

Independent Review into the Police-led Management of Registered Sex Offenders in the Community:

Executive Summary

Foreword

In a 2004 House of Lords judgement in the case [of A \(FC\) and others \(FC\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department](#), the following was stated:

It is perhaps the first responsibility of government in a democratic society to protect and to safeguard the lives of its citizens – that is where the public interest lies. It is essential to the preservation of democracy, and it is the duty of the court to do all it can to respect and uphold that principle. But the court has another duty too. It is to protect and safeguard the rights of the individual. Among these rights is the individual's right to liberty.¹

This judgement encapsulates the dilemma of the dual state responsibilities to protect the citizen but at the same time to protect and safeguard the rights of the individual, including the right to liberty. I was tasked by the then Home Secretary with carrying out a fully independent review of how the police service of England and Wales deals with those convicted of a range of sex offences after they have been tried and convicted and after they have completed the sentence imposed by a court. Essentially the police, as the coercive arm of the state, are charged with somehow monitoring and managing those convicted of a certain category of offending long after their sanction and punishment, and whilst they are “ex-offenders” and at liberty.

My background and career history are in policing, and I am the first to recognise that there are some very dangerous, evil, and manipulative people living freely in communities across England and Wales. These include those convicted for a wide range of criminal behaviour, and those who offend but for a variety of reasons escape justice. Within the first group are those convicted of sexual offending and who, by nature of their crime and the legislative framework, are deemed to warrant additional state management and control by the police forces in England and Wales. Some of these people are amongst the most dangerous and their offending revolts, corrupts, and often ruins lives and families. We should not hide from this reality.

Some 25 years ago, the first measures were implemented to try and have greater knowledge and control of this group of sex offenders. This was supplemented some years later with the introduction of the multi-agency arrangements known as MAPPAs, by which the police, prison and probation services work together as the “responsible authority” to try and assess and manage the real or perceived risk from the convicted sex offender.

This is the first fully independent review of how the police service carries out the duty expected of it by the state and inevitably by the citizen when it comes to managing sex offenders; and, in line with the legislation and the above House of Lords ruling, how the police service seeks to protect the citizen whilst also protecting the rights of the individual – in this case, the former offenders who are

¹ House of Lords (2014). [Judgments - A \(FC\) and others \(FC\) \(Appellants\) v. Secretary of State for the Home Department \(Respondent\)](#). Paragraph 99.

at liberty having ended their sentence. This is in many ways an impossible task, especially so given the volume and diversity of the offenders' subject to police monitoring and where necessary, control, and at times support.

In carrying out this review, I have been struck by the dedication, commitment, and professionalism of all those involved in this work. Engaging with and both seeking to control and support those responsible for such serious offences is challenging, upsetting, and requires a special type of person. In this, I include police officers and staff, but also those from the many other criminal justice agencies and the voluntary and charitable sector who work tirelessly with both victims and survivors, but also importantly with ex-offenders. I have also been struck by the absolute support for this review and by the commonality of views and the agreement on the best way forward.

There is no question that the long-standing MAPPA arrangements are good, and the bringing together of key partners (the police, prison, and probation services) to jointly understand, assess and manage risk is not only logical and operationally sensible, but it is what the public would expect should happen. I am clear that this MAPPA model, some 20 years on, remains the right one to provide the best opportunity to protect the citizen and still be able to respect the liberty and rights of the individual.

Nevertheless, in engaging with policing at all levels and with a wide-ranging spread of partners and stakeholders, I am clear that there is a pressing need to change given the modern complexities of society, of offending and of policing, coupled with the inexorable rise in the current and future numbers subject to MAPPA and police supervision and control. If change is not made, it is clear to me that the volume and complexity will overwhelm, with the inevitable consequence that the ability to manage and control the most dangerous will be compromised, putting the public at risk of future serious victimisation. This cannot happen.

All policing should be about appropriately allocating resources against risk with a clear evidence base and rationale. This is all the more crucial given the widening mission and the many pressures faced by the service in a modern, global and technology-enabled world. Identifying and managing risk is implicit in this; yet, as this review will demonstrate, in the world of convicted sex offenders, this logic and rationale is not always evident, and resources and effort are at times perhaps wasted or, at best, not used efficiently around dealing with some of the lower risks.

Seeking to control the behaviours of the most dangerous offenders is onerous and requires a concerted and often multi-agency approach, and this review saw many excellent examples of this. That said, the ethos of effective "sex offender management" should be as much about reducing offending, wherever possible working with those convicted to help them on a pathway to desistance – to one of no more offending and being a worthwhile member of society, presenting only minimal risk. It is impossible to completely eliminate risk, other than at the point of death, and we have to accept this whether for sex offenders or any other offenders. In addition, working with those offenders convicted of a sexual

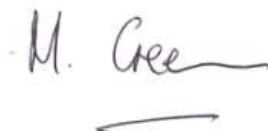
offence should avoid an overly negative, blame-laden and punitive mindset and approach which is not only contrary to the values of this country, but also fails to recognise and support the desired and necessary path to desistance, which brings the danger of forcing offenders back to the negative place that potentially spawned their initial offending, despite the evidence that many of those convicted will not reoffend.

It has been a privilege to be given the opportunity to review this area of policing and public protection, and I conclude this introduction with two comments, leaving the most important till last.

Firstly, there is a danger of a review making wide-ranging recommendations that are unrealistic and require huge financial investment. That is not the case with this review, and I am confident that the police service - together with partner agencies (the Home Office, the College of Policing and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services) - through some relatively simple process, leadership and culture changes can address many of the problems and blockages in the current system, and thereby better manage the numbers so that scarce and specialist resources are deployed to manage risk rather than process compliance.

Lastly, I refer to the many victims and survivors of sexual abuse and offending and their role in the long-term management of those who have abused them. Because of the complexities of some of the offending, it is not always possible to identify or engage directly with victims, but even accepting that, it is critical that their voice is heard. They are the ones who have been attacked, abused, and corrupted, and who suffer long after the offending and, where it happens, long after the conviction and sentence. When the initial attempts at sex offender management and control were introduced a generation ago, the context was very different and the victim engagement and involvement in the justice system was less than now. I am clear that the victim/survivor can and should have the opportunity to play a part in the long-term sex police offender management strategy and have sought to address this in this review. I am also clear that, with a strategic objective of wherever possible rebuilding and rehabilitating offenders to prevent further offending, the best way to serve and protect victims is to better serve offenders.

I thank all those who supported and contributed to this review, and more widely to those in the police service and beyond who work tirelessly with convicted sex offenders, seeking to protect communities and future victims whilst also helping to rebuild and rehabilitate wherever possible. To those who receive this report and hopefully progress my recommendations, I wish you well in this critically important area of work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Creedon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mick Creedon QPM

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1. Introduction

1. Following her commitment in the [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#) (2021), I was appointed to undertake an independent review of the police-led management of registered sex offenders in the community in England and Wales in March 2022 by (then) Home Secretary Priti Patel. No matter the catalyst, this review is exceptionally timely. As outlined in [section 2](#), it has been almost 20 years since the formalisation of the multi-agency public protection arrangements (see [Box 1](#)) and 25 years since the introduction of the notification requirements (see [Box 2](#)), during which time the landscape of sex offender management (SOM) has changed radically. This is, in my view and that of all whom I have spoken to across policing and the many interested stakeholders, an opportune moment to reflect on sex offender management as it is and as it should be going forward.
2. Despite its title and focus, it would be impossible to undertake this review looking solely at the policing aspect of what is chiefly a multi-agency process. To fully consider this subject matter, some exploration and commentary has been made on the contribution and role of other partners in the wider SOM sphere, but this is limited to their reported engagement with and impact on the police service's management of RSOs in the community and does not constitute a review of these other partners, nor their work, policies, regimes, or frameworks. The review has touched on the work and interactions with other multi-agency public protection arrangements ([MAPPAs](#)) agencies in a considered manner, seeking to understand their perspective on the police-led aspects and learning from best practice in the wider sex offender management system to inform recommendations that are, as far as possible, directed at the policing portfolio. Similarly, this work has been commissioned by the Home Office, whose remit for policing policy is limited to England and Wales, but I have tried to reflect on good practice in police-led sex offender management in the devolved administrations as part of this work.
3. To my knowledge, no singular review had sought to look at the police-led management of registered sex offenders in the community in England and Wales in the manner in which the (former) Home Secretary wanted this work to be undertaken. I was particularly pleased that there was a clear focus in the review's Terms of Reference on the position and views of victims and survivors. At the time of the introduction of notification requirements and when the MAPPAs arrangements commenced, there was not the understanding and sensitivity towards victims and survivors that there is now in policing and across the criminal justice system, and I have sought to address this issue throughout the review.
4. Whilst there has been extensive research in this area, including the insights generated from the HM Inspectorates, this independent review has sought to fill a gap in the existing literature and build upon the previous work done by esteemed colleagues that focused on other aspects or angles of the MAPPAs process. I was fortunate enough to have direct engagement with

academics in this important research area and, although not all of it is as yet published, I have drawn much from their insightful findings.

