



Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Scrutiny Panel Dip Sampling Exercise Stalking and Harassment Cases

Panel Members' Findings & Feedback

May 2022

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1.0 Overview

At the meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on the 25th of May 2022, a random selection of harassment and stalking cases were considered by the Members. Within the 12 harassment and stalking cases reviewed, there was also a selection of cases with a domestic abuse link for Members to consider how these cases were responded to.

The meeting was held in person at Dyfed-Powys Police headquarters.

2.0 Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Quality Assurance handbook, available on the [PCC's website](#), states the background and purpose of the Panel along with how the dip sampling is carried out and what the Panel is asked to consider.

3.0 Stalking and harassment cases

The Panel received an initial input from a Detective Inspector who explained the difference between harassment and stalking and the way in which they should be dealt.

The Panel received an input on how to identify stalking cases and were given a breakdown on the acronym FOUR that officers use when trying to identify stalking behaviour:

F – Fixated

O – Obsessive

U – Unwanted

R – Repeated

The Quality Assurance Panel members were asked to review the sample of cases considering the following:

- Timeliness of incident handling and the initial response.
- Timeliness of the investigation and how well the victim was kept informed.
- Whether an appropriate risk assessment was undertaken, for example a DASH assessment for domestic abuse linked incidents and a SASH for stalking related incidents.
- Whether there was a safeguarding plan in place for the victim.
- Were there any evidence of protective orders being considered?
- Whether the case files had a domestic abuse link and whether this impacted on how the case was dealt with.

4.0 Review of Harassment Cases

Case 1 (Domestic Abuse link)

- Members noted that this incident had been dealt with in a timely manner and had been responded to on the day of being reported.
- Members felt that this individual was being safeguarded and that the concern for the children involved had been identified. The victim was also receiving support for anger management and was receiving support from Goleudy victim support.
- There was no evidence within this case of any protective orders being considered.
- Positively there is evidence of a DASH and domestic violence report being completed.
- This case was closed following appropriate advice being provided to the offender. The importance of officers using their body worn video cameras was captured as part of the investigations.

Case 2

- Panel Members noted that this incident received a timely initial response and a thorough review was carried out and documented.
- Members felt that the victim was kept well informed with information relating to the case when available.
- It was noted that a THRIVES assessment had been carried out and psychological harm had been identified as part of the review.
- It was noted that protective orders were unsuitable for this case.
- It was felt that this case had been dealt with appropriately.

Case 3

- The Panel felt that although this case was recorded as harassment, the case did have elements of stalking and it was felt that possibly these should have been investigated further.
- Within the documentation it is noted that a SASH was undertaken and it was considered that the case was not stalking. Members of the Panel disagreed, and felt that the offender being in locations which the victim would regularly be at, along with the unwanted contact was stalking behaviour.
- This case was in relation to bullying/ harassment in the workplace and it was felt that possibly this case should have been followed up, as details of the offenders were known.

Case 4

- Members felt that this incident should have been followed up sooner. An officer left a message on the victims' phone approx. twenty days after the incident was reported. The victim did not want to pursue the

investigation however members felt that this should have been investigated sooner, due to the threats involved.

- Positively a DASH was completed, however, due to both individuals now living some distance apart, it was deemed as not necessary.

5.0 Review of Stalking Cases

Case 5

- Members felt that the documentation and investigation was to be commended. Vital information was recorded and gathered to help build a strong case against the offender.
- It was noted that the initial response from the officer was excellent and victim was updated throughout.
- It was noted that the individual was receiving support from Goleudy and support from the National Stalking helpline. Members stated that they felt that support and empathy was given to the victim.
- A SASH was completed, and good safeguarding plan and advice was passed on the victim on how to keep herself safe. It was however questioned as to whether the SASH should have been completed sooner due to the seriousness of the case. The SASH was undertaken four days after being reported.
- Members did highlight a concern that the victim was not aware that the suspect knew her home address; a matter which was disclosed to officers but not communicated to the victim. Members queried whether the victim should have been told that the offender knew her address to allow for additional safeguarding to be considered.

Case 6 (Domestic Abuse link)

- It was noted that although this case was recorded as stalking, following investigation, it was found that the case did not meet the criteria/ FOUR

to be considered as a stalking crime. The crime was still recorded as stalking despite officers deciding that FOUR was not met.

- It was noted that a SASH was considered, and rationale was recorded within the log as one was not undertaken.
- Members felt that although this case was complex, officers responded to the incident well.
- Although the case was closed, a multi-agency referral form (MARF) was undertaken due to a child being involved and the incident relating to discussions around child custody.
- Due to the domestic abuse link, a DASH was completed.
- Safeguarding advice was given to the victim and a safeguarding plan was put in place.

Case 7 (Domestic Abuse link)

- Members felt that this incident received a prompt initial response. However, further into the investigation the victim decided to withdraw and did not support any further police action.
- The victim was advised to follow an existing safety plan and was given safeguarding advice. Members felt that referencing a previous plan was good practice as it demonstrated the officers were fully aware of the situation.
- Members noted that a DASH has also been undertaken and a safeguarding report was prepared. It was also noted that a SASH was prepared prior to the victims' withdrawal from the case.

Case 8 (Domestic Abuse link)

- Members noted that the response to the initial incident and interviews were all undertaken in a timely manner.
- Members felt that the victim was well updated and had been informed throughout the investigation.
- Both a DASH and a SASH had been undertaken.

- It was also found that a safeguarding plan had been put in place and was reviewed and updated as necessary.
- The suspect in this case had been given a restraining order and was bailed with conditions.
- It was stated that it would be very useful if there was a safeguarding leaflet/ general safeguarding advice information pack available that could be given to all victims of stalking.

