

[print version](#)



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Making it work together

Publications online

19 November 2002

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Site Map](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Help](#)

[Publications](#) > [Education](#)

[Next >](#)

Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[The Inspection](#)

[Chapter 1: Working With Adult Sex Offenders](#)

[Chapter 2: Children's Cases](#)

[Chapter 3: Strategic and Organisational Issues](#)

[Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations](#)

[Annex A: The Inspection Team](#)

[Appendix 1: A structured approach to programme review](#)

[Appendix 2: Guidance on recording](#)

[Appendix 3: Adolescent Sex Abuser Research Project \(ASAP\)](#)

[Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Site Map](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Introduction

Background

1. In 1997 SWSI completed a review of the arrangements for the supervision of sex offenders in the community, "A Commitment to Protect". Since then, there have been a number of important developments in relation to the management of sex offenders. The Sex Offenders Act 1997 came into force in September 1997 and requires sex offenders to register their address or any change of address with the police. All police services across Scotland have made arrangements to register sex offenders, many having designated officers to manage the register and the transmission of information. All have developed comprehensive systems for assessing, tracking, and recording cases. To date, there has been a very high level of compliance with the registration requirements. In addition, local authorities and police services across Scotland have developed protocols and working arrangements to share information for the purpose of managing the risks sex offenders pose. The legislation is about to be reviewed by the Home Office, with a view to identifying the scope to further improve on these arrangements.

2. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides additional powers to deal with sex offending. It enables the courts to impose Sex Offender Orders on convicted sex offenders who are not registered under the Sex Offender Act and whose behaviour gives cause for concern that serious harm might occur. The order requires the offender to register with the police and to desist from behaviour that has been identified as indicative of future risk to children or vulnerable adults. The same Act allows courts to impose extended sentences on sex offenders. The extended sentence comprises a custodial element with an 'extended' period of supervision post release for up to 10 years. Although such sentences can be imposed only for offences dealt with on indictment, the legislation effectively allows for all serious sex offenders to be supervised on release should the sentencing court consider this necessary at the time of sentence.

3. Since publication of "A Commitment to Protect", there have been a number of improvements in the management of sex offenders. New legislation has increased the protective measures available to the courts. The police and social work services have worked very effectively in ensuring the success of the sex offender's register as a monitoring tool and in developing risk assessment and management processes in order to offer greater protection to the public. These arrangements provide excellent examples of best practice that could be built upon in other interagency arrangements.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

The Inspection

4. In Jan 1998, the Minister for Home Affairs announced that the Social Work Services Inspectorate would inspect all sex offender cases supervised by Aberdeen Social Work Department, and such cases in a sample of other local authorities across Scotland, to assess compliance with National Objectives and Standards. This announcement followed the issue of an independent report by Dr James McManus¹, commissioned by Aberdeen City Council social work department, into the supervision of Steven Leisk, a convicted sex offender, who killed ten year old Scott Simpson whilst subject to supervision. Although unpublished, his report was made widely available to local authorities.

5. The main inspection was undertaken across 8 local authorities, between April and October 1998. We also undertook a follow-up inspection in Aberdeen a year later, to assess specifically the progress made by that authority in implementing the recommendations contained in the report by Dr McManus. Inspectors examined the case files of all adult sex offenders subject to supervision, and court and home background reports prepared by social workers. Through examination of case files, we also looked at the work of the 8 authorities with children and young people who had committed sexual offences or were sexually aggressive. This report comments on the quality of work and the extent to which the improvements identified in "A Commitment to Protect" and in the report by Dr McManus are being addressed in practice. In relation to adult offenders, we consider risk assessment, monitoring and oversight of offenders, personal change programmes, working with offending-related problems, effective practice and case management and supervision, and offer an assessment of the overall quality of these dimensions of supervision across Scotland. In relation to the local authorities' work with young people, we examined the extent to which sexual offending or sexual aggression was addressed by workers, and assessed the management of these cases against the regulations and guidance relating to work with children looked after by local authorities.



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Chapter 1

Working With Adult Sex Offenders

The Sample

6. We examined a total of 136 individual cases and 77 reports across the 8 local authorities in the first tranche of the inspection, and 26 individual cases (some of which we had seen previously) in the second sweep of work in Aberdeen.

