# UK’s first self-declared X-oholic jailed for sustained online harassment of Chief Constable



In a striking case that highlights the dark side of social media addiction, Jason Nicholls, a 55-year-old from East Cowes on the Isle of Wight, has become the first self-declared 'X-oholic' to be jailed in the UK. His obsession culminated in a two-year campaign of online harassment against Chief Constable Jo Shiner of Sussex Police, during which he shared hundreds of abusive posts, memes, and satirical images aimed at discrediting her work.

The court heard that Nicholls created a 'Twitter soap' titled 'Shiner Street', where he detailed the "ups and downs" of Shiner’s police force. His troubling creativity extended to crafting a wanted poster featuring her face for "crimes against policing," an act that prosecutors noted required a "significant degree" of planning. Magistrates emphasised that Nicholls displayed a "flagrant disregard" for Shiner's rights, leading to a 15-week prison sentence and a restraining order barring any further contact with her or Sussex Police, unless in genuine emergencies.

Nicholls attributed his actions to a longstanding struggle with his social media addiction, describing it as a relentless pursuit of instant gratification from likes and shares. In a candid moment during his court appearance, he stated, "I may be the UK's first registered X-oholic, but I won't be the last," highlighting not only his personal plight but also the potential for similar cases to arise as social media platforms increasingly dominate public discourse. He revealed that his addiction was exacerbated by ADHD, which made him particularly susceptible to such behaviours. Seeking forgiveness, he acknowledged the critical role of the police and expressed remorse for the distress he caused, stating, “I deeply appreciate the difficult and vital role the police play...”

This incident is part of a growing trend of online harassment targeted at law enforcement officials. For instance, Simon Tilley, a 44-year-old from Northampton, is currently facing multiple stalking charges after using social media to harass police officers, a pattern that underscores the problematic intersection of digital discourse and public service. Similarly, John Clough, a former Leicestershire police officer, was sentenced for stalking a female colleague, showcasing that the issue extends beyond the general public into the ranks of law enforcement itself.

The prevalence of such cases raises critical questions about the impact of social media on mental health and societal norms. Serial stalkers like Rhys Hardman and Matthew Hardy utilised platforms not only to spread misinformation but also to instil fear in their victims by creating fake profiles and weaving narratives designed to undermine personal safety. These instances highlight the evolving landscape of harassment, where technology facilitates anonymity and distance, often emboldening offenders.

As Nicholls serves his sentence, advocates are calling for more comprehensive resources to support individuals struggling with social media addiction. His case presents a unique opportunity for both individuals and authorities to consider the psychological ramifications of digital engagement, especially in a time when the platform in question—now called X—has transformed how people communicate, challenge authority, and connect with information. This ongoing struggle with online addiction and its consequences signifies a pressing need for societal interventions that address not only personal behaviour but also the broader cultural context in which these addictions flourish.

While Nicholls' story may be singular in its specifics, it reflects a broader societal issue. With the rise of digital platforms, the line between engagement and obsession has blurred, and the ramifications can be severe. The courts will need to consider not just punitive measures but also supportive frameworks to address the underlying mental health issues that often accompany such addictive behaviours. As public discourse continues to evolve in this digital age, it is crucial to cultivate an environment that fosters healthy interactions and safeguards both individuals and community figures from the perils of online harassment.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14706361/UKs-X-oholic-jailed-online-stalking-chief-constable-hundreds-posts-memes-dopamine-rush.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
2. Paragraph 5: [[2]](https://www.northants.police.uk/news/northants/news/in-court/2024/december/northampton-man-charged-with-stalking-police-officers-on-social-media-is-remanded-in-custody/)
3. Paragraph 5: [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2lywz93kko)
4. Paragraph 6: [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4n0rwllkz4o), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-60139693), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/05/cyberstalker-matthew-hardy-who-harassed-women-has-sentence-cut)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14706361/UKs-X-oholic-jailed-online-stalking-chief-constable-hundreds-posts-memes-dopamine-rush.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.northants.police.uk/news/northants/news/in-court/2024/december/northampton-man-charged-with-stalking-police-officers-on-social-media-is-remanded-in-custody/> - In December 2024, Simon Tilley, a 44-year-old man from Northampton, was charged with multiple counts of stalking police officers and perverting the course of justice. Tilley allegedly published false and malicious material online targeting two serving and one former Northamptonshire Police officer. The stalking charges related to his use of social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), and a WordPress website to harass the officers. Magistrates declined his bail application, remanding him into custody until February 2025, when he is scheduled to appear before a judge at Northampton Crown Court for a plea hearing.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4n0rwllkz4o> - In November 2023, 23-year-old Rhys Hardman was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison at Liverpool Crown Court for stalking and blackmailing a woman over several years. Hardman befriended the victim in 2018 and later harassed her online by creating fake social media profiles and posing as a police officer to obtain her phone number. He also blackmailed her into sending indecent images by falsely claiming he would pay her £1,500, which he never did. The victim reported the harassment to the police in November 2021, leading to Hardman's arrest and subsequent conviction.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2lywz93kko> - In August 2024, former Leicestershire police officer John Clough, 51, was sentenced to 22 months in prison at Northampton Crown Court after pleading guilty to stalking a female colleague and computer misuse. Between 2022 and 2023, Clough continuously messaged the victim and attended incidents she was involved in without necessity. He also accessed police systems to monitor her whereabouts. Despite the victim informing him of the distress his behavior was causing, Clough's actions continued. He resigned from the force in March 2024 and was issued with a five-year restraining order.
5. <https://www.cambs.police.uk/news/cambridgeshire/news/2024/march/jail-for-wanted-man-who-goaded-police-on-social-media/> - In March 2024, a man from Bretton, Cambridgeshire, was sentenced to 16 weeks in prison after pleading guilty to multiple offenses, including criminal damage, theft, sending malicious communications, assault, and harassment. The individual had been wanted by police and taunted them on Facebook, commenting, 'catch me if you can, I ain't hiding.' He was eventually apprehended on February 15, 2024, after detectives spotted him in Marsham, Bretton. In addition to his prison sentence, he was subject to a two-year restraining order prohibiting contact with three named individuals and attendance at a specified address in Peterborough.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-60139693> - In January 2022, Matthew Hardy, 30, was sentenced to nine years in prison at Chester Crown Court for stalking and harassing women online. Hardy created fake social media profiles to befriend women across the UK, gathering personal information to spread lies and create rifts among their families. He sent numerous messages, leaving victims in constant fear. One victim reported that she slept with her phone in her hand and a baseball bat next to her bed due to Hardy's harassment. Hardy's actions caused significant emotional distress to his victims, and his sentence was later reduced to eight years on appeal.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/05/cyberstalker-matthew-hardy-who-harassed-women-has-sentence-cut> - In October 2022, the Court of Appeal reduced the jail sentence of serial cyberstalker Matthew Hardy from nine to eight years. Hardy had harassed women by creating fake social media accounts to spread false claims about them. The judges acknowledged the sophistication of his offending, including the manipulation of social media accounts and the use of real photographs to create fake profiles. Despite arguments about Hardy's mental health conditions, the court maintained that his actions had a profound effect on his victims and upheld the reduced sentence.