

Institution: University of Worcester		
Unit of Assessment: UoA20 Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Improving the police response to stalking and harassment in England and Wales		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: December 2016 - July 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn	Senior Lecturer in Violence and Abuse	July 2014 – current
Professor Erica Bowen	Professor of Violence Prevention Research	April 2016 – current
Professor Elizabeth Gilchrist	Professor of Psychology	Sept 2016 – August 2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: July 2017 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The ONS (2019) estimates that 21.2% of women and 9.5% of men in England and Wales have experienced stalking since the age of 16. Research into experiences of victims of stalking highlighted significant issues with the way police engaged with victims, police understanding of relevant legislation, and police investigation of stalking and harassment offences. The research has led to changes in police guidelines on stalking and harassment, Police and Crown Prosecution Service policy, and practice and service provision within regional police forces. The impact of these changes is shown by a substantial increase in the recording of offences throughout England and Wales between 2017 and 2020.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Taylor-Dunn led on research to examine the experiences of the criminal justice response reported by victims of stalking and harassment in England and Wales, commissioned by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (Grant 1). The research was conducted as part of the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection into stalking and harassment. It was published as a report in its own right (Reference 1) and incorporated into Living in fear – the police and CPS response to harassment and stalking. A joint inspection by HMIC and HMCPSP (2017), before being presented in an academic article (Reference 2).</p>		
<p>The key findings from the research were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of context – victims' experiences suggested that officers were treating each incident in isolation and failed to see the 'bigger picture'. This resulted in offences being missed because a course of conduct had not been identified. Furthermore, this had a negative impact on victims who subsequently felt they were not being taken seriously. • Understanding of legislation – it was apparent that many victims had been told there was nothing the police could do as particular behaviours did not constitute a criminal offence: for example, loitering outside someone's property. This advice suggested there was a misunderstanding of stalking legislation by police officers. 		

- Use of Police Information Notices (PINs) – a PIN is an early warning notice to potential offenders of harassment who are given advice to cease their behaviour following one form of unwanted contact or they could be arrested. However, it became apparent in our research that offenders were being issued with a PIN following months of harassment, where a course of conduct had been clearly established. We therefore suggested there was an urgent need to review the use of PINs as in every case described by interview participants where a PIN was issued, this was not done in accordance with official guidance.
- Victim care – Most victims described negative interactions with the police at some point. These experiences included incidents not being deemed ‘serious enough’, victim-blaming attitudes and responses, not being kept informed of the progress of their case, not being referred to specialist services and missed opportunities to take action against the offender. This resulted in a third of participants suggesting they were not taken seriously by the police. Views such as these affected the likelihood of whether a victim would call the police again; with a quarter saying they would no longer approach the police due to their most recent experience. We therefore suggested it was essential for the police respond to victims by taking their concerns seriously and acknowledging the impact of stalking and harassment – a key requirement of this was specialist training for police and prosecutors. In addition, when trying to recruit participants for our research, we identified a lack of local specialist services for victims of stalking and so we recommended commissioners consider the availability of support in their area.

3. References to the research

1. Taylor-Dunn, H., Bowen, E., Gilchrist, E. (2017) The Victim Journey. A participatory research project seeking the views and experiences of victims of stalking and harassment. HMIC. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/the-victim-journey.pdf>
2. Taylor-Dunn, H., Bowen, E., Gilchrist, E. (2018) Reporting Stalking and Harassment to the Police - A Qualitative Study of Victims’ Experiences. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0886260518811423>

Grant

1. Taylor-Dunn, "The Victim Journey": A Participatory Research Project, HMIC, 2016-17, £29,880.

Output 2 was selected for the unit’s submission to REF2021, through the processes set out in the REF2021 Code of Practice and as such was subject to peer review through this process. We are therefore confident that it meets the 2* threshold.

4. Details of the impact

The findings of the research were widely publicised by national and local media on the day the reports were released. Following this, Taylor-Dunn was involved in a wide range of dissemination activities, including radio interviews, a BBC Facebook documentary, and numerous conference presentations (academic, public and practitioner).

