

Avon and Somerset

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
Annual Report 2005-6



PROTECTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Foreward

It is now five years since the implementation of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, (MAPPA). Much has been achieved in terms of enhancing public safety in Avon and Somerset and the arrangements are rightly described as world leading.

There is now an intrinsic link with the work of police, probation and the prison service to provide public protection to all. Yet we are acutely conscious and aware that a number of serious case reviews and other reports published this year indicate there is still much to do to ensure the arrangements are fit for purpose to protect our communities nationally.

While we recognise that it is never possible to eliminate risk entirely, the public are entitled to expect the authorities to do their jobs properly. Making our communities in Avon and Somerset safer and reducing re-offending is our highest priority and one of the greatest challenges facing the agencies and staff involved.

Over the last year, all agencies responsible for establishing, maintaining or contributing to these public protection arrangements have been extremely busy. This is police, probation and the prison service as well as health, housing, education, social services, youth offending teams and organisations representing victims.

This year has seen us reap the benefit from the input of lay advisors appointed to the MAPPA Strategic Management Board. Two members of the public have been recruited locally to offer key support to the strategic management of the MAPPA process. Their role is essentially to ask often fundamental questions of senior practitioners and bring a community perspective to a process that could otherwise lose sight of its main function – to protect members of the public from serious harm.

This year in Avon and Somerset, all of those inputting into the MAPPA process have ensured that more high-risk sexual and violent offenders have been identified and proactively managed than ever before.

So what now for MAPPA in the next year?

In Avon and Somerset we are at the forefront of continuing to develop good practice and raise standards achieved through experience and research.

This year we hope to increase involvement from the community in the MAPPA process by using the Circles of Support network, where trained members of the community can help reintegrate and support offenders.

It is an area very much under development, but part of our challenge to improve accountability and communicate more effectively with the people of Avon and Somerset and also respond rapidly to new learning.

The journey is not always easy, but communities are safer because, as this report demonstrates, the responsible authorities are travelling together in the right direction.

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Ministerial Foreword by Gerry Sutcliffe MP

Making our communities safer and reducing re-offending is our highest priority and one of our biggest challenges. That is why the work undertaken through these multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) is so important. The supervision and management of sexual and violent offenders who pose the highest risk of serious harm, whether in the community or in custody, is complex and challenging; and is an aspect of public service where the public rightly expects all reasonable action to be taken.

Although we have made significant progress in the last five years with the development of MAPPA across England and Wales, the review this year of a number of tragic incidents where people have been murdered or seriously injured reminded us of the importance of reviewing performance, improving practice and learning lessons. It is vital that these tasks are undertaken by the probation, police and prison services, as well as by those other agencies that contribute to the assessment and management of offenders. The publication of MAPPA Business Plans by each Area in this year's annual reports offers a helpful and necessary programme of local development and review and must lead to enhanced practice. It will be essential that this progress is transparent and shared with local communities.

In addition to this, however, it is important that no opportunity is missed to consider other measures that will further enhance public safety. That is why we are undertaking the Child Sex Offender Review, to look at how a particular group of offenders, who provoke anxiety for many, are best managed in the community. The review is consulting a wide range of practitioners and key stakeholders including the MAPPA lay advisers, and will report around the end of the year.

Finally, in commending this report to you, I want to take the opportunity to thank all those involved locally in working with sexual and violent offenders, or in ensuring that these arrangements are fit for purpose. Where MAPPA is working well it is based on maintaining high professional standards and effective multi-agency collaboration in the delivery of robust risk management plans. While it is not possible to eliminate risk entirely, where all reasonable action is taken the risk of further serious harm can be reduced to a minimum and fewer victims will be exposed to repeat offending.



Gerry Sutcliffe MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Criminal Justice and Offender Management

Who does what in the MAPPA process?

Avon and Somerset Constabulary

The Avon and Somerset Constabulary, the Probation Service and the Prison Service all help to drive the MAPPA process.

MAPPA was set up in 2000 and at first, one police officer was attached to the Probation Service to start the process. Two years later Detective Sergeant Maurice Flay was appointed to start setting up a new team.

The Dangerous Offenders Unit expanded to comprise officers in Portishead, Central Bristol and Bridgwater covering the whole of the force area, the remit of the team is to robustly monitor and manage those violent and sex offenders living in the community and to support the MAPPA process in reactive and proactive investigations into the activities of the most dangerous offenders, including paedophiles.

Under the direction of DS Flay, the unit works closely with Police Child Protection Officers and Probation Officers sharing information and intelligence. A member of the Prison Service was also added to the team in April 2005 to enable vital information to be shared, prior to an offender's release.

More recently the unit has also teamed up with Mental Health workers as part of the management plan to ease such offenders safely back into the community.

