

Decision ID:

PCCDJ

000651

2022

Decision title

Continuity of provision for victims of stalking across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to enable a review to be undertaken

Executive summary

Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones is committed to standing up for victims at both a local and national level through her role as victim lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). In her Police and Crime Plan, 'More Police Safer Streets', the Police and Crime Commissioner outlines her commitment to improve outcomes for victims and ensure that they have the support services they need.

Through co-commissioning arrangements with the four upper-tier Local Authorities across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the Police and Crime Commissioner funds specialist support services for victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Crime. The Police and Crime Commissioner also commissions countywide Victim Care and Restorative Justice Services, however none of these services provide independent and specialist advocacy for victims of stalking.

The former Police and Crime Commissioner funded an independent stalking advocate that was aligned to the Multi-Agency Stalking Partnership (MASP) and a second advocate further to a grant application submitted by the current provider to the Safer Communities Grant Fund. However, the provision is not sustainable under the current funding arrangements and two advocates for the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight may be insufficient to provide quality support in light of increased reporting.

Hampshire Constabulary data indicates that there were approximately 2,349 offences of stalking reported to them between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. Data for this financial year suggests that there is approximately a 44% increase in reporting. An examination of all stalking offences in 2020-2021 indicates that 85% of stalking offences were committed by a former intimate partner, which is the rejected stalker typology.

Further analysis of the data shows that the perpetrators are predominantly male (89%) and victims are typically women and girls (82%). Perpetrators are commonly aged between 18 and 32 years old. The 2020/2021 crime recording profile for stalking revealed 1946 section

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2a stalking offences and 403 section 4a stalking offences (serious alarm/distress or fear of violence). Section 4a offences represent the highest harm and have been perpetrated by a range of typologies, including those associated with Domestic Abuse. However, the prevalence of a rejected stalker is still high and a link to Stage 4 (separation) of the Homicide Timeline ([JMS Homicide Timeline](#)) is likely.

Hampshire Constabulary estimate that section 4a stalking offences will increase by 44% to approximately 600 crimes in 2021/2022. The current provision of two specialist stalking advocates may therefore be inadequate to meet the projected level of need. The current provider of stalking advocacy support across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a member of the National Stalking Consortium and based on their local and national experience, they have advised that advocates can take approximately 110 referrals per year, with approximately 70 victims taking up the offer of support.

The independent stalking advocate funded through the Safer Communities Fund (SCF) is funded until 30th June 2022, however the advocate aligned with the MASP is funded until 31st March 2022. This decision record recommends that funding for this post is extended for a period of three months in order to align. This will enable the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure continuity of provision while further analysis of data and a review is undertaken.

As outlined above, there is a strong correlation with domestic abuse and there are a range of services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight commissioned to support victims. The review will explore the most appropriate way to retain independent and specialist support for victims of stalking, while complementing existing and future support for victims across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

This proposal supports the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver on the commitments made in her Police and Crime Plan 'More Police Safer Streets':

- Maintain and strengthen support for victims of crime, ensuring they have the services they need
- Improve police visibility and improved outcomes for victims

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- Overhaul stalking and harassment services and ensure support for victims when they have the courage to come forward and seek justice.

Recommendation

The Police and Crime Commissioner approves this decision request for **£11,000** from the Transformation Reserve for the period 1st April – 30th June 2022.

The decision request will ensure continuity of existing provision for independent stalking advocacy support for victims while available data is analysed and a review undertaken.

The funding will be awarded via a grant to the existing provider of the independent stalking advocacy support, Aurora New Dawn.

This decision request aims to provide independent and specialist support to victims of stalking and work in partnership to reduce risk and deliver better coordinated outcomes for victims.

Statement on publication

This Decision Record and supporting Decision Request documentation is suitable for publication.

Police and Crime Commissioner approval

I hereby **approve** the recommendation above.

Signature:



Name:

Donna Jones

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire

Date:

5-Apr-22

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Continuity of provision for victims of stalking across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to enable a review to be undertaken

Requester details:

Requester: Lisa Allam

Role title: Commissioning and Contracts Manager, Commissioning and Partnerships Team

1 Strategic context

Stalking became a criminal offence on the 25 November 2012. Two new offences were introduced amending the Protection from Harassment Act 1997:

- Section 2(A): pursuing a course of conduct that amounts to stalking
- Section 4(A): a course of conduct causing someone to fear violence or to cause serious alarm and distress that has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities.

