

Notification requirements

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 18 July 2017 Updated 26 March 2026

Written by College of Policing

16 mins read

Notification is a critical element of management of sexual offenders and violent offenders (MOSOVO) in the community. It is a legal requirement that provides the police with information useful for assessing and monitoring risk.

Notification requirements

What information must be provided on initial notification?

Go to [Section 83 \(5\) of the Sexual Offences Act \(SOA\) 2003](#).

When a registered offender is released into the community, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as the lead agency must complete an Active Risk Management System (ARMS)-informed Offender Assessment System (OASys) risk assessment within 15 days.

Forces are not required to check the accuracy of information provided by offenders unless they suspect it is inaccurate. Financial information should not be stored in local intelligence systems, although it is acceptable to note on an offender's local record that financial information is held on the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR).

Where must the offender attend to provide the required information?

Notification must be completed at a prescribed police station.

Go to [The Sexual Offences Act \(SOA\) 2003 \(Prescribed Police Stations\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2018](#).

Registered offenders must notify the police in person at a prescribed police station in the area where the offender intends to reside of the required information.

A prescribed police station is a building which would ordinarily be recognised as a police station by a member of the public. Co-location premises such as council offices cannot be prescribed police stations.

When must the offender provide required information?

Registered offenders must notify the police of the relevant information within three days of any of the following.

- Release from custody, from imprisonment or from service or hospital detention following a court order.
- Conviction or caution regarding an offence.
- Being found not guilty of an offence by reason of insanity.
- Being found to be experiencing a disability and having committed the act charged against them in respect of an offence requiring notification.

If notification depends on the sentence reaching a qualifying threshold, the offender must notify the police three days from the sentence date.

Go to [SOA 2003, s83](#).

Initial notification actions

Initial notification by registered sex offenders (RSOs) must be made in person at a prescribed police station in the area where the offender resides. Initial notification by registered terrorist offenders (RTOs) and registered violent offenders (RVOs) may be made at any police station in the area where the offender resides.

When an offender attends the police station, the person responsible for recording the notification details (as appointed through local force policy) should:

- carry out a Police National Computer (PNC) check prior to registering the offender's notification to establish the offender's identity and whether they are notifying police within the required time period

- ensure that the offender is, where possible, seen or interviewed in private
- complete a registration form – the offender is required to supply sufficient details to complete it (such as name, date of birth, national insurance number, home address, passport, bank account and credit card details)
- give a copy of the completed form to the offender
- take fingerprints to verify the identity of the person notifying
- photograph the offender to verify their identity. This can include taking photographs of tattoos or other identifying features and is particularly important if the offender applies for a name change
- establish the information required from the offender to complete the risk assessment, for example who they live with, whether they are in a relationship and/or have access to children
- ensure that the offender understands the requirements of offender notification
- follow local procedures to ensure that the offender's notification is registered on the PNC within 24 hours – failure to do this could result in the person's unlawful arrest and detention for failing to fulfil notification requirements
- follow local procedures to ensure that a person record is created on ViSOR in accordance with ViSOR standards

Definition of home address

The definition of a registered offender's home address can be found under [section 83\(7\) of the SOA 2003](#).

Homeless offenders may not be able to give a residential address but they are obliged to register every week. This must be recorded as part of the notification. They must supply the address of a precise location where they can regularly be found, which may include:

- shelter
- a friend's house
- a caravan or a park bench

These should not be registered as 'no fixed abode'.

The individual responsible for recording the offender's details should seek advice from the public protection unit when deciding whether an address is suitable for notification purposes. If the location where a person can regularly be found changes, the offender should inform the police in

accordance with the legislation.

Notification of a change to notified details

An offender has three days to notify the police of any change to their original notified details. Multiple name changes should be examined carefully and recorded on ViSOR.

Mobility impairments

Registered offenders with mobility impairments have no legal exemption from notification requirements. The offender should produce evidence of a medically diagnosed condition to support any request for assistance with notification requirements.

Periodic notification

Registered offenders must renotify the police of the relevant details within one year of either an initial notification or any notification of changes. Registered offenders do not need to do this if they have already notified the police within that period as a result of changing circumstances.

In the case of RSOs and RVOs, if the offender has not registered a residential address, they must renotify the police on a weekly basis, not annually.

Foreign travel notifications do not affect the periodic notification date. But if a person is outside the UK on the date they are supposed to renotify the police, they must instead give notification within three days of their return to the UK.

Indefinite notification requirements for registered offenders

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that indefinite notification without possibility of review was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. [Section 91A of the SOA 2003](#) introduces a new provision to remedy this incompatibility.

It is the responsibility of the police to inform existing offenders of this change to their notification requirements.

Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act (CTA) 2008 provides a notification scheme for offenders aged 16 or over who have been dealt with according to section 45 of the Act.

