

I wish to make this submission to raise awareness on very critical gaps in our system, for victims of violence.

I am a victim of harassment and stalking, by a male who is a complete stranger. I would like to provide you with some background on my situation to help you to understand the "gaps" I faced in our system, throughout this terrifying experience

A man whom I met at a party over [REDACTED] years ago, came to my home one evening in [REDACTED], demanding to speak to me face to face. Unbeknown to me, he has been obsessing over me all of these years. I am a young defenseless female and he is [REDACTED] tall, terrifyingly he has stalked me and knows where I work, live and the car that I drive. He also has a criminal record, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Coincidentally, or not, he met my [REDACTED] a few of years ago and tried to befriend him. Since his appearance at my home, he has sent 'love' letters to me in the mail where he describes his sick and twisted fantasies which seem to have become his reality. He believes that we are in love and meant to be together, and I am refusing him because I am confused and playing "hard to get". As he still has my [REDACTED] phone number, he sends him [REDACTED] text messages begging him to "set us up" and pass on messages to me.

I visited my local police station to report each and every incident; the appearance at my home, and printed copies of every text message and letter that he has sent. Upon my first visit to the station, the police man on duty called the defendant to have a "stern talking to" him to leave me alone. This did not work and hours later he continued to send harassing text messages to my brother. After multiple visits to the police station with my evidence, the police officer ultimately advised me to obtain a personal safety intervention order.

Gap #1: While multiple police officers acknowledged his behavior as stalking, harassing, and described him as a "lose cannon" they could not apply for an intervention order on my behalf.

I was forced to take a day off work to attend the magistrate's court, where I waited for numerous hours and presented my evidence, all alone, in front of a magistrate. The magistrate recognized the severity and I was granted an interim order to appear at the court at a later date. This meant I would have to face my stalker.

Gap #2: I had done everything in my power to avoid interacting with this terrifying individual, and now I would have to face him in court. I couldn't stop thinking about what if we turned up at the same time and I had to face him outside the building? Or in the long "check in" line? To my absolute horror, he intentionally walked in to the protection area of the court to find me. This was absolutely horrifying. There must be more protection for women going in to a court hearing.

Gap #3: I had tried on multiple occasions to receive advice on how to approach the court before the hearing. I was told to attend my local community centre within an open session to speak to a lawyer. I could not believe that this was the only resource available to me. The police were unsure about the specifics of what happened at the court and were of no assistance in this area. We need more information, help and advice for women in this position.

Both the police and magistrate acknowledged that the defendant was mentally unwell and exhibiting behavior of harassment and stalking. In court, he tried to defend himself and requested another hearing, but in an effort to stop this matter progressing the magistrate persuaded him to accept and granted me a two-year personal safety order.

The personal safety order has eight "strict" rules that "protect" me from him. Unless he directly breaches them, he cannot get into trouble. The basis is that he cannot contact me, stalk me, or harass me directly; he cannot come within 20 meters of me and 100 of my home. I would like to point out "directly" as he constantly harasses me through my [REDACTED] which the police can do nothing about.

To my disgust, the defendant continued to harass me after the order was granted by texting my [REDACTED]. I presented the messages to the police however they could not do anything to help me, because he was not directly breaching the order. I was turned away and had to go home and deal with the fact that he had just gotten away with it.

Gap #4: The "personal safety order" needs to obtain stricter rules around indirect breaches. It should protect the defendant's family as they are also victims. I was terrified that the defendant could mistake my [REDACTED] as me, outside our home.

The defendant continued to harass me, he sent a letter to my home but this time he addressed the letter to my [REDACTED] to try and avoid it being recognized as a breach of the order, he even referred to me with a code name instead of my real name. Luckily, the police officers were able to find the incriminative evidence they needed to charge him with a breach.

The police officers gathered all of my evidence and charged him, this time thankfully I did not have to appear in court.

Gap #5: Although I feel a tremendous sense of relief knowing he has been charged with breaching the order, the police have not provided me with any further information about the case. I believe that as the victim I have the right to be updated on the matter and receive information regarding the outcome of the matter court hearing. It is a huge concern to me that he may be angry and aggravated by his punishment and ultimately come after me because of it. If I am aware of what is happening I can put the appropriate measures in place to protect myself.

I can't even begin to express just how much this experience has changed my life. I no longer feel safe or want to live at home; I have constant anxiety and cannot be left alone. I do not leave the house or come home when it is dark out. I am constantly looking over my shoulder and must always check in with someone to let them know where I am. I live in fear.

To my final point, as much as I would love to see this individual locked up somewhere, where he can no longer victimize me or worse, move on to his next victim; another helpless young female, I also know that this is not very realistic. It pains me to realise that until he commits a worse crime, he will not end up in prison. What I ask of you today is that you recognize the above gaps and help to build a system which will help women in this situation but also help people with mental illness. I truly believe that a court should have the authority to order men who exhibit specific types of behavior that threaten women, to receive psychiatric help. It could very well save mine, or another woman's life.

[REDACTED]