Stalking has no single definition in legislation, however there is a national working definition, as agreed by the National Stalking Consortium which defines stalking as **"a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour, which is unwanted, repeated, persistent and intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim"**.

Stalking can be perpetrated by anyone regardless of gender, age, race and socio-economic background. They can be ex-partners, acquaintances, family members or strangers, and the motivation for stalking can vary.

Due to the repetitive nature of stalking and the psychological stress this places on victims, coping and recovering from stalking can be difficult. Victims are often isolated, unable to turn to friends and family or professionals who lack understanding of the nature of stalking behaviour and are often quick to dismiss seemingly 'harmless' behaviour. Many stalking behaviours can be viewed as 'low-level' actions, for example delivering flowers, sending text messages, malicious social media posts, contacting friends and damaging property.

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Stalking campaigns are often built on small, seemingly isolated and low-level crimes. Early identification of behaviours and well-informed multi-agency interventions are central to reduce re-victimisation and help victims to cope and recover from the devastating effect of this crime.

Stalking is a unique crime, driven by the fixation and obsession of the stalker and each stalking incident is different. It is a long-term pattern of behaviour that can last for weeks, months or even years. The psychological impact of persistent stalking can be absolutely devastating. Stalking is a serious offence that requires urgent intervention. Victims require and deserve extensive and long-term support.

It is important that, where appropriate, victims are able to access relevant support organisations. This is to ensure that their safety and support needs are addressed (irrespective of whether they choose to report to the Police) and to reduce the risk they face as a result of the offending.

Violence against Women and Girls Strategy published July 2021

The Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy published in July 2021 acknowledges that certain crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, manifest themselves in different ways, and demand targeted solutions – stalking is one of those crimes. The VAWG Strategy references the Crime Survey for England and Wales which estimates that in the year ending March 2020, 892,000 women and 443,000 men experienced stalking.

As well as prevalence, the strategy also outlines the detrimental effect that stalking can have on mental health. Research conducted by Sussex Stalking Support and the National Centre for Cyberstalking Research at the University of Bedfordshire (in conjunction with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust) found that as many as 91% of victims of stalking involved in the research reported suffering from mental health problems after being stalked.

The strategy also highlights challenges in terms of lack of understanding of stalking behaviours amongst victims and police, which may be resulting in an underestimation of its real prevalence and under-reporting to the police. Online forms of stalking were perceived to be increasing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Local context - reported incidents of stalking across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Hampshire Constabulary data indicates that there were approximately 2,349 offences of stalking reported to them between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. Data for this financial year suggests that to date there has been a 44% increase in reporting (1494 vs 2148). The data from Hampshire Constabulary evidences the following:

- The 2020/2021 crime recording profile for stalking revealed 1946 section 2a stalking offences and 403 section 4a stalking offences (serious alarm/distress or fear of violence).
- Examining all stalking offences in 2020/2021 found that approximately 85% were classified as domestic abuse.
- An analysis of section 4a stalking offences between October 2020 and February 2021 identified the rejected stalker (67%) as the most common typology of perpetrator.
- However, the range of perpetrator typology would indicate the need for a specialist advocacy service.
- Section 4a stalking is estimated to increase by 44% to approximately 600 crimes in 2021/2022.
- Perpetrators are predominantly male (89%) and commonly aged between 18-32 years.
- The warning markers associated with them were Weapons (26%), Firearms (15%), Mental Health (12%) and Drugs (20%).
- Women and girls made up 82% of the victim profile.
- The victims are almost entirely ex-partners demonstrating a significant link to domestic abuse.
- Section 2a stalking offences accounted for the largest volume of recorded crime and had a large variation of harm associated with it.

In their Stalking and Harassment Strategic refresh, Hampshire Constabulary outline the following strategic objectives:

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- Improve our response to Stalking and Harassment through self-assessment and continuous learning.
- Reduce offending, scoping and developing a Stalking Perpetrator offer to encourage positive behavioural change.
- Protect vulnerable victims, prioritising Stalking Protection Orders.
- Embed and sustain a positive organisational change.

