submission of intelligence reports.

Response Summary

The coordination of responses to recommendation 7 is being led by the NPCC lead for Crime Data Integrity (CDI), Deputy Chief Constable Chris Green.

Across England and Wales, police forces use Record Management Systems to assist in the collection, recording and processing of crime data. The most common systems used are Niche and Connect/Athena, with 4 forces using their own bespoke crime recording systems. Forces with Connect/Athena applications have been largely compliant with this recommendation owing to the already embedded facility to record "included classifications". There has been further work noted from Connect/Athena forces around the improvement of crime recording standards and emphasis on training to ensure that staff and officers are fully aware and equipped to record crimes in line with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR). Whilst Niche RMS does not hold this facility as standard, the Minerva Delivery Group is working to bring this facility forward following the work and guidance of DCC Green and CI Matt Caton. All forces who currently use Niche have committed to comply with this recommendation once the digital solution is embedded.

The remaining forces which have their own bespoke systems have also committed to embedding digital solutions to ensure that recommendation 7 can be adhered to. Some forces have already completed this process, whilst others remain in the development stages.

Many forces have started using, or are in the process of implementing, PowerBI and data dashboards to help with the identification and collection of stalking data. This demonstrates promising use of technology and data to inform policing.

Interim Solutions

Niche and non-Connect/Athena forces have been encouraged to embed interim solutions to allow principal and included crime classifications to be recorded until a more robust digital solution is rolled out. This has been taken up by most forces however it is noted that some are waiting on the long-term solutions.

Examples of interim solutions include recording of included classifications in the free text summaries of crimes, or within templates embedded in crime reports, to allow searching and collation of crime data. This is undoubtedly a clunky/inefficient method of recording crime, however it is noted that this is never intended to be a long-term solution. Other methods have included a temporary period of separate recording of conduct crimes to ensure they can be counted, or the using flags/markers/qualifiers within Niche to denote a stalking crime is included. It has been noted that the separate recording may have the impact of inflating crime figures and a return to effective "double counting".

Areas for Development:

This recommendation and the corresponding force updates highlight the need to review record management systems across England and Wales. There are clear challenges in the sharing of information between forces and

in the accurate recording of crime which has been subject to regular reviews and updates in recent years. The NPCC is aware there is ongoing work within the Home Office to address these issues and will continue to monitor progress in this area.

We would strongly encourage forces who need or have had to implement interim solutions to meet this recommendation to seek and embed longer term solutions as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 10

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

- Meets the learning outcomes on stalking within the public protection national policing curriculum.
- Makes appropriate use of the stalking or harassment e-learning product developed by the College of Policing.
- Uses the skills and knowledge of local victim advocates or others from outside policing with relevant expertise.
- Includes information on relevant local policies and practice where necessary.
- Is provided to the officers and staff who will most benefit from the learning.

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

Response Summary

Almost all forces have confirmed their training meets the outcomes of the national policing curriculum, and those that do not are committed to reaching this level through a credible plan. There has been an overall uptake in stalking training across most forces. Whilst the College of Policing e-learning packages on stalking have been in place for some time, there were limited completion rates when force action plans were originally published. The recent updates have demonstrated a renewed commitment to training and some forces have mandated the College e-learning packages within their operational ranks. Data gathered from the College of Policing confirms that, as of January 2025, the completion rate across all forces in England and Wales stands at 88,879. This is compared with 148,886 officers across England and Wales, not all of whom will require this training. Whilst this is a considerable improvement, marking an 800% increase since 2023, there remains more work to be done to ensure all frontline staff have completed these e-learning packages.

In addition to e-learning, some forces have sought to bring in training from external advocates such as Paladin and Suzy Lamplugh Trust. However, it has been noted that in certain areas, due to limited funding or availability, the use of external advocates, such as ISACs, to deliver or enhance training has not been possible, or has been limited.

Training rollouts have been both holistic and targeted in certain forces. It has been widely acknowledged that there is a need to upskill all frontline staff, including first responders, PCSOs and control room staff in recognising and responding to stalking, however, there has also been particular emphasis on directing training to more specialised areas, including Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Teams. Many forces include specific training on

stalking and course of conduct crimes within their PIP1 and PIP2 training and continuous professional development (CPD). Due to the large numbers of staff and officers in some forces, it has been noted across several updates that training rollouts are in progress but take several months to complete. The NPCC understands this is a practical consequence of ensuring effective training across a large number of personnel and welcomes continued efforts to meet this recommendation. Alongside general training on stalking, a large number of forces are currently rolling out training on Stalking Protections Orders, utilising expert inputs from legal services and advocacy groups.

High performing forces have built face to face training into their "business as usual" practice, including bespoke stalking training to all new recruits delivered by subject matter experts. There is some variation across forces in the delivery of training, ranging from e-learning packages to in-depth training facilitated by experts. Stalking remains a complex area of policing with many factors that require consideration by officers and staff. Given the widely acknowledged current levels of inexperience amongst frontline police officers across England and Wales, the use of external agencies and experts to assist in providing robust training is considered promising practice by the NPCC. Forces such as Gloucestershire have shown novel and innovative training practices such as immersive learning which will hopefully provide a deeper level of knowledge and understanding of stalking offences, particularly around the level of risk and the effects on victims.

Several forces have provided breakdowns of their training packages which highlight inputs on more nuanced areas of stalking, including the increased frequency of cyber-stalking and how this can be tackled.

It has been noted that some forces are using direct inputs from stalking victims to inform their training and continuous improvement. Victim inputs covering the experience of being stalked and the victim's journey through the criminal justice process have been recorded and are regularly used in ongoing training. In other forces, Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) have been used as a critical friend to shape and redesign training and policy.

Several forces have begun rolling out Stalking Champions across their teams and have been providing specialist training to the officers and staff fulfilling these roles.

Along with the training recommendations, forces have performed wide-reaching reviews of their internal policies, procedures and guidance around stalking to ensure that their training is not simply compliant with this, but that the policies themselves are setting the best standards. Forces which do not currently have a policy for stalking have committed to developing this in line with the recommendation. Certain forces have completed self-directed deep dives and reviews into their stalking investigations and practices and utilised the results of these to update and inform policy changes. It is also encouraging to see forces using the guidance from victims, experts, and external advocates to update their practices and policies. The NPCC is aware of ongoing improvements and updates being made to the College of Policing APP for Stalking and that this will further inform individual forces of best practice.

In several updates, it has been noted that stalking training has been incorporated within existing Domestic Abuse training and structures. Concerns have been expressed from the National Stalking Consortium regarding the lack

of provision for specifically non-DA stalking and forces are reminded to ensure that they have provisions in place to adequately support victims of non-DA stalking.

