



STALKING AND HARASSMENT BY A PARTNER/EX-PARTNER DURING COVID-19

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If you have been experiencing stalking or harassment by your partner or ex-partner, you may be feeling particularly anxious during lockdown – for example, you may be worried that it is harder to vary your routine, as you will be spending most of your time at home.

Below is some guidance about steps you can take, things to consider, and where you can seek more support. Remember that under the government's coronavirus guidance, it is ok to leave your home 'to avoid or escape risk of injury or harm'
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

If at any point you feel you are in immediate danger, phone the police on **999**.



What can I do if I feel unsafe at home?

- You could talk to your neighbours and ask them to make sure shared entrances are always secured, and to look out for the person who is stalking/harassing you.
- You could think about carrying a personal alarm at home, especially if you live within earshot of neighbours.
- Consider doing a regular check that all locks/alarms etc. are working.
- You can talk to the police about extra safety measures for your home.
- You could tell family, friends and colleagues about the situation. You may want to agree a code word with them to let them know you need help in an emergency.
- If you have children, encourage them to tell you if they see the person (e.g. your ex-partner), or if they see anything unusual or worrying.

My ex-partner keeps contacting me, what can I do?

- Consider blocking them across the different social media and communications methods (e.g. phone, email).
- If they keep phoning, you could contact your service provider and ask if they can put extra measures in place, e.g. to block calls from withheld or unknown numbers.
- Consider setting up a new email address, phone number, etc., (and if necessary asking mutual friends not to share this with the ex-partner.)
- Do not respond to unwanted calls, letters, or conversations.

How can I stay safe online?

- Change your passwords regularly, and don't use the same password for all your accounts. Consider changing all your passwords if you have recently separated and believe your ex-partner could have access to any accounts.
- If you think your internet use might be monitored, consider deleting your search history or using a browser such as Chrome's 'incognito' mode. More information here:
<https://safer.scot/page-4/>
- The **Revenge Porn Helpline** has a **guide** to changing your privacy settings across commonly used social media and apps.



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Can I report this to the police?

- If you are experiencing stalking or harassment from a partner or ex-partner, you can report this to the police. Domestic abuse is a crime, when a partner or ex-partner does things which are likely to cause you physical or psychological harm. An abuser's behaviour often breaks other laws too such as stalking or threatening and abusive behaviour. The police take this seriously and should investigate it.
- If your partner is convicted of domestic abuse in court, the court must consider issuing a 'non-harassment order', to protect you and any children from further abuse. This process is likely to be delayed during the lockdown, but see this **blog** from the Scottish Women's Rights Centre for more information.

What evidence would I need, to report their behaviour?

- You can keep a diary, which keeps a note of the date and time of each incident, along with a summary of what happened, and the names of any witnesses and any reports made to the police.
- You could consider using an app like the Scottish Women's Rights Centre's **FollowItApp**, to log what is happening.
- Keep phone records, copies of texts and emails, screenshots of web pages or online conversations, letters and gifts.
- If you see the perpetrator, you could take a photo or video of them if it's safe to.

Can I still take legal action if I don't want to report to the police?

- If you don't want to report to the police, you can still contact a solicitor about ways to stop the person from contacting or approaching you.
- You could talk to them about applying for a 'protective order' such as a non-harassment order or an interdict.
- You don't need to report their actions to the police to apply for these. However, if you get

(1) a non-harassment order or (2) a domestic abuse interdict with power of arrest, it is a crime for the person to breach this.

- Remember that during this time, response times from lawyers and legal services may be slower, and meetings and court dates might be delayed or carried out online.

Where can I seek further support and information?

- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline, open 24/7, supports anyone experiencing domestic abuse:
 - Email: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk
 - Web chat: www.sdafmh.org.uk
 - Phone: **0800 027 1234**
- If you are a woman being harassed by an abusive partner or ex-partner, your **local Women's Aid** group could help.
- For more specific legal advice around stalking, you could contact the **Scottish Women's Rights Centre**, or read their **legal guides**: 'Reporting Stalking – Your Rights', and 'Stopping Harassment – A Legal Guide'
 - Phone: **08088 010 789** (Mon 2-5pm, Tues 6-8pm, Weds 11am-2pm, Fri 10am-1pm)
 - Email: www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk/contact/
- **Victim Support Scotland** offer support to victims of crime, witnesses, and their family members. They specialise in giving information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system.
 - Phone: **0800 160 1985** (Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm)
 - Web chat: victimsupport.scot (Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm)
- **The National Stalking Helpline** has useful information on issues like personal safety and lone working.