Stalking Clinic

The Stalking Clinic currently meets monthly and is police-led. The Clinic lasts for approximately three hours during which 3-4 cases, which are live investigations, are discussed in front of a multi-agency panel (CPS; Hampshire Constabulary; Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust; Probation; Aurora New Dawn) with the aim of improving the outcome of the investigation. The purpose of the Clinic is to establish a framework within which agencies and professionals can share information and expertise with the aim of managing any identified risks presented to the victim(s) by the person commissioning the reported stalking episode(s) as presented in case information within the clinic.

Ultimately, recommendations are preventative and proactive in that they determine strategies to reduce reoccurrence, persistence, imminence, severity and diversity with management strategies 'deployed'.

Management strategies take multi-faceted forms to support both the perpetrator in cessation and desistance of stalking behaviour (perpetrator risk factors) and, primarily, protection and safety of the victim (victim vulnerability factors). This may additionally include strategies to protect secondary victims if identified.

In partnership with the current provider of victim advocacy, Hampshire Constabulary have reviewed the processes and practice surrounding the Stalking Clinic and refreshing the terms of reference which has not been undertaken since 2018.

There is no specific funding attached to the Stalking Clinic, however the advocates funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner are central to the work of the clinic and the multi-agency response to stalking.

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MASP (Multi-Agency Stalking Partnership)

MASP is a collaboration between Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, Hampshire Constabulary, Aurora New Dawn (victim advocacy), and Hampshire and IOW Probation. MASP aims to reduce reoffending, increase psychological well-being, improve victim safety and raise awareness of stalking through information sharing, training, interventions and the police-led Stalking Clinic.

The MASP Southern Health team includes Clinical and Forensic Psychology and Psychiatry provision. The team works to reduce and manage the risks associated with stalking across the health and criminal justice sectors, through training, case consultation, specialist risk assessment and direct intervention for complex and high-risk cases. As well as contributing to the evidence and knowledge base of working with stalking.

MASP was initially a pilot programme funded by the Home Office until March 2020, after which, each agency within MASP received funding from different sources.

The former Police and Crime Commissioner approved a decision request in February 2021 for £44,000 which would ensure the continuation of victim advocacy support as part of the partnership. In terms of governance, MASP has been a self-governing partnership. The current members agree that stalking is lacking strategic oversight and a wider multi-agency partnership response.

It is understood from local partners that moving forward, the victim advocacy service would be most effective if it was independent of other agencies and a focus on ensuring the victim has a voice and to advocate on their behalf. This would be achieved by working alongside MASP (subject to continuation of funding for some partners) and Stalking Clinic colleagues and other agencies and exploring all opportunities for victim justice and safety.

2 Options appraisal

Option 1 – *Do nothing*

The current grant agreement for the stalking advocacy post aligned with the MASP will end on the 31st March 2022. Capacity within the existing provider would be limited to one stalking advocate across the whole of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight until 30th June 2022. Victims

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would be able to access support through the national helplines, commissioned domestic abuse providers (where appropriate) and the Victim Care Service. However, with the exception of the national helpline, these services may not have the necessary skills and experience to provide a targeted service to all high risk victims of stalking, which would include safety planning, risk assessment, advocacy, support through the criminal justice/civil legal process which is considered fundamental to promoting safety and thus reducing the risk of serious harm or homicide.

Recommendation - Option 2 – Do something

It is recommended that the Police and Crime Commissioner approves this decision request to ensure continuity of provision while a review is undertaken to help inform the Police and Crime Commissioners strategic commissioning intentions.

Through approving this decision request, it demonstrates the Police and Crime Commissioner's commitment to maintaining the existing levels of provision until further information has been gathered to inform the future strategic direction. This will ensure continuity of provision and retention of skilled staff.

This decision record supports the Police and Crime Commissioner's priority to ensure that victims have the support services they need, including support for victims of domestic abuse, sexual crime, modern slavery, stalking, and harassment.

3 Timescales

As outlined above, funding for the current advocate ends on 31st March 2022. It is recommended that existing provision is maintained while the review is undertaken and to align with the advocacy post that ends on the 30th June 2022.

An imminent decision is required due to the insecurity around the funding for an advocate post that ends on the 31st March 2022.