Areas for Development:

This recommendation highlights the importance of training officers and staff in the complexities of stalking. Whilst there has been much progress to date, there remains some gaps in the training provision in relation to the spread and quality of training. The College of Policing remains the primary source of training across forces in England and Wales and despite a considerable increase in the numbers who have completed the College of Policing training, forces need to continue to ensure that officers and staff in relevant roles complete this training. The NPCC will continue to work with the College of Policing to ensure this training is routinely updated and publicised to ensure increased completion rates.

The NPCC is also aware of certain forces utilising stalking SPOCs or SMEs who have not received any specialist or extra training. Whilst this demonstrates a step towards improving the response to stalking, it could end up being counterproductive as people in these roles will not be sufficiently equipped to assess or manage the risks involved. The NPCC has published a report in relation to Recommendation 21 which deals with this matter and recommends forces invest in training for their SPOCs/SMEs.

Recommendation 11

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

- Problem profiles using police data and intelligence and other sources of information to ensure that the full extent of stalking is well understood. This could include information sharing with local victims' services and other public services, and national and local statistics.
- Regular assurance work such as audits to better understand the force response and make improvements where appropriate, including monitoring the use of SPOs, investigation outcomes and the quality of investigations.
- Ways to regularly receive feedback from victims, such as victim surveys.
- Force management statements which reflect current and future demand from stalking.

Response Summary

Many forces now have a stalking problem profile in place which is under regular review, whilst other forces have reported work being commissioned to ensure this is completed. As part of these profiles, select forces are breaking down their victim and offender profiles according to age, gender, sexuality, as well as ethnicity to fully understand their particular risk areas. In some forces, stalking features on other problem profiles, such as VAWG or DA and so has not been commissioned for a dedicated problem profile. Generally, forces understand the need to have bespoke problem profiles specifically around stalking to better understand risk and any specific demographic and geographic challenges.

However, some forces have expressed concerns that problem profiles may have limited utility in that they take a considerable amount of time to complete and are therefore out of date at the time of completion. With this in mind, some forces are utilising data dashboards and PowerBI to understand their stalking demand in a different way. Some forces have employed a dedicated VAWG analyst to review and analyse predatory behaviours to inform thematic areas. The NPCC is aware of concerns that stalking could be lost amongst the wider VAWG picture, and that forces should not lose sight of stalking amongst competing demands. Some areas which have a completed profile have shared this directly with advocacy services to assist in risk management and promote transparency. The format of problem profiles varies across forces; certain areas have built an intelligence/data led profile to describe and raise awareness of the current problem, whilst other areas have developed this further to lay out how the force intends to address the current problem. In the latter cases, forces have used the 4P model (Pursue, Prepare, Prevent and Protect) or the Op Soteria model to set out their intended actions.

The majority of forces report having an embedded auditing or dip sampling function where stalking cases are assessed against expected standards. This often involves reviewing investigations and case files, but also can include review of Body Worn Video. The most common form of audit appears to be the Quality Assurance Thematic Testing (QATT) process in which investigations are routinely assessed on a qualitative basis to ensure high standard of investigation and robust offender/risk management. Some forces are targeting stalking cases closed under outcome codes 15 and 16 (cases where a named suspect is identified, but either there are evidential difficulties or the victim does not support prosecution,) to ensure these are correctly applied, and opportunities for improvement are identified and implemented. Other forces have trained PIP2 investigators or supervisors who regularly review high risk cases of stalking. Stalking scrutiny panels have been implemented in certain forces to bring in other parties such as CPS and IAGs.

Stalking Protections Orders are now routinely monitored and audited centrally by forces to ensure that they are being correctly enforced and that applications not delayed. Some areas report having a dedicated SPOC for SPOs who collates and monitors data on their application and conversion rates. The majority of forces still report challenges around the SPOs, particularly in relation to securing SPOs when bail conditions are in place and the imposition of positive requirement conditions. Regular audits and reviews of SPOs, and respective conditions, is proving useful in demonstrating their efficacy and supporting future applications with certain conditions

Forces are regularly engaging with victims of crime in a more general sense to understand their journey through the criminal justice system, and their experience with police. Modern methods have been developed such as engagement via WhatsApp and video calls to ensure ease of access and to prevent barriers to obtaining feedback. On top of this, many forces a now using new technology such as Power BI to assist in analysing victim satisfaction data as well as occurrence rates and outcomes. This enables large amounts of data to be presented in a manner that ensures ease of understanding. Forces continue to work with external advocacy groups to understand the wider picture around stalking and victim satisfaction/concerns. Some of this work is commissioned through respective mayoral or PCC offices. Many forces are reporting high levels of satisfaction from stalking victims which is encouraging and shows improvements have been made since the super-complaint.

Forces have either published or are in the process of reviewing their Force Management Statements in readiness for publication. Most forces already include stalking in their Force Management Statements or have committed

to do this in future publications. There is a widespread understanding that the increase in training and action around stalking may lead to a temporary demand increase in stalking crimes, due to increased reporting and increased identification by front line officers. Forces have acknowledged the need to anticipate this extra demand and are building this into their Force Management Statements.

Areas for Development:

Understanding the risk and prevalence of stalking in a force area is key to public safety and early interventions. Several forces have acknowledged a lack of bespoke or specific problem profiles for stalking and this ultimately means that their understanding around stalking in their force area could be limited. This can present an issue where there are certain demographic or cultural factors at play in an area which provide an increased risk of stalking behaviours; failure to recognise this could lead to missed opportunities for prevention. The NPCC would encourage forces to gain a better understanding of their own risk areas for stalking and reach out to academic institutions in their areas to assist with this where funding allows.

Recommendation 12

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

- Considering implementing the stalking screening tool to support the identification of stalking and the risks associated with stalking.
- Having clear policies and procedures in place for assessing and managing risk in all cases. And where appropriate, embedding recognised risk assessment tools in force systems so that it is easy for officers to access, use and document their consideration of risk and safeguarding.
- Recognising (in policies, guidance and training) the heightened risk associated with breaches of protective orders and measures.
- Implementing screening and checking processes to support the early identification, assessment and management of high-risk cases. This may require stalking and breach of order cases to be considered at daily management meetings.

Response Summary

Several forces have raised concerns over the lack of national guidance in relation to this recommendation and that this is a delaying factor to implementing solutions. There is currently no single risk assessment which has been accredited and endorsed for use in the UK for all stalking types. The NPCC accepts that more work needs to be done in conjunction with the College of Policing to ensure that a thorough set of guidance is in place to help guide forces through this area. The College of Policing APP for Stalking is in the process of being updated and the NPCC will continue to support this. In conjunction with this, the NPCC is working with our network of academics and practitioners to identify and disseminate the latest research on stalking risk assessments going forward.

Certain forces have adopted the Stalking Screening Tool (SST) in either a digitalised form or as a paper document for front line officers. There remains ongoing discussions around the SST and whether it is appropriately designed to use as a stalking identification tool, or for risk mitigation. With this in mind, some forces have

delayed their adoption of the SST pending further guidance from the NPCC. Furthermore, the SST needs to be digitalised and embedded within force Record Management Systems in order to be effective and easily used. Work has been started by the Minerva Group along with the NPCC to establish a digital solution however this remains ongoing, and the SST is yet to be adopted into Niche in a fully digitalised format. Certain Connect forces have a digitalised SST in place in the form of a question set.

