

Operation trinity – management of high risk individuals accused of sexual offences

Managing offenders in the community to protect vulnerable people from harm.

First published

20 May 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Reoffending
Topic	Violence against women and girls Adults at risk Offender management
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Offenders

Aim

Operation Trinity aims to manage individuals accused of sexual offending who are subject to bail conditions or where no further is taken but still pose a risk of harm.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of operation trinity are to:

- improve the management of individuals
- increase the number of civil orders
- reduce the number of breaches of civil orders
- reduce the likelihood of reoffending

Description

An officer identified an increasing number of individuals subject to bail conditions but no other risk management mechanisms. An initial review revealed that there were individuals who had been on bail for six to 12 months, awaiting forensic examination of seized devices.

It was observed that there had been 180 arrests for both contact and non-contact sexual offences and order breaches in a 12-week period. Only 25 were charged and remanded, and 16 were released under investigation. The vast majority were released on bail.

Bail conditions were not sufficiently or robustly to managing the risk. Many of these individuals had been repeatedly arrested for sexual offending and released under investigation.

Operation trinity

Operation trinity was established to manage individuals using the potentially dangerous persons framework (PDP). If an individual is a registered sex offender and or deemed to be a dangerous offender, they are managed under the multi-agency protection arrangements (MAPPA).

By using MAPPA, a civil order can be enforced alongside a charge used as a safeguarding measure and tool to manage offender behaviour. These orders impose restrictive conditions or positive obligations on an individual who poses an ongoing risk of harm.

Operation trinity aims to reduce the workload of the officer in charge (OIC) of a case by assuming responsibility for applying for civil orders. This ensures that the individual(s) are subject to and effective management by the management of sexual or violent offenders (MOSOVO) team.

The referral pathway is not limited to the police, and the project receives referrals from probation, local councils, and mental health services. Referrals are sent into a dedicated inbox and assessed by the operation trinity team. If the individual is judged as posing a sufficient risk, the team supports the OIC to write their statement and prepare the documentation required to apply to the court for a civil order.

For every application, the team conducts research on the individual using the police national database (PND) and police national computer (PNC), as well as using information from other agencies. The team reviews each individual on a case-by-case basis when considering the restrictions and positive obligations to put in place.

The team have a close working relationship with legal services and work with a solicitor who presents the applications to the court. The solicitor has six court slots every fortnight. This ensures that applications are seen in court within four weeks of submission. Once an application for a civil order has been approved, a risk management officer visits the individual at regular intervals to enforce any prohibitions and are required to register their name and address. If the individual goes on to breach the civil order they become a registered sex offender.

Overall impact

Operation trinity has not been formally evaluated yet. Monitoring of the data indicates signs of a positive impact.

Since operation trinity was launched there have been 62 referrals and 43 were accepted. 22 civil order applications have been made and granted, with only one interim application refused. The

team has received court feedback stating that applications for civil orders have been consistently high in standards. Using the same solicitor has been helpful as they understand the process and only require four slots every fortnight rather than six.

Learning

Balancing offender management, risk and preventing reoffending has sometimes been challenging. Considering the potential impact of any restrictions on individuals' mental health is also essential.

The team has seen a high number of referrals for neurodiverse individuals, particularly those with autism. Each case requires the team to consider the clarity and fairness of any restrictions to make sure the individual understands the terms of the order. The team received referrals for juvenile peer-to-peer offending. Extra care must be taken with any restrictions, as juveniles still need to be able to attend school/college.

There has been a high volume of referrals. The current cohort is manageable but there is a significant workload associated with managing individuals. Contested hearings and appeals are time consuming, and individuals regularly contest the terms of the civil orders. In addition, balancing the rights of offenders and the force's safeguarding responsibilities is particularly challenging in complex cases such as neurodiverse and juvenile individuals.

The key to operation trinity's success has been a close relationship with the force legal services department, as they are responsible for presenting the application in court.

A similar approach could be used for stalking cases. Durham constabulary already takes a similar approach in domestic abuse cases, and eventually would like to establish a civil order team in the force working across all crime types.

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