

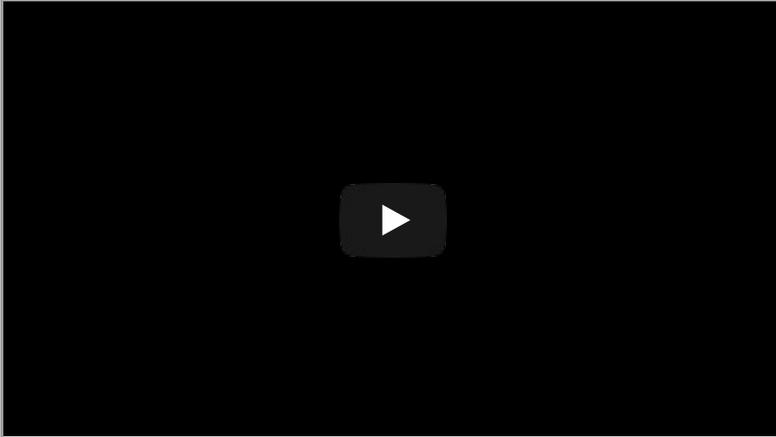


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Derbyshire police back national campaign to highlight devastation caused by stalking

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This week, Derbyshire Constabulary is taking part in a national campaign to raise awareness of stalking and harassment.

Stalking is defined as any unwanted contact with a person and can take many forms, from physical stalking to texts, emails, phone calls, and endless messages on social media.

Targeting a person in this way is a criminal offence. Men and women of all ages – including teenagers and young adults – can become victims of stalking.

As part of National Stalking Awareness Week, which runs from April 20 to 24, Derbyshire police are urging people to boost their own knowledge of the tell-tale signs of the crime.

We also want victims to know how seriously we take any report of stalking or harassment, and that there is a wealth of support available for them.

To help raise awareness of the issue, we are also promoting the video at the top of this article, which highlights the wide variety of methods stalkers use and the impact they have on their victims.

Detective Chief Inspector Malcolm Bibbings, from Derbyshire police, said: "People assume that stalking means that an offender will follow the victim around and watch them, perhaps sending them presents.

"But it is much more serious than that, and can be devastating and life-changing for the victim. "With developments in technology, stalkers can target their victim through text, email, and on social media. They can send hurtful messages, hack into their accounts, and as time goes on, ruin their lives.

"Stalkers target men and women of all ages, and as access to social media has boomed, teenagers and students are becoming victims through that channel, too.

"We want people to know the signs of stalking and to encourage anyone who thinks they might be a victim to come forward and tell us, or the National Stalking Helpline."

Police are urging people to take the following action if they think they are being stalked;

- Tell the police, friends, family and colleagues about what is happening.
- Make sure you get good, practical advice. Contact the National Stalking Helpline for support.
- Gather evidence against your stalker. Keep any texts or messages as evidence.
- Keep a diary and log any contact and details of what has happened.
- Don't post too much information on your social network sites. Private message or text your friends instead.

The National Stalking Helpline can provide a wealth of information for victims, or people concerned that someone they know might be the target of a stalker.

Their support workers can be reached on 0808 802 0300, or online at www.stalkinghelpline.org.

You can also call Derbyshire police on 101, or 999 in an emergency.