The assessment and management of risk in stalking cases remains an area of concern across policing. The NPCC understands that fully assessing the risk in stalking cases is highly complex and potentially contentious, especially considering the capacity for risk to change rapidly. Forces are reviewing their current risk assessment procedures across the different arenas of policing. Some forces are seeking to improve their overall risk management and including stalking within this, whereas others are taking a more direct approach and seeking to improve their understanding of stalking risk specifically. Many forces are using S-DASH to identify and assess risk, albeit it has been acknowledged that this wasn't designed for non-DA stalking. Other forces have sought to improve their risk assessments for stalking by obtaining funding and training staff in the Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment (SASH) or Stalking Risk Profile (SRP). Both of these tools hold some level of academic or practical evaluation however the NPCC acknowledges that further accreditation may be required in order to be endorsed across all forms of stalking. It is also acknowledged that these tools carry a financial cost which may present a challenge to many forces. Other risk assessment models include the DA/Stalking Homicide Timeline risk tool as well as the THRIVE+ model which was previously rolled out by the College of Policing as a generic, non-stalking specific risk assessment. Several forces noted that they have adapted their digital platforms to make risk assessments a mandatory part of recording stalking offences. There are also several examples of forces working directly with local universities and partner agencies to develop stalking risk assessment and decision-making tools.

Certain forces have created dedicated stalking roles or teams that screen crimes on a daily basis and use external partners to assist in assessing risk. These models incorporate multi-agency working as part of their day-to-day practice and this appears to have a positive impact on the force's ability to assess and respond to risk. Most forces report making use of regular multi-agency meetings such as MARAC and MAPPA in their risk assessment processes.

Promising practice has been noted in forces where custody suites are reviewed daily to identify detainees exhibiting stalking or behaviours which are early indicators of stalking risks. This then triggers a thorough risk mitigation strategy discussion amongst in-force stalking experts and investigating officers to ensure a thorough investigation and where appropriate a safe release from custody.

Breaches of SPOs and protective orders remains a development area however it is noted that forces are taking more notice of the risks posed in this area. Almost all forces have expressly accepted the increase in risk presented by breaches of orders and embedded this in their standard operating procedures, policies and ongoing stalking training. Many forces are using their Integrated Offender Management teams to monitor and enforce protective orders, including the use of compliance visits to avoid reliance on victim or witness reporting. Forces are also reviewing their allocation policies around breaches of orders to ensure that they are acted upon quickly rather than waiting on the investigating officer's return to duty.

Most forces are actively screening their cases for risk and much of this is being conducted during daily management meetings (DMM) in which there is representation from senior ranks. In some cases, there are now specific Stalking and Harassment sections built into the DMM to ensure that this is not missed. Importantly, almost all forces have policies in place to deal with high-risk cases in a more robust manner, either by allocating to PIP2 accredited units, or by ensuring they are reviewed by specialist staff, often a PIP2 supervisor. Those forces that are yet to embed a regular screening process have committed to doing so in the near future.

Areas for Development:

Forces should ensure, pending further guidance and/or endorsements, that they have a robust and consistent approach to assessing stalking risks. The NPCC understands that adopting certain risk assessment tools carry a considerable financial cost and that this may be a barrier to implementation. To assist with this, the NPCC will be working with a network of academics to review risk assessments for stalking with the intention of being able to provide forces with some level of validation, and therefore confidence in what investments to make. We will also be working with the College of Policing and the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection to ensure that clear guidance is provided to forces on how best to assess and mitigate risk in across all public protection matters. Ultimately, the most important factor for forces to consider is what actions are taken to mitigate the risk. The NPCC would encourage forces to review their management of breaches of protective orders to ensure these take account of the risks inherent in breaches and seek to take positive action in a timely manner.

Recommendation 13

By 27 March 2025, take steps to make sure that force strategies, structures and processes are in place so that police consider an SPO in every stalking case, and apply for an SPO where relevant and appropriate to prevent harm and further offending. To achieve this, chief constables should review, and revise where necessary:

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

Response Summary

Most forces are now delivering training specifically on Stalking Protection Orders to all staff, including supervisors and operational staff, particularly those in PIP2 and safeguarding roles. In some cases, this is delivered by key partners and subject matters from advocacy groups, CPS and legal services. Forces have also conducted knowledge gap surveys to identify where knowledge is lacking with regards to SPOs. This then informs their training delivery and highlights aspects of SPOs which need covering. An example of this is where opportunities for early applications for SPOs were being missed in some forces; this is now being addressed and included in training packages in certain forces.

Forces are also ensuring that training is delivered to Superintendents who are reviewing applications so that they are aware of the importance and standards required. Whilst some forces are using face to face training which can

be resource and time intensive, other forces have taken to delivering training over MS Team and recorded e-learning to reach a wider audience including those in high demand areas which struggle to commit time to training. Almost all forces have updated their intranet and online materials in relation to SPOs so that this can be accessed and reviewed ad hoc by officers and staff, including out of hours. Forces are now more widely considering and testing applications with positive requirement conditions based on knowledge sharing and good practice from other force areas. A particularly noteworthy example comes from Sussex Police who have pioneered the use of "Buddi Tags" in SPO conditions which has yielded largely positive results.

Many forces now have dedicated teams or officers who are tasked with progression of SPOs, either from writing the application through to the hearing, or by picking up applications that have been authorised by a Superintendent and progressing the hearing process. Forces that use this model have reported a decrease in SPO rejections and an increase in overall SPO numbers. Some forces that do not have these roles are in the process of setting out a business case to implement them in future. Alternatively, other forces such as West Midlands Police have reported establishing "Stalking Clinics" where officers and staff can seek advice and guidance on all aspects of stalking investigations, including SPOs. In addition to this, forces have also started reviewing their capacity in legal services, with some forces increasing their staffing in legal services to be able to process the higher rates of SPO applications. In some cases, aide memoires and proformas have been devised to assist officers in completing applications to avoid rejections or needing to make amendments later.

There is widely reported dip sampling of stalking cases to ensure SPOs have been considered and forces are now requiring a recorded rationale as to why an SPO has not been applied for. This is further augmented in certain forces by the use of Stalking Champions in each district who can assist with disseminating new training and maintaining investigative standards. Certain forces have now written it into policy that an SPO needs to be considered in every stalking case, and this is being monitored at daily management meetings where stalking cases have an allocated space. Some forces have shown innovative use of technology to ensure that cases where stalking is recorded automatically prompt the officer in the case to record their rationale around an SPO. On top of this, certain forces have adapted their command-and-control systems to ensure early identification of stalking and generate an early prompt for SPOs to be considered and discussed with victims by first responders.

