**EXAMINING THE VICTIM’S RIGHT TO REVIEW (VRR) BY POLICE IN STALKING AND HARRASSMENT CASES: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) FINDINGS & CASE STUDIES**

Researchers received data from 27 police forces on stalking and harassment-related Victim’s Right to Review (VRR) requests — 17 forces were unable to retrieve requested data within FOI time/cost limits.

**386**

**STALKING AND HARASSMENT VRR REQUESTS**

Received by all forces, 2015-2020

**468%**

**INCREASE IN STALKING AND HARASSMENT VRR REQUESTS**

Between 2015-2020

**VRR OUTCOMES**

- Decision to take no further action (NFA) upheld
- Request ineligible/out of remit for police VRR scheme
- Referred to Crown Prosecution Service for charging decision
- NFA overturned and proceedings started against suspect
- Other*

*Includes 8% police making further enquiries, 7% outcomes unavailable/not disaggregated, 2% original NFA decision overturned, subsequently relitigated as NFA, 2% NFA overturned, did not succeed to prosecution, 1% VRR request withdrawn by complainant, 1% no further information on record, 1% complaint upheld, disposal decision remained, 1% no response from interested party, so VRR not conducted.

**STALKING**

We define stalking as a pattern of fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated behaviour which is intrusive and causes serious alarm and distress and/or fear of violence to the victim.

**POLICE VRR**

The Victim’s Right to Review (VRR) came into effect on 5 June 2013, and the scheme was extended to police decisions on 1 April 2015. Under the VRR, crime victims can seek a review of “decisions not to charge, to discontinue or otherwise terminate all proceedings” by lodging a request with their local CPS office or with the relevant force in the case of the police VRR (CPS, 2020).

**IMPACTS FOR STALKING SURVIVORS**

Case studies show unsuccessful VRR requests can have severe impacts for survivors:

“When the case was NFA’d in December 2019 I felt like I’d lost a battle. I didn’t feel safe knowing that this was ‘procedure’.”

However, Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISAC) can support survivors through the process:

“Knowing I had support and someone fighting the same battle with me meant so much for my self-worth during a bleak process.”

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **MORE CONSISTENT POLICE RECORDING**

   ROBUST GUIDANCE & PROCEDURES TO ENSURE SURVIVORS ARE AWARE OF THEIR RIGHTS

2. **ENSURE THAT STALKING SURVIVORS HAVE ACCESS TO AN INDEPENDENT STALKING ADVOCACY CASEWORKER**