Backing up the unit at Police Headquarters at Portishead are Dangerous Offenders Registration Officers, who are responsible for the registration of offenders when they are released from prison. Formerly known as the Sex Offenders Registration Officers, both violent and sexual offenders have now been brought under their remit. They are assisted by one member of support staff to administer ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offender Register). There are also two staff based with the Headquarters team responsible for the administration of the MAPPA process

"From one Police Constable we now have a dedicated team working together with the Probation Service to ensure the highest possible protection for the public," said DS Flay.

"The unit has gone from strength to strength and we are working more and more with our partners to manage our dangerous offenders."

In fact, the process has been so successful that, from April 2006, each Police District has its own designated Public Protection Unit, this has resulted in an increase in the number of Police Officers dedicated to the management of Dangerous Offenders throughout the Force area.

"Instead of being run from headquarters, the unit has been devolved to each district, which will have its own team of dedicated officers," said DS Flay.



The probation service

The probation service aims to reduce re-offending and to protect victims and potential victims.

It does this through assessment, supervision and control of offenders and through its direct contact with victims. Its assessments contribute to decisions about sentencing and release from prison and influence the level of control placed on offenders and the type of intervention which is made available to enable them to break the pattern of offending.

The probation service runs hostels where offenders can be kept under scrutiny and where those who want it can take advantage of support towards a crime-free life. It provides individual supervision and group work programmes, which research suggests have successful outcomes.

The probation service takes seriously its authority to return to court or prison any offender who does not co-operate with the terms of their supervision or licence. Contact with victims enables them to take steps to protect themselves and be supported and also allows the controls placed on an offender to be specific to the circumstances of each situation.



The prison service

The prison service protects the public by ensuring that those committed by the courts are kept in custody. It is the service's duty to ensure all inmates are looked after with humanity to help them adapt to law abiding and useful lives upon their release back into the community.



It also aims to work closely with inmates, fostering skills that will prove invaluable on release. These include addressing offending behaviour and improving educational and work skills through practical sessions.

The prison service is also playing an increasing role in the risk assessment of

offenders to ensure protective measures begin to be put in place well before release.

Social services

Social services have a statutory duty to protect children and vulnerable adults. In Avon and Somerset they are organised into five authorities. Social services professionals play one of the biggest roles in the multi-agency assessment of certain offenders. At the MARC level of risk assessment/management, they provide thorough reports and work closely with all relevant agencies in supervision plans of offenders.

Housing

Local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations) provide large numbers of rented properties in the area and manage the tenancies involved.

Their role within MAPPA is to help in delivering the fundamental aim of public protection by providing the type of accommodation most suitable to an offender, depending on the seriousness of the crime.

It is a key role of the housing provider to know the location and availability of its accommodation stock, ensuring that, for example, a sex offender is not placed near to potential victims.

One of the new developments in Avon and Somerset has been a protocol on housing dangerous offenders in the force area.

The protocol is an agreement between the nine district and unitary councils in the area and the MAPPP. It has now been formally adopted by each Council and enables dangerous offenders, who would otherwise be homeless, to be suitably accommodated wherever is appropriate in the area.

The protocol will ensure that the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committees (MARCs) are able to put housing provision as a key element of effective risk management plans for offenders.

Training takes place for housing staff to help them understand the important role they play in public protection.

In Avon and Somerset, there are 118 social housing providers managing in the region of 100,000 properties.

During 2005, 88.8 per cent of dangerous offenders subject to MAPPA were successfully rehoused within a period of three months from the date of referral into the system.



Mental health

The Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust Partnership (AWP) and Somerset Partnership NHS and Social care Trust provide statutory mental health services across the Avon and Somerset force region and beyond. They are

committed to playing their part in the MAPPA process.

Providing a wide spectrum of services, they work alongside GPs, offering advice and support to them and their staff.

Those people in the community requiring support are given it by the mental health services in partnership with social services. The Trusts offer in-patient units for those who require a period of hospital care and also operate a range of specialised units.

Among these is the Fromside Unit at Blackberry Hill Hospital in Bristol, a medium secure facility that can take people from within Wiltshire and Gloucestershire as well as Avon and Somerset. This unit caters for those with a mental illness, some of whom will have offended.

As part of the MAPPA process, members of the mental health services will attend the MARCs. Although the number of cases considered by the MARCs requiring Trust input will be comparatively small, where help is needed staff will provide a careful assessment of the risks presented by individuals to themselves, their carers and the general public. Mental health services will also provide information to other agencies at the MARC level, where it is deemed necessary.

Youth offending teams

Multi-agency youth offending teams have a statutory responsibility to prevent crime amongst 10 to 17-year-olds.