Table 1: Sample of sex offenders (1st tranche)

Authority	Probation Orders	Post release licence	SRO *	Voluntary cases	SER **	HBR ***	Other	Total
Aberdeen	12	4	1	1	5	?	2****	25
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	2							
Dumfries and Galloway	7	3	2	3	10	1		26
Edinburgh	14	15	4	3	18 (+ 2 Pre trial)	6		62
North Lanarkshire	26	3	5	4	21			59
Renfrewshire	14	2		2	11			29

Scottish Borders	6	1	1	1	1 (+ 2 Pre trial)			12
Shetland	2							2
Totals	81	28	13	14	70	7	2	215

* Supervised Release Order

** Social Enquiry Reports

*** Home Background Reports

**** Mental health orders.

Risk Assessment

7. "A Commitment to Protect" highlighted the need for risk assessments to be undertaken when working with sex offenders and identified 'four main issues that need to be considered separately and in relation to each other:

- how likely is it that an offender will re-offend?
- if he or she re-offends how serious a crime is he or she likely to commit?
- are there changes in the offender (for instance his or her mental state) which modify the initial assessment of either of these?
- are there changes in the offender's circumstances (for instance where or with whom he or she is living) which modify the initial assessment of either of these?'

8. The report noted that the use of structured approaches to assess risk was in its infancy but concluded that 'Assessing risk - though complex and uncertain - is vital, both at the beginning of and during, an order. Supervision plans should be based on systematic risk assessment, which should be written down'.

9. Risk assessments can inform the sentencing process through assessing the likelihood of further offending and the impact sentences may have on this. They can also advise the court of the degree of harm should a further offence be committed. When supervising offenders in the community, risk and needs assessments can inform the work to be undertaken, the degree of oversight needed and the warning signs to be alert to. Additionally information on the risk sex offenders pose is crucial to any interagency discussions about risk management.

10. When "A Commitment to Protect" was published, few local authorities were using structured risk assessments and many local authorities were uncertain about their role in this regard. In the intervening period many local authorities have started using a risk and needs assessment framework called LSI-(R) and 17 local authorities have piloted the Risk Assessment Guidance and Framework (RAGF) developed by The Scottish Office in consultation with ADSW. Some authorities use LSI-(R) for predicting risk of re-offending and assessing needs, and use RAGF for assessing potential harm and the overall level of risk. Within authorities where a structured framework is used, it may be applied in only some teams and the use is not yet widespread. The review of the RAGF pilot suggests that it is a useful tool, some improvements are required and that it should be adapted and improved further as the information base grows.

11. The inspection showed that there has been considerable progress in the use of structured

tools to assess and manage risk, although the extent to which risk assessments were made and the degree to which the assessment of risk was integrated into practice varied across the country. Across the 8 authorities inspected, we saw 33 risk assessments out of 81 probation cases. Some authorities performed better than others in this regard. For example, in one authority we found a risk assessment in only one of the 12 probation cases examined, whilst in 2 local authorities LSI-(R) was used in every case.

12. The inclusion of risk assessments in SERs has been part of national standards since 1991. There was a risk assessment in 28 of the 66 relevant SERs (pre-trial reports were excluded from this consideration since it is not possible to undertake a risk assessment in such circumstances). In a further 5 cases an attempt had been made to assess risk, but was rather limited.

13. The inspection of all 8 authorities took place during the pilot period for RAGF and we saw increased use of the framework as the weeks progressed. Its use was not widespread across authorities (except by one authority already using LSI-(R)) and was used mainly by pilot teams or individuals who chose to use it.

14. We did see a number of cases where there had been no attempt to assess risk and in some cases the dangers arising from this were evident. For example, "David" was in prison for an offence of rape, having two previous convictions for similar offences. Two of the offences involved women known to him, both vulnerable, and there was a suggestion that they may have had alcohol problems. The victims of both offences seem to be viewed by the local community as partially culpable. The limited information contained on the file suggested to the inspectors that there was a pattern of offending where vulnerable, not very 'credible' women, who were known to the offender, were targeted. Both offences were committed when there was least chance of being disturbed. The danger the man presents to women did not appear to have been recognised by the social worker nor was consideration given as to how best to manage the risk on the offender's release.

