

Communication and media considerations

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This module provides management of sexual offenders and violent offenders (MOSOVO) officers with guidance for managing communication and media strategies when dealing with MOSOVO offenders and potentially dangerous persons (PDPs). It refers to the management of community knowledge and suspicions, and to the importance of community impact assessments.

For further information go to:

- [Operational Advice: Managing the risk of suicide for persons under investigation for online child sexual abuse and exploitation](#)
- [APP on investigation](#)

Managing community knowledge and suspicions

MOSOVO offenders or PDPs living in the community can generate strong public feeling. Managing community knowledge and suspicions about these individuals may require contributions by the MOSOVO unit, neighbourhood policing team (NPT) and public order specialists. A communications strategy may be necessary to manage interactions with the media, communities and police officers and staff.

Unfounded community suspicions about an individual

Unfounded community suspicions about the identity of an individual (for example, the misidentification of an individual as a sexual offender) can cause community tension. Police response to tension may be low level, requiring attention of the local NPT or shift supervisor.

Sometimes, these issues can escalate into a critical incident requiring senior officer support and significant deployment of resources. The appropriate level of management and resourcing must be decided in line with the local situation. This may include a strategy meeting with representatives

from the NPT, the MOSOVO unit and other relevant agencies or policing departments.

The meeting may include the targeted individual, and should consider:

- safety planning for the targeted individual and their family, including the possibility of alternative accommodation
- how NPTs will manage the situation in their geographic area, including the need for a community impact assessment
- the use of the media

The decision maker must consider carefully whether or not to confirm or deny whether a person is a MOSOVO subject. A decision in a particular case could create an expectation that the police will confirm or deny in every other case. The overriding consideration must be protection and safety of the public, including the person subject to an allegation. Where a decision is made neither to confirm nor deny, the decision maker must explain very carefully why this decision was made and that no inference can be drawn.

Community impact assessments and critical incident management

All police forces should have arrangements to manage any impact public protection or offender management has on a community. NPTs are central to these arrangements. The identification of high-risk offenders' residences by the media or anyone else can provoke anxiety in the community, particularly where that risk is associated with children. Managing risks posed by the offender and any threat from vigilantes can be a complex task and require rapid response by agencies, particularly the police. A community impact assessment is necessary in complex or high risk situations.

Any incident involving registered offenders can become a critical incident and should be managed accordingly. Effective management of the situation is required to support the State's responsibility to protect human rights of both offenders and potential victims, with particular reference to Articles 2, 3 and 8.

Communication and media strategies

Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) guidance requires all strategic management boards (SMBs) to have a communication and media strategy plan for managing the

publication of annual reports.

Public protection, particularly in relation to sexual offenders, attracts media attention. This can cause public alarm and distress and lead to public disorder. Forces should implement a communications strategy and protocols as appropriate in consultation with the lead agency.

The key principles for a communications strategy on managing MOSOVO offenders or PDPs are:

- the information provided should be accurate, honest and fair
- individuals (both victims and offenders) have a right to expect the police service to treat personal information about them as confidential, except where public protection takes precedence
- in any case concerning a sexual offender or violent offender, there should be close liaison between the police, probation and prison services and communication with victims, where necessary
- where there are differences of opinion between organisations, these should not be commented on publicly without prior discussion
- unauthorised sharing of information, for whatever reason, should be treated by each of the organisations as a serious matter, possibly resulting in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanction

Forces should coordinate with SMBs to devise media strategies in line with national objectives and messages.

For further information go to:

- [Managing information](#)
- [APP on engagement and communication](#)

Tags

Sexual and violent offenders