They provide a range of services to young people who have offended, and also seek to engage and support their parents. They also offer direct services to victims of youth crime, using a restorative justice approach wherever possible, and so are particularly aware of public protection issues.

All Youth Offending Teams use ASSET, a validated assessment tool, to identify young people's needs and rate their likelihood of further offending. Where there are particular concerns, a full risk of serious harm assessment is undertaken.

Youth offending teams have established systems for sharing information and have skilled, specialist staff who can manage risk effectively, while also addressing the vulnerability of the young people themselves. However, with the minority of young people who present a high risk, managers will take a decision to refer to a MARC.

The five youth offending teams in Avon and Somerset are committed to working in partnership with all other agencies involved in the MAPPA process.



Domestic Abuse and MAPPA

The police are working more closely than ever before with partner agencies to tackle the problem of domestic abuse.

With an estimated one-in-four women affected, domestic abuse accounts for 25 per cent of all violent crime and is continuing to become a high priority issue. Between March 2005 and April 2006 there were seven murders in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary area and one of those was related to a domestic situation.

Detective Sergeant Martin Longden, the police's domestic violence co-ordinator, said: "We are working closer now with partner agencies, in particular the Crown Prosecution Service, than at any other time.

"We recognise that domestic abuse is a specialist area and, therefore, we deal with it in a specialist way with specialist officers."

These officers have recently come under the umbrella of Public Protection units, which means there is more accountability and, more importantly, more support for them, said DS Longden.

"People are realising that domestic violence crosses all sections of society and it needs the bravery of victims for us to pursue investigations through the Criminal Justice System," he added. "However, we have looked at ourselves and realised that other agencies can help and do help. It has been recognised that resolving domestic abuse situations with a combined approach is far more important than achieving a force percentage figure for convictions.

"The police are now committed to working with other agencies to pursue and convict offenders and support victims.



Offenders: Risk management – MAPPA style

The MAPPA process is a multi-agency approach dealing with those offenders who have committed violence, a sex offence or pose a very high risk of causing harm.

These offenders are either supervised on Community Rehabilitation Orders, Automatic Conditional Release Licences or Discretionary Conditional Release Licences.

These licences include various conditions placed on an offender following their release, such as attending group sessions.

Since the introduction of MAPPA, Action Plans for Release drawn up for every offender, involve more agencies.

Liz Hodge, senior probation officer said: "We now have better risk management because we are able to call on psychiatric and psychological reports and get police input rather than it just being down to the probation service to manage the risk. It means we can protect the public more effectively."

Probation or police officers now put forward a comprehensive action plan for the management of a particular offender, which is ratified by the members of the MARC on a group decision basis. Once the plan has been drawn up, it is reviewed regularly.

From the police perspective, the MAPPA process has brought many added benefits.

Detective sergeant Maurice Flay, of the Avon and Somerset force, said: "What can happen now is that, in some cases, registered sex offenders will come out of prison on licence and have a probation officer attached to the case with an action plan already in place. After a period they will come off licence and the police will become the lead agency, so there is basically a period of hand-over when we are looking at those offenders from a multi-agency perspective, as opposed to just us dealing with them."

Liz Hodge says significant and effective working relationships are being built.

"Local health authorities and trusts, Social Services and youth offending teams are all making referrals into the MAPPA process," she said.

The public protection team has 11.5 officers across the Avon and Somerset area, as well as an area accommodation officer.

"We have good liaison with the victims unit, very effective relationships with our police colleagues in the dangerous offender unit and, additionally in April 2005, a seconded prison officer. It is planned that they will negotiate with prisons regarding allocation of offenders on our caseload to ensure that they go to a prison where the appropriate intervention programmes are available to address their risk factors, attend reviews, make appropriate links to exchange relevant information and feed into the Multi Agency Risk Conference process.

This is when representatives from all agencies risk assess and individual," said Liz.

She added: "Working as a team, we aim to effectively protect children and the public from violent and sexual behaviour, reduce the number of victims and reduce sexual, violent and dangerous offences."

The following offender case studies are based on real cases that occurred within the Avon and Somerset Constabulary area.

Case Study One: Indecent assault on a daughter

Mr A was given a two-year prison sentence after being convicted of indecently assaulting his daughter from the ages of six to 13.

The abuse was only discovered when another daughter, aged six, made allegations about him sexually abusing her. In this case the father was acquitted.

His adult daughter described being sexually, emotionally and physically abused by her father throughout her childhood. Her mother

indicated that the physical and emotional abuse began in infancy. There was also physical abuse to his other children and police were called out to a case of domestic abuse.

While awaiting trial, Mr A formed a relationship with a new partner who was

initially unaware of his conviction or the prison sentence. Despite this, the woman, who has four grandchildren all starting to reach his 'target' group in terms of age, decided to stand by him and the couple plan to marry.