15. In Edinburgh, the sex offender project worker (a psychologist) provided assessments for court which included assessing the risk of further sex offences being committed, the offender's motivation to change and the degree to which the sex offender programme might reduce risk. These assessments were of a very high standard and invaluable in assessing the individual's predisposition to further offending and the extent to which change might be possible. Whilst social workers, in their case management role, also need to include in their assessments the circumstances in which the offender might re-offend and the action required to reduce risk, the involvement of a psychologist in the assessment process clearly has much to offer.

16. We saw one excellent example of a risk assessment conducted over time-

Paul's offences against children were assessed as being moderately serious at the time of the court hearing and this was reflected in the court's decision to place him on probation. Over time, through working with him, it became apparent that his behaviour was more damaging, more planned, had continued for longer and affected more children than was previously thought. Increased knowledge suggested a sadistic streak and a high level of skill in manipulating children and their parents. The initial risk assessment, using RAGF, was updated when new information became available and the risk was re-assessed at each review. The comprehensive risk assessments outlining all his offending patterns, warning signs, characteristics of the children who might be vulnerable and characteristics of the parents whose children might be targeted were used as the basis for action.

17. The case of Paul demonstrates the utility of comprehensive, structured risk assessments. We

also saw examples of informal risk assessments undertaken on a day by day basis, for example, when considering changes of accommodation. In these cases the worker's knowledge and experience of the offender, combined with knowledge of what factors might increase the risk of offending, were utilised to make quick judgements about the best way to respond in periods of crisis.

18. We did, however, also see cases where the reverse was true. New information was received without a further assessment of the implications of the changed circumstances. In one case a man identified as being a risk to his children informed social workers that he had spent a weekend with them, although a case conference had agreed that unsupervised access should not be permitted. Social workers had not considered the implications of this new information. Ensuring those in authority know of such contact with vulnerable children can be a tactic used by abusers, as it sets a precedent and undermines the protective mechanisms that have been put in place, making it difficult for the child to voice concerns and for social workers to insist on previous patterns of contact.

19. There has been considerable attention focused on sex offenders in the past couple of years and this may have led to an over-emphasis, by some social workers, on the sexual nature of the offending with insufficient attention being given to the overall pattern of offending and attendant risks. For example, we saw 2 cases involving rape within relationships which were themselves characterised by physical assaults. Another case related to an offence of indecent assault against a young female relative, during an attack also involving non-sexual violence, by an offender who had previous convictions for non-sexual assaults on young male relatives. In a fourth case, indecency offences which seemed designed to offend members of another religious denomination were committed by someone known for his sectarian aggression. In each of these cases workers focused exclusively on the sexual nature of the index offence, although a wider focus, which tackled the propensity for violence or sectarian hatred in addition to the sexual aggression, may have been more appropriate.

20. In other cases, offenders had demonstrated a range of anti-social behaviours, of which sexual offending was just one element. Assessing only one dimension of risk may result in other risks being insufficiently addressed. It is likely that as confidence in using the risk assessment tools grows and awareness of the need for a comprehensive analysis of offending behaviour increases, these problems will reduce.

21. We saw evidence indicating that risk assessment practice at the SER stage and during supervision was improving, but there was scope for further development. Different authorities, and different workers within each authority, were at different stages of understanding and practice. Some staff were completing the paper work but had yet to develop the assessment skills of description, analysis and evaluation in both a systematic and holistic way. Other staff displayed an intuitive grasp of the essentials, based on considerable experience and knowledge. This intuition is essential for the day to day management of the case but needs to be coupled with more objective risk assessments, and the thinking behind professional judgements needs to be recorded so that all staff are able to manage the risk appropriately. Some staff assessed the risk fully, recorded it well and made informal judgements to manage the case when crises occurred. Assisting staff to reach this stage is an important task for local authorities and will require training, development activities and opportunities for practice and reflection.