Throughout the updates and communications with forces, the NPCC is aware that there are ongoing barriers with the application for SPOs, particularly with reticence from the judiciary. There have been examples when police bail has been used as a reason to refuse applications for SPOs. The NPCC continues to work with the CPS, MOJ and Home Office regarding these issues and encourages individual forces to discuss these challenges with their own legal services and judiciaries.

Areas for Development:
On the whole, forces have greatly improved their appreciation of the importance of stalking protection orders, however the process, application and enforcement of the orders requires review. It has been widely recognised that the legislative framework in which the SPOs sit is cumbersome and bureaucratic, to the point of being a bottleneck to victim safety. The NPCC is working with the Home Office to seek amendments to the SPO legislation to allow for SPOs to be applied for more quickly and to identify opportunities for immediate, temporary protections, similar to a DVPN. Whilst this work is ongoing, there remains a duty for forces to review

their own practices and processes to ensure these are fit for purpose. Of note, forces should continue to work with their legal services to remove or address any barriers to the application of SPOs.. The intended position is that SPOs are to be considered in every case of stalking. In some forces this is already the case, however the NPCC would encourage any forces where this is not mandated to consider updating their policies to be compliant with this.

Recommendation 14

By 27 March 2025, take steps to make sure stalking victims receive the rights they are entitled to under the victim's code and have access to support services. Chief constables should make sure:

- Victim needs assessments are always completed
- Their force has appropriate processes to make sure all stalking victims are told about their rights and under the victims' code.
- Information about the national and specialist stalking support services available in their force area is easily available to police officers and staff, victims and the general public.
- Victims who would like to receive support are referred to an appropriate service in a timely manner.
- They monitor the number of stalking victims who are referred to specialist support services and take action when referral numbers are low.

Response Summary

Police forces have acknowledged that there are improvements to be made in completing victim needs assessments (VNA) at the point of reporting. Some forces have committed to ensuring these are completed for all victims with "enhanced needs" and have specific units set up to facilitate this process. Other forces have made victim needs assessments mandatory for all victim-based crimes and have a dip sampling process in place where cases are reviewed monthly to ensure compliance. Other quality assurance measures reported include having a VNA automatically generated at the point of crime creation, or preventing crimes from being closed until a VNA is completed. Forces often do not have the ability to fully assess the data on the completion rates of victim needs assessments as the data cannot be broken down by offence type and therefore, they can only provide data on overall completion rates. Nevertheless, forces are regularly discussing the completion of victim needs assessments on a wider scale and acknowledge the improvements that need to be made. There are some higher performing forces who have reported an ability to monitor completion of victim needs assessments in real time, and view this via an integrated PowerBI dashboard. Some areas have also been able to disaggregate data to demonstrate that stalking victims are not being missed. These forces report a high level of compliance in completing victim needs assessments and are working to ensure this is maintained. Certain forces did not reference completing a "Victim Needs Assessment" specifically in their action plans; these forces have been asked to update their action plans accordingly, and to ensure that this is covered in any future updates or publications.

All forces have "Victim Information Booklets" available which they are ensuring are provided to all victims at the point of reporting. Likewise, most forces now have a digitalised version of this available on their website which is available for victims. Certain forces have a digitalised version of the victim information booklet which can be sent via email or digital messaging apps to victims when reporting remotely. This provides the reader with all available

information regarding the victim's code and their rights throughout the investigative process. Almost all forces have stated that all officers are trained in the victim's code and providing victim information booklets to victims at the time of reporting a crime or otherwise when needed. Most forces have a dip sampling process to review investigations pre and post charge to ensure that victim contact rights are adhered to. Many forces have reported having a specific unit set up to address vulnerability and safeguarding of victims. These units ensure that victims are engaged with, and appropriate referrals are made in a timely fashion. Certain forces have reported having a specific victim information booklet for victims of stalking which is provided in addition to the standard booklet. Further to this, some forces have noted making improvements to their resources to ensure they are accessible to all service users, regardless of disability or language barriers.

Most forces are ensuring that specialist stalking services are publicised in their area and information about these services are communicated to victims, however it is acknowledged that some services are not available in every area. Where services are available, some forces have adapted the Stalking Screening Tool to include an appendix containing all local support services and contacts to ensure that this information is provided when needed. Similarly, forces report including details of support services and referral processes within their training packages for front line staff.

Most forces are driving improvements in their referral rates and turnaround times to prevent delays in receiving support. Some forces have updated their local policies to ensure that referrals to advocacy services for high-risk cases is mandatory. Many forces have Service Level Agreements in place with support services and are using this as a tool to ensure quality victim support. In some cases, commitments have been missed but this is readily acknowledged by forces and appears to be feeding into future improvement plans. Some forces raised that processes were previously not in place for monitoring the number of stalking referrals made, however they have now set up national referral mechanisms with advocacy services to allow this to be done. In some areas, this information is shared and scrutinised in monthly or quarterly meetings with PCCs. Other forces have a Stalking Coordinator or Victim Care Unit, through whom all stalking referrals are made and who can keep a record of all such referrals. This is enhanced by PowerBI and data dashboards to easily review data on referral rates and identify any changes in rates. It has been noted in certain updates that advocacy services have requested reduced referrals due to limited capacity – this demonstrates some of the challenges faced by both policing and third sector partners.

Areas for Development:

All forces need to ensure they have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the victim's code, and the victim needs assessment. In certain updates, there has been an absence of direct mention of these areas and this is a cause for concern. Furthermore, this understanding needs to be embedded within the frontline staff of each force to ensure that victims are getting their needs met.

There remains a challenge in ensuring consistent support for victims of stalking, particularly due to variation in service provision across regions and force areas. We recognise the important work already being done by PCCs and their partners to meet local needs, often while navigating significant financial pressures.

To build on this, we encourage forces to work closely with their PCCs to share insights, highlight best practice, and help identify the most effective services for victims. These collaborative efforts can support PCCs in the commissioning and ongoing development of stalking support services that are responsive to local needs.

Recommendation 16

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

Response Summary

Some forces are now engaging with partner agencies on a wider scale in relation to stalking. There is a range of different models and processes in place, largely dependent on resourcing, funding and demand. Certain forces, including the Metropolitan Police and Cheshire, operate a MASIP-style model where partnership working is continuous, and information is free-flowing. This contrasts with other models which rely on structured multi-agency meetings which can restrict information flow and availability. More forces are moving to this model or striving to emulate a compatible version of it, with reported business cases under review and new units being set up in the future. West Midlands Police and PCCs have pioneered an Early Awareness Stalking Intervention (EASI) model which brings together a number of partners from across the public and third sector and is showing promising results. Further details of the EASI model can be located online in the College of Policing Practice Bank A large component of these multi-agency collaborations comes from health and probation services who are providing invaluable expertise on perpetrator psychology which in turn informs risk levels to justify police action. Alternative models exist with forces using existing arrangements under MARAC and MAPPA to assess risk and deploy a multi-agency response. In some areas, it has been acknowledged that a dedicated meeting for non-DA stalking cases needed to be set up and this is either already embedded or being set up. Some forces have reached out to partner agencies such as Suzy Lamplugh Trust and Paladin to critically review their current operating models and provide constructive feedback on how they can improve.

