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### Article

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## Discussion of current stalking provisions by a previous probation officer in Cheshire's MASIP

This article seeks to both raise awareness of Multi Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes (MASIPs), and of the success of the three current MASIPs. This will lead to considering the value MASIPs such as Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit have for the Probation Service in managing and understanding Stalking behaviour. The article will sum up the findings of the MASIP evaluation report (Tompson et al, 2020). Then it will provide a discussion of the "Super-complaint" on the police response to stalking (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022) and, examine the more recent London Stalking Review (London Victim's Commissioner, 2024) to consider the potential gaps across the country in managing the risk of those committing stalking offences. This article will highlight two key charitable trusts, the Alice Ruggles Trust and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, both of which work to support victims and perpetrators of Stalking and provide necessary training and awareness across the country. The article will conclude that there should be provisions to increase the number of MASIPs across the country to protect and support victims, and effectively manage the risk and support stalking perpetrators.

Firstly, it is important to note that currently there is no legal definition of Stalking in England and Wales. Stalking is explained by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2022:7) as "a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim. Stalking behaviour is unwanted, repetitive, and it is almost always carried out (or orchestrated by) one individual towards another". The objective of MASIPs are to mitigate the risk and effects of stalking on victims through the creation of a multi-agency intervention model. MASIPs facilitate coordinated efforts involving both the victim and the perpetrator, while also establishing a critical pathway aimed at addressing the fixation and obsession in perpetrators that may lead to stalking behaviour (Tompson, 2020). Initially, MASIPs were piloted in the Metropolitan, Hampshire and Cheshire Police Services. As the author has previously worked as a Probation Officer within the Cheshire MASIP, this article is informed by personal professional experience, Stalking Risk Profiling training and the available literature.

Opportunities for Probation Officers to receive funding for external training are limited. Probation Officers linked to Cheshire's MASIPS have occasionally had the chance to undertake an online course in Stalking Risk Profiling, led by Dr. Rachel MacKenzie and Professor Troy McEwan. This involves the learning and understanding of stalking profiles as developed by Mullen et al. (2000). Understanding the psychological profiling of individuals exhibiting stalking behaviours serves as a significant asset for Probation Officers. This profiling is also utilised by the Clinical Psychologist in Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit, who collaborates with the Detective Sergeant before conviction and works with Probation Services to contribute to the multi-agency monitoring of relevant individuals, post-conviction. The referral process to the Harm Reduction Unit allows for discussions on high-risk cases with experienced practitioners, and specialist victim advocates ensure that victims outside of probation's Victim Liaison Officer scheme receive support during police investigations and/or when referred to the Harm Reduction Unit after conviction. One stalking victim support by Cheshire's HRU, Denise Welch said "Cheshire Police's Harm Reduction Unit is something I would like to see everywhere because they were there for our emotional and physical wellbeing" (Loose Women, 2022).

The three pilot MASIPS, including the Harm Reduction Unit were all introduced in 2016 and were evaluated in 2020 (Tompson et al., 2020). Several recommendations highlighted the importance of funding for MASIPs, and key stakeholders raised the requirement of motivation and skilled staff within the teams to support victims and work with perpetrators. The report considered the three MASIP pilots which had the same ideology but in different geographical areas, and how each model suited the force size and location. One critical factor in the success of the MASIPS is utilising thorough data collection to enable the MASIPs to evidence their success and share this with funders and potential future partners (Tompson et al., 2020). It has also been found that working as a MASIP resulted in a decrease in recidivism and an understanding of the early detection of repeat perpetrators was observed. Furthermore, the perpetrators exhibited a level of assurance in their ability to utilise the resources available to them to manage their compulsions and fixations (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022). Following their own unit's success, Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit have recently received funding to initiate their own investigation team. It would be prudent for a further evaluation report to be completed to account for this additional resource.

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust Super-complaint report found inadequate police response to stalking is not merely an isolated issue within specific police departments but rather, reflects a broader systemic problem that exists throughout all forces in England and Wales (2022). There were several findings within this report, some of which are directly focused on the Police. Some criticisms though could be supported by Probation practitioners.

The following complaints were highlighted within this report (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2022:13-29):

- Police failing to identify the behaviours as stalking
- Police failing to recognise the link between stalking and serious harm or homicide
- Dangerous or unhelpful advice given by police

These criticisms were, however absent in the three areas that have MASIPS and the disparity of the service that victims and perpetrators receive in those areas was vast. This is something above mentioned, but to reiterate, there is clear evidence that knowledge and experience of stalking for those working the front line is invaluable. Additional training should be provided for those managing people on Probation Orders or Licences, convicted of Stalking offences.

There have been some changes nationally which were summed up by London's Victim Commissioner (2024:1) "Through our work, we have begun to see progress. We saw the extension of sentencing for Stalking 4a offences to a maximum of 10 years in 2017, the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders in 2020, and the introduction of Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programmes housed in police forces in Cheshire, London, and Hampshire". Despite this, the stalking legislation faces profound criticism for the disparity between 2a and 4a convictions, 4a being the more serious, and only achieved if it can be proven that the unwanted, fixated stalking behaviour had a substantial impact on the victim. It was recommended by the London Victim's Commissioner that "the Government should legislate to make Stalking Protection Orders a bespoke ancillary order that judges can issue at the point of sentencing, focusing the court's attention on requirements which would ensure the safety of crime victims" (2024:19). This suggests that despite their introduction, they have not had the desired impact and success through the Courts. The final point of the introduction of the three MASIPS has improved the

identification, classification and understanding of people who commit stalking offences in those areas, but legislation needs to go further.

As noted above, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Alice Ruggles Trust provide awareness, support, and training. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust run the National Stalking Helpline. They also offer training and consultancy across the country, and complete work with perpetrators of stalking. “The Suzy Lamplugh Trust works across the public, private and voluntary sectors, offering training, policy writing and other consultancy provisions” They campaign to increase awareness of the harm caused and “demand systematic change.” Their longest running campaign is the licensing of the operators and drivers of minicabs and private hire vehicles, which began back in 1998” (Suzy Lamplugh Trust Website, 2024). Over the past 35 years the Suzy Lamplugh Trust has influenced changes in legislation to include stalking as specific offences, and the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders. More recently the Alice Ruggles Trust was established, aiming to educate young people, support those working with children to develop skills, and develop interventions as preventative work for young people (Alice Ruggles Trust Website, 2024). The work of these charitable trusts is undeniably important and invaluable. The implementation of MASIPs across England and Wales is, however unmatched in terms of the potential for proactive and reactive risk management for statutory criminal justice agencies such as the Police, Probation and the Courts.

This article highlights that despite wholly positive findings, no further MASIPs have come to fruition in England and Wales. Whether that be through a lack of funds, unawareness by other areas across the country, or the lack of appropriate skillset and motivation from those who would be needed to set up MASIPs. It is just unfortunate that this has ensured that for almost a decade and the support for victims and work with perpetrators remains a postcode lottery across the country. It is hoped that there may be further impact following the London Stalking Review as Watson stated, “all those involved in the criminal justice system have a role to play to make sure stalking is always treated seriously and those affected, get the support they deserve” (2024:5). Reflecting upon the identified need for support from stalking victims and perpetrators, the success of the MASIPs currently in place, and the demand for support through two key charitable trusts, surely it is only a matter of time before statutory agencies and stakeholders take note and ensure these models are put in place across England and Wales.

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