



PRESS RELEASE

Embargo: May 30 2014

Stalking Advocacy Service Launches New Accredited Training to support high risk victims

Paladin, the UK and world's first National Stalking Advocacy Service, has launched a pioneering accredited training course to develop a new network of lifelines for high risk victims of stalking: Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs).

Paladin was set up following the introduction of the new stalking laws it campaigned for, which were introduced in 2012 following the highly successful All Party Parliamentary Campaign. Paladin was launched following law change on 11th July 2013 in the House of Lords. To date the service has received over 260 referrals.

Given the volume of stalking cases and life saving work the ISACs do Paladin have developed an accredited Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs) training course through the University of Brighton to be rolled out locally. This training will enable Paladin to establish a network of specialists locally to ensure victims are given the right advice and supported through the Criminal Justice System, much the same as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) who play a key role in keeping victims safe, supporting victims through court. We know from research there is a much higher prospect of a conviction with specialist support.

Using their specialist knowledge, Paladin have already made a difference and have assisted in some of the highest of risk cases. With stalking only set to increase, particularly with the advent of new IT that facilitates stalking, it is right now to roll out accredited training so there are experts on the ground to assist professionals from other services with risk assessment as well as how best to collect the evidence when digital and cyber stalking occurs and advise victims.

Some cases are domestic violence related but we have seen an increase in stranger related cases and there are currently no local specialist services for these cases. These are the cases that fall between the stalls when it comes to public protection. This can have serious consequences which is

what happened in Helen Pearson's case. Helen was stalked for five years. She reported more than 125 incidents to the police including her car being vandalised, break-ins, abusive messages were graffiti on the streets around her house, threatening and sexualised letters and a dead cat being left on her doorstep. Helen did not initially know who her stalker was and when thought she knew, the police did not progress the investigation. In October 2013 Helen was on her way to the gym when she was attacked and dragged into a cemetery. Joseph Willis, a man who had become obsessed with Helen, stabbed her eight times in the back, face and neck. Willis was found guilty of attempted murder on 15th April 2014 and is due to be sentenced on 30th May.

Helen's case highlights the escalating risk and danger in stalking cases and clearly shows why Paladin and a network of specialist ISACs are needed. Early identification, intervention and prevention is vital in cases of stalking and ISACs save both lives and money. This cutting edge course will be delivered by leading specialists in the field including Paladin's Director Laura Richards, Dr Roxane Agnew Davies, a clinical psychologist and expert in domestic violence, stalking and trauma as well as key inputs from victims including Helen Pearson. Helen said "Paladin are brilliant and ISACs are absolutely essential for victims of stalking. They helped to navigate me through a difficult court process and were extremely supportive. If I had been referred to Paladin earlier then I may have had a different outcome. It is an essential role that ensures high risk victims of stalking have a proactive coordinated response and are kept safe. People like Paladin save lives; they are essential."

Laura Richards, Director of Paladin, said "This is about homicide prevention. Stalking is about fixation and obsession and some of the most serious cases end in rape and murder. It is vital professionals understand the dynamics of stalking, risk assessment and management, how to collect evidence when technology is used as well as ensure the local response is co-ordinated and victims are supported at court. ISACs are greatly needed to keep all victims of stalking safe and I am delighted this much needed and pioneering course has been accredited by the University of Brighton and we are very grateful to the Women's Foundation for funding."

Emily Simon, from the Women's Foundation, said: "The Women's Foundation is proud to support Paladin in extending its reach by initiating and offering a university accredited training program. In one short year, the effective team at Paladin led by Laura Richards has changed the landscape for victims of stalking so that they may be protected and made safe."

Note to Editor:

A. Paladin's Objectives

The main aims of Paladin are:

1. To provide victim advocacy to individuals at high risk of harm.
2. To provide training
3. To scrutinise the new stalking laws to ensure consistency of application to better protect victims
4. To continue to lobby Parliament for further changes to Law and Practice including: reform of the Family Courts, the strengthening of restraining orders and campaigning for Domestic Violence Law Reform to criminalise coercive control
5. Raise awareness of dangers and risks of stalking

B. 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 (80.4%) are female while the majority of perpetrators (70.5%) are male. (National Stalking Helpline, 2011).
- The Metropolitan Police Service found that 40% of the victims of domestic homicides had also been stalked (ACPO Homicide Working Group, 2003).
- 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 first ISAC accredited training course will start on 15th September 2014. For more details and to register for this training course, please visit <http://paladinservice.co.uk/accredited-training/>
- This course is designed for those who have one year experience working on the frontline with clients experiencing abuse; come into contact with victims of stalking both domestic violence related and non-domestic violence related; or manage those working with clients experiencing abuse and hold a caseload.
- The cost for statutory agencies to attend this course would be £1110 and £990 for voluntary agencies. This price includes seven classroom based training days, hand-outs, workbooks, case studies and refreshments.

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