Mr A's supervising officer spoke with his new partner to explain the process that would be followed on his release from prison.

She was told that:

Σ He would be placed in a hostel initially for ongoing assessment monitoring prior to a planned move-on;

Σ He was subject to a number of restrictions in relation to minors due to his conviction for sex offences;

Σ Social Services would need to assess the family in relation to any contact that he may have with her grandchildren

This was part of a MAPPA action plan to reduce the risk from the offender. Agencies, including the police's Dangerous Offender

Unit, the hostels and social services, worked together to put in place a series of measures.

These included putting the man on the Sex Offender Register, hostel residence, disqualification from working with children and other appropriate Licence restrictions in relation to minors.

There was also a condition of no contact with the victim, as well as work on his denial, and a social services assessment to ensure

his new family was aware of the situation and to make sure that protective measures were in place.

Through the Multi-Agency process, Mr A's potential risk was addressed by ensuring that his partner's

daughters, who did not know of his convictions, had a clear understanding of the offences. His partner was also clear about the nature of his offending and the risks he would continue to pose due to his sexual preference.

The result was that, following home leaves, Mr A was able to leave the hostel and move in with his partner prior to the end of licence, supported by ongoing visits from his supervising officer.

He ended supervision in a stable relationship and he was clear that the appropriate agencies had oversight of him for the future to help minimise the risks that he represents to children.

This is an example of multi-agencies working together pro-actively in the best interests of victims, potential victims and child protection.



Case Study Two: Breach of a Sex Offender Order

Mr B was referred into MAPPP Level 2 as a high-risk offender on both Oasys and Thornton Risk Matrix just before his release from a three-year sentence for breaching his Sex Offender Order.

He has a history of offending with convictions for attempted rape, indecent assault, indecent exposure and several domestic burglaries, which seem to have been sexually motivated.

Mr B continued to deny or minimise his offending, had not developed any victim insight and denied sexual motivation. A prolific offender, he mainly targeted adult women in their homes but had followed females as young as 14.

The risk management plan for release included hostel residence, licence conditions to address his sex offending behaviour, and residence and employment restrictions. Other measures included frequent reporting to hostel staff plus police monitoring of his Sex Offender Prevention Order (SOPO) and his Sex Offender Registration.

Mr B was unfit for employment due to a heart condition but he complied with hostel rules and regulations. He was not considered suitable for a group programme but undertook one-to-one work with his supervising officer to address the risks he represented in the community.

Police surveillance was carried out at intervals in relation to his SOPO and, while he would often

appear to fixate on particular females in his vicinity, he did not breach his licence conditions.

A referral was made to the area accommodation officer to house Mr B under the Dangerous Offenders Housing Protocol agreed with unitary housing authorities throughout the Avon and Somerset Area.

Mr B applied through his solicitor for some alterations to his SOPO to allow him to visit family in Ireland and attend a wedding in Europe. Exact details are passed to Europol or Interpol when such offenders travel abroad.

The fact that he complied with all the requirements placed upon him, addressed his risk issues and asked for variations in his SOPO giving reasons, was a significant step forward for a man who previously readily breached licence conditions and the restrictions of his SOPO.

Further offending cannot be ruled out. But, some months after the expiry of his licence, he is settled in his own accommodation in the community, is aware of the risks that he represents, has strategies that he can use to prevent further offending and is complying with his Sex Offender Registration.

With the oversight of MAPPP and co-operation between the probation service, the police and the housing department, the risk from this offender was managed in an effective, pro-active and constructive way in the best interests of public protection.

Case Study Three: Harassment and domestic violence

The subject of this study is a persistent offender with a history of displaying domestic violence towards women in relationships.

He was 15 when he was first convicted and went on to commit several offences of a violent nature, including ABH, wounding, battery and common assault.

One of these offences, in 1999, was an assault on his 16-year-old-girlfriend. After the assault, he prevented her from leaving his flat for 19 hours and threatened and intimidated her.

This was followed by three offences of harassment in 2003 and 2004 – all involving women.

The first victim was a nurse who supervised him while he was a patient in hospital and to whom he made sexual suggestions on the telephone.

The other two offences resulted in the subject being sentenced to five months imprisonment at Bristol Magistrates Court in 2004. This was for harassing a student, who lived nearby, and a nurse.

He approached the student on two occasions in a café and was later spotted standing outside her ground-floor bedroom window in the early hours. The nurse called the police after seeing the subject

peering into the window.

The subject was referred to the MAPPA team for his habit of going out late at night and apparently aimlessly wandering the streets. It soon became clear that he was attempting to peep through the bedroom windows of women.