Many forces now have Information Sharing Agreements in place with local services and partners to ensure a free exchange of relevant information, however there are still reported challenges in some areas. It is clear that forces are working with their PCCs and Mayors to influence the commissioning of services and, where needed, support services are being extended into the future, or amalgamated to ensure services can continue in light of funding changes.

It has been noted in several updates that there remains a disparity between services available to domestic abuse victims of stalking and non-domestic abuse victims of stalking. Many forces report having a much higher incidence of domestic stalking to non-domestic, and this may explain why provisions are given such weighting. Currently, there is no national disaggregated data on Stalking which can demonstrate the comparative levels of DA and Non-DA stalking. As such, the NPCC recommends that investment is made in both or omnicompetent services. There are undoubtedly challenges in certain force areas where funding is not available for advocacy services or there are unique barriers to partnership working. British Transport Police have noted that they do not have a PCC or equivalent and therefore do not receive any funding for joint services. Despite this, they have

engaged with Paladin to maintain some form of provision for victims and are working with local areas to ensure services are provided where needed.

Areas for Development:

This recommendation highlights the need for police forces to adopt a multi-agency approach to stalking and the MASIP model currently stands as the most robustly evaluated model available. Results from forces that have adopted this model, or similar models such as EASI, are positive, particularly in cases where risk is high, and intervention is key. The NPCC would encourage forces to review their capacity for multi-agency working in this space, and consider practice sharing with forces such as Cheshire or West Mids.

The NPCC is aware that these models require considerable staffing and financial overlays and therefore may not be implementable in certain forces. In such cases, we would encourage forces to adopt what measures are feasible to improve multi-agency working and embed best practice.

<u>Recommendation 17</u>

By 27 March 2025, CCs to make sure the new College of Policing investigations APP content on case allocation is reflected in the relevant policies relating to the allocation of stalking and breach of order cases for investigation.

Force policies should support the allocation of stalking cases to officers with the right skills and experience, taking into account the potential risk and complexity involved in stalking and breach of order cases.

Response Summary

Forces have largely employed the College of Policing policy of crime allocation in relation to stalking offences or are in the process of reviewing their current allocation policy in order to meet this recommendation. In most cases, stalking crimes are allocated on the basis of risk, with the higher risk cases being allocated to a unit with PIP2 capacity, whether that is a CID or Public Protection unit. A select few forces have set out a policy where all stalking investigations are allocated to a PIP2 unit as standard. Some forces have acknowledged that there are inconsistencies in the actual allocation of crimes as risk is being assessed subjectively and there are instances where the risk is misunderstood or can be downplayed. These forces are exploring opportunities to standardise practices to reduce the likelihood of this happening., Furthermore, the use of Daily Management Meetings to review and allocate crimes more objectively is proving beneficial. Many forces are now using the Stalking Screening Tool as a mechanism for categorisation of stalking offences, which in turn assists with allocation. Other forces who have invested in accredited risk assessments such as SRP or SASH are using the risk gradings from these tools to assist in allocations. Some forces are ensuring that all stalking cases that involve violence or threats of violence are reviewed by a PIP2 supervisor and allocated to a PIP2 unit. Cases assessed as being lower risk are commonly held by response officers or PIP1 unit equivalents.

All forces report having a written policy or SOP in relation to crime allocation, and these are regularly reviewed. Within most crime allocation policies is a stipulation that escalation in risk should lead to a review of allocation. In this way, matters that were initially low risk and allocated to a PIP1 officer should be reallocated to a more suitably trained officer if the risk escalates.

Forces have different mechanisms for investigating and enforcing breaches of protective orders. Many forces utilise their offender management units or ViSOR teams to deal with breaches of orders, whereas others allocate these breaches to the original OIC for continuity.

Forces are aware that the College of Policing is currently reviewing and updating their APP on Stalking and Harassment crimes and have made commitments that their policies and procedures with be reviewed in line with this updated guidance once published.

Areas for Development:

The NPCC is aware of ongoing challenges for forces in relation to both the number of staff and experience levels. It is clear that this presents challenges in relation to allocation of stalking investigations which can be complex and carry high levels of risk. The NPCC would encourage forces to regularly review their staffing levels, training provisions and allocation policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose, and do not expose victims of stalking to unnecessary risk.

Recommendation 18

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

- Their workforce has the capacity and capability to undertake effective stalking investigations and can apply new and innovative investigation techniques to pursue digital lines of enquiry.
- All reasonable lines of enquiry are pursued, supported by good supervision.
- Arrest and search powers are used to gather evidence from and about suspects.
- The impact on victims is evidenced in witness statements, so it can be used to inform charging decisions and improve the likelihood of successful investigation outcomes.

Response Summary

Forces are investing in their training and understanding of investigative practices surrounding stalking crimes. There has been particular emphasis on digital investigations including the use of best practice such as Operation Atlas, developed by the Metropolitan Police, to augment policing responses. Operation Atlas has been trialled by other forces outside of the Metropolitan Police and provides a rapid turnaround service for digital examinations for high-risk stalking cases. Further details of the Operation Atlas can be located online in the College of Policing Practice Bank. Across all of England and Wales, forces are struggling with backlogs in their digital investigation departments and this impacts on all investigations including stalking. Forces are reviewing their current processes to identify and alleviate bottlenecks and prioritise workloads to address high risk cases.

Stalking scenarios are being designed for immersive training in certain forces which should give officers and staff a better appreciation or risk, evidence, and victim experience. Some forces have drafted guidance on search strategies for suspected stalkers' premises including lists of evidentially valuable material which can often be missed. There has also been increased training on the correct seizure of digital assets to ensure they do not lose their evidential value. In some areas, there has been further investment in the training and availability of Digital Media Investigators who can greatly assist officers in securing digital evidence. There has been specific training

given to DMIs on stalking offences to ensure they are aware of the best sources of evidence and how to secure it. Forces have completed reviews of their investigation toolkits to ensure that their knowledge banks are up to date with current guidance.

Forces have acknowledged that improving investigative quality is a continual process which cannot be "completed"; they have therefore caveated their progress by committing to continuous improvements and process reviews to identify areas for development. Importantly, a number of forces have identified that investigative performance is tied to workforce capacity and levels of inexperience. Despite this, there has been some important and innovative practice noted in force action plans, including work on cyberstalking, identifying and tracing tracking devices, and detecting spyware on victim devices. Where necessary, forces are seeking advice and expertise from regional organised crime units and the National Crime Agency.