Prisoners subject to notification requirements under Part 4 of the CTA are required, for a period of up to 30 years, depending on their age at the time of conviction and length or type of sentence, to do the following.

- Register in person at a police station in the area they live, within three days of release from prison, to provide relevant personal details, including name, address, date of birth and national insurance number, and to be photographed and fingerprinted. This also applies to addresses to which relevant prisoners are released on temporary licence for a period of over three days.
- Notify the police in person within three days of any change to their details.
- Notify the police in person within three days if they have stayed for seven days or more within any 12-month period at an address that they have not notified to the police. This can be cumulative.
- Notify the police of any intended foreign travel at least seven days prior to departure.

Forces must have systems and protocols with other agencies to record and act on information received about relevant offenders. Suitably trained officers and staff and, where possible, MOSOVO personnel should record notification requirements. Forces should also have systems in place to inform offenders of notification requirements.

For the purposes of verifying their identity, and if requested to do so, a registered offender must allow the offender manager to photograph any part of them and take fingerprints when notification requirements are being met. Refusal to comply with this request qualifies as a breach of notification requirements.

Sections 94 and 95 of the SOA 2003 provide powers to help the police verify that an RSO has given them full and correct details by comparing those details with those held by other agencies. These other agencies could include the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Identity and Passport Service (formerly the UK Passport Service) and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA).

Staff should record full information about all registered offenders on ViSOR. This includes instances where an offender has not met some or all of their notification requirements. Staff recording this information must be authorised ViSOR users. Local and other national systems should direct staff

to view ViSOR when an alert such as a marker or an intelligence flag appears.

Police forces should also have systems to update notification periods to reflect further convictions or cautions, and to ensure that the offender is fully aware of the duration of the notification period.

Under [section 91 of the SOA 2003](#), a person commits a criminal offence if they fail to meet the notification requirements without reasonable excuse, or they knowingly provide false information in purported compliance with those requirements.

Staff should record any actual or suspected breach of notification requirements on relevant local and national systems (for example PNC and ViSOR) and distribute this information as appropriate.

Once it has been established that the offender is in breach of notification requirements, this should be recorded on the relevant local and national systems within 24 hours. All parties involved in managing the offender (for example a MOSOVO officer or probation officer) should be informed. An urgent multi-agency public protection (MAPP) meeting may be required in some cases. The decision to call for this meeting is taken by the relevant detective inspector or senior probation officer, depending on which agency is leading.

Foreign travel

Offenders who are subject to notification requirements and intend to travel abroad must inform the police of:

- their date of departure from the UK
- the country (or, if there is more than one, the first country) to which they will travel and their point of arrival (determined in accordance with the regulations) in that country

Registered offenders who travel outside the UK must notify the police of the following additional information:

- the intended point of entry in each additional country if they intend to travel to more than one country outside the UK
- the identity of any carrier or carriers they intend to use for the purpose of their departure from and return to the UK, and for travelling to any other point of arrival
- details of their accommodation arrangements for their first night outside the UK

- their return date and point of arrival, if they intend to return to the UK

These requirements apply if an offender intends to leave the UK for any period of time. Offenders should provide the police with the relevant information not less than seven days prior to their departure. On return to the UK, the regulations require the offender to provide their date of return to, and point of arrival in, the UK within three days if they did not provide it before they travelled.

Foreign travel notifications should be entered on the foreign travel section of ViSOR as soon as possible. Officers should examine offenders' foreign travel arrangements and not merely record the details. Repeat visits to a particular destination (and application(s) for a name change) could be significant. All travel arrangements should be risk assessed and appropriate action taken.

Offenders subject to notification requirements must notify the police of all foreign travel. Also see foreign travel guidance for further information. Offenders on licence are not allowed to travel abroad unless there are exceptional circumstances and they have received written authorisation from a senior probation manager.

Note: Refusal of entry to a country is an individual decision for the country to make as part of immigration policy. They may refuse entry to persons they believe pose a threat to their country.

Analysing foreign travel

Staff and officers should analyse all notified foreign travel arrangements and take appropriate action, including sharing information with other agencies and countries. Some offenders may travel abroad specifically to commit further offences, which can put children and adults in danger.

Any decisions to share information should be proportionate. Staff and officers should record all decisions made in this regard, along with the justifications for them.

For further information, go to the [APP on Information management](#).

Support from Child Exploitation and Online Protection

The National Crime Agency's (NCA) Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) carries out a quarterly analysis of foreign travel notifications, downloaded from ViSOR, and produces a

spreadsheet summarising the results. The analysis of this data (which primarily covers registered sex offenders (RSOs) who have offended against children) is then shared with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) travelling sexual offender subgroup and with UK MOSOVO units. This analysis assists in identifying hot spot destinations and trends in RSOs travelling overseas.

These results permit forces to make more accurate judgements when considering disclosure to the country concerned. They also provide information for the necessary risk assessments in conjunction with existing threat assessments from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)/NCA. The results also assist with foreign travel order (FTO) applications.