5. I have more broadly been overwhelmed by the support across policing and from stakeholders while conducting this review. Despite the emotive and often controversial subject matter, representatives from all manner of organisations provided constructive, impassioned contributions, for which I could not be more grateful. Moreover, I was able to carry out seven deep-dives into local police forces in England and Wales during the course of this review. In the visits, I spoke with staff at different levels within each organisation, with different responsibilities in and engagements with the sex offender management system, all of whom were open, honest, and enthusiastic. Without exception, I found myself speaking with enthusiastic and committed individuals, all of whom wanted to protect communities effectively and efficiently and recognised the complex and, at times, competing goals of their work. I want to thank all of them for their constructiveness and candour. As I assured them at the time, these visits were not an inspection or an attempt to judge performance; as such, I have kept the forces anonymous insofar as possible so as not to break their trust. Representatives from other forces did provide evidence to my review, though, and I have made reference to this only with their express permission. In this review, I have sought to fairly and objectively present the extensive information provided during these consultations which has included every rank in the service, NPCC policy leads, Police staff managers, MAPPA Chairs and independent advisors, and Police and Crime Commissioners and their executive officers. Their views and feedback may not necessarily represent official policies or frameworks at a local or national level, but it is an accurate reflection of these individuals' own reported practices, perceptions, and experiences of their work and its undertaking.
6. Undertaking this review has been exceptionally interesting, challenging and rewarding as this is an incredibly complicated subject matter. Registered sex offenders are not a static homogeneous cohort with similar motivations and patterns of behaviour, offending and risk. Whilst there is an incredibly dangerous minority for whom extreme investment is required by police and the state to adequately manage the risk that they pose so as to best protect citizens, this is not the case for all. For some of the offending cohort, they remain under some form of post-sentence state supervision for many years and even life, yet, with the right interventions, they can go on to lead respectable offence-free lives, providing positive value to society and presenting minimal risk to their communities.
7. Registered sex offenders are unusual as a group in that they are convicted offenders who have completed the sentence and punishment imposed for their offending and yet remain under a form of state supervision for many years, and sometimes indefinitely. Many highly dangerous offenders involved in organised crime, fraud, money laundering, domestic abuse, gang activity and a range of other criminality do not face such attention at the end of their sentence, despite the fact that many will reoffend and continue to pose a serious threat to society. This is not to suggest that the

current arrangements for managing sex offenders are wrong, but rather to recognise that, in terms of managing risk and protecting communities, an unequal process, structure and investment is in place.

8. At the heart of all policing is the assessment and management of risk; it informs all processes and working practices, and is especially pertinent in the management of sex offenders in the community. That a culture of risk aversion exists across many areas of policing is understandable for organisations charged with protecting the vulnerable, challenging serious criminal behaviour, and dealing with life threatening risk on a daily basis. Within this review, I want to be clear that the police cannot manage away all risk and the reality is that some offenders (sexual or otherwise) will reoffend even when they present little or no risk. In considering the effectiveness of any measures in place to manage risk, we have to acknowledge that no system can or will ever be infallible.
9. In undertaking this review, I was aware that the Home Office was carrying out an internal review to consider the impact of convicted sex offenders changing their names. As this was not a substantial issue raised by forces, and to avoid duplication of effort, this is not a topic that has been explored further within this review. That said, I am confident that there will be read across from my review, and many of the recommendations made in my review will have relevance or direct application to mitigating risks associated with sex offenders attempting to change their names.
10. I have sought to identify implementable, scalable and realistic opportunities to improve the police-led sex offender management in England and Wales, which are set out in full in [Table 1](#). However, I would note that this review was necessarily limited on both time and resource and, accordingly, the review has signposted some areas for which more could have been done to explore and uncover the issues within. Whilst I am proud of what the review has achieved in these short months, I firmly believe that further investment would be needed to build a sufficiently robust evidence base to support any more specific proposals.

Box 1: Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

The multi-agency public protection arrangements known as MAPPA are the set of arrangements through which the Police, Probation and Prison Services work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community in order to protect the public. They were introduced formally in the early 2000s in England and Wales. As soon as a person is convicted or cautioned of an eligible offence (or found not guilty by way of insanity or disability for an eligible offence), that person is entered into MAPPA.

Category 1: Registered Sex Offenders

In addition to MAPPA management, registered sex offenders are subject to notification requirements under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. These offenders will be managed under MAPPA until the end of their notification period.

Category 2: Violent Offenders

Violent offenders who have been sentenced to 12 months or more in custody or to detention in hospital and are now living in the community subject to Probation supervision. These offenders will be managed under MAPPA until their licence expires.

Category 3: Other Dangerous Offenders

Other dangerous offenders who have committed any offence in the past and are considered to pose a risk of serious harm to the public, to the extent that a multi-agency approach to managing their risk is needed. These offenders will remain under MAPPA until it is assessed that a multi-agency approach is no longer required to safely manage their risk.

Category 4: Terrorist or Terrorist Risk Offenders

Terrorist offenders have been convicted of an offence under terrorism legislation (excluding the minor offences that are not caught by Part 4 Counter-Terrorism Act 2008) or of an offence under non-terrorism legislation which has been found by the sentencing judge to be connected to terrorism under the Counter Terrorism Act 2008. A terrorist risk offender refers to any offender, convicted of any offence, who is assessed to present a risk of committing an act of terrorism.

MAPPA is not a statutory body in itself but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner. Agencies at all times retain their full statutory responsibilities and obligations.

Though primarily seen as a tool for His Majesty's prisons and probation services and the police, incorporates other partners who may lead the management of an offender, such as Youth Justice Services for offenders under the age of 18 or specialist police forces, as well as so-called Duty To Cooperate Agencies who have a responsibility to support the management of offenders and the risks that they pose, ranging from physical and mental health services to local housing associations and Border Agencies.

Box 2: Notification Requirements

The notification requirements are an automatic consequence of a conviction or caution for a Schedule 3 offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. These offenders are often referred to as being on the “Sex Offenders’ Register”. The principle of notification was introduced in 1997, but has expanded and evolved since then, as has the range of information that the convicted offender must supply to the local police.

Whilst subject to notification requirements, individuals will be asked to provide the police with details including:

- date of birth
- national insurance number
- name and any other names used (including names used online)
- passport, bank account and credit card details (including joint and business accounts)
- home address – either their sole or main residence in the United Kingdom, or where they regularly reside / can be found
- (upon request) expected dates or periods when they will reside with a child; and
- any changes to any of the above details.

This information allows the police and other authorities to monitor an offender and to manage any ongoing risk that they pose. The duration of the notification requirements, which range from 2 years for a caution to indefinitely for custodial sentences over 30 months, are set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the courts have no discretion over this.

Where the offender:	Notification period (aged 18 or over upon conviction)	Notification period (aged under 18 upon conviction)
Is sentenced to imprisonment for 30 months or more (inc. life)	An indefinite period	An indefinite period
Is admitted to a hospital subject to a restriction order	An indefinite period	An indefinite period
Is sentenced to imprisonment for more than 6 months but less than 30	10 years	5 years
Is sentenced to imprisonment for 6 months or less	7 years	3 ½ years
Is admitted to hospital without a restriction order	7 years	3 ½ years
Is cautioned	2 years	1 year
Is given a conditional discharge	The duration of the conditional discharge	The duration of the conditional discharge
Received any other disposal (such as a community punishment or fine)	5 years	2 ½ years

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Remedial) Order 2012 provides individuals who are subject to indefinite notification requirements the opportunity to apply to the police for a review of this requirement after a period of 15 years (8 years for juveniles) has elapsed. Individuals have the opportunity to demonstrate that their risk has been minimised to a degree that it is no longer necessary for them to be subject to the notification requirements.