Case 9 (Domestic Abuse link)

- It was felt that the engagement with the victim was reasonable, with every report of contact from the suspect being followed up.
- It was noted that this case was initially recorded as harassment, however, the case was changed to stalking by the Supervisor. Following this change it is noted that there is some confusion within the log and interview notes with the crime still being referred to as harassment. Members queried whether all officers are aware of the difference between the two and how they are determined.
- The Panel noted that the case was recorded as an outcome 16 – victim does not support or withdraws from case. During the investigation the victim does state that they would like to withdraw, however, following further contact from the suspect this decision was changed and the victim continues with the case. Members queried whether the outcome status needed to be updated to match victim's decision to continue.
- It was also noted that the outcome is unclear from the records and the panel are therefore unable to determine how this was communicated to the victim.
- Positively a DASH and a SASH was completed, and it was felt that there was clear safeguarding advice and knowledge by the officer of FOUR and the eight steps to homicide.
- Members didn't see any reference to protective orders being considered.

Case 10 (Domestic Abuse link)

- A DASH was completed in a timely manner and was seen to be a standard risk.
- A SASH was considered, and rationale was entered into the log to explain why the officer felt that FOUR had not been met and therefore a SASH was not necessary.
- Victim was issued with detailed safeguarding advice.
- It was noted that the victim had to phone in order to chase an update on her case.
- It was felt that further information was needed to be recorded in relation to how the victim was presented with the safeguarding advice for example, via email, leaflets, victim information pack etc.

Case 11

- Members noted that this case was difficult to review as there were many related crimes involving family members who were trying to report this crime on the victim's behalf. The victim did not want to pursue any criminal charges and the investigation was linked to three previous crimes which were ongoing, meaning that members were unable to fully review the full picture.
- Positively it was noted that the same officer appeared to be liaising with the victim for all crimes and therefore trust had been established.
- Safeguarding advice was reviewed and a SASH had been completed.
- It was found that key information had been recorded incorrectly – for example “male who believes she is his mother” should read “male believes he is her father.”
- Positively a referral to a support service was made and members felt that this was an appropriate outcome under the circumstances.

Case 12

- It was felt that the timeliness of the initial response to the victim was reasonable with Dyfed-Powys Police undertaking the initial investigation and then asking South Wales Police to attend the victim's address. This process between the two forces was undertaken smoothly.
- It was felt that officers did all they could to keep the victim updated.
- It was noted that a wide range of avenues were considered as part of their investigations.
- It was found that due to the suspect being unknown in this case, a SASH was unable to be completed.
- It was noted that the suspect has tried to contact the victim via social media, but due to being blocked their name was no longer available. It was queried whether this potentially could have been followed-up as a means of investigating the suspects identity.
- There was no evidence of a safeguarding plan, however, safeguarding advice was provided as suspect was unknown. The victim was happy with the Police response.

6.0 General Comments and observations

Panel Members made the following observations:

Observations	Force Response
The Panel felt that on the whole victims were provided with good safeguarding advice and that good safeguarding plans were provided to victims of stalking.	We welcome the observations of the panel which provides reassurance that our focus on safety planning during the Spring Vulnerability training has had some impact.
All cases with a domestic abuse link had received a DASH assessment.	This has seen significant improvement over recent years.
For all stalking cases a SASH was either completed or considered. Rationale was recorded if a SASH was deemed unnecessary. Members queried if there was any guidance on how quickly a SASH should be completed?	The SASH assessment is used in a slightly different manner to the DASH risk assessment. The SASH does not solely rely on the victim input and requires research. This increases the time taken to complete. We are aware that in many cases the time taken is too long to provide a meaningful impact of the safety

	plan. This is an area our force stalking co-ordinator has reviewed and the recommendations are due to be reported on in September.
It was found that on the whole the initial response to both stalking and harassment cases were done in a timely manner.	This is a welcomed observation.
It was felt that it would be very useful if there was a safeguarding leaflet/ general safeguarding advice information pack that could be given to all victims of stalking.	This is useful feedback. The force has recently developed a covert leaflet that can be provided to victims with which the QR code leads to safety advice. A similar leaflet will be considered specifically for stalking in non-domestic circumstances.
It was found in cases 3 and 12 that there were some aspects in relation to the investigation that possibly could have been followed-up.	We are grateful for the view of the panel. In relation to both cases feedback has been provided to the officer and supervisor.
It was found that the crime was incorrectly recorded for cases 6 and 9.	There is currently a conflict between crime recording guidance and the practical consideration of the 'FOUR' mnemonic that officers are asked to consider. This is currently under review by the force stalking co-ordinator. Due to the feedback we have requested that the force crime registrar review the two crimes to ensure they meet the home office counting rules for crime recording.
It was acknowledged that there is no clear guidance on identifying stalking due to each case being unique. It was however queried whether all officers understand the difference between stalking and harassment?	In spring of 2022 all frontline officers received training in identifying stalking using the FOUR mnemonic as guidance to deciding whether the case is one of stalking or harassment. The training included aspects of the academic research undertaken by Professor Jayne Monckton Smith. In either case the management of risk and investigation standards should be maximised with the Crown Prosecution Service making any final consideration on charging standards.
It was queried whether the force have champions for stalking or specific points of contact that officers can speak to if they need advice on stalking cases?	The force have stalking champions within each of the local policing areas. They are provided with enhanced training to provide peer support. In addition, the local domestic abuse officers have received advanced training to add resilience to the peers support network.