

MAPPA - Information for families

Introduction

Action for Prisoners' Families has developed this information leaflet to explain to **prisoners' families** what **MAPPA** is and the consequences to them if an offender in their family is subject to **MAPPA**. General information about **MAPPA** already exists on the internet and in a leaflet but it is directed at the offenders themselves and/or the public and those who work with **MAPPA** offenders rather than the family members. This briefing, written by Russell Webster, has arisen out of an advisory group, which is part of a project funded by Pilgrim Trust and which involves family members and voluntary and community groups. A further two briefings will be produced as part of the project. Our thanks to PrisonChat UK and DCI Roy Leddingham at NOMS for their help in checking the contents of the briefing.

What is MAPPA?

MAPPA stands for **M**ulti-**A**gency **P**ublic **P**rotection **A**rrangements. Its purpose is to stop sexual or violent offenders from committing further crimes and to protect the public, including previous victims, from serious harm.

MAPPA is basically the mechanism or way in which the police, probation and prison services are required to work together to monitor and supervise dangerous offenders to keep the public safe.

MAPPA was created in 2001 to try to ensure that police, probation and prison (and other agencies such as local authorities, health trusts and housing departments) worked together in a co-ordinated way.

Who does MAPPA apply to?

MAPPA applies to sex offenders, violent offenders (sentenced to 12 months custody or more) and other dangerous offenders. On 31 March 2009, there were 32,336 sex offenders, 11,527 violent offenders and 898 other dangerous offenders subject to **MAPPA**. Most offenders are subject to

MAPPA because of the most recent offence they have committed. However, if any agency – police, probation, school etc. – has concerns that someone who has *previously* been convicted of an offence may pose a significant danger and that agency has reliable information to base these concerns on, they may apply to their local **MAPPA** board to consider making an offender subject to **MAPPA** supervision.

How does MAPPA work?

Offenders subject to **MAPPA** are categorised under **three** levels according to how much risk of danger they pose to the public.

Level 1 Offenders at **Level 1** are supervised in the normal way by one agency, either the probation service (for people on community orders or on licence following release from prison) or police service (for registered sex offenders).

Level 2 Offenders at **Level 2** are considered more dangerous and **MAPPA** meetings take place to develop a co-ordinated plan so that police, probation and other agencies can effectively manage the risks that these offenders pose to the public.

Level 3 Only a relatively small number of offenders (924 in the year from April 2008 to March 2009) are categorised as **Level 3** offenders – normally because they are considered particularly dangerous, or, occasionally, because their case has received a lot of media coverage. Being placed at **Level 3** means that extra resources can be used to ensure that offenders are very closely monitored and supervised. Offenders can move between the **MAPPA** levels if they are assessed to be more or less dangerous over time.

Violent offenders **are no longer subject to MAPPA proceedings when their period of supervision by the probation service has ended**. However, some very serious offenders may be subject to **MAPPA** for the rest of their life. The Supreme Court ruled in February 2010 that being on the Sex Offenders Register for life was unjust without regular review and the Government is in the process of deciding how to respond to this judgement.

Typically, offenders subject to **MAPPA** may have to have frequent contact with the probation service, be subject to regular surveillance from the police and be required to live at a specific address. They may be excluded from visiting areas where their victims live and be banned from Internet access to prevent them accessing pornography or making contact with other sex offenders.

How will you know if your family member is subject to MAPPA?

It is not possible to find out if a family member is subject to **MAPPA**. The offender is told and they can inform any family or friends if they want to. Family members are not automatically informed. However, in some cases a **MAPPA** meeting may decide that it is in a family's interest to know. If the offender is living with a family member, typically the family will be visited by a probation officer or police officer who will ensure that they are aware of any risks to them involved in having the offender live with them.

There is one **important exception** – the future partners or employers of anyone convicted of murder will be told of their offence.

How will MAPPA help you?

If an offender subject to **MAPPA** wishes to live with you and you are happy to have them in your home, you may be required to agree to some conditions. For instance, if the offender has committed offences against children, you may have to agree that any children who visit the house are not left unsupervised. Again, if the offender has committed sexual offences, you may have to agree to make sure they do not access the Internet on any computers in the house without supervision.

If you don't wish a family member who is in prison to live with you on release, the probation or prison service will not tell them that this is your wish, unless you agree for them to do so.

What if you're the victim, too?

As a victim, you have more rights. The probation service has a responsibility to inform victims of serious offences about a prisoner's release and should take your wishes into account in deciding where your family member lives on release. However, as the victim you **do not have a right** to know where the offender lives.

What if, as a family member, you think you are being treated unfairly?

As stated above, family members have no right to information about **MAPPA** proceedings. However, offenders themselves – or their solicitors – can make complaints if they feel they are being treated unfairly. In the first place, offenders can complain to the probation service who supervises them – the first step is to ask their probation officer for the complaints procedure.

If someone feels they have wrongly been made subject to **MAPPA**, they should get a solicitor to contact the chair of the strategic management board for **MAPPA** in their local area (the easiest way to find out is either to ask their probation officer or call the head office of the local probation area). You can find the local probation service's address by looking in the phone directory or using the Internet. You can find links to the 36 probation areas which cover England and Wales at this website:

<http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/Page21.asp>.

If an offender wants information about the discussions that took place about him or her at a **MAPPA** meeting, they can request this formally from the local **MAPPA** Co-ordinator. The co-ordinator will then supply an executive summary of the minutes of the meeting. This is not a full version – be aware that some information relating to managing risk (for instance, a victim's address or information about what school children attend) will be removed.

Help and Information

If you are concerned about an offender subject to **MAPPA**, you can call their offender manager. Typically, the offender manager will be a probation officer based in the office which covers the offender's home address. In some cases, particularly if your family member is a registered sex offender who is not being supervised by the probation service, the offender manager will be a police officer.

If you want to know more detailed information about how **MAPPA** works, the official guidance is available online

(<http://www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/files/pdf/MAPPA%20Guidance%202009%20Version%203.0.pdf>) – but be warned, the current version is 347 pages long!

If you want support or information for yourself as a family member of a person who is an offender, whether they are in prison or in the community, you can call the **Offenders' Families Helpline** on 0808 808 2003. All calls are free, even from a mobile. The helpline is open from: 9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 10.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

There are two existing briefings in this **Families of Serious and Sex Offenders briefings** series:

The Sex Offenders Register

Sentence Progression

These can both be downloaded from the Family Zone area of Action for Prisoners' Families website: www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk/familyzone

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