



Monday 26 October 2009

WEST MERCIA MAPPA: BEACON OF BEST PRACTICE IN PUBLIC PROTECTION

UK multi-agency teams that manage serious offenders in the community under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA), including West Mercia, are being seen as beacons of best practice in public protection by countries around the world.

Countries that have expressed an interest in learning more about MAPPA are America, Canada, South Korea, Jamaica, Norway and Latvia. In the last couple of years, both Scotland and Northern Ireland have introduced MAPPA following its success in England and Wales.

MAPPA teams in England and Wales were put in place eight years ago to provide more robust management systems for those offenders who live in our communities through the sharing of information and expertise. The teams, comprising police, prison, probation and other relevant agencies ensure joint working and enhanced communication to effectively manage risk to the public.

Julie Masters, Assistant Chief Officer for West Mercia Probation Trust, said:

“Once more the Mappa annual report for West Mercia demonstrates how the community can be more effectively protected from potentially dangerous offenders through multi-agency working. In West Mercia we are continuing to develop effective and co-operative working between all those agencies involved in the management of these few offenders who pose the greatest risk to our communities”.

Detective Superintendent Martin Lakeman, who heads up the West Mercia Police’s Public Protection Unit, said:

“Protecting the public is our number one priority. It is impossible to remove risk completely but we are confident that the vital shared information we refer to as ‘the golden thread’ is working well and reflected in our strong arrangements. Thanks to better legislation and an investment in additional specialist resources, we can reassure people living and working in West Mercia that we have effective supervision of those offenders living in the community and continue to be robust in dealing with those who breach their conditions.”

This year has seen our arrangements assessed and inspected by a number of independent bodies namely the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) and a Probation Inspectorate, the findings being graded as good. West Mercia has once again been at the forefront of innovative work.”

Publishing the eighth MAPPAs annual reports, Justice Minister Maria Eagle said:

“Since the introduction of MAPPAs eight years ago, other countries around the world view the arrangements as an important development in enhancing public protection against dangerous offenders in the community.

“The offenders dealt with under MAPPAs can display extremely dangerous and unpredictable behaviour so the risk of further offences is ever present. That risk can never be eliminated entirely, but the majority of those subject to active MAPPAs management do not seriously re-offend due to robust and effective management. The number of those who re-offend seriously has remained at around 0.5 per cent for the past four years.

“The MAPPAs continue to develop and this year saw the issue of revised, extensive national MAPPAs guidance to enhance consistency and accountability and the launch of a national MAPPAs training manual to ensure that learning is embedded in public protection practice. We have also made significant changes to legislation in recent years to enhance public protection, including the sentence of imprisonment for public protection which ensures that certain offenders are not released until the Parole Board determines that it is safe to do so.”

There are more offenders on the sexual offenders register which means more offenders subject by law to notification requirements and therefore being monitored by the police and other agencies.

In 2008, the Home Office began pilots to increase the amount of information about particular child sex offenders that is shared with the public. People can request information about an individual who has contact with their children. These pilots took place in four police areas and ended in September 2009. The pilots will now be evaluated with a view to considering a national roll out. Regardless of the outcome of that evaluation, there is a requirement in all cases of MAPPAs-eligible offenders to consider, as a part of every review of the case, whether there is a need to disclose information about the offender. Information will be disclosed where this is required by the risk management plan.

Paul West, Chief Constable of West Mercia Police and ACPO lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders, said:

“Protecting the public from those sexual offenders and violent offenders who pose a risk of serious harm is a key role for the police service;

however, we recognise that this cannot be achieved by any one agency working alone. For this reason, in recent years we have been part of a determined multi-agency approach to manage dangerous people and successful partnerships have been established nationally, regionally and locally. In particular, strong partnerships have been developed with the Probation Service and the Prison Service.

“Effective collaboration with partners within Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is crucial to managing those individuals and ensuring strict compliance with notification requirements. These reports indicate an overall increase in compliance by Registered Sexual Offenders and demonstrate that the police service has continued to make good use of the legislative tools that are available to it, such as Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs).

“The risks posed to the public by such offenders can never be completely eliminated, but the reports provide evidence that MAPPA successfully keeps them to a minimum and significantly enhances public safety.”

The Ministry of Justice is now piloting mandatory polygraph tests for sex offenders in the community, West Mercia is one of the pilot areas. The tests will help us determine whether the polygraph can be a useful additional tool in the management of sex offenders, in order to protect the public. It will be used alongside other processes in place to manage these offenders. The legislation was introduced in the 2007 Offender Management Act which enabled the pilot to be carried out on a mandatory basis for sex offenders subject to licence release from prison.