Children and young people, who were under the age of 18 when convicted or cautioned, can be subject to indefinite notification requirements like adults; however, durations are halved for finite periods. Likewise, juveniles can apply for a review of indefinite notification requirements after a period of 8 years.

2. Context

11. More than 25 years have passed since the Parliamentary debates that preceded the introduction of the [Sex Offenders Act of 1997](#). This was the first clear step taken by the state to identify and manage the long-term risks of those convicted of sexual offences.
12. Despite some criticism over the years (see for example [MAPPA joint thematic inspection 2022](#)), there is some clear evidence to suggest that registered sex offenders are being managed effectively under the current model. In terms of the concept of inter-agency intelligence-sharing and the identification and active management of risk, this is what the public would rightly expect of policing and the partner criminal justice agencies. MAPPA provides a clear structure, process, accountability, and oversight to achieve this in the management of registered sex offenders. However, the challenges faced by policing have changed markedly since 2001. As a result, the service now exists with an ever-widening mission in an increasingly global and digital world, with new offences and reduced resources.
13. In light of these persistent and growing challenges, it is important to undertake this timely review to consider whether MAPPA is still fit for purpose in this modern, technologically-evolved offending environment. Also, it is crucial to consider how the police service can most effectively manage registered sex offenders' risk, alongside these ever-growing demands and expectations.
14. Notification requirements were first introduced in England and Wales in 1997 for individuals cautioned or convicted for sexual offences, following the commencement of the Sex Offenders Act (1997). Since their initial introduction in the UK, the notification requirements have been added to and strengthened on several occasions. Some of these changes were catalysed by the abduction and murder of eight-year-old Sarah Payne by a registered sex offender in July 2000. This case sparked outrage across the country and ignited a conversation around how to best protect children from registered sex offenders living in their community. This ultimately led to the introduction of "Sarah's Law" ([the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#)) in 2011, which sets out a mechanism for the police to disclose relevant information about an individual's previous convictions, primarily convictions for sexual offences against children, or other relevant information to the person best placed to protect the named child. This case also contributed to further tightening of notification requirements through the [Criminal Justice and Court Services Act](#) in 2000. The additional requirements imposed on registered sex offenders were:
 - the time scale for new offenders to register post-conviction was reduced from fourteen days to three;

- the initial registration was then to be made in person, as opposed to via written notification as originally set out in the Sexual Offenders Act 1997;
- the police were given powers to photograph and fingerprint offenders on their initial registration at a specified police station, and the sanction for non-compliance rose significantly from a maximum of six months' imprisonment to five years; and
- registered sex offenders would have to notify the police if they were going abroad for more than eight days.

15. The principles of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were formally introduced under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, with commencement in 2001. These arrangements were consolidated by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 which made the Police, Probation and Prison Services 'responsible authorities' and enforced further multi-agency cooperation by giving other agencies a 'duty to cooperate' in each of the police and probation areas in England and Wales. These amendments were central to how MAPPA operates today. Furthermore, the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 2003 strengthened notification requirements by including additional offences which required registration and were therefore included in the MAPPA regime (for example, trespass with intent to commit a sexual offence). The SOA 2003 also introduced the annual verification of offender's details and Chief Constables were given a power to apply for a notification order making an offender – whether a UK or foreign national - with relevant convictions abroad subject to the notification requirements.

2.1 Volume

16. The number of Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) managed under Category 1 of MAPPA has increased by 111% since 2006/2007, reaching over 64,000 in 2021, with persistent year-on-year growth between 3-8%.² This consistent growth in numbers since the introduction of MAPPA has been, and will continue to be, relentless due, at least in part, to the lengthy notification requirements periods outlined in [Box 2](#). It is easy to enter the system on conviction, but it takes many years to exit. Some evidence was made available to this review that indicated that a significant proportion of RSOs are subject to indefinite notification requirements, which is not surprising given the severe nature of sexual offending and the relatively low sentencing bar for long or even indefinite notification periods. The high volume of indefinite notification requirements imposed on registered sex offenders creates an inevitability around the continued and rapid growth in numbers, as relatively few existing registered sex offenders will see their

² HM Government (2021). [MAPPA Annual Report 2021](#). Note: MAPPA data may be subject to some inaccuracies due to it being a large-scale recording system.

notification period end and consequently drop out of the MAPPA system each year. In addition to this bulk of RSOs remaining indefinitely on the register, a growing volume of registered sex offenders has continued to enter the MAPPA system each year, driven by three key factors set out below.

1. Proliferation of the internet

17. In 2020, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published a report on the Internet and Child Sexual Abuse, which highlighted the 'explosion in online-facilitated child sexual abuse'.³ Between 2012/13 and 2020/21, there was a 912% increase (from 3,500 to 35,000) in recorded obscene publications offences.⁴ The numbers are immense and every professional view on this area of offending will stress that this is in no way the totality of the offending. The growing volume of child sexual abuse material available on the internet has made online offending much more accessible to those with a sexual predilection for children. It is impossible to know whether the internet has increased the number of individuals with such a predilection but, prior to the digital explosion, the reality is that it was much harder to turn a disturbed interest into the actual viewing, making, and sharing of images, and it was also far more difficult to meet and engage with children privately and/or anonymously. The modern world has undoubtedly provided an opportunity previously unavailable and made it significantly easier for potential offenders to act on these impulses through online offending.

2. Societal and Criminal Justice System awareness around sexual offending

18. Another notable shift since 1997 contributing to the continued growth in numbers of registered sex offenders managed within the community is the shift in culture around reporting sexual offending. As previously noted, much sexual offending goes unreported due to the historically stigmatised nature of the crime and at times the coercion and control exercised by the offender over the victim. However, the exposure of several high-profile and historic abuse cases over recent years has sparked a global conversation around rape culture and child sexual abuse.

19. Whilst it would be erroneous to argue whether the prevalence of rape and sexual violence has materially changed in the last five years, evidentially the reporting of rape has increased in recent years, from approximately 29,000 adult rapes recorded by the police in 2015 to more than 58,000 in 2020.⁵

³ IICSA (2020). [The Internet: Investigation Report \(iicsa.org.uk\)](https://www.iicsa.org.uk)

⁴ HM Government (2022). [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2021). [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020.](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

(Figure 4: Police recorded sexual offences by offence type, England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2020).

20. In parallel to the above, despite the fact there are still challenges, there is no doubt that the response, attitude, culture and structural approach of the various criminal justice agencies and system has changed over the last 20 years. Many will suggest that this has not evolved enough - that victims are still not properly served, whilst offenders continue to evade justice - but without seeking to disagree with these points, I believe that the landscape and ethos have changed significantly since the inception of MAPPA.
21. Police forces have made significant investments in response to extreme cases over recent years. While some will point to the media attention around celebrity cases, the impact of graphic reporting such as the recent [Rotherham report](#) by Alexis Jay cannot be understated in driving these changes. Forces have adopted increasingly innovative investigative methods to uncover sexual offending in light of these cases. One example, of which I'm particularly proud, is Operation Retriever in Derbyshire, which was considered ground-breaking in 2009 for its use of covert surveillance tactics alongside a safeguarding investigation to obtain evidence and uncover the organised and group sexual exploitation and trafficking of vulnerable children. The success of Operation Retriever, which received accolades for its pioneering investigation, paved the way locally and nationally to improve early intervention and detection of sexual exploitation. Huge efforts have been put into the police capacity and capability to understand and respond to differing threats in this space – whether challenges related to online offending environments or to investigating historic, institutional, or impossibly persistent sexual offences – which has improved not only the handling but also the detection of sexual offending.