He was being supported by a mental health team, who described him as suffering from a personality disorder and schizophrenia.

Despite the fact he had no convictions for sexual offences, a change in legislation in May 2004 meant that an application for a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) could be made using the harassment offences as the cause for concern.

This was granted but the subject breached the conditions of the order when he was found loitering under the bedroom window

of a woman and her partner. He received a two-year prison sentence for breaching the SOPO.

The subject has now been released and is monitored by the police, probation and mental health services. His SOPO is in place indefinitely and the probation service has imposed strict licence conditions on him while he continues to receive regular support from his mental health team.



Case Study Four: A potential risk to his children

After being sent to prison for two years for indecency offences against a young female over a decade ago, Mr D was considered to be a risk to his own children.

Assessed by probation as a high risk and by police as a low risk, he was referred to the MAPPP system.

Mr D was initially reluctant to examine his offending or accept any responsibility, despite having committed sex offences in his distant past. He was supported by his family who turned to the local church for help.

Social services were petitioned to allow Mr D to return to the family home on his release from prison and the family showed little or no understanding of the risk he might present.

While in prison, Mr D threatened to self-harm when he felt under stress or when attempts were made to address his offending.

Psychological assessments showed that he did represent a risk to children and a plan was drawn up to reduce the risk by getting him to acknowledge his offending and accept his sentence. A good support network was also established with the ongoing involvement of the probation service, support organisations, police and social services.

The supervising officer attended child probation conferences to discuss the issues and made sure that social services and probation were aware of the public protection needs.

Mr D was released to a probation hostel where, with the support of hostel staff and intensive individual work with his supervisor, he made such good progress that a supported move to independent accommodation, with supervised contact with his children, was agreed.

Both the probation and social services used the MAPPP process to examine strategies and undertook joint offence focused work with the offender and his partner, the mother of his young daughters. Throughout, there was close liaison with the police, probation and social services, who made regular visits to the offender and his family.

The risk management plan included requests for regular assessments by social services and joint visits to the family as necessary. The local church was viewed as having a pivotal role and, through the Anglican Churches Child Protection Co-ordinator, ensured that both the family and the offender gained an understanding of the risk factors presented.

This case shows how a very difficult and resistant individual can be encouraged to review his offending and risk through the MAPPP process by engaging all relevant parties in risk management plans. The welfare of his children and public protection of his victim and potential victims was viewed as a paramount consideration in all deliberations.

Case Study Five: Complex problems of the elderly offender

Mr C is an elderly man who has spent lengthy spells in prison for sexual offences against young boys.

He was classed as a high-risk offender by the police and the probation service after being sentenced to four years' jail for indecent assault on a boy under 16.

He has learning difficulties and was once under a psychiatric treatment order. During his sentence he took part in the Adapted Sex Offender programme, where he gained an understanding of issues around his offending, including relapse prevention.

However, - concern over his propensity to groom young boys and to seek associations with other sex offenders led to him being placed in approved probation hostel immediately he was released.

Having spent so much time behind bars, it was acknowledged that he had become institutionalised and needed the structured and supportive setting offered by the hostel.

It was also recognised that, despite his age, his risk factors were unlikely to be reduced significantly during his prison licence and that he could re-offend.

It was decided to find suitable accommodation to take into account all the risk factors and his particular needs. A referral was made to the accommodation officer who, through the Dangerous Offender Protocol, arranged for a tenancy in an elderly persons

supported housing scheme.

A risk management plan was devised to support the move from the hostel and links were developed with Somerset Care Support, which provided a support worker to visit on a weekly basis. This provided direct practical assistance and befriending and, with input from the supervising officer, ensured that Mr C's learning needs were properly addressed.

The plan aimed to resettle Mr C back into the community as a pensioner. It included compliance with the Sex Offender Register and appropriate sharing of information between probation, police, the support service and the tenancy officer of the district council.

This meant that all services could monitor the

offender's progress and associations and offer the community a sense of public protection. The offender has proved to be responsible and open in his contact with the support networks – which has enhanced Public Protection.

This case highlights the complex problems that elderly offenders with entrenched offending attitudes can present. It also shows the problems encountered in returning an individual to the community after a lengthy period of imprisonment and the difficulties MAPPP faces in trying to balance the needs of that particular individual and the interests of protecting the public, victims and potential victims.



Victims of crime: How the MAPPP process can contribute to keeping them safe

The Victims' Charter has been replaced by the Victims' Code of Practice, which came into force as a statutory obligation on agencies from April 3rd 2006.

This means that all the criminal justice agencies must carry out the duties in the code, including the Avon and Somerset Probation Area Victim Liaison Team.