The CEOP (n.d.) Travelling Child Sex Offenders Guide on the Dissemination of Intelligence Reports assists forces in standardising the decision-making processes on when and how to disseminate intelligence on sexual offenders who travel overseas. This guide includes advice on how to find current high-risk destinations and a link to a website listing global ages of sexual consent to enable more assured decision making. The guide applies to both child and adult sex offenders and can be requested from the CEOP Overseas Tracker Team. For further information, go to the [APP on Travelling abroad](#).

Missing registered offenders

All forces should have procedures in place for tracing missing offenders. Every effort must be made to locate missing registered offenders. The offender manager is accountable for the actions and outcomes of all searches undertaken, in particular checks made via agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Immigration and Passport Service for change-of-name applications.

The responsible owner should, as a minimum, maintain a record of action taken to trace the missing offender. The responsible owner should also ensure actions and outcomes are subject to review periods by supervisors to make sure all lines of enquiry are pursued.

Once it is established that the offender is in breach of notification and cannot be located, the MOSOVO unit should circulate them as wanted/missing via local and national systems within 24 hours.

When an individual does not fulfil the notification requirements and all operational efforts to track down the person have failed, a decision may be made to appeal for help in tracking down the

missing offender, including releasing a photograph.

Any such decision should include a full assessment of the risk of harm from the offender and from others (for example risk of vigilantism), and the risk of attacks on the offender or their family, or someone with a similar name or appearance as the offender. Staff should contact the force press office and refer to [APP on Media and communications](#).

Only the minimum details about the offences committed should be included in any public appeal or press statement. Unless a 24-hour information-gathering facility is available, the Crimestoppers number (0800 555 111) should be given in a public appeal for information.

NCA CEOP Command UK Tracker Team

The NCA CEOP Command's UK Tracker Team assists UK police forces in locating the highest-risk non-compliant RSOs who have convictions against children. Where an offender meets referral criteria, the managing police force should give the details to the UK Tracker Team at the earliest opportunity.

The statutory responsibility for the child sexual offender remains with the managing police force. The CEOP case officer and the force MOSOVO officer agree the actions to be taken and the UK Tracker Team then assists with enquiries in the UK and abroad to locate the offender.

If the UK Tracker Team has capacity and can add value, it can provide assistance to MAPP Panel (MAPP) cases where the offender is high risk or MAPPA level 3, where there is a network of offenders, or where there is likely to be significant public interest.

For further information, go to [Travelling abroad](#).

Referral criteria

The CEOP criteria for referral to the UK Tracker Team are that the offender:

- is a UK RSO
- has committed a sexual offence against a child/children, ie the offender has been convicted of a contact offence(s) with a person(s) less than 16 years of age, or has been convicted of a non-contact offence(s) with a person(s) less than 18 years of age
- is assessed as very high or high risk

- is wanted for breach of SOA notification requirements

The UK Tracker Team may also consider referrals where the offender:

- is managed at MAPPA level 3
- is involved in a serious sexual offender network
- has dynamic risk factors that suggest that the offender is likely to imminently go missing or commit a serious offence against a child
- is likely to have access to multiple victims
- has a high public profile
- is a prisoner to be released in the near future who is assessed as likely to breach licence conditions or breach notification requirements, and is assessed as likely to commit a serious sexual offence against a child on release

If the non-compliant child sex offender does not fall into one of the above categories, the UK Tracker Team can give advice and guidance to the local force but will not accept the referral of the offender.

The UK Tracker Team manages the [CEOP Most Wanted website](#), in conjunction with Crimestoppers. Offenders can only be posted on the Most Wanted website if they are the subject of a current UK Tracker case. The website is used as a last resort, once all other lines of enquiries have been exhausted. The offenders posted to the website are shown as being wanted for breach of notification requirements and their convictions are not detailed.

A rigorous risk assessment (signed at assistant chief constable level) to fully consider issues of proportionality and impact on the victim's and offender's families, and risks to the offender, is required before posting an offender on the website. A joint media strategy is also needed, with accompanying press statements.

The UK Tracker Team has produced handouts to be given to RSOs who have committed offences against children and are currently being managed within the community. These handouts highlight that if an offender goes missing, they lose their right to anonymity.

The UK Tracker Team can be contacted via CEOP Command.

Escorting offenders

In exceptional circumstances, it is appropriate for one police force to take responsibility for escorting an offender from one force area to another or to a different location. The following points need to be considered before a decision is made about whether or not to escort an offender:

- availability of funding and staff
- media strategy if appropriate
- outcome of any risk assessment relating to the police officers escorting the offender as officer safety powers will be limited if transport is in line with a license condition
- outcome of any risk assessment relating to the offender which suggests the need for the offender to be escorted
- arrangements for accommodation and supervision of the offender in the destination force area

Tags

Sexual and violent offenders