3. New Offences

22. Since 1997, there have been numerous new sexual offences added to the statute book, reflective of the changing criminal, technological, and political landscape. The proliferation of the internet described above has created a new online offending environment, which has catalysed the introduction of new laws to respond to this new threat, while new offences have been introduced in light of the shifting societal pressures and perceptions of other harmful sexual behaviours. There are offences now on the statute book that were not even conceived of 25 years ago.
23. The creation of these new offences may present police with more opportunities to pursue and charge perpetrators – closing loopholes and punishing previously legal behaviours – which could consequently increase the number of registered sex offenders and, hence, the pressure on the police service managing their risk. Set out in [Figure 1](#) is a timeline of the new offences added to Schedule 3 of the SOA 2003, all of which could have contributed to growing the cohort of registered sex offenders managed in the community.

Figure 1: Timeline of offences added to Sexual Offences Act 2003



24. In parallel to the creation of new offences is the move for longer sentences. Notably, the average custodial sentence length (ACSL) for sexual offences has increased over time.⁶ In 2005, the ACSL for sexual offences was 41.6 months⁷; by 2021, this had risen to 61.2 months⁸, an increase of over 47%. Similarly, sentences for specific sexual offences have increased. Revised Sentencing Council guidance from 2022 means prospective child sex offenders who are caught in sting operations could receive longer sentences; the new guidelines for courts in England and Wales state that a real child does not have to exist for offences such as arranging a child sex offence or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity. In addition, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts ([PCSC Act](#)), which received Royal Assent at the end of April 2022, includes a number of measures around child sexual

⁶ Note: ACSL is worked out by adding all sentence lengths together and dividing them by the number of sentences added together – this calculation does not include the life sentence, as this is an indeterminate sentence, and it is not known how long offenders will serve in custody.

⁷HM Government. Criminal justice system statistics quarterly: December 2014 - [Outcomes by Offence data](#)

⁸ HM Government. Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2021 - [Outcomes by Offence data](#)

abuse, including an amendment to ensure those that target children under 13 are sentenced with consideration of the additional vulnerability of the intended victims.

25. While recognising the seriousness of these crimes, it is clear that the increased custodial sentence lengths will have the implication of extending offenders' notification period (see [Box 2](#)), and consequent period of post-custodial management in the community. Once again, the impact of political decisions designed to punish and protect will continue to have an impact on the police service charged with the long-term post-sentence supervision of the convicted offender.

2.2 The implications on policing

26. There is no doubt that this drastic change in landscape since the inception of current sex offender management processes has placed unprecedented pressures on both policing and the criminal justice system, which are increasingly struggling to cope with the scale of the challenge.
27. The challenges for policing in responding to the new digital offending environment, combined with a persistent growth in sex offender numbers and low rates of deregistration, are further exacerbated by the long-term reduction in policing resources. In 2010, the new coalition government announced a period of austerity, with an average 19% four-year cut in budgets of government departments. This has had a significant impact on Home Office grants and policing budgets in England and Wales. Since 2009/10, although not distributed evenly across the countries, spending on police services in England and Wales has declined by 16%.⁹ Unsurprisingly, this has had a detrimental effect on officer numbers. The number of police officers has fallen by 14% since the peak of 2009, from nearly 144,000 to around 123,000 officers in 2019.¹⁰ At the same time, the reduction of police staff numbers was proportionally greater, falling 19% from 79,000 in 2009 to 64,000 in 2019.¹¹ This significant decrease in police officers and police staff numbers has an obvious effect on the ability of the forces to respond operationally, to manage risk and threat and to deliver front line services, including managing sex offenders in the community.
28. While budgets and officer/staff numbers fell post 2010, the police service saw an ever-widening mission, with new and growing challenges including serious and organised crime; international terrorism; cybercrime; and fraud. These challenges came alongside the introduction of locally elected Police and Crime commissioners, often with a localist agenda requiring visibility and reassurance, and with the service increasingly being asked to fill the gap created by wider cuts in other public services. In this environment, and considering the continued growth in RSO numbers, the demand and workload for management of sexual or violent offenders (MOSOVO) teams has only increased and will continue to do so. Whilst the police uplift

⁹ HM Government (2013). [Local authority revenue expenditure and financing](#). [Last updated 21 July 2022].

¹⁰ Home Office (2019). [Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2019, second edition](#). Table H3.

¹¹ Home Office (2019). [Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2019, second edition](#). Table H3.

programme may alleviate some of these pressures built over the last decade and more, the extent to which any additional resources will be allocated to this specific area of policing is unknown.

2.3 Summary

29. Whilst there is some reason to believe that the current sex offender management model is effective in managing registered sex offenders in the community, the continual growth in numbers is inevitable. If the average year-on-year increase of 6% was to continue¹², the number of registered sex offenders managed under MAPPA would be nearing 80,000 within the next two years and would reach over 100,000 by 2029.
30. On this basis, I have considered four potential options to address the challenge of the police-led community management of registered sex offenders in a time of continued growth:
- I. Refuse to accept the continued growth in numbers as inevitable, instead altering the whole process built over the last 25 years to accommodate for this. This would include a set of current qualifying sexual offences no longer attracting notification requirements, meaning that any such convicted offender would not be subject to the RSO management processes. For several reasons, I have rejected this option, which I see as publicly unpalatable, logistically and legally complex, and operationally naïve.
 - II. Accept the continued growth in numbers as inevitable, continue with the current operating model and substantially increase investment in resource for sex offender management teams accordingly. I have rejected this option as this approach would be enormously costly in fiscally challenging times and would arguably not represent the best use of resources against risk.
 - III. Accept the continued growth in numbers as inevitable, retain the same operating model and simply demand that the current sex offender management teams and resources work harder. However, there is substantial evidence seen by this review that would suggest that the current MOSOVO staff are already working to capacity, and in many places are overly stretched. I have rejected this option as I believe that such an approach would be naïve, short-sighted, and very unwelcome for staff working in this area, while also frankly bringing unnecessary risk to the public by effectively diluting the management resource and response to RSOs in their community.
 - IV. Accept the continued growth in numbers as inevitable and seek to work differently. This option looks to recognise that resources are

¹² HM Government (2021). [MAPPA Annual Report 2021](#).

limited, especially in the current fiscal climate, and asking that the police service and partners should seek to make better use of them. This involves creating a new, modernised business process model that more effectively and efficiently manages risk to better protect the public, whilst still providing a clear structure with oversight and accountability.

31. Following my field work in forces, literature review and extensive stakeholder engagement, I only see one of these options as realistic and viable: option 4. This review will consider how we can adjust the current sex offender management model in a way that is proportionate to the risk posed by offenders, while mitigating some of the increasing pressures on policing, both operationally and financially. Public protection should remain policing's priority in all instances, and the effective management of risk is fundamental to achieving this aim. While many aspects of the current system are effective, the current use of MAPPA and the process of sex offender management is simply not sustainable nor efficient, and I sincerely hope my recommendations can support the longevity of this model.
32. My recommendations from this review are presented in full in [Table 1](#) but, given the sensitive and tactical nature of the supporting evidence and arguments, this has been redacted from this version of my reporting. Rest assured that the full documentation with the necessary evidence and rationale has been made available to key stakeholders and decision-makers within HM Government, law enforcement, and criminal justice agencies to allow for the most informed consideration of my recommendations by those that I envision implementing them.

3. Recommendations

Table 1: Table of Recommendations

Organisation	Action	Timeframe
His Majesty's Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that all relevant partners strongly support the continued development and timely roll-out of MAPPS, with a clear focus on the benefits this can afford in terms of information-sharing and time efficiencies. As a minimum, I would recommend MAPPS delivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role-based and mobile access; - The ability to receive relevant registered sex offender data remotely - Interfacing with Police National Computer, Police National Database, local intelligence platforms, and tools such as the HM Passport Office watchlist and broader intelligence applications; and - Management information and data analytics functionality. 	ASAP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the Government commissions further research into escalating behaviours to identify opportunities for early intervention. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the Government commissions research into non-judicial diversion options for some online offenders. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the Government explores the provision of a Sexual Offending Prevention Fund, similar to that of Domestic Abuse. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that notification requirements are reviewed to explore whether the current details collected are fit for purpose, considering the incorporation of additional details such as email addresses and telephone numbers. 	Within 12 months