The provisions of Section 69 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 regarding the victims of serious crime came into effect from April 2001 and placed this work on a statutory footing. This was updated under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. This also includes victims of offenders who are convicted of a sexual or violent offence and receive a restricted hospital order under mental health laws.

Victims are identified as a result of sentencing at the Crown Courts, or in the case of youths sentenced to Detention Training Orders, in the Magistrates' Courts.

In Avon and Somerset, the witness care units write to the victims and ask if they want their addresses to be passed on to the area victim liaison team so that they can be offered its service. During 2005, 16 people chose not to receive any further information about the offender.

The list of relevant offences for the purposes of this legislation was updated in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. This means that the victims of violent and sexual offences on this list can be offered contact with a victim liaison officer, and be given information about the offender. The victims can also contribute to the release plan for the offender by stating whether they would wish to have additional conditions placed on the offender's licence in order that they be protected – for example a condition not to contact them or to keep the offender away from where they or their family are living.

The victim liaison officer contacts staff in the probation service and other agencies in order to be able to provide the relevant information about the offender.

Information from the victims about the offender, the risk that he or she poses to them and to others is fed into the MAPPP process. The victim liaison officer can attend the MAPPP meeting with the other agencies to give the victim perspective with the victim's consent. This knowledge can then be used to prepare the risk management plan and the release plan.

The unit is staffed by a manager, four victim liaison officers – an increase in staff from last year – a specialist administrative officer and two administrative assistants, one of whom is part time.

Between January 2005 and December 2005, a total of 273 new victims were offered contact in line with the expectation.

As well as these victims, ongoing contact is kept with other victims where sentence occurred prior to this period. This includes the families of victims where the offender is serving a life sentence. Victims or their families can choose to take up the service at any time, even if they have previously declined it.

Case Study One: Fears in the family

Mr G is a 21-year-old man sentenced to two years' imprisonment for grievous bodily harm and possession of an offensive weapon.

He had a history of drug abuse and mental health issues and was jailed for stabbing John, his brother-in-law.

John had come to the aid of his wife, Jean, who was being threatened by Mr G.

John and Jean's two young children, aged 9 and 11, had witnessed their father being stabbed and the oldest son had been called as a witness at the trial. Both children were traumatised, as were the whole family.

Issues for the victim:

- John and Jean wanted to be kept informed throughout

- and wanted contact with the Victim Liaison Officer.

- Jean's parents and her sister were supporting the offender and her parents had offered him accommodation upon release. Jean's parents lived near to her home. Jean's relationship with her parents had broken down following the offence.

- John and Jean had concerns about the offender's ability to change and confront his drug addiction. They were also concerned that unless his mental health issues were addressed, he would re-offend again as soon as he was released.

- John and Jean were very concerned for their two sons. Both attended a local school and, if the offender were to live with his parents, the boys would have to walk past the home to reach school. The eldest boy, in particular, was having continued nightmares about what happened and was afraid of retribution from the offender.

Outcomes via MAPPA referral:

- A referral was made to MAPPA and it was agreed that the offender should be placed in a probation hostel away from the area in which John and Jean lived.

- Licence conditions were requested and agreed that prevented the offender from having contact with John, Jean and their two boys, who were named on the licence.

- An exclusion zone was put in place which prevented the offender from entering a substantial area around John and Jean's home and which also included the children's route to and surrounding their schools.

- John and Jean were able to be kept informed about all key stages during the

- sentence and, because of the close family link and the fact that Jean was sometimes receiving information via her sister about the offender, the MAPPA took the step of permitting the disclosure of more than the base line level of information to John and Jean, so that they could be sure of the facts that they were hearing.



Case Study Two: Keeping away the abusive father

The victim was a young girl who had been sexually abused over a period of time by her father.

The abuse came to light after she began to refuse to take part in any visitation with her father, also distancing herself from her younger sibling.

Following a meeting with the parent who had custody of the victim, a number of issues were raised and presented at the MAPPA.

There was a gap in knowledge about the offender's life history, and a further charge of a sexual nature had come to light during the trial. The involvement and risk to the younger sibling from ongoing contact with the offender was identified and it was also noted that the father was in denial about the offences against his daughter and had attempted to discredit her by writing letters to a number of different agencies.

MAPPA ordered an investigation and it was discovered that the offender, some years previously, had been charged with indecent exposure and also had an alias. He had followed a young girl, about his daughter's age, and would masturbate in front of her.

The parent no longer wanted to have contact with the offender and also described episodes of domestic violence.

With the father away, the younger child had become a changed person, no longer had the same behavioural problems

and did not want contact with the father.

The parent with custody was told that the child would be viewed as being at risk if the youngster did wish to see the father in the future.

All mail and contact sent from the prison was screened, and the offender was advised that he would no longer be able to contact his ex-partner without approval by his supervising officer.

