

Stalking or Harassment (Policy)

OFFICIAL

Publication Scheme Y/N	Policy can be published on Force Website Procedure should be withheld
Department of Origin	Investigations and Intelligence
Policy Holder	Detective Chief Superintendent Investigations
Author	Public Protection Unit
Related Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPCC / CPS Protocol on the Appropriate Handling of Stalking or Harassment Offences • Authorised Professional Practice: Stalking or Harassment • Public Protection Tactical Menu of Options • HMIC Report 2017 'Living In Fear' • HMICFRS Report 'Stalking and harassment: Inspection of Sussex Police and Update on 2017 report' • CPS Guidance – Stalking & Harassment • Anti-social Behaviour Policy • Domestic Abuse Policy • Hate Crime Policy • Honour Based Abuse & Forced Marriage Policy • Protection from Harassment Act 1997 • Code of Practice for Victims of Crime • CJ Guidance – Supporting Victims and Witness
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Policy

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Statement

Offences of stalking or harassment encompass an extremely wide field of behaviours. The nature of the offence may result in a victim being traumatised and in more serious cases, unable to live a normal life e.g., cannot be alone/go out/work, etc.

Merseyside Police is committed to providing a professional and proportionate response to every report of stalking or harassment, taking into account any aggravating factors such as hate crime and fear of violence and having regard to the views of the victim.

Aims

This policy aims to help protect the lives and preserve the safety of all victims and others who may be at risk as a result of stalking or harassment.

The policy is underpinned by procedures designed to provide clear, definitive and unambiguous direction for all those involved in its deployment.

Objectives

Our priorities when responding to a report of stalking or harassment are to:

- a) Conduct quality investigations into all reports, ensuring the safety and protection of victims.
- b) Facilitate effective action against offenders so that they can be held accountable through the criminal justice system.
- c) Adopt a proactive and, where appropriate, multi -agency approach to prevent stalking and harassment.

Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police, must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

This policy document sets out principles to help guide decision making and is in some parts quite prescriptive. However, it is vital that officers and staff have the freedom to innovate, exercise discretion and take risk-based decisions centred on the needs of the victim and the merits of each case. Non-statutory policies, including College of Policing APP, provide guidance only. They are 'living documents' and it is recognised that there may be a better way of doing this. Accordingly, if staff depart from a policy but are able to give a good rationale for their actions, and have acted with honesty, integrity and professionalism, to make the best decision for the community we serve, they will be trusted and supported.¹

All officers and staff will be held accountable for the adoption of this policy. Chief Officers and managers will show strong leadership in addressing relevant issues.

The Chief Officer lead for this policy is the Assistant Chief Constable with responsibility for Investigation and Intelligence.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Progress against specific objectives should be measured on a routine basis. The Head of Crime/Chair of Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) Performance will determine responsibilities and activities involved in measurement.

In general terms, success will mean that quality investigations are conducted, and that preventative engagement has increased.

Based on outcomes, the Public Protection Unit (PPU) will amend policy and develop responses that keep people safe and hold perpetrators to account.

¹ This paragraph inserted 21/06/2016 to emphasise appropriate use of discretion. Version number remains unchanged.