His Majesty's Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly recommend that discretion is incorporated into the notification requirement regime. Whilst the requirements might still be common at the point of conviction, the subsequent risk assessment and management plan should vary, allowing forces to assess which details to collect and how individuals should notify, affording opportunities for online or remote notification where appropriate. • I recommend that notification requirements are reviewed to explore whether courts should be afforded discretion over the application of notification requirements, such as where registration may not be deemed proportionate. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend the exploration of a single risk assessment system across police and probation; not a single assessment, but a single system that affords seamless transition between agencies. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the period after which requests can be made to remove an offender's notification requirements is reduced from 15 years to 10 years, aligning this process with the Ministry of Justice time period applicable to those subject to Imprisonment for Public Protection and to life licence supervision. • I recommend that legislation places the responsibility on the police service to proactively consider and, if suitable, apply for indefinite notification requirements to be removed where justifiable without applications from the individuals. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that no further cohorts of offenders be made subject to sex offender-style registration or notification requirements. Instead, where significant risk is identified and all available options have been considered, including the use of civil orders, the focus should be placed on utilising existing MAPPA processes in order to manage the risk. In particular, much better use should be made of MAPPA Category 3 for managing high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators. 	Immediately
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend the introduction of central repositories for collating serious case reviews and police internal management reviews, and the creation of a mechanism for the national sharing of emerging patterns and national recommendations. 	Within 12 months

His Majesty's Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the role of Lay Advisors within MAPPA be overhauled, looking at increasing their involvement in meetings, enabling them to provide challenge to decisions and processes, and reflect the views of their local community. • I recommend that a supportive wellbeing offer is put in place for all Lay Advisors. • I recommend that consideration be given to the recruitment process for Lay Advisors, particularly how and where vacancies are advertised and how roles are described, to encourage a broader and more diverse range of applicants. 	Within 12 months
College of Policing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the College of Policing, in partnership with the National Police Chiefs Council, review all existing guidance, updating the Authorised Professional Practice, providing forces with one clear source of information. For it to remain effective, the College of Policing must embed a process of regularly reviewing the Authorised Professional Practice in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs Council portfolio lead, ensuring updates are made in a timely manner. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs Council consider establishing MOSOVO as an accredited professional specialism. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that College of Policing introduce central repositories for sharing best practice, in line with the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that College of Policing review the MOSOVO training programme to ensure there is sufficient digital media investigation training offer available, both in initial and continuous professional development training. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the College of Policing develop a training programme – with a UK-based accreditation only if legally required – specifically for polygraph testing in offender management which is made available to all forces. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the College of Policing should review the MOSOVO training programme and continuous professional development opportunities to ensure a clear focus on desistance. 	Within 12 months

National Police Chiefs Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council should review and restate the approach to reactive management with a clear focus on the deployment of resources proportionately against risk, making it clear that offenders managed at reactive level should not be subject to a civil order. • I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council should review the reactive management guidance and introduce force-level discretion around the current requirement for 3 years of low risk, allowing individuals managed for less than 3 years to be moved to reactive management more quickly where risk is considered to be sufficiently low. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council should review the relevance of the 1:50 ratio of offender manager to offenders to consider a more realistic, team-based approach to staffing guidelines. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council should clarify the role that neighbourhood policing should take in sex offender management, with particular focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood policing teams should be aware of offenders within their areas but, recognising the demands on the local officers, the focus should be on those where there is an active risk - Mechanisms should be in place for intelligence sharing and appropriate tasking between sex offender managers and neighbourhood teams - There should be clearly defined roles and responsibilities, with clear guidance for neighbourhood teams on how to support sex offender managers, whilst recognising that neighbourhood teams should not be taking responsibility for the management of sex offenders. - Visiting the home of a registered sex offender is the responsibility of trained staff. If neighbourhood policing teams or other uniform staff are used to support home visits by MOSOVO staff members, these visits should never be in uniform. 	Within 6 months

National Police Chiefs Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council works in collaboration with the College of Policing and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to develop both qualitative and quantitative performance outcomes as well as a clear and appropriate inspection regime with these outcomes in mind. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council, following a review of the opportunities to best utilise existing datasets at both a national and local level, produce and disseminate a position or guidance document on how to most effectively deploy such techniques to improve management of known risks and identification of otherwise unobserved risks. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council review, restate and add emphasis to the protective factors within ARMS risk assessments and ensure such factors are included within risk management plans. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend developing and disseminating, in line with the Police Service of Northern Ireland model, documents for victims and offenders explaining sex offender management processes, providing contact details and signposting to further support. 	Within 12 months
Police and Crime Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to see Police and Crime Commissioners including MAPPA / sex offender management within their Police & Crime Plans, ensuring they are able to appropriately hold Chief Constables to account and providing them the opportunity to inform the public of realistic expectations for sex offender management within the community. 	Within 12 months
His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that training and induction for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services inspection staff includes an understanding of risk and effective management of risk relating to sex offenders in the community with a particular focus on desistance. 	Within 12 months

Chief Constables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that all forces put in place processes to allow investigative teams to engage with sex offender managers prior to and during the application process for Sexual Harm Prevention Orders issued at the point of conviction to ensure the application seeks only the appropriate and necessary measures. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that all cases where indefinite notification requirements have been in place for 15 years or more should be reviewed with the aim of discharging notification requirements which are found to be no longer necessary. 	Within 12 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that all forces should review and where appropriate seek to discharge all indefinite Sexual Harm Prevention Orders, starting with all those in place for offenders subject to reactive management. I recommend that all forces should review and where necessary seek to amend or discharge remaining Sexual Harm Prevention Orders to ensure they remain necessary, enforceable and compliant with relevant case law, including ensuring they align with and do not exceed notification periods. This process should start with all those in place for offenders subject to reactive management. 	Within 12 months Within 24 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that, when the police become the lead agency, police engagement with victims and survivors should be facilitated where appropriate, applicable, and desired. This should be reflected in the necessary guidance and College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice. 	Within 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that MOSOVO staff routinely video/audio record home visits and retain recordings alongside risk assessments and risk management plans. 	Within 6 months
His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend that steps are taken to improve information-sharing between courts and Sex Offender Management units, both with regards convictions and sentencing as well as documentation such as judges' summaries and victim impact statements. 	Within 6 months

4. Looking ahead

33. Appointed to conduct a fully independent review, I was given the freedom to explore any aspect of police-led sex offender management, an exceedingly broad scope that could easily take years to dissect in great detail. With the limited time and resource available, I have nevertheless sought to look across the current police-led sex offender management (PSOM) landscape in this review and have made numerous, wide-ranging recommendations for policing and partners.
34. What has been made clear to me is that the MAPPA partnership-working is fundamentally a good thing. The concept of public sector criminal justice agencies assessing and managing risk in a joined-up manner and with the use of a wider partnership network is exactly what the public would expect to happen. It would frankly be a concern if this wasn't taking place. The MAPPA arrangements provide a beneficial structure and generally work well, with some very good practice already existing within the PSOM space. While their volume may suggest otherwise, many of the recommendations made in this review are simply suggestions for process and practice improvements in order to modernise sex offender management processes that have been in place for 20 years or more. Many of my recommendations can and should be implemented in the short or medium term, with proposed timescales noted in the table of recommendations (see [Table 1](#)). For the most part, my recommendations do not come with significant financial implications and are well within the gift of policing and the various partners to introduce; however, I recognise that embedding some of them will take a little longer.

4.1 Culture

35. One of the greatest challenges and a prime example of change that will take time to embed surrounds the culture across policing. I set out my expectations for a greater focus on prevention and desistance in PSOM going forward. Reviewing and restating protective factors and incorporating a greater desistance focus into training modules, risk assessments, management plans and working with offenders will take some time. I don't underestimate the time and resource investment involved with such workstreams – particularly where the respective portfolios have competing priorities – but these should be more than manageable in a relatively short timeframe. However, I envision this necessary change as simply the start of a much larger shift in policing.
36. I was a police officer for almost four decades. I was lucky enough to work at every rank and latterly as a Chief Constable, having also held several national portfolios on behalf of the service. During my career, sex offender management was not one of my main areas of focus or expertise, but I should imagine that if Detective Sergeant Creedon of 30 years ago had been posted into the world of sex offender management, his starting point would

have been that the offenders were dangerous, manipulative, untrustworthy criminals that, without exception, posed an ongoing threat to the public. I have little doubt that I would likely have seen my role as neutralising that threat through investigation, intelligence, detection, and prosecution, and I probably would have seen a breach of a civil order or notification requirements as a success to a certain degree, and certainly a measure to be counted and celebrated. Concepts of desistance and helping offenders to rehabilitate, if not completely alien to me, would have been difficult for me to comprehend and even harder to put into practice.