The further risk of harm to his children were assessed as high due to the father's denial, and the offender, upon release from prison, was ordered to live at a probation hostel.

An exclusion zone and hourly reporting was also imposed to assist with monitoring his progress, and to restrict access.

The police officer, in addition, applied for a SOPO to prevent the offender from access/contact to other children under the age of 16.

All the victims' concerns and views were taken into consideration by the MAPPA.

Case Study Three: Fighting the fear of intimidation

The offender was a man who had been imprisoned for committing numerous sexual offences against children while working in care homes around the country.

Some of the victims lived in the area where the man was to be released and, although the unit was able to trace them and send a contact letter, none of them responded – which is not unusual in such situations.

However, members of the offender's family did contact the probation service as they felt they had also been victimised. Their experience had been much more about bullying and cruelty as they had grown up experiencing manipulation and a level of control that was dictatorial.

Although they had all been victims of

violence at times, they felt more affected by the sense of menace and threat of violence that permeated their home. Each one had concerns about the sentence and eventual release.

The members of the family were also identified as being victims of the man's intimidating and violent behaviour.

As a result of contact with the family, much information was gained about the offender, which contributed to the risk assessment, and the family's fears being taken to MAPPP meetings.

Various measures were put in place to safeguard the family that went a long way to alleviating the anxiety and distress they were experiencing.

Case Study Four: How information from the victim can affect the assessment of risk

The victim liaison unit contacted a woman after an offender had been sentenced to prison for domestic abuse.

She revealed levels of abuse and humiliation suffered by her at the hands of the offender which had previously been undisclosed.

She was afraid he would kill her when released because of the level of control he had exercised over her and their children and the threats he had made against her. She was determined to disappear so that he could not find her.

Contact with the domestic abuse police service was made immediately due to the level of concern for the victim and her safety.

The police view of the victim's vulnerability

and the potential level of harm that might be committed against her by the offender matched entirely with and the victim liaison officer's view and this was sufficient for the police to take immediate and ongoing action in order to ensure that the victim was protected.

The offender manager was notified immediately of all the information so that the case could be considered for referral into MAPPP due to the enhanced level of risk which the offender posed.

In addition, the fact the victim felt at ongoing risk from the offender meant that at the first sign of non-cooperation by the offender, enforcement action was taken and the offender recalled to prison.

Lay advisers

Over the past year two voluntary lay advisers have brought a fresh view to the work of MAPPA.

John Pridham and Charles Beal are the first lay advisers to be appointed in Somerset and among the first in the country to take up the new role. Their remit is to attend strategic management board meetings, to ask questions of the authority, offer constructive criticism and challenge assumptions and advise how the work of MAPPA can be communicated to the local community.

"Being a critical friend" is how John, the retired former head of adult education in Somerset, describes the job. "It has proved to be a fascinating insight into the work done behind the scenes to protect the public and prevent re-offending. We are obliged to attend the quarterly strategic management board meetings but both Charles and I have done a lot more than that. We have attended a number of Level 2 risk assessment meetings and have been very impressed with the way the system works and the level of inter-agency co-operation."

John sees his role as looking at the work of MAPPA from a non-professional point of view and feels his opinions are valued and taken into account. "Everyone has been very supportive and people have gone out of their way to invite us to as many of the processes as possible. The cases are dealt with very thoroughly and I feel the main agencies work very well together. The public can be reassured about the work that is being done to protect their safety and reduce the risk of re-offending."

Retired company director Charles Beal says his experience as a lay adviser has convinced him that the public should have a better understanding of the work of MAPPA.

"It has given me a much clearer insight. I have moved from being maybe slightly sceptical to realising that this is an effective way of dealing with dangerous offenders. I now want to see how we can support and drive the process forward," he said.

"Part of this involves telling the public about the work that is being done and I know ways of doing this are being talked about for the future."

Avon and Somerset Criminal Justice Board

Avon and Somerset Criminal Justice Board (ASCJB) is working to better manage and improve the criminal justice system locally.

It is one of a national network of Boards established by the Government in April 2003, which were set up as a direct result of the good practice and partnership working first pioneered by the Criminal Justice Agencies in Avon and Somerset. ASCJB has now been tasked by the Government to:

- Improve the delivery of justice
- Improve the service provided to victims and witnesses
- Secure public confidence in the Criminal Justice System

The Board meets seven times a year and brings together the chief officers from all the criminal justice agencies in Avon and Somerset including: Avon and Somerset Constabulary, The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS), The five Youth Offending Teams in the area (YOTs), Avon and Somerset Probation Area, Her Majesty's Prison Service, Victim Support Avonvale and Victim Support Somerset (co-opted members).