In order to maintain standards, most forces are regularly dip-sampling stalking cases and reviewing them to identify improvements, common themes and unaddressed risk. Forces are reviewing cases which are closed due to lack of victim support in order to understand the reasons behind victim attrition and seek to address this. Most forces use a PIP2 trained supervisor to review their stalking cases, even where the cases are not allocated to a PIP2 unit. It is common for a PIP2 supervisor or stalking SME to provide an investigative strategy for all stalking cases from the outset. Some forces have a dedicated stalking unit which allows for a more consistent and higher standard of investigation. Sussex is a key example where their Complex Domestic Abuse and Stalking Unit (CDASU) is dedicated to improving investigation standards and utilising Stalking Clinics to provide in-depth supervisory support for stalking cases. Other forces are exploring this option dependent on resources and demand.

Most forces now have procedures in place to raise awareness of, support and monitor Stalking Protection Order applications to ensure effective suspect management strategies. Many forces have recognised the learning from Op Soteria and how this can relate to stalking investigations, particularly around the suspect focussed approach. Forces have largely adopted a "positive action" model, similar to that used in Domestic Abuse cases, where officers are encouraged to take positive action to safeguard the victim - often an arrest when lawful. This is regularly monitored at daily management meetings where stalking cases now have a permanent position in most forces. Certain forces have acknowledged that they are not using arrest powers in stalking cases at a rate that is expected. This is demonstrated in their data reviews and they have made firm commitments to address this.

Certain forces have provided training to supervisors on the importance of detailing the impact on victims in statements. This has been emphasised as a crucial part of proving stalking offending and is heavily linked to obtaining the correct protective measures for the victim. In some areas, mnemonics have been devised to guide statement takers through the process of a victim personal statement, and to ensure that keys points to prove stalking are addressed. Other forces have brought in telephone and online statements as a way of gathering evidence with less impact on the victim or witness. his has been identified as an important way of maximising the chances of getting a victim personal statement, by reducing the logistical challenges for both victims and police officers associated with face-to-face appointments. It also minimises the risk of re-traumatisation by allowing victims to report in a setting outside the police environment and saves time for victims who might otherwise be unable to attend in person. Forces are also providing Trauma Informed training, making sure that

staff are aware of how trauma can impact victims and how this can manifest in the way they communicate. Forces have acknowledged that this has historically been a problem when investigating crimes such as stalking and are demonstrating a commitment towards victim-centred policing. Some forces have reported working in conjunction with CPS to identify investigative failings or common themes which prevent charges/convictions so that these can be remedied in future cases.

Forces are increasing awareness of res gestae evidence to support cases of stalking and manage the issues of victims not supporting for various reasons. In many cases, supervisors are now mandated to consider evidence-led prosecutions before finalising a case due to lack of victim support.

Areas for Development:

There have been some promising improvements in these areas across all forces, however there is still more that can be done to improve stalking investigations. The current resourcing demands and inexperience of staff makes this even more challenging and puts pressure on forces to ensure that staff dealing with stalking cases are adequately trained and supervised. The College of Policing is currently updating the APP for Stalking and this will be augmented by guidance coming from the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection. The NPCC will publicise any new guidance to forces and strongly encourages forces to review this and embed it as a priority.

Forces are also encouraged to work with their local CPS teams to identify and remedy issues in stalking cases which are proving barriers to conviction. A key example of this is around evidencing the intent of the perpetrator, particularly in the cases of intent to cause fear of violence. Where this learning is identified, it can then be fed back into the investigative process to ensure improvements to future investigation and a better service for victims.

Recommendation 20

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

- The scale and nature of online stalking behaviours informs their strategic understanding of, and the response to, stalking.
- Examples of online stalking are included in locally produced training and guidance material about stalking.
- Clear online safety advice is available to officers and staff, drawing on the College of Policing APP on stalking or harassment when it is developed.
- Appropriate tools, technologies and support services to digitally safeguard victims are procured and officers and staff use these resources when appropriate.

Response Summary

Forces are showing a greater appreciation of the online elements of stalking and how often these can play a part in offending. Cyber flags are now included in most force systems to allow for cases of cyber stalking to be analysed and give an accurate picture of the level of cyber stalking in each force area. Most forces that have

completed a Stalking Problem Profile have considered cyber stalking and built this into their approach. Certain forces have secured funding for the Stalking Cyber Helpline to assist victim with protection from cyber stalking and to raise awareness.

Cyber stalking now features on the initial training provided to recruits, as well as in the ongoing training for experienced officers and staff. Most forces have an understanding of new technologies being used by stalkers, including tracking devices, spyware and malware, and are developing guidance for investigators on how to evidence these tools. Guidance has also been provided to frontline officers to ensure they are correctly identifying cyber stalking at the scene and avoiding this being missed as single instance offences such as malicious communications. More forces are now including digitally informed conditions in applications for SPOs, with certain forces including positive requirements for stalkers to have safety software installed on their devices.

Forces are building their capabilities to tackle online stalking, including evidence gathering and digital downloads. Many forces have introduced or are exploring the Operation Atlas to improve their digital capacity for stalking cases. Most forces have some form of cybercrime unit who provide expertise to officers in investigating cyber stalking cases. Some forces have now deployed Digital Dogs that can assist in the search of suspect premises and locate concealed devices that may be of evidential value. Other forces now have dedicated VAWG Digital Media Investigators who can rapidly turnaround digital examinations for in-custody cases in order to secure charges and remand. Likewise, forces are exploring options to identify the least intrusive and time-consuming ways of extracting evidence from victim devices as this remains a barrier to victim support. Forces are currently waiting on the updated Stalking APP from the College of Policing which will provide further guidance on cyber elements of stalking. All forces have committed to being compliant with this guidance once it is published and can be reviewed.

Many forces now have publicly available guidance on online safety including how to prevent and report cyber stalking. These include advising victims and members of public on the use of anti-malware/spyware programmes as well as what action to take when experiencing online harassment. Certain forces, such as Sussex, have offered victim support clinics where they can have their phones "swept" using Guardian software for potential malicious applications or malware used by stalkers. Other forces are using Cyber Protect events and cyber roadshows to raise awareness of cyberstalking in the community. These have been targeted towards different demographic groups including student cohorts who may be at higher risk of cyber stalking. Forces have utilised information and guidance from partner agencies such as Suzy Lamplugh Trust and Paladin to assist in developing their digital strategies and provide the most accurate advice to victims. Similarly, some forces are using training and expertise from regional organised crime units and their specialised cybercrime teams to upskill their staff. Other areas are using their links with academic institutions to assist in developing new approaches to tackling cyber stalking. TecSafe software (previously TecSOS) is now more frequently used across forces as a method of improving victim safety and protections. This offers victims the ability to get help from emergency services quickly and discretely when feeling threatened.