37. I do not suggest for one moment that the modern day MOSOVO community across policing is reflective of my views on what I might have done a generation and more ago. They are no doubt far more mature in their thinking and professional in their outlook and training. That said, in my view, the longer-term goal for policing needs to be to change the underlying ethos behind sex offender management. Those that we engaged during the review were dedicated to all aspects of their work, but we did still hear numerous anecdotes of MOSOVO officers having an attitude of looking to catch offenders out with an underpinning risk aversion and a “what if?” mentality, and even stating ‘if my daughter were a victim...’ as a justification for not placing anyone into reactive management. Whether through breaches of notifications or civil orders, the narrative continued to be of officers using management and monitoring as a means to one specific end: identifying further offending, even if the offending was not of a sexual or broader criminal nature that might pose a genuine threat to their community.
38. To be clear, it is 100% right that the police should seek to uncover offending, particularly of a serious and sexual nature, and I would not wish to dissuade anyone from this mission. However, I am firmly of the belief that the MOSOVO focus should be on reoffending and risk rather than technical, accidental, and/or non-risky breaches of civil orders or notification requirements. Within my full report, I set out the arguments for supporting desistance and successful reintegration into society, but this will not be possible if offenders are unable to exist without falling foul of overly pedantic breaches. More to the point, it is not in the public interest to pour resource into chasing down low-risk RSOs for using online banking and failing to update details of accounts or the like instead of supervising the most persistent and dangerous criminals in society.
39. Even the language utilised in the sex offender management space is indicative of a more traditional policing approach, which I feel is bordering on misleading. Ultimately, sex offender management is not just about management, and we need to be clear what “management” means. The interpretation of management is typically in line with *control*, but it is not possible, realistic or desirable that the police service truly *control* tens of thousands of convicted offenders who have finished the punishment imposed by the state for years or even decades. In my view, requirements to annually attend a police station to register personal details with a front desk enquiry clerk does not constitute meaningful *control* or management. For those high-risk offenders, it may be that their management really has to

be about close monitoring and the use of some intrusive or covert tactics. The reality is, though, that this is only required for the few, whereas the approach for the many is – and should be – about assessment, monitoring, and supervision, seeking to support their difficult and often uncomfortable journey to desistance and reintegration.

40. These are not my thoughts alone. The Council of Europe, of which the United Kingdom remains a member at the time of writing, issued new guidelines and recommendations regarding the assessment, management and reintegration of persons accused or convicted of a sexual offence in October 2021. The recommendations, which aim to guide national authorities in their legislation, state that¹³:

- risk assessments, treatments and intervention plans be individually tailored to sex offenders.
- agencies should manage and seek to reintegrate sex offenders in line with the risk they pose, focusing on an individual's distinct needs rather than the type of offence committed, especially concerning interventions or treatments.
- cooperation between offenders and the professionals is central for effective reintegration, preventing and responding to sexual offending should be based on a holistic approach with a range of professionals involved.

41. Embedding this ethos and thinking of reintegration, the needs of the offender, and prevention within PSOM through risk assessments and training (per my earlier recommendations) is a tangible step in the right direction, but I want this culture to be truly embedded in strategic leadership, among Police and Crime Commissioners in their oversight and public-facing role, and throughout MOSOVO leadership and operational teams across England and Wales. I know that this is a long-term vision which may be culturally challenging and perhaps uncomfortable to some, and one that is undoubtedly going to take some time. I have no firm actionable recommendations to make here, nor will I attempt to propose a timeframe for such a radical cultural change. This area of business is very well led at the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) portfolio level, and these issues I have outlined are understood. I am strongly of the view that it is the role and responsibility of the NPCC and individual Chief Constables to set direction and change policing culture, but I will also make myself available to support the service and to discuss this review, the opportunity for change, and the service-wide implications.

42. A greater focus on prevention and desistance in sex offender management is needed going forward. I believe the police service is now in a place where steps can and should be taken in this direction. It is important that this is recognised and progressed, and I will look forward to the NPCC individually and collectively leading by example.

¹³ Council of Europe (2021). [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2021\)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States regarding the assessment, management and reintegration of persons accused or convicted of a sexual offence.](#)

4.2 The Future of MOSOVO

43. As clearly expressed above, it is my hope that the culture of MOSOVO will shift over time to reflect the broader approach that is required for managing sexual offenders. However, when thinking about the future of police-led sex offender management, even with all the recommendations that I have proposed in this review, it seems inevitable to think about a high-volume workload for officers. My recommendations are, to a certain extent, coping mechanisms for the service and present an opportunity for risk and evidence-based change in process and practice. Removing unnecessary civil orders or notification requirements, modernising the system and the IT support, and investing in prevention efforts can only have so much impact against the tsunami of sexual offending already described, and it would be simply untenable, complicated and, in my view, operationally naïve to remove a tranche of offences from Schedule 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or shorten sentences therein. I have instead sought to make recommendations that present the service with the opportunity to change and focus more on the high-risk minority, moving away from the current emphasis on process compliance. Ultimately, my recommendations should allow for better use of the limited resources available to policing to manage risk in the optimal way to protect the public, but it doesn't mean that the growing volumes will, under these circumstances, be easily manageable. In short: my recommendations are seeking to improve the policing approach to SOM and support the longevity of the MAPPA system as it currently stands.
44. As part of this review, I sought to consider downstream impacts of current and future policies. The terms of reference sought consideration of new measures arising from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In my view, though, these pale in comparison to the commitment within the [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan \(2022\)](#) to explore options for a domestic abuse offenders register. This is nothing new. It's a recurring political proposition to register other cohorts of dangerous offenders, with domestic abuse and non-sexual child cruelty perpetrators being the current cohorts of interest at the time of writing.
45. Some may argue that this has merit given the relatively low reoffending rate among registered sex offenders, implying that a MAPPA structure and a SOM-style approach to other dangerous offenders would be equally impactful. Strictly, this is outside the scope of the review, but I think it's important to recognise the impact that additional registers would have on policing. Given the rhetoric behind many of these propositions, though, they seem to be primarily political posturing - publicly denouncing certain crime types with little consideration of the practicalities of a new register and the practical impact on policing set against the benefit for victims.
46. Assuming that the intention behind any additional registers would be to implement notification requirements and a SOM-style management approach in line with the current MAPPA Category 1, this would effectively

be the equivalent to expanding the RSO cohort substantially. Realistically, if these proposals were limited to tens or hundreds of new offenders under police management, the pressure on policing would be acute but potentially manageable with sufficient investment in resource (and successful implementation of my recommendations around process improvements). The cohorts being discussed at present are, to my knowledge, as yet undefined – both legally and in terms of intended eligibility – but it seems likely that these volumes would far exceed what is practicable with police resources. The numbers known to be involved in domestic violence and abuse are significant, and certainly more than the numbers currently subject to SOM.

47. Further, this is simply with consideration of proposed cohorts named in the press in 2022; there are many other cohorts of dangerous offenders that are not subject to registration nor have been put forward for such management. I am not minimising the profound effect of domestic abuse or child cruelty, but it seems to me that other cohorts – for instance, modern slavery and human trafficking, county lines, or other serious organised crime offenders – also pose serious risks to society, yet the debate is not being had about their registration, despite the very clear evidence about harm, motivation and recidivism rates of those involved in serious and organised crime.
48. Perhaps this is the political pathway and the future will see more and more offenders and cohorts subject to notification requirements and quasi state control through the police service, but with that comes considerable concern. Serious consideration must be given to the volumes of additional offenders potentially being subject to SOM-style management, and the impact that that may have on law enforcement's ability to effectively manage this workload alongside the ever-widening mission for the service and the many competing demands. I keep coming back to this point that resources must follow risk, both from an efficiency standpoint and for the most effective protection of the public against risk. However, by increasing the workload of MOSOVO staff, the clear risk is a dilution of the resource and response to each offender. Suggestions have been made that registering only the most high-risk/high-harm offenders within specific cohorts would reduce the prospective volumes and thus be more practicable. However, this review has made it clear that assessment of risk and harm is highly subjective and, even if there were increased accuracy, by limiting the eligibility for any new registration to just the highest-risk perpetrators, it would presumably follow that this new cohort would have already been assessed as higher-risk by police, and thus already warrant more intensive police management than other offenders. In essence, this would automatically put intense pressure on the MOSOVO staff for any new cohort. Should they be managed by MOSOVO officers, this would consequently further reduce the resource available to manage RSOs and, hence, increase the risk of something inadvertently going wrong.
49. It is also worth considering that, based on the current legislative framework, any new cohorts subject to registration would not currently be managed by the police, as they would be managed by probation on licence in the

community and not have any state supervision after their sentence ends. As such, were legal change introduced, not only would new registers represent a whole new bulk of offenders for the police to manage, but they would also be an entirely different type of offender for them to manage. RSOs themselves are a heterogeneous cohort, but the typology between them and, say, someone offending within the sphere of non-sexual domestic abuse is presumably different and would require consideration of different protective and criminogenic factors in any risk assessments and management plan. Even the specific information that would be of merit for collection through notification requirements for different offender cohorts would surely differ. Registration is not as simple as adding a name to a list; there are myriad aspects surrounding such a policy move that would require extensive consideration, and the opportunity cost for policing will be a critical factor in any such plans.