Monitoring and Oversight

22. National Standards currently require offenders to be seen, in most cases, at least weekly in the initial stages of the supervision period, reducing to fortnightly thereafter, with the option of monthly contact in the later stages of supervision. There are also expectations about home visits and additional contacts for any groupwork programme or counselling e.g. drug and alcohol counselling. "A Commitment to Protect" highlighted the need for appropriate levels of supervision and oversight based on risk and related to the offender's motivation and circumstances. The report recognised that a high degree of oversight may be more easily achieved if the offender is well motivated, is attending an offending behaviour programme or residing in supervised accommodation than if the offender refuses to engage with the worker other than on a superficial level. In such cases monitoring and oversight are especially important.

Table 2 Meeting National Standards since 1 January 1998

Order	Nos	Exceeds standards	Meets standards	Does not meet standard (due to failures to report)	Failures to report dealt with appropriately
Probation*	81	51	19	8	6
Post release supervision	28	13	12	3	2
Total	109	64	31	11	8

*3 probation files were poorly recorded and it was not clear if National Standards had been met.

23. Where contact was less than required by National Standards, in 8 out of the 11 cases there had been only one failed contact during the course of the whole order. The failure had been followed up promptly and appropriately in all these cases, frequently in person within a couple of hours of the failure to report. Of the 3 cases where appropriate action was not taken to enforce the order, two cases involved delayed action, whilst in the third, enforcement action through notifying the then Scottish Office Home Department should have been taken.

24. Overall, the inspection revealed a high degree of monitoring and oversight, with 87% being seen in accordance with, or in excess of, National Standards. Over half the cases (59%) were seen in excess of National Standards. Most contact was weekly throughout the order and in some cases, where concerns were identified, the contact was daily. There were examples of contact being raised or reduced according to perceived risk, with a flexible approach being adopted within the parameters of National Standards. **We endorse this approach, which ensures that assessment and management of risk is central to the overall supervision of individual cases.**

25. We noted that in some authorities, all offenders were seen more than required by National Standards and in these authorities there were fewer difficulties in ensuring compliance. All the cases where the levels of contact or enforcement were unclear were in one authority. In another authority adherence to National Standards was only in evidence in all the cases since 1 January 1998. This is in contrast to other authorities where high levels of contact were in evidence in cases going back as far as 1995.

26. Enforcing contact levels or work agreements was unnecessary in the majority of cases, as purposeful engagement was in evidence throughout the orders but particularly at the start. In one authority this process involved -

- the development of an action plan pre sentence, negotiated with the offender and endorsed by the supervising court;
- the prompt commencement of orders;
- the involvement of the offender, social worker and senior social worker in well managed and documented reviews and,
- prompt follow-up (same day, in person) of any missed appointments.

Ken, a 17 year old young man with learning difficulties finds it difficult to remember when his appointments are. After appointments, the social worker writes to Ken reinforcing the learning from the session and reminding him of his next appointment. The social worker also advises the youth's father of the days and times of appointments and, when Ken obtains stable employment, arrangements are made for him to be released from work at a regular time. Gradually as he settles into the demands of the order and understands the importance of meeting the requirements, he is able to take more responsibility for his own appointment keeping.

27. In a number of cases, offenders had to flee their homes because of media or 'vigilante' activity. In these cases the supervising social worker attempted to find suitable alternative accommodation, which became a regular occurrence in some cases as news of the offender's whereabouts travelled. Some of the offenders were clearly in fear of their lives and had already been attacked. In these cases the social worker was usually the only source of help to the offender. In all these cases, social workers managed to keep contact and take steps to prevent the offender 'going underground'.

John is a serious sex offender who is made homeless as a result of being attacked by local people. Accommodation is found for him but he has to move repeatedly. The situation is so volatile that he is occasionally without an address and sleeps rough or is sheltered in non residential local authority buildings. During this period he keeps daily contact with the social work department and completes a written record, held at the office, of his whereabouts. Throughout most of his order (12 months) he is seen on an almost daily basis and never less than twice a week.

28. In another case, through supervision and close oversight of his behaviour, the offender was able to participate in activities that he might not otherwise be permitted to do - or, for fear of prohibition, he might keep secret from his supervisor.

George, a dangerous sex offender against children, is released from prison. He has a number of relatives with children. Through painstaking work with the offender, the social worker builds up a comprehensive list of family members, including the names and ages of children and their addresses. Each set of parents is contacted and advised on the care they need to take in respect of George and the protective measures that need to be put into place if they wish to protect their children whilst maintaining some family support for their brother. Later in the supervision process, the offender wishes to have a holiday in an area frequented by children. This is agreed on the basis of continuing oversight provided by the social work department in the holiday area, discussions with the relatives he is going with about how they can alert the social worker if they have concerns, and a visit by the supervising social worker to the holiday site to monitor arrangements and identify any risk that might be apparent.