It has been widely acknowledged that there are still considerable challenges in the digital arena for law enforcement, particularly around securing evidence from devices and obtaining evidence from social media companies. These challenges can delay and hamper prosecutions and so all forces are committed to improving

their capabilities in this area. Furthermore, there is a gap in the development and applications of technology between law enforcement and criminals; whilst the efforts and progress made to date are notable, law enforcement struggles to keep pace with new criminal applications of technology.

Areas for Development:

Cyberstalking is an increasingly prevalent aspect of many stalking investigations. Forces need to ensure that they are considering online elements of stalking in every case and that this is embedded within their training, and any investigative templates or aide memoires. The NPCC understands that challenges around capturing digital evidence and that backlogs in the digital arena may lead to prolonged investigations and extended risk. We encourage forces to consider best practice highlighted in this update, including the use of anti-malware software and Op Atlas, to expedite investigations where risk is high. We also recommend that forces use protective orders as a method of ensuring safety for victims, particularly when investigations are delayed by lengthy digital examinations.

The NPCC is continuing to work with academics across England and Wales to bring new technology and approaches to tackling cyberstalking, and these will be shared to all forces regularly. We encourage forces to use their links with local academic institutions to commission research and improve their approaches to digital investigations where necessary.

Recommendation 22

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

Response Summary

On the 27th of March 2025, the NPCC published their report in relation to Recommendation 21 which presented a summary of dedicated stalking coordinator roles which exist in police forces across England and Wales. This demonstrated a wide range of options available to forces to improve or augment their response to stalking and highlighted some areas for development where forces did not currently have these roles in place.

Most forces have acknowledged the publication of this report and have committed to considering the best practice highlighted. Numerous forces already have a robust and working coordinator model in place and so are likely to continue with this towards the September deadline for this recommendation. Other forces are exploring their resourcing and demand landscapes to identify their options for introducing coordinator roles in the future. In many cases, it appears that coordinator roles are held by officers and staff in addition to their day-to-day roles. Forces should be aware of the burden that this can place on staff and ensure that they have both adequate time and training to meet the demands of this role without needing to compromise on the quality of their work.

Areas for Development:

The NPCC encourages forces to consider the findings of the report and determine how these could assist in improving their current approaches to investigating and managing stalking. As the report has only recently been publish at the time of force updates, it would be unfair to suggest any further development areas at this time.

By 27 March 2025, implement a mechanism for early screening of crimes to improve the identification, recording and management of all stalking cases.

Forces should consider screening crimes similar to stalking or where stalking behaviours may be present as part of a course of conduct, like harassment, malicious communications and breaches of orders.

Response Summary

Most forces report having a screening process in place at call handling to allow for early identification of stalking and prevent misidentification as single events or lower-level offences such as harassment or public order. This includes building in a "stalking" or "course of conduct" classification into their command-and-control system which will then prompt further stalking relevant screening questions for the call handler. Historic crimes are routinely searched to ensure a course of conduct is identified early on. Certain forces have developed flowcharts and guidance on recording harassment and stalking offences to ensure consistency for all victims. Certain forces have openly acknowledged that this remains a challenge but are actively exploring solutions.

Investigators at all levels are receiving training on stalking and correctly identifying course of conduct crimes. Some forces have now implemented the Stalking Screening Tool to assist frontline officers in identifying stalking whereas other forces have a similar question set to be used in any course of conduct crime, or malicious communications offence. Areas that have invested in other risk assessment tools such as SASH are using this as an alternative method for screening cases. Most forces have a review process in place where a PIP2 supervisor will review all stalking cases following initial recording and provide an investigative strategy. Some force areas are exploring the opportunities presented by Artificial Intelligence in screening for stalking, however this remains some way off implementation.

Most forces have an auditing process in place which allows for incorrectly classified cases to be identified and reviewed. In many cases, this is carried out by a dedicated Crime Management Unit which is tasked with ensuring compliance with recording guidance. This ensures that issues in identifying stalking are picked up and corrected for the future. Likewise, certain forces have a "key word" function in their reporting systems which enables them to pick out cases which may have been missed or have since developed into stalking having been initially reported as a simple harassment or criminal damage. Forces are working closely with the National Crime Registrar to ensure that they are accurately recording stalking crimes in line with current guidance and Home Office Counting Rules.

Areas for Development:

The identification and screening of stalking has often been an area of difficulty for forces, largely due to the cross over in legislation between stalking and other offences such as harassment and malicious communications. The NPCC is aware of and involved in the ongoing discussions regarding current stalking legislation and how any changes may impact on how stalking is screened and identified in the future. We will ensure that any new proposals are shared with forces and changes to counting rules that impact stalking are also disseminated to allow for a consistent approach across forces.

The NPCC is currently working with forces to strengthen the process of identifying and screening cases of stalking. In conjunction with this, we are reviewing opportunities to ensure call handlers are equipped to identify stalking over single occurrence offence at the first available opportunity. We will share any future learning in these areas with forces and would encourage forces to consider how these could be implemented to improve their service.

Recommendation 25

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

- How the force works in partnership with healthcare, the CPS, probation services and other criminal justice partners to manage stalking perpetrators and address their behaviour.
- Whether and how they should collaborate with other forces to effectively and efficiently contribute to multi-agency partnerships on stalking.
- How multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are being used to effectively manage stalking offenders.

Response Summary

Most forces have now embedded multiagency meetings which include local authorities, CPS and victim advocates to provide a holistic approach to tackling stalking. Some areas are including representation from health services including Forensic Psychologists and clinicians. Much of this is contingent upon local and Home Office funding, however, and therefore is not available across all force areas. Cheshire Police currently have a robust model where partner agencies are co-located and actively share information on a daily basis, rather than being restricted to structured meetings. This model, based on the MASIP model set out by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, allows for a therapeutic approach to managing perpetrators by utilising the expertise of clinical staff accordingly. Further details of the Cheshire Harm Reduction Unit can be located online in the College of Policing [Practice Bank](#). Several forces now utilise a MASIP or MASIP-like model, and numerous others are currently exploring opportunities to embed this in their areas. In certain areas, the costs of embedding a MASIP approach have not been manageable and therefore they are exploring other arrangements which can replicate some elements of this approach.

Many forces are actively engaging with probation services to assist in managing perpetrator behaviour and risks. This includes sharing information on Stalking Protection Orders to assist with enforcement. Some areas have now set up Stalking Clinics which bring together multiple agencies to discuss live cases and help manage associated risks. Many areas have their own jointly commissioned stalking perpetrator intervention services where they seek to change offender behaviour and rehabilitate them. This includes Thames Valley Police and their PCC who have an agreement in place with Probation to roll out the Compulsive and Obsessive Behaviour Intervention (COBI) Programme. As previously suggested, these interventions are largely dependent on local and Home Office funding, and service availability, however, some promising provisions have been noted across force updates.