4 Financial and resourcing implications

This decision request has financial implications of **£11,000**. The funding will be awarded via an extension to an existing grant for a period of three months, from 1st April – 30th June 2022.

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The funding will come from the Police and Crime Commissioners transformation reserve.

Total cost	£11,000
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Timeframe funding required for	1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022
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Table 1 - Funding allocation in each financial year

	2022-23		
Capital	£0		
Revenue	£11,000		

Table 2 - Funding source - Capital and Revenue

	Capital (insert 'Yes' if applicable)	Revenue (insert 'Yes' if applicable)
Transformation reserve		Yes
Commissioner's reserve		
Commissioning budget		
Approved capital programme		
General fund		

5 Communications and engagement implications

This would be a suitable decision request for publicity which would promote the Police and Crime Commissioner's priorities as set out in her Police and Crime Plan 'More Police Safer Streets' to improve outcomes and strengthen support for victims of crime, ensuring they have the services they need.

It also evidences the Police and Crime Commissioner's commitment to the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda through commissioning adequate specialist support for victims and ensuring that Police and partner agencies recognise and respond appropriately to stalking.

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6 Legal implications

Under S.143 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the Police and Crime Commissioner may provide or arrange for the provision of services to secure or contribute to securing crime and disorder reduction, or which help victims or witnesses of, or other persons affected by, offences and antisocial behaviour.

7 Risks and mitigation

If this decision request is not approved, this could result in the end to specialist advocacy support for some victims of stalking across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. There is already limited support available and those grant funded projects are due to end by 31st March and 30th June 2022 respectively. The end to this provision would mean that victims of stalking would not receive the specialist emotional and practical support they need. There could be a risk of reputational damage around not supporting vulnerable victims and withdrawing services, particularly at a time when reported incidents of stalking is increasing.

This decision will maintain existing provision for some of the most vulnerable members of our society while the Police and Crime Commissioner reviews current provision for victims of crime. It will also mitigate the risk of increased demand on policing should services be unable to continue their valuable work in our communities. It will ensure that specialist support continues to be available to reduce the risk of serious harm or death.

8 Strategic policing requirement

Although it is unlikely that this decision will have direct implications on current national strategic policing requirements, the victim advocacy service will work in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary to manage risk to victims and provide ongoing support, which includes as they navigate the Criminal Justice System, enabling the Police to focus on frontline duties and on tackling serious offending.

9 Equalities

The current provider supports vulnerable people, many of whom have protected characteristics. This funding will be subject to a grant agreement and in signing this, providers must commit to contributing

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towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity for everyone, including those having a protected characteristic and the fostering of good relations. The current provision ensures that individuals are able to access the service regardless of whether a report has been made to the police.

10 Data Protection implications

There are no General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implications associated with this decision request. The Police and Crime Commissioners Office does not hold personal information of the people who access the services provided by this funding. The provider is required to adhere to GDPR regulations as part of their grant agreement with the Police and Crime Commissioners Office.

Performance information submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office only contains anonymised data.

11 Publication status

This report is suitable for publication.

12 Personnel consulted

The following personnel were consulted on the Decision Request.

Table 3 - Personnel consulted

Role	Organisation	Confirmation of consultation (insert 'Yes' if applicable)
Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	OPCC	
Chief Executive	OPCC	Yes
Deputy Chief Executive / Criminal Justice Portfolio Lead	OPCC	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	OPCC (HCC)	Yes
OPCC/Hampshire Constabulary liaison	OPCC/HC	Yes
Head of Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships	OPCC	Yes
Head of Communication and Engagement	OPCC	Yes
Head of Performance and Information	OPCC	Yes

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Role	Organisation	Confirmation of consultation (insert 'Yes' if applicable)
Head of Standards and Compliance	OPCC	Yes
Head of Estate, Operations and Support	OPCC	Yes
Programme Office Manager	OPCC	Yes
Accountant	OPCC (HCC)	Yes
Deputy Monitoring Officer	OPCC (HCC)	Yes
Head of Strategic Procurement	HCC	Yes
Commissioning and Partnerships Officer	OPCC	Yes
Data Protection Officer	OPCC	Yes

OPCC - Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

HCC - Hampshire County Council

HC - Hampshire Constabulary

13 Appendices

None.

14 Background papers

None.