ViSOR - the database for sexual, violent and other dangerous offenders – is now in every probation area, police force and virtually every prison in England and Wales. This means a greater degree of supervision with all working on the same IT system to ensure timeliness of risk assessments and interventions to prevent re-offending.

Notes to Editors

1. This is the eighth year in which annual reports by the 42 Responsible Areas in England and Wales have been published by Written Ministerial Statement in parliament, following the implementation of MAPPA in 2001.
2. The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000) established the MAPPA and placed them on a statutory basis. The Criminal Justice Act (2003) re-enacted and strengthened those provisions. The legislation requires the Police, Prison and Probation Services (acting jointly as the ‘Responsible Authority’) in each of the 42 areas of England and Wales:
 - to establish arrangements for assessing and managing the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders;
 - to review and monitor the arrangements;

- as part of the reviewing and monitoring arrangements, to prepare and publish an annual report on their operation.
3. A range of other agencies have also been placed under a duty to co-operate with the Responsible Authority. These include:
 - Local Authority Social Services
 - Primary Care Trusts, other NHS Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Youth Offending Teams
 - Registered Social Landlords which accommodate MAPPA offenders
 - Local Housing Authorities
 - Local Education Authorities
 - Electronic Monitoring providers
 4. There is also a requirement to appointment two lay advisers to each of the strategic management boards that review the MAPPA.
 5. MAPPA is the term to describe the arrangements set up locally to assess and manage offenders who pose a risk of serious harm. Offenders eligible for MAPPA are identified and information is gathered/shared about them across relevant agencies. The nature and level of the risk of harm they pose is assessed and a risk management plan is implemented to protect the public.
 6. In most cases, the offender will be managed under the ordinary arrangements applied by the agency or agencies with supervisory responsibility. A number of offenders, though, require active multi-agency management and their risk management plans will be formulated and monitored via MAPP meetings attended by various agencies.
 7. National MAPPA guidance indicates the use of 3 levels of management. Offenders will be moved up and down levels as appropriate:

Level 1 - Ordinary Management These offenders are subject to the usual management arrangements applied by whichever agency is supervising them. But this does not rule out information sharing between agencies, via ViSOR and other routes.

Level 2 - Active Multi-agency Management The risk management plans for these offenders require the active involvement of several agencies via regular multi-agency public protection (MAPP) meetings.

Level 3 - Active Multi-agency Management As with level 2 but these cases additionally require the involvement of senior officers to authorise the use of special resources, such as police surveillance or specialised accommodation, and/or to provide ongoing senior management oversight.

8. There are three categories of offenders managed through MAPPA:

Registered sexual offenders (Category 1) - sexual offenders who are required to comply with the notification requirements (sometimes called the “sex offenders register”); ie to notify the police of their name, address and other personal details and notify any changes subsequently;

Violent offenders (Category 2) – offenders sentenced to imprisonment for 12 months or more, or detained under hospital orders. This category also includes a small number of sexual offenders who do not qualify for registration and offenders disqualified from working with children; and

Other Dangerous Offenders (Category 3) – offenders who do not qualify under categories 1 or 2 but who currently pose a risk of serious harm, there is a link between the offending and the risk posed, and they require active multi-agency management.

9. Sexual Offences Prevention Orders, Notification Orders and Foreign Travel Orders are intervention tools that restrict the behaviour of offenders and can be applied for through the courts with the intention of preventing them committing serious further offences.

- Sexual Offences Prevention Orders place prohibitions on behaviour and can be used where an offender with a conviction or caution for an offence listed in Schedule 3 or Schedule 5 is considered to pose a risk of serious sexual harm. It does not matter when the conviction or caution was received.
- Notification Orders require sexual offenders who have been convicted overseas to register with police, in order to protect the public in the UK from the risks that they pose.
- Foreign Travel Orders prevent offenders with convictions for sexual offences against children from traveling abroad where it is necessary to do so to protect children from the risk of sexual harm.

A breach of these orders, without reasonable excuse, is a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

10. Copies of the 42 MAPPA reports and national figures are available at www.probation.justice.gov.uk in the Public Protection section or www.westmercia.police.uk

Please direct any enquiries to Jackie Bell, West Mercia Probation Trust on 01562 748375 ext 1907

Or Rachel Anstee, West Mercia Police Media Comms Unit, on 01905 331663. Det Supt Martin Lakeman is available for interview, please call Rachel Anstee to arrange.