There continues to be a disparity between service provisions available to Domestic Abuse and Non-Domestic Abuse victims/perpetrators. Forces have widely acknowledged that the availability of services for non-DA stalking cases needs to be reviewed and increased, however it has been highlighted by some areas that their demand for such services comes primarily from DA cases. Forces continue to review their demands with their PCCs/Mayors to ensure they provide an effective service. In cases of DA stalking, the majority of forces capture these in MARAC/MATAC meetings where there is representation across partner agencies.

Forces are actively engaging in regional and national stalking working groups to share best practice and escalate barriers to improvement. There is also engagement in joint meetings and workshops aimed at improving and redesigning statutory guidance and protocols in conjunction with the CPS, College of Policing and other partners. Some areas are pooling resources such as victim support services and legal services with a view to providing more effective support, especially where financial constraints are present. Force representatives from across England and Wales have visited high performing areas such as Cheshire and the Metropolitan Police Stalking Threat Assessment Centre to observe best practice and consider how this can be implemented locally.

Some forces are referring all stalking cases to MAPPA as standard practice. Forces that have dedicated stalking teams or SPOCs are often ensuring a representative attends any MAPPA meetings where a stalking perpetrator is discussed. Other forces are reviewing their MAPPA arrangements and ensuring that stalking is included and openly discussed. This includes promoting referrals of stalking cases to MAPPA and training staff on risk levels so that cases are appropriately escalated. Some forces previously did not include stalking cases in their MAPPA meetings; however they have now made commitments for this to be changed. Where appropriate, forces are updating their internal policies around MAPPA referrals to reflect recent changes.

Forces are showing more awareness of perpetrator risk levels and how these feed into the MAPPA process. Factors such as SPOs being in place and offender psychology are now considered when making referrals to MAPPA for stalking offenders. This is important as it has been noted many offenders receive less than 12 months imprisonment and therefore fall out of Category 2 by default or are not convicted. To address this, they are designating individuals as Potentially Dangerous Persons (PDP) and managing them accordingly. Outside of MAPPA, forces such as Hampshire are adopting a MOSOVO-style approach to offender management where offenders subject to protective orders are assigned a dedicated offender manager who proactively ensures order conditions are enforced.

Recommendation 27 & Recommendation 28

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

By 22 November 2024 (56 days from publication), publish on their force website an action plan which explains what their force will do in response to each of the recommendations made to them and send the NPCC a link to where this action plan can be found.

By 27 March 2025 (six months from publication) provide an update to the NPCC describing the progress they have made against their action plans.

Response Summary

All forces across England and Wales have complied with this recommendation and action plans have been published on force websites. Updated action plans have been received by the NPCC from all forces detailing progress made against commitments detailed in their initial action plans.

<u>Closing Remarks:</u>

Throughout the updated action plans, the NPCC has noted a renewed commitment to improving the policing response to stalking offences. All forces have accepted the recommendations and tangible progress has been made against the majority of recommendations. There are certain areas where further progress needs to be made however the NPCC is cognisant of the fact that many of these areas are subject to challenges, including finances, lack of resources, need for improved digital capabilities, as well as competing threats and demands. The NPCC is reassured by the level of transparency and accountability displayed in the updates and thanks forces for openly acknowledging areas where they need to improve. We have been particularly assured by forces that have accepted scrutiny from third sector partners such as Suzy Lamplugh Trust who remain a critical friend for forces. The NPCC would like to remind forces that the finalisation of the Super-complaint does not mark an end to improving the police response to stalking and that forces should seek to embed continuous improvement as part of their daily business.

From the force updates, the NPCC has identified a number of areas where there remain considerable challenges for forces and will continue working with them to assist in addressing these:

Funding for Services – across all action plans, and from communications with representatives from the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, it has been noted that police forces and PCC/Mayors are dependent on local, Ministry of Justice and Home Office funding to provide services for victims of stalking and interventions for stalking perpetrators. In some areas such as Cheshire, Sussex and the Metropolitan Police Service, this works well and the level of funding providing is sufficient to provide a level of support across the board, albeit more can always be done. However, there are concerns that this level of funding or service provision is not uniform across England and Wales, and as a result, certain force areas are unable to signpost victims to local specialist support or divert perpetrators into intervention programmes to tackle further offending. Furthermore, the NPCC is aware of recent reductions to the funding received by PCCs and Mayors for the provision of services. This reduction, in the region of 4%, will present further challenges for PCCs and Mayors providing services and inevitably lead to the need to do more with less. Despite the evident challenges, the NPCC is impressed by some of the practice displayed in forces including areas that have joined up to provide a joint support service and optimise their financial position.

Digital Challenges – Across policing as a whole, there is an ever-increasing challenge of the use of technology to offend and the retrieval of digital evidence. This is clearly relevant to stalking cases with the level of cyberstalking becoming more prevalent across the UK and internationally. As the technological landscape continues to change

rapidly, this presents an increasing challenge for police forces to adapt their methods to ensure digital evidence can be secured with continuity and safeguards can be put in place to prevent offending. Not only is this process complex, it is also increasingly expensive. The NPCC acknowledges that this can result in cases being progressed slower than would be expected by victims and the public, and often results in key digital evidence being unretrievable due to high levels of encryption and device security. Nevertheless, the NPCC has noted some considerable improvements in the digital space, including the advent of Operation Atlas in the Metropolitan Police which has now been mirrored by other forces across the country. We have also noted the increase in numbers of Digital Media Investigators across forces and are reassured by the continued efforts to tackle this challenge. The NPCC, alongside the College of Policing, will continue to explore new opportunities in digital policing, and artificial intelligence, including working with academic institutions who are at the forefront of technology and forensic practices.

DA and Non-DA – Stalking is a complex offence which can affect a wide cohort of people. Whilst crime data has increased in detail and accuracy over recent years, there remains a degree of uncertainty of the precise prevalence of stalking offences across England and Wales. This is due to a number of factors including inconsistencies in recording and reporting. One major consequence of this issue is that there is a level of uncertainty over the prevalence of stalking offences across domestic abuse and non-domestic abuse settings. Historically, it has been assumed that the vast majority of stalking offences are committed by ex-partners or others within a domestic setting. This has led to a lack of bespoke provisions being made available for specifically non-domestic related stalking victims in some areas. Some forces have addressed this in their updates where current data presents the DA component of stalking at upwards of 85% of all stalking cases. With this in mind, it is understandable why some service provisions are weighted towards DA victims but forces and PCCs should not lose sight of non-DA victims of stalking and ensure they do not receive a lesser service.

From the recent force updates, the NPCC is reassured that the vast majority of forces acknowledge the issues around non-DA stalking and are working to embed processes to improve their responses to it. The NPCC is continuing to review data in relation to stalking to ensure that an accurate and disaggregated data picture is provided to support fair distribution of services for all victims. We will continue working with our network of professionals and experts to identify and disseminate new information and research into stalking and will liaise with the College of Policing to ensure this is reflected in future best practice. Along with this, work is ongoing with the Home Office in reviewing the current stalking legislation and ways that this can be improved to better tackle stalking offending.