

Paladin Press Release

EMBARGO: Thursday 24 April 2014

Employers not doing enough to protect their staff from stalking

A survey carried out by Paladin, National Stalking Advocacy Service, has revealed that 86% of those who took part did not have a policy on stalking at their place of work and victims are not receiving the support and advice to keep them safe. The survey also revealed that 52% did not even have a domestic violence policy which is deeply concerning. Paladin distributed the survey across April and ninety-one professionals from different agencies took part, 49% were from statutory agencies, 51% were from non-statutory agencies. 22% who took part worked for domestic violence services.

Sadly too many victims have been stalked and murdered in their work place and yet the connections have not been made. Sometimes this is called 'workplace violence' and yet in many cases it is about stalking. Natalie Esack was stalked and stabbed to death at her hairdresser salon by her ex-partner Ivan Esack in Kent in 2012. Jane Clough, an A&E nurse, was stalked and murdered by Jonathan Vass, an ambulance technician, in 2010 in the hospital car park where she worked. Clare Bernal was stalked and murdered by Michael Pech in Harvey Nichols in 2005.

Research¹ has found that 75% of domestic stalkers will target their victim at work, with 79% of male perpetrators using their work resources to target the victim. We know that the majority of stalkers who attend the workplace will be ex-partners of the victims, who also experienced domestic violence within the relationship.

Stalking has a detrimental impact on work performance of victim and others they work with. To reduce impact that stalking may have on productivity, it is important that employers understand the reasons why job performance may deteriorate and look to ways that their organisation can help employees to overcome these problems. The workplace can be impacted in a number of ways such as sick leave where the victim is suffering from psychological symptoms or the victim is too frightened to leave their home. Employers may also find that victims may have deteriorating work performance and increasing absenteeism. Putting an effective policy on stalking in place will help to minimise risk to members of staff and ensure the stalking behaviour is dealt with appropriately and safely.

Laura Richards, Director of Paladin, said: *"Stalking is about fixation and obsession and stalkers know their victim's routine and can easily access them at work and at home. Many victims we work with are stalked at their place of work and it has a serious impact on their performance as well as*

¹ Sheridan, L. (2005). Paper on Key Findings from the www.stalkingsurvey.com

attendance levels due to the psychological impact, stress and anxiety. Many also need time off to attend repeat legal appointments. Some stalkers may escalate to serious harm and murder. I have reviewed many cases that have tragically ended in murder and yet the links have not been made. Employers have a duty of care to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. It is vital that employers protect their staff with the relevant policies and offer them the appropriate support to keep them safe.”

The theme for National Stalking Awareness Day on April 24th 2014 is themed “Working without Fear”. It aims to eliminate workplace stalking and provide information to employers about how they can support employees who disclose stalking behaviour.

New stalking laws were introduced on 25th November 2012 following a highly successful Parliamentary Campaign initiated by Laura Richards and Harry Fletcher. They established a unique All Party Parliamentary enquiry chaired by Elfyn Llywd MP and then raised funds and launched the UKs first national advocacy service for stalking victims. The service opened on 11th July 2013 and has received over 245 referrals for high risk victims of stalking.

For practical advice, please visit Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service (<http://paladinservice.co.uk/advice-for-victims/>) and National Stalking Helpline (<http://www.stalkinghelpline.org/about-the-helpline/nsad14/>)

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Notes to Editors

About Paladin

Paladin are a not for profit organisation (CIC Number 8361675) founded after the successful All Party Parliamentary Stalking Law Reform Campaign which led to the new stalking law. We are the first service in the world to providing specialist advocacy support to *all* victims of stalking.

Our objectives include:

- i. Providing strategic advocacy to high risk stalking victims.
- ii. Providing training to criminal justice professionals.
- iii. Providing test case advocacy aimed at changing law and practice through the courts.
- iv. Raise awareness of the dangers and risks of stalking
- v. Campaigning based on extrapolating from case work experiences.
- vi. Providing post-legislative scrutiny
- vii. Establishing a network of victims who have endured stalking, providing mutual support and empowerment.

For further information contact Paladin www.paladinservice.co.uk

Stalking, Facts and Figures

- The Crime Survey of England and Wales 2011/2012 suggests that at least 120,000 individuals are affected by stalking and harassment each year; however, only 53,029 cases are recorded as crimes.
- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men will experience stalking in their adult life (Homicides, Firearm offences and intimate violence 2009/10; Supplementary Volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2009/10 2nd Edition. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 01/11).
- Victims do not tend to report to the police until the 100th Incident (Sheridan, 2005)
- Statistics show that the majority of victims (79%) are female while the majority of perpetrators are male (National Stalking Helpline, 2014).
- The Metropolitan Police Service found that 40% of the victims of domestic homicides had also been stalked (ACPO Homicide Working Group, 2003).
- Many stalkers devote hours each day to their stalking campaign, are capable of stalking their victims for many years and use multiple means of contact² and stalking rarely takes place at a distance. Some stalkers approach victims regularly.
- If violence was threatened in cases where the stalker was a current or ex-partner, 1 in 2 perpetrators would carry out that threat.
- According to the Victims Voice Survey (Richards, 2011), when victims did contact the police, 65% (of 69%) said that they were not satisfied with police response.
- The most common stalker behaviour was unwanted phone calls, 32.8%, text messages 32.1%, the use of a third party 23.2%, following 23.4%, visiting home or workplace 23%, criminal damage, 6.7%, death threats 5.1%, physical assault 4.3%. In virtually all cases there was more than one behaviour present.
- The Paladin survey about workplace policies revealed that 74% had a personal harassment policy and 68% had a sexual violence policy.

² Richards, L. (2011). *Victim's Voice: the experience of victims of stalking in the criminal justice system*
www.paladinservice.co.uk/publications