

About Paladin

Paladin, the world's first National Stalking Advocacy Service, exists to amplify the voice of the stalking victim within the criminal and civil justice system. Many victims feel isolated and terrified, while some pay with their lives. Paladin provides a high level of advocacy and support to anyone at risk of serious harm or homicide from a stalker.

In 2012, the *All Party Parliamentary Stalking Law Reform Campaign* led to stalking becoming a criminal offence. Paladin is also dedicated to improving the police response to stalking nationally and is the only charity to offer University Accredited training which has led to the creation of an **Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC)** network across the UK.

Definition of Stalking

A pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive and causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress.

Stalkers usually use a range of ways to stalk their victims both physically e.g. following, intimidation and entering locations where the victim is, as well as digitally enabled methods including spy technology on devices such as computers and phones, messaging via email and WhatsApp etc. and accessing or using social media sites to contact or intimidate victims.

National Stalking Awareness Week 20th 25 April 2020 – See Stalking Clearly **#NSAW2020 #SeeStalkingClearly #YouAreNotAlone**

The theme is **See Stalking Clearly** to ensure stalking victims are still visible and supported throughout the response to Covid19 through the National Stalking Helpline, police and other vital services such as Paladin.

- **It is vital that stalking remains a priority for the police and the criminal justice system**
- **It is vital that stalking services remain funded**
- **It is vital that early warning signs aren't ignored and that victims feel able to ask for help from these services at an early stage before risk escalates**
- **It is vital we build a nationwide network of trained accredited ISAC'S to ensure victims of stalking receive the support they need and deserve regardless of which area they live in .**

Impact of COVID-19

- **Stalking will persist despite Covid19. Risk remains high as the fixation and obsession of perpetrators is unlikely to be affected by the restrictions of lockdown**
- **Victims are feeling MORE isolated at this time**



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Behaviours may move more online and this could trigger different but equally serious fears in victims and consequent mental health impacts which we know can in some cases result in suicide. Physical behaviours meanwhile are enabled by knowing victims' whereabouts and using the excuse of legitimate shopping or exercise to access them. Children may also be used as an excuse for greater interaction/contact.

Paladin key messages

- Paladin is still receiving as many victim referrals and requests for support with a significant increase in online contact
- Paladin currently has more than 140 open high-risk cases – this signifies a high proportion of victims at risk of injury or death
- Paladin has been lobbying the Government to introduce a serial stalking perpetrator register that will collect the offences of the most dangerous offenders. This has never been more important. We have over 175k signatures on the petition. Here is more info around the register and a link to the petition: <https://paladinservice.co.uk/serial-perpetrator-register-and-order/>
- Paladin's support is essential but its funding is at risk and is affecting its ability to fully support victims and cope with increasing demand for its essential services – please donate if you can!
<https://www.justgiving.com/paladin-nsas>
- Paladin is asking friends and family of victims not to forget those experiencing stalking during the COVID-19 crisis
- Even in normal circumstances restrictions on stalkers movements have very little impact (for example the ongoing breaching of restraining orders) and they continue to stalk!
- Stalking is a sign of escalating risk within abusive relationships
- Stalking has a significant impact on mental health which is being exacerbated during the COVID-19 isolation
- Paladin continues to work in collaboration with local VAWG services to build a national network of trained accredited ISAC's .
- During National Stalking Awareness Week Paladin NSAS is working in collaboration with Oxford University to reach out to young people via social media as stalking victims and young people are feeling more isolated and vulnerable due to the lockdown restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

Quotes from stalking victims being supported by Paladin during COVID-19 isolation:

Fear of a stalker knowing where their victim is:

"I feel like a sitting duck, my stalker knows exactly where I am most of the time since lockdown due to the Coronavirus"

Victims are feeling more isolated in lock down:

"On my daily walk I feel scared, as there are less people around and no places open that I could turn to for help, so I often don't go out."

Further isolation due to COVID-19:

"I have avoided logging on to social media as it's not safe, my history may be checked. I would normally go to the local library, however they are closed."

COVID-19 Victim case-study

A woman is being stalked by her ex-partner. There was domestic abuse when they lived together and on separating he has continually stalked her and made threats, and is due to appear in court.

She has moved twice over the past 18 months due to him finding her location via social media. She no longer has any social media presence and all contact with friends and family is via face-to-face contact or limited phone calls on a land-line. During lockdown she is therefore more isolated as she does not want to be present on social media again in case her stalker finds her.

She is aware he has been furloughed, so he has time on his hands. He has already been seen around her parents' home - they are vulnerable and are in isolation. She wants to be able to deliver essentials to them but is scared he will see her, follow her and discover her location. She hasn't been able to see her parents since we went into lockdown. She also feels more vulnerable while shopping as she is queuing outside so is visible. When walking to or from the shops nothing is open so if he did approach her she would not be able to run into a café or somewhere to get help.

She is now suffering panic attacks and has spoken to her doctor about her poor mental health and is seeking additional support, but currently Paladin is her only support.

Key Paladin spokespeople and all press enquiries to:

Zoe Dronfield – Twitter [@ZDronfield](#)

Zoe Dronfield is a mother, business women, a professional and a survivor of domestic violence and stalking in that order. Zoe refuses to be defined by her journey although is compelled to make changes for the future for others and her children.

Her professional expertise allowed her to see how flawed that system is after being catapulted into the criminal and family justice system in 2014. Two very stark contrasts and Zoe wants to highlight the impact the system has on victims going through this at their most vulnerable time.



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Zoe is calling for a #openfamilycourt not to the public but highlights the need for transparency and accountability in the family judiciary. She also campaigns using #serialregisterneeded and highlights how serial abusers are getting away with it time and time again. Her own story highlights how perpetrators are giving a platform and the victims are the forgotten in a system which looks at incidents in isolation meaning the severity and risk of offending is minimised.

Zoe has done many media appearances, conference talks, education in colleges, help groups and implores you to follow her and back her campaigns for change. She is a board member and key spokesperson for Paladin and has a group supporting mothers and victims of domestic violence going through the family court system IWMM. She says there is a real skewed view of survivors in family court and this needs to change.

Rachel Horman – Twitter [@rachelhorman](https://twitter.com/rachelhorman)

Rachel Horman is a Director & Solicitor and the head of the Family Department at Watson Ramsbottom. She specialises in cases of domestic abuse and stalking with a very fast-growing niche practice in cases involving coercive control. Rachel is widely regarded as the go to solicitor regarding cases of coercive control and stalking, harassment and cyberstalking with a national client base of high profile clients.

Rachel has throughout her career worked at the forefront of campaigns for domestic abuse and stalking legislation, Rachel is the Chair of Paladin, the National Stalking Advocacy Service who campaigned to create a specific criminal offence of coercive control and continues to advise the government and police in relation to these issues.

Rachel has sat on All Party Parliamentary Groups for Domestic Violence and Stalking & Harassment and was invited to give evidence to the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights about Domestic Violence and Forced Marriage in the House of Lords. Rachel was also involved in the successful campaign to increase the sentence for stalking from 5 years to 10 years. She continues to regularly advise the Home Office and legislatures out of the jurisdiction in relation to legislation and guidance on coercive control and stalking.

Paladin Contact details

Email info@paladinservice.co.uk

Donate <https://www.justgiving.com/paladin-nsas>

Website www.paladinservice.co.uk

Facebook: Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service (Weekly hosted session Thursdays 12-1pm)

Instagram: Paladin_NSAS (Weekly hosted session Tuesdays 8-9pm)

Twitter: @paladinservice