50. Furthermore, such a policy move would not, to my mind, be defensible. During the review, MOSOVO staff noted the benefits of having access to some of the information collected through notification requirements, both in terms of intelligence-gathering and for keeping track of offenders. Without totally dismissing this view, to my mind, this feels like a product of the institutional risk aversion that has been a recurring theme throughout the review – collecting details “just in case”, with little consideration of why. The benefits are, realistically, fairly limited given the wealth of information that would ordinarily be collected on any convicted offender, particularly through their probation-led management during their licence period. The benefits that are gathered by the notification requirements are countered by the sheer bureaucracy involved in maintaining these details year on year, including the many ad hoc in-year notifications, often collected for individuals presenting low or even minimal risk. Moreover, the international and academic evidence is hardly supportive of registration schemes. There is a wealth of evidence that sex offender registration and notification schemes have no effect on RSO recidivism, with some evidence suggesting a number of unintended consequences to public registration, including harassment, property damage and negative psychological impacts on offenders and their families.¹⁴

51. Given that the police forces that engaged the review were largely in favour of the notification requirements for RSOs, whether I agree with their reasoning or not, I do not have any evidence to support any move to completely remove sex offender registration, but I am clear that there exist options for change. I understand the intent and arguments behind the introduction of notification in 1997, where the real focus was on location and address, ensuring the police knew where the offenders lived. This made sense at the time, but some of the rationale for this has now gone, as it is far easier to track and trace individuals in the modern world than at the end of the last century. The notification scheme has now grown to such an extent that the opportunity cost of maintaining its bureaucracy set against the reality of the benefit is too great. I have made some recommendations of

¹⁴Lobanov-Rostovsky, C (2015). [Adult Sex Offender Management](#). *Sex Offender Management, Assessment and Planning Initiative Research Brief*.

how to modernise the notification requirements but, on the whole, I feel that they should be maintained. By the same token, I have heard support for registration of additional cohorts from numerous stakeholders and political statements, but I have not seen any evidence that would justify the creation of any new registers or notification schemes. With limited evidence as to their effectiveness, any such move would pose a significant additional opportunity cost on policing, likely destabilising police offender management and consequently deteriorating efforts to protect the public.

52. One of the arguments put to me during this review was that registration for other cohorts of offenders, such as domestic abuse perpetrators, would fill a gap. Following extremely severe cases, coverage will frequently cite that serious offenders are subject to supervision by probation until their licence period ends but are then free to live their lives, which is then used as justification for a new register with notification requirements. I am not persuaded by this argument. While I am sympathetic to the causes of those victims and survivors of such abhorrent crimes, it is a fundamental principle of our criminal justice system that, on conviction and after the due legal process, offenders are punished by the state, they complete their sentence, are hopefully rehabilitated, and are then given the opportunity to be able to re-join society. Ultimately, the notification requirements and police-led offender management in the community cannot ever replicate probation supervision of those on licence, nor should they. Probation-led management of offenders is out of scope for this review, but there is clear legal precedent and justification for the existing processes in England and Wales.
53. Moreover, there are other opportunities available for managing other dangerous cohorts of offenders without resorting to registration, notification, and a form of police management. The use of imprisonment for public protection and life licence, as well as appropriately used civil orders, are demonstrable means by which serious offenders can be monitored and managed which are not limited to registered sex offenders. From Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders, through Domestic Abuse Prevention Notices and Orders and Stalking Protection Orders, to Slavery and Trafficking Risk and Prevention Orders, Serious Crime Prevention Orders, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Financial Reporting Orders and Knife Crime Prevention Orders – to list but a few – there exists a whole host of opportunities for policing and law enforcement agencies at both pre- and post-conviction to add layers of monitoring and management to potentially dangerous persons.
54. Even at a more basic level, there already exists within MAPPA the capacity to manage the most dangerous offenders through Category 3. This pre-existing MAPPA Category is designed for offenders who do not meet the criteria for either Category 1 (Registered Sexual Offender) or Category 2 (Violent or other Sexual Offender) but who have committed an offence indicating that they are “otherwise so dangerous” and capable of causing serious harm, thereby requiring multi-agency management at MAPPA Level 2 or 3. The offence does not have to be one specified in Schedule 15 of the

Criminal Justice Act 2003 and may have been committed abroad.¹⁵ In this way, MAPPA Category 3 has been designed sufficiently broadly to allow for the management of any number of dangerous offenders, including but not limited to seriously high-risk domestic abuse or child cruelty perpetrators.

55. This option already within the system is, however, hugely underutilised. The yearly total of offenders managed under MAPPA Category 3 in 2006/07 was around 3,000 and at a time when the overall MAPPA numbers were much smaller. In contrast, less than 400 offenders were managed under MAPPA Category 3 on 31 March 2021, set against a far bigger MAPPA population, and this figure is also roughly 20% lower than the volumes managed at Levels 2 and 3 in Category 1 and Category 2.¹⁶ Given that the potential cohort of dangerous offenders eligible for management in Category 3 is so vast, this seems like a significant missed opportunity.
56. MAPPA processes are generally effective at assessing, understanding, and managing risk, and Category 3 represents an underutilised method for managing the most dangerous offenders across a wide range of criminality in a multi-agency fashion without the need for extensive legislative or operational restructuring. There are some areas for improvement but, in principle, MAPPA arrangements already provide solid structures and processes for the management of all manner of dangerous offenders by the responsible authorities and duty to cooperate agencies.
57. One of the other MAPPA processes that may well be persuasive is that of disclosure. The [Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme](#) and [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) are formalisations of existing common law powers held by the police to disclose relevant information to relevant persons where it is necessary and proportionate in order to best protect vulnerable people. These disclosures would not include details collected through notification, nor are they to be limited only to subjects that are current or archived RSOs. Members of the public can make applications to such schemes, and the police can and do proactively utilise these powers where intelligence or conviction information is held about an individual that warrant a disclosure. It is perhaps mechanisms such as these that are appealing to those calling for new registers, and I would be inclined to support the formalisation of new disclosure schemes – noting that the powers already exist – or encouragement of law enforcement to more frequently utilise these powers proactively where appropriate over the creation of new registers or notification schemes.

¹⁵ HM Government (2021). [MAPPA guidance](#).

¹⁶ HM Government (2021). [MAPPA Annual Report 2021](#). Table 2. *Note: the 2006/07 figure was a yearly total, whereas the 2020/21 figure was taken on March 21. There may be some discrepancies due to the variation in reporting methods.*

58. Admittedly, this is out of scope of this review but, given the current political appetites, I want to make it clear to HM Government that:

I recommend that no further cohorts of offenders be made subject to sex offender-style registration or notification requirements. Instead, where significant risk is identified and all available options have been considered, including the use of civil orders, the focus should be placed on utilising existing MAPPA processes in order to manage the risk. In particular, much better use should be made of MAPPA Category 3 for managing high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators.

