

Civil order caseworkers for reducing sexual offending risks

Using subject matter experts (SMEs) to identify and prepare civil order applications against people posing a sexual risk.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Child sexual exploitation and abuse Crime prevention Offender management Violence against women and girls Vulnerability and safeguarding
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Region	North East
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	June 2019

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Offenders

Aim

Identify those who pose a risk of sexual harm to the public where it would be appropriate to seek a civil order to help mitigate that risk.

Intended outcome

- A reduction in sexual offending.
- An increase in the number of civil orders.

Description

West Yorkshire Police invested in two civil order caseworkers. They act as subject matter experts (SMEs) in the preparation of civil order applications against those who pose a sexual risk to others – such as for civil sexual harm prevention orders (SHPOs) and sexual risk orders (SROs).

They accept referrals from district-based staff. They also proactively look at non-positive disposals to assess risk and identify cases where civil orders would be appropriate to protect the public from sexual risk.

They are based within the force's Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) unit. They are police staff scale 5 (standard cost £33,684 per annum).

The business case for the civil order caseworkers stemmed from the following.

- The identification that safeguarding staff generally did not have the experience of preparing civil orders and did not have the capacity to do so.

- Legal services had the capability and capacity to present the cases, but did not have the capacity to quality assure and bring referrals up to the required standard for court.

Where civil SHPOs and SROs are obtained, their management is allocated to one of the district-based management of sexual or violent offenders (MOSOVO) teams.

The orders are deemed effective in reducing reoffending. Between July 2020 and August 2023:

- 34 SROs were obtained
- there were 14 SRO breaches (although one challenging offender accounts for eight of those)

Overall impact

The overall impact of the intervention has been an increase in the force's use of civil orders relating to sexual risk.

An evaluation is planned to inform consideration of whether there's a case to increase the capacity of the team and any resulting decision paper. Success will be measured through analysis of orders, breaches and will involve use of case studies.

Learning

Keys to success were as follows.

1. Ensuring the civil order caseworkers both accepted referrals and proactively scanned for suitable cases.
2. Initial 'roadshows' in each of the force's basic command units (BCUs) raised understanding of the role, as well as the options and benefits civil orders could provide in mitigating the risk of offending. Several cases were highlighted by district staff during the roadshows, with concerns that suspects of cases subject to 'no further action' still presented a risk of reoffending.

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Tags

Sexual and violent offenders Child sexual exploitation Child abuse
Violence against women and girls