In order to achieve its targets, the Board has also set up a number of multi-agency task groups which meet on a regular basis to look at a particular issue and agree ways to improve results and move forward.

Current task groups include: Prolific and other Priority Offenders; Race and Diversity; Youth Issues; Domestic Incidents; Financial Investigations; Operational Issues; Training; Victims and Witnesses and Narrowing the Justice Gap.

There are approximately 10,000 members of staff working within the Criminal Justice System in Avon and Somerset.

These staff, together with partner organisations, such as the Racial Equality Councils, are dedicated to providing a first-class Criminal Justice System for all in Avon and Somerset.



MAPPA business plan

A new business plan has been drawn up to spell out the aims and objectives of MAPPA over the next three years.

Put together by MAPPA co-ordinator Mair Wise, it outlines future plans in four key areas until 2009. These are development strategy, monitoring and evaluation, communication and strategic partnerships, and training.

The main points are:

Development

- A review of resources to ensure staffing levels are sufficient;
- Moves to maintain duty-to-co-operate representation on the Strategic Management Board and more effective engagement of mental health and social services;
- Support the regional MAPPA group;
- Integrate revised MAPPA guidance into local procedures to ensure compliance with national requirements;
- Review recommendations on sex offenders and public protection;
- Implement integrated IT systems for effective information sharing;
- Develop the integration of South West prisons into MAPPA to aid effective risk assessment;
- Maintain effective public protection during police reorganisation;
- Develop clear guidelines for the management of offenders and the safety of victims of domestic violence;
- Promote opportunities for co-ordinated risk management by multi-agency teams working on high risk cases;
- Develop guidelines for joint police, probation and prison systems and processes for robust risk management.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regular reporting and analysis for an annual report;
- Meet performance targets;
- Meet national guidelines to improve the consistency and quality of recording information.

Communication and Strategic Partnerships

- Publication of an annual report to enhance public confidence;
- Development of a comprehensive communication strategy to improve public awareness and understanding of MAPPA.

Training

- Ensure all lay advisers are aware of SMB training opportunities;
- Implement a local training strategy for new SMB members, MAPPA chairs, practitioners, managers and MAPPA staff;
- Contribute to multi-agency training to increase understanding of MAPPA work in other agencies.

The people who help shape the MAPPA process

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Statistics on offenders 2005/06

Below is the statistical information relating to the offenders managed under the MAPPA system in the Avon and Somerset force area for the 12 month period between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006.

The figures are divided into four category areas, registered sex offenders, violent and other sex offenders and other offenders, those who do not fall within the other two categories, but are assessed as posing risk to the public.

The final category deals with the MAPPA cases, the so-called 'critical few' of offenders dealt with at the highest risk management level.

Category One: Registered sex offenders (RSOs)

	No. of offenders
(i) The number of RSOs living in the Avon and Somerset area on 31 March 2006	787
(ii) The number of sex offenders having a registration requirement who were cautioned or convicted for breaches of the requirement between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006	10
(iii) The number of Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs)	
(a) applied for	44
(b) interim SOPOs granted	7
(c) full SOPOs imposed by the courts between 1 May 2004 and 31 March 2006	44
(iv) The number of Notification Orders	
(a) applied for	3
(b) interim Notification Orders granted	0
(c) imposed by the courts between 1 May 2004 and 31 March 2006	0
(v) The number of Foreign Travel Orders	
(a) applied for	0
(b) imposed by the courts between 1 May 2004 & 31 March 2006	0

Category Two: Violent offenders and other sexual offenders

	No. of offenders
(vi) The number of violent and other sexual offenders living in the Avon and Somerset area between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006	374

Category Three: Other offenders

	No. of offenders
(vii) The number of 'other offenders' living in the Avon and Somerset area between 1st April 2005 and 31st March 2006.	167

Category Four: MAPPA cases

	No. of offenders	
	Level 3	Level 2
(viii) How many MAPPA offenders in the three previous categories were managed through the MAPPP system between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006?		
(a) Registered sex offenders	6	158
(b) Violent offenders and other sexual offenders	2	97
(c) Other offenders	1	166
(ix) Of the cases managed by the MAPPA system between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006 how many, whilst still in MAPPA		
(a) Were returned to custody for a breach of licence?	3	48
(b) Were returned to custody for a breach of a restraining order or sexual offences prevention order?	0	4
(c) Were charged with a serious sexual or violent offence?	0	4

Registered Sex Offender figures broken down by police district

	No of offenders per Basic Command Unit	Population	Offenders per 100,000 people
Bristol	271	393,910	68
South Gloucestershire	78	247,508	31
Bath and North East Somerset	72	172,189	41
Somerset East	115	261,779	43
Somerset West	163	250,694	65
North Somerset	88	191,439	45
Force total	787	1,517,519	51

