



Probation shares information and intelligence to manage offenders who pose a serious risk

The work done by Probation with its Criminal Justice colleagues to protect the public from dangerous offenders is acknowledged by many as exemplary, with its systems of cooperation between key agencies to plan for individuals who pose a risk. It makes total common sense, both to members of the public who learn about it, and to the professionals themselves.

Probation in Essex takes a lead in the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) with the Police and Prison Services. In 8 years, around 4000 offenders have been referred to MAPPA. Only two serious reoffences have taken place in that time. Given the nature of the offenders being managed, the result represents a lot of hard work and clever planning. The case below is typical of the planning, supervision, surveillance, and above all, sharing of information and intelligence that goes into a MAPPA case.

Three random indecent assaults, committed in public places, earned Jonah Davis seven years imprisonment, to be followed by a three-year Extended Licence. None of the women suffered serious physical injuries, but the psychological impact on them was significant.

In addition, several years before, he had exposed himself to a 15-year-old girl.

Six months to plan: what concerns?

The case came up at a MAPPA meeting, six months before the offender's release. How to handle his release, and what requirements were needed in his Licence, were all on the agenda.

Victims need help

Two of the victims had responded to contact from Probation's Victim Contact Officers. They needed to be looked after: a non-contact requirement was written into the Licence, as were areas from which Jonah Davis was excluded altogether.

Did he pose a risk to children, given his previous offence?

He planned to return to live with his wife and young children. Although divorced, Mr. and Mrs. Davis had become reconciled during his imprisonment. The MAPPA meeting decided that he would not return home until such times as an assessment of his risk to children had been completed. The first release address would be a Probation Approved Premises.

However, the Essex Approved Premises was too close to one of the proposed exclusion zones. He would have to go to another county.

Licence Conditions to help control

By the end of the six months, a number of Level 2 meetings had come up with a Risk Management Plan, and mapped out the added Licence Conditions that would help manage his risk. They were extensive, including residence; contact with children; to advise Probation of any developing relationship; to inform Probation of any vehicle he used; to attend a sex offending programme – and exclusion zones.

Pushing boundaries?

On release, he went to Approved Premises in another county; he was seen regularly by Police Public Protection Monitoring Officers, by Probation Officers in that Area, and he had to return regularly to see his Supervising Officer in Essex. For this, he could not travel the normal route across the county. He had to take a number of detours to avoid entering the exclusion zones. It was not long before he requested to be allowed to travel through the areas so as to reduce his journey.

Application refused

Any easement in Licence conditions is down to the Probation Service, and it is not done without care. In this case, Probation discussed it at MAPPAs, got the views of the Victim Liaison Officer – the voice of the victim – and refused the request. In addition, Probation reminded the offender that any vehicle used by him had to be notified to his supervising officer, on pain of a return to prison for any failure. Probation shared his vehicle details with the police so additional checks on his route could be made.

He had been testing the boundaries, but the offender appeared compliant and cooperative. The checks on his risk to children were also indicating that it would be safe for him to return to his wife and children.

Alert!

However, police checks on his mobile phone showed calls to the same number, which proved to be that of a young woman. She knew nothing about his previous offending – he had told her his conviction was for robbery, and that he was homeless apart from the Approved Premises. The police made a full disclosure of the real offences, and she stopped seeing him.

Probation sends him back to prison

Confronted by Probation about his failure to mention a developing relationship, he described her as a passing acquaintance. This was not the view taken by Essex Probation and he was recalled to prison.

A further effort

Three months later, the Parole Board allowed him out, for another trial at management in the community. Probation, and MAPPAs, was in agreement. (Better to have Licence controls early on while they learn the boundaries and start to avoid re-offending, than release offenders later with none.) The child protection core assessment had almost been completed and it was felt that, provided adequate safeguards were agreed (not to be left alone with the children) he would be allowed to return to his family. In the meantime, he was to return to the same Approved Premises.

Victims have their say

Throughout all of this time, the Victim Contact Unit carried on discussing any concerns with the victims, keeping them informed, and asking if they wished to pass on any comments to MAPPA.

The current situation

- He has finally returned to the family home.
- He receives periodic unannounced visits from Probation and the Police.
- He will be subject to Licence Conditions until 2011.
- Any breach in these could mean another recall to prison.
- He will remain subject to Sexual Offender Registration and police monitoring for life.
- Any breach of the registration requirements makes him liable to arrest.
- He is attending the Sex Offender Treatment Programme and making progress.

Continued vigilance

The Risk Management Plan continues, with MAPPA agencies (in this case, Probation, Police and Children's Services) working together.

Checking risk

His Risk has been reduced to Level 1. This is under constant review, and could revert to Level 2 if the risk increases, or if there are other concerns.