The research has had the following impacts:

(a) Changes to professional guidelines

The College of Policing issued new guidance in 2019 on the investigation of stalking and harassment offences that show full cognisance of the issues highlighted in the research (Source A):

- Officers are encouraged to consider whether the offence should be stalking as opposed to harassment.

- Officers are asked to establish any pattern of behaviour and relevant history (regardless of whether it has been reported).
- Officers are given guidance on how to deal with victims, specifying the need to be compassionate and understanding, not to be judgemental, to refer victims to specialist support and to keep them updated with the progress of their case

(b) Changes to public policy

In 2018, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the CPS developed a new Joint Working Protocol for dealing with stalking and harassment offences (Source B) in direct response to the report (Source C). The protocol makes provision for training police and prosecutors to enhance understanding of the difference between stalking and harassment, acknowledges the need for police and CPS to identify patterns of behaviour rather than looking at incidents in isolation, sets out clear guidance on the use of PINs, stating these are not appropriate in stalking cases, and recognises the serious impact stalking has on victims and the need for a swift response that addresses victim safety.

(c) Changes to practice and services

In addition to changes to policy and guidelines at the national level, there have been significant changes to practice and service provision at regional level. These are highlighted in a selection of testimonies from Police and Crime Commissioners and Police Forces (Source D):

- Widespread training initiatives to enhance understanding of stalking legislation and stalking behaviour (Kent, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumbria, North Wales, Staffordshire, West Midlands)
- Cessation of use of PINS (Kent, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumbria, North Wales, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Wiltshire)
- Improved recording of stalking offences (Kent, Staffordshire, Wiltshire)
- Improved investigation of stalking offences, including creation of stalking ambassadors to assist officers (Staffordshire)
- Introduction of Multi Agency Stalking Intervention Programme meetings to discuss high-risk stalking cases and consider use of Stalking Protection Orders (Kent).
- Enhanced victim care (Merseyside, Kent, Northumbria, West Midlands), including commissioning of Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (Staffordshire)
- Development of local specialist services for victims of stalking (e.g. Kent has developed a Countywide Stalking Advocacy service)
- Specific initiatives around Cyber Stalking, such as the creation of Digital Media Advisors to support digital media investigations (Northumbria)

(d) Issues of concern highlighted to parliament

The research was cited by the Home Secretary in a speech about the Government's response to tackling violence against women and girls in July 2017 (Source E). It also informed a UK Parliament POST on stalking and harassment, for which Taylor-Dunn was a reviewer (Source F).

As a result of the above changes to practice, policy and guidelines, there has been a significant impact on recorded offences of stalking and harassment, highlighting the effectiveness of some of these changes:

- Between 2017 and 2019 recorded offences rose from 227,859 to 444,054 (Source G).
- The CPS reported that there has been 36.7% increase in stalking offences charged from 2017/18 to 2018/19 (Source H).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. College of Policing, Stalking or harassment. Advice for investigators on effective investigation (2019):
https://library.college.police.uk/docs/appref/Stalking_or_harassment_advice_for_investigators_261119.pdf
- B. NPCC-CPS Protocol on the appropriate handling of stalking or harassment offences:
<https://paladinservice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Stalking-and-Harassment-Protocol-2018.pdf>
- C. Press release on new NPCC-CPS protocol: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/action-on-stalking-and-harassment>
- D. Testimonies from Police and Crime Commissioners and Police Forces
- Chief Executive, Staffordshire Commissioners Office
 - Force Executive, Norfolk Constabulary
 - Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Kent
 - Police and Crime Commissioner, Merseyside
 - Police and Crime Commissioner, North Wales
 - Police and Crime Commissioner, West Midlands
 - Police and Crime Commissioner, Wiltshire and Swindon
 - Safeguarding Department, Northumbria Police
- E. Home Secretary's speech on tackling violence against women and girls (5th July 2017):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amber-rudds-speech-on-tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls>
- F. Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology, POSTNOTE, Stalking & Harassment, December 2018
- G. ONS, Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2019, Figure 15:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019>
- H. CPS, Violence Against Women and Girls Report 2018–19:
<https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2019.pdf>