29. The inspection findings indicate that many social workers are dealing well with the controlling elements of their role. Supervision expectations were explicit and enforcement action was swift in almost every case. However, this approach needs to run in parallel with motivating the offender to engage on work on his or her offending and assisting offenders with the very real practical and

social problems they face. In Renfrewshire and North Lanarkshire, we saw what we describe as 'assertive outreach', where efforts were made to engage offenders, even though the contact with the social worker is entirely voluntary on the offender's part. This "outreach" work took place either through pre-release contact in prison or in the course of joint home visits with police, as part of the risk assessment process associated with registration under the Sex Offender Act. We were particularly impressed by this pro-active stance, which assisted the local authority to manage more effectively the risks presented in such cases, and **we commend it to other local authorities.**

Personal Change Programmes

30. "A Commitment to Protect" described the programmes then available across Scotland and comments on their effectiveness. There were change programmes run with designated staff in 4 of the authorities we visited, although one had not been running for a while. Three of the remaining authorities made use of programmes developed elsewhere, adapted for work with individual offenders. Two offenders were resident at a specialist residential change programme for sex offenders in England during the period of the inspection.

31. In those authorities where structured change programmes were available, there was considerably more focus on offending behaviour than was apparent in those authorities where no such programme existed. However, where the programme was conducted by staff other than the supervising officer there were often problems in the delivery. Group work programmes ran in cycles. Start dates were often dependent on the numbers available at any one time and interim arrangements for addressing the offending behaviour prior to commencement of the groupwork were not always in place. In one authority, there was a lengthy waiting list for assessment onto the sex offender project before work could begin, whilst in another authority, planned work by a NHS psychologist and joint work with a child care social worker had yet to be implemented many months into the orders.

32. In two of the authorities we visited, most of the structured work was undertaken by pairs of workers, in one case supplemented by a groupwork programme, and this seemed to work well. A programme was available, the workers could quickly begin work, thus building on the momentum gained through the court processes, and the delivery of the programme was not dependent on cycles of availability.

33. We saw evidence of co-working, involving 2 workers, in 7 of the 8 authorities. In some authorities co-working seemed to have been introduced following the recommendation in Dr McManus' report but lacked a coherent underpinning rationale. Without such a rationale there is a risk that resources will be used inefficiently, for example, where the assessed level of risk does not warrant this approach. We also noted that in one or two cases involving young offenders, it seemed possible that the co-working approach had put the offenders under unnecessary pressure and had led to increased resistance on their part. In most cases, however, the joint working approach was specifically used to implement a change programme. Where this occurred, the work on personal change tended to be more focused. This approach also ensures appropriate levels of supervision in the absence of individual staff members.

34. The inspection team was impressed by the particular approach of one pair of workers in the Scottish Borders. Following the development of an action plan for the overall supervision of the case, each individual session was planned, the aims of the session clarified and the detailed work

to be undertaken during the session agreed. After each session the approach, content and learning were reviewed. From the file we could clearly see links from one session to another and the approach ensured that areas of difficulty could be repeated, taken more slowly or approached in a different way. The form used for this is attached as Appendix 1.

Denial

35. It is very difficult to work with offenders who continually deny any involvement in the offence or any culpability for their behaviour. Most sex offenders, however, minimise their culpability and, given the hostility such offending generates, this is not surprising as it may be in their best interests to do so if their own personal safety is to be preserved. Additionally, sex offenders know that to disclose details of their behaviour may result in them being viewed as a higher risk than might otherwise be the case. Prior to sentence, there are few incentives for offenders to admit culpability for the harm they have caused. In our view, the degree of admission required by some social workers before an offer of a change programme is made is sometimes unrealistic. We were concerned to see in one authority change programmes being denied offenders at the SER stage following, at most, 2 interviews. In two cases the same conclusion (word for word) was written in the report for court, suggestive of a blanket response rather than an individual appraisal of each offender's motivation to change.

36. We also saw clear evidence to suggest that many social workers are highly skilled in motivating offenders to engage on these difficult issues. Where they are successful, the social workers are persistent and patient, assist the offender in improving those aspects of his life that make a change worthwhile, and make the offending behaviour work interesting and relevant. However, years of denial cannot be eradicated overnight and agreement by the offender to engage in the work, without any prior disclosure of the extent of his abusive behaviour, should be sufficient for initial inclusion on a programme. If subsequent attempts to engage the offender in offence-focused work fail, it may be appropriate to return the order to court or report the matter to the Parole Board.

Working with offending-related problems

37. Many sex offenders do not commit only one type of offence and their offending may be part of a wider pattern of offending and/or violence. Some offenders' propensity to offend will be exacerbated by their social and personal circumstances. Others may be un-motivated to stop offending, having very little to gain from doing so - perhaps having already lost their liberty, home, family and employment. In some cases, dealing with other social and personal problems may be essential before work to address sexual offending can begin. An offender who is sleeping rough, for example, is unlikely to be able to focus on 'classroom' type of activities, whilst in other cases efforts may need to be focussed initially on remaining alcohol-free during working sessions.

38. Very few of the offenders whose cases we examined were without personal problems. Alcohol abuse was significant in a number of cases. Many offenders were homeless at some point in the order, sometimes as a result of the offence. Only one offender sustained employment following publicity about his offence. A number of the offenders had learning difficulties. Rarely were these factors significant in terms of contributing to offending, but all were relevant to the offender's motivation or ability to undertake a change programme.

39. These social problems were dealt with appropriately in almost all the cases we saw on the

inspection. Some problems, such as housing, were extremely difficult to resolve and took up a significant amount of time. In one particular case a family had fled their home following the conviction of the eldest son who was 15 years of age at the time of the offence. In moving to a new area the family had to change their name and develop a new 'history'. The youth had learning difficulties and much of the work during the supervision order focused on ensuring he was clear about who he could and could not mix with, and supporting his mother in ensuring he was never left unsupervised in the company of his brothers and sisters. The oversight of her son was a 24 hour a day task for this mother, and respite care may have been appropriate in this case. During periods of crisis when offenders were fearful for their own safety, offence-focused work was extremely difficult to undertake. These difficulties were sometimes compounded by the offender perceiving himself to be more the victim rather than perpetrator of offending.

Supervision and case management

40. Supervision requires 'planned arrangements for overseeing sex offenders in the community, designed to manage and reduce the risk posed by the offender within the framework of a statutory order which may be either a community disposal or a post-custodial requirement. The supervision plan includes an assessment of risk and how the supervisor will check on the activities and circumstances of an offender, monitor compliance with all requirements of the order (taking action where necessary) and collaborate with other agencies in managing and reducing risk'. ("A Commitment to Protect")

41. Effective supervision and case management begins at the SER stage. We noted earlier that half the SERs examined did not contain risk assessments and thus the basis for work was not always secure. In most of these cases the analysis of the offence was weak and the proposals for supervision were not related to the work that needed to be undertaken to reduce the risk. Of the 44 reports which proposed probation, 22 (50%) included an action plan, and a further 5 reports contained an outline plan.

42. One local authority's performance was, however, significantly better than the rest, completing 9 out of 11 reports to a very high standard, the remaining 2 being satisfactory. In this authority, SERs contained a full offence analysis linked with previous offending behaviour and information about social circumstances. Action plans, where probation was proposed, fully addressed how re-offending or harm might be reduced. In this particular authority we also noted the high quality of supervision, thus highlighting the importance of assessment in formulating plans for supervision and ensuring good quality work post sentence.

43. Some sex offenders pose a very high risk to the community. Many live unstable lives and keeping track of some of them is not easy. As the McManus report noted, regular contact must be maintained in the absence of the nominated officer and these cases also require considerable management oversight. In order to manage work with sex offenders appropriately, records need to be accurate, accessible and kept up to date. Relevant information, particularly in relation to risk and current whereabouts, must be readily available in the file, and the focus of intervention must be clear.

44. The files were in good order in 6 of the 8 authorities we inspected; information was reasonably easy to access, the reasons for supervision were clear, work plans were in place and the work undertaken reflected these plans. In two authorities the files were poorly ordered and maintained (although in one authority this was not the case in every team) and other staff would

have found it very difficult to manage the case in the absence of the supervising officer. In some cases essential information, such as details of the offence, was either not recorded or was very hard to find. Appendix 2 offers a case file structure that meets information requirements for effective case management.

45. Where authorities had paper systems which clarified the tasks expected of staff (for example, proformas for risk assessments, action plans and case reviews; quick reference systems for checking national standards; and, in Dumfries and Galloway, a fully computerised case record system that incorporated all of these), the work reflected this focused and purposeful approach. In those authorities where the paper work was markedly poor, the focus of work was less easy to determine, plans were either non-existent or unclear and it was difficult to ascertain whether the objectives of supervision were being met.

46. We saw some good examples of effective case management on the inspection. Where action plans had been developed they were generally adhered to, offenders attended change programmes, reported as requested, their homes were visited and other significant people in their lives were involved in the process of supervision. Where arrangements were made to involve other agencies, such as alcohol counsellors, hostels or mental health services, these seemed to be followed up appropriately and liaison was generally good. Earlier we gave a case example of George whose social worker ensured that as part of the case management process all the relevant relations were informed of the risk he posed. One Edinburgh team, who supervised a number of high risk homeless offenders on release from custody, were exceptionally good at developing and maintaining risk management networks around the offender, involving a change programme, accommodation projects, voluntary organisations and other team members. The case below, from another authority, is a further example of a well managed case.

Paul is residing out of the area and undergoing a change programme. The social worker in the home area maintains a good level of contact with the offender and with hostel and programme staff; prepares a plan to manage the next phase of supervision, including a full risk assessment; negotiates appropriate funding for the placement; works with at risk families in the 'home' area to build their skills in protecting their children and uses information gained during the change programme to inform departmental decisions about levels of support for families who have been victims of the offender.

47. In the case outlined above the social worker has a significant case management role without undertaking the direct work on changing behaviour.

Managing the transition from custody to the community

48. "A Commitment to Protect" noted the need for greater collaboration between social work services and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) in order to achieve a more focused approach to supervision and risk management. The transitions into and out of prison are stages where information exchange is critical. At present social workers are not routinely sharing risk assessments (where these have been undertaken) with prison staff as offenders start their sentences, and prison staff are not routinely sharing information with the supervising officer as part of release planning. Both the SPS and social work services have developed their own methods of risk assessment, which serve different purposes and address different priorities. Social workers would benefit, in their supervision of the most high risk offenders on release from custody, from the detailed risk information collated within the prison system on this group of offenders. We understand that the new SPS Sentence Management arrangements being introduced for long-term prisoners are likely to address this issue. Likewise, using social workers' risk and needs assessments prepared at the SER stage to match offenders to appropriate prison

programmes might save considerable duplication of effort within the prison system, especially in relation to short term prisoners. Glasgow City Council's social work department has recently agreed a protocol with Peterhead prison which addresses these issues and offers a model for other authorities and prisons in managing the critical transition of sex offenders from prison back into the community.

49. Effective supervision of offenders released from long term prison sentences (4 years or more) is also not facilitated by current National Standards for parole and non-parole supervision, which only require local authorities to nominate a supervising officer shortly before a prisoner's release on licence. In the course of the inspection we saw examples of good practice involving early contact with long-term prisoners who would be released on supervision. In these cases, the social worker was better informed about the nature and impact of work undertaken in prison, and was more able to engage the offender in purposeful planning for release. The worker also had more time to put in place a range of community resources to support a detailed release plan designed to manage the risks arising from the offender's return to the community,

50. In the course of our inspection, we saw only two cases of offenders released under mental health legislation who were supervised by social work services. Generally, patients who are supervised in the community have successfully completed a course of treatment which has stabilised their illness, or their illness is no longer considered to pose a threat to the public. However, ex-patients may pose a risk and may exhibit behaviour that is of concern. There is a need for collaborative assessments of the social, medical and criminogenic needs of these offenders. There is much to be gained by the sharing of information about individual cases and, whilst confidentiality must be observed, the protection of the public is an overriding consideration. It is not possible to supervise an offender with mental health problems effectively in the community if the supervisor is unaware of the health issues or signs which might indicate increased risk.

Effective practice

51. In "A Commitment to Protect" the components of effective practice are outlined -

- change programmes
- monitoring and oversight, and
- attention to those personal and social factors that cause offending or constrain its cessation.

52. All three approaches can have an impact on offending. However, some change programmes can increase the risk of re-offending for some offenders; too much attention to personal and social factors can reduce the necessary focus on offending and, although monitoring and supervision can reduce risk, this may not be sustained beyond the supervision period. A 'multi-modal' approach (using a range of techniques) has been found to be the most effective but if this results in a battery of interventions that are not targeted to meet the specific circumstances of the offender, it too can be counter-productive. What is clearly emerging from the research literature is that different programmes and intervention methods need to be used with different people.

53. We saw on the inspection that social workers are working, in the main, to principles of effective practice and are demonstrating the components of effective supervision in their work with offenders. Most of those working with sex offenders had received some specialist training and

were participating in ongoing developmental initiatives. It was clear that their practice was informed by research and current knowledge. It was also clear, however, that social workers' choice of intervention depended also on what was available within the authority, their own skills and preferred practice methods, and agency policies that required certain activities to be undertaken with all sex offenders regardless of their individual profiles or need.

54. This may be partly because the use of structured risk assessments is not yet fully developed in practice and so staff are not confident that they are able to match the right intervention to identified need. It may also be that once resources are in place, the pressures to use them outweigh the need to target appropriately.

55. Hazel Kemshall² identifies three dimensions of resource matching for work with offenders - risk, responsivity (the offender's capacity to engage with a structured programme) and motivation. Offenders who are high risk but are unmotivated or unable to change require monitoring and control. High risk, well motivated offenders who can change will benefit from change programmes. Low risk offenders, whether motivated or not, probably do not need change programmes and adherence to National Standards may suffice. There is some way to go before this level of matching is likely to be achieved.

56. Two local authorities had incorporated knowledge from their work with sex offenders into their practice with potential victims in an effort to contribute to effective child protection. In one authority the child care and criminal justice teams worked closely together on risk assessments and management, pooling knowledge and undertaking joint work with offenders. In another authority, the criminal justice social workers undertook therapeutic work with a non abusing parent as part of the supervision process and ensured that information and learning about those at risk from the offender was incorporated into the agency's decisions about the allocation of social work services to the victims and to the community who had been damaged by it.

Summary

57. The majority of sex offenders supervised in the community were well supervised, with contact rates well above those required by National Standards. With very few exceptions, offenders complied with the supervision requirements and when they did not they were swiftly followed up and, except in one case, enforcement action was swift and appropriate. The majority of offenders had access to a change programme either individually or in a group although in two authorities this did not necessarily start at commencement of the order. All the offenders' social and personal needs relating to offending were dealt with and, in the majority of cases, the supervision and monitoring was extensive. Two authorities needed to do much more work to bring their practice up to that of the best, and one of these should replicate the work of one team within the authority that already offers a model of best practice. In the remainder of the authorities the practice was of a high standard and in some cases the work was excellent and worthy of replication elsewhere.

58. Below, Figure 1 summarises each of the dimensions of supervision addressed in this chapter of the report. For each dimension we describe poor, satisfactory, good and best practice³. Whilst no single authority has achieved best practice across all dimensions, with all offenders, some authorities were fairly close to this.


59. Most of the work with adult sex offenders was 'satisfactory' with much of the work being


assessed as 'good'. A significant number of cases demonstrated better practice across some dimensions. The evidence of best practice in respect of risk assessment, change programmes and effective practice is limited to a handful of cases and these are the areas for further attention and development.

Figure 1 QUALITY OF SUPERVISION

	RISK ASSESSMENT	MONITORING & OVERSIGHT	CHANGE PROGRAMME	MEETING CRIMINOGENIC NEED	SUPERVISION AND CASE MANAGEMENT	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
BEST	Full structured risk assessment reviewed and updated. Flexible approach when circumstances change.	Accordance to risk and not less than national standards. Flexible as circumstances and needs change.	Integrated part of risk management plan, matched to offenders' learning styles and needs.	Individually designed, flexibly delivered, respective to changed circumstances.	