

Protecting Yourself, Family, Friends and Colleagues

There are steps you can take to help protect yourself and others, for example:

- Keep records of any intimidating behaviour (what, where, when) – the more details the better.
- Do not engage with individuals who are stalking/harassing you (offline and online).
- Report intimidation to your Internet Service Provider / Mobile Phone Company.
- Use 'Report Abuse' tools on Social Media platforms.
- Block/report trolls.
- Conduct an online Health check - review online information and minimise availability of personal information.
- Seek advice from your local force on personal safety and building security (e.g., home/workplace security survey)

Further advice and information is available from the links overleaf but if you feel you or others are in immediate danger, dial 999.

Key Links

This guide should be read in conjunction with the 'Joint Guidance for Candidates in Elections'. The guidance can be found on the Electoral Commission website. Please see the link below.

Electoral Commission

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent>

The CPS has also issued additional information for parliamentarians on responding to intimidating behaviour.

You can find further information on relevant offence on the link below

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/verbal-abuse-and-harassment-public>

Practical advice and information is available from:

Get Safe Online:

www.getsafeonline.org/

Suzy Lamplugh Trust:

www.suzylamplugh.org/

Victim Support:

www.victimsupport.org.uk/

Telephone: 08 08 16 89 111

Key Contacts

This space is left blank for you to record key contact details.

When it goes too far



Why this guide?

Political debate and discussion underpins our democratic process. The freedom to engage in debate and disagree with others is a key component of public life.

Sometimes, it can go too far. When it does, it may lead to harassment, intimidation or threatening behaviour and, in some circumstances, may constitute criminal offences. This can cause you to question whether you have made the right decision to participate and engage in public life.

This guide has been jointly produced by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), College of Policing and the Electoral Commission to help you respond to intimidatory behaviour. The guide provides practical advice based on the past experiences of candidates. It outlines relevant key indicators and offences, ways to protect yourself and links to other relevant information. The 'Joint Guidance for candidates in elections'. This guidance provides legal definitions and details of what might constitute a breach of criminal law in order to inform and assist candidates any contact they may have with Police and the wider criminal justice system. It is intended that both the guides are read in conjunction. Both of these documents are available from the Electoral Commission's website.

What might happen?

The election period places a number of pressures on candidates. This will include greater scrutiny on you and your political standpoint. You will be subject to heightened public exposure.

For the majority of candidates, and for most of the time, these pressures will not impact on your personal safety. However, there have been occasions where candidates have been exposed to unacceptable levels of harassment and intimidation. This can have a significant psychological impact on candidates and those close to them, and can affect their wellbeing. In some cases, these behaviours and actions have reached the criminal threshold. The worst examples have led to violence and injury.

It is important to recognise what might happen and the action you can take. The advice contained in this guide applies to both your political and private life – harassment and intimidation may also be directed at your family, friends, and co-workers. In addition to occurring in public life, these behaviours and actions can primarily occur in virtual ('online') spaces.

When Should I Contact the Police?

The actions and behaviours listed below may constitute a criminal offence and should be brought to the attention of your local police: Please refer to 'Joint Guidance for candidates in Elections' for legal definition of offences.

- Communications, on or offline, which contain abusive or threatening language.
- Repeated unwanted contact may constitute harassment or stalking.
- Racial, homophobic or other discriminatory abuse or threats.
- Fixation on you or an issue associated with your campaign.

The following indicators ('red flags') may signal an escalation and should be brought to the immediate attention of your local police (dial 999):

- Threat of imminent violence.
- Fixated ideas.
- If you become aware that the individual has access to weapons or has weapons skills.
- If the person releases personal information about you not already in the public domain.