59. I believe that this would be the more efficient and effective approach to managing other cohorts of dangerous offenders than registration, and it would pose significantly less risk to policing and the public. This approach, as I have posited throughout this report, seeks to put resource against risk, and I am in no way minimising the seriousness of any one offending type or another. It is my hope that my recommendations can support the longevity of the MAPPA model but, in my view, that will not be possible if numbers inflate beyond what can be reasonably managed, which seems a likely consequence should this last recommendation not be accepted and further groups of offenders are subject to the same approach of notification and some form of police oversight.

4.3 Closing remarks

60. It has been a privilege to be asked to lead this review into the police-led management of registered sex offenders in the community. Whilst this is a subject I knew of and had been involved in, I would not claim this to have been an area of knowledge and expertise for me. I have learnt much over these last few months, as has my team who supported me.

61. Over the course of the review, I have sought to be independent, objective and evidence-based. Not everyone will agree with all that I have said and the precise detail of the many recommendations, but I believe that there are system improvements that can be made that will not only make better use of resources to manage risk but will also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the process, while also better protecting the public from those dangerous few who seek to damage and harm our communities.

62. I am pleased that the previous Home Secretary specifically asked that the review gave a focus to the interests of victims and survivors and I have sought to cover this, recognising both the limitations and importance of engagement with those most affected by the offending against them. The criminal justice system is dependent on the support and involvement of witnesses and victims and, were this to be undermined or even lost, the very legitimacy of the system is under threat.

63. The police service is the only law enforcement agency to deal with such a range of criminal threats – from the shoplifter and anti-social behaviour gangs through to the football hooligan, the burglar, the murderer, the rapist, the serious and organised gang member, the international terrorist and the transnational money laundering and cyber fraud expert. Within this exceptionally broad mission, the service faces, understands and deals with the widest range of criminality, but also actively manages the risk posed by known offenders within their communities, including those whose sentence has ended and those who manage to evade justice. This is impossibly complex and can only be informed by working with others and making best possible use of information, intelligence, and advanced analytics to identify any new offending behaviour. Even with such an approach, the sad reality is that many offenders will and do reoffend.
64. As this review has described, the registered sex offender cohort subject to long-term police management and supervision is not a single homogeneous group with common offending motives and typologies. We have to recognise the difference amongst the many; whilst some sex offenders are fundamentally evil – manipulative, predatory offenders who pose a lifetime of risk – many simply are not and, with the right approach, support, and guidance, they can go on to lead a productive and offence-free life.
65. Given the growth factors outlined in this report, it is clear that the numbers subject to many years of active police management and monitoring will continue to expand. Capacity and, to an extent, capability in policing is limited, and this situation is likely to worsen as volumes expand and budgets tighten. It is essential that the service is able to properly assess and manage complex risk and, instead of overinvesting in process compliance, focus resources in the best way possible to protect the public. This responsibility sits with Chief Constables given their operational responsibility, and they must work with Police and Crime Commissioners with their democratic mandate and oversight role. To manage this risk process and to do so efficiently and effectively, we must recognise and collectively accept the fact that many convicted might never offend again, even if they sadly retain some of the perverted interest that led to their original offending. Ultimately, the evidence is clear that an aggressively punitive and blame-laden approach might be necessary in the minority of cases but, for the majority, the post-conviction and post-sentence experience should be one of reform, rehabilitation, and mending.
66. I commend this report to the police service and to the leaders of the wider partnership. Given the support of Chief Constables, Police and Crime Commissioners, and the leadership of the College of Policing, HMICFRS, the NCA, HMPPS and the ministries of the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, I believe that whole system changes can take place to enhance what is already a powerful and successful partnership approach to offender management. Much can be achieved without any significant financial implications but, in the case of the IT foundation, it is absolutely essential that there is continued investment and strategic ambition in the MAPPS system. Technology is now part of the underpinning foundation for any

significant organisation, public or private. Without a fully functional, dynamic, flexible, and mobile system able to adapt to operational and legal change, I fear the whole MAPPA and police sex offender management process will remain at best sub-optimal. I encourage the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice to prioritise this investment to reap the inordinate efficiency and effectiveness rewards it can offer over the dated and tired ViSOR system.

67. Chief Constable Michelle Skeer from Cumbria has led this portfolio for many years for the police service in her role with the National Police Chiefs Council. I have sought to avoid the direct naming of individuals and groups engaged during the review, but I make an exception with Michelle. Her work leading this subject matter for the service has been outstanding and has been so for many years. She understands the subject and its complexities, and she works tirelessly on behalf of forces and colleagues. Her dedication is to protect the public and I support her completely. I hope she has the time, commitment, and support from colleagues within and outside of policing to take forward the recommendations from this review and to continue the success she has already delivered.

Glossary

- **APP:** The College of Policing has produced the 'Authorised Professional Practice' (APP), which aims to streamline existing knowledge products and guidance into a consolidated format, providing one source of information.
- **ARMS:** Active Risk Management System (ARMS) is a dynamic risk management framework which provides a national standard for the risk assessment and management planning of registered sexual offenders.
- **Lay Advisors:** Lay Advisors are voluntary public appointments introduced with the aim of reviewing and monitoring MAPPAs, attending both MAPPAs SMB and MAPPAs meetings.
- **MAPPAs:** This stands for the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, the formal partnership that oversees the management of offenders, including sex offenders. More details are presented in [Box 1](#).
- **MAPPSS:** Multi-Agency Public Protection System (MAPPSS) is a joint Home Office and Ministry of Justice project to facilitate more effective and automated information sharing between MAPPAs responsible authorities and their partner agencies. The offender management solution will replace all current ViSOR functionality and allow ViSOR to be decommissioned.
- **MOSOVO:** This stands for the Management of Sexual or Violent Offenders and is common shorthand for this area of policing. I recognise that this is not the terminology used in all forces – with some having dedicated sex offender management units and using the acronym 'SOM' – but, for the purposes of this review, the term MOSOVO is used to represent police sex offender management teams.
- **Offender Manager:** Police forces utilise a range of police officers and police staff members within their sex offender management teams. For the purpose of this review, the term 'offender manager' or 'MOSOVO staff' will be used to describe both police officers and police staff working in this area.
- **Offender:** For the purpose of this review, which is solely focused on sex offenders, the term 'offender' will be used to describe an individual with a conviction or caution for a Schedule 3 offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- **PIMR:** A police internal management review (PIMR) reviews the police involvement in managing a registered offender who has committed a serious further offence. The purpose of the PIMR is to examine the factors surrounding the management of the registered offender, and to determine whether the police did all they could reasonably have done to reduce the risk of further offending.

- **Polygraph:** Polygraph testing is a tool available for MOSOVO staff to interview registered sex offenders under controlled conditions. Polygraph testing is a non-evidential interview process and can assist MOSOVO staff as an information gathering tool to support risk assessment and management.
- **Reactive Management:** Developed by the National Police Chiefs Council in 2016/17, reactive management is a process used to manage qualifying consistently low risk offenders.
- **SCRs:** A MAPPA serious case review (SCR) will be commissioned by the strategic management board if a registered offender who is managed under MAPPA is charged with a serious further offence – such as a further violent or serious sexual offence.
- **ViSOR:** Also known as ‘The Dangerous Persons Register’, ViSOR is the Home Office owned national computer offender management system. ViSOR is a UK-wide system used to store and share information and intelligence on those individuals who have been identified as posing a risk of serious harm to the public.
- **VKPP:** The National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) was formed to improve police practice in protecting vulnerable people. The programme identifies and shares current interventions and approaches being used by forces across England and Wales, collaborating with the College of Policing, other national policing programmes and wider partners to maximise reach and reduce duplication.

Acronyms

ACSL: Average Custodial Sentence Length

APP: Authorised Professional Practice

ARMS: Active Risk Management System

CoP: College of Policing

HMICFRS: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

HMPPS: His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

IICSA: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

MAPPA: Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

MAPPS: Multi-Agency Public Protection System

MOSOVO: Management of Sexual or Violent Offenders

NCA: National Crime Agency

NPCC: National Police Chiefs Council

PCCs: Police and Crime Commissioners

PIMRs: Police internal management reviews

RSO: Registered Sex Offender

SCRs: Serious Case Reviews

SOA: Sexual Offences Act 2003

SOM: Sex Offender Management

ViSOR: The Dangerous Persons Database

VKPP: Vulnerability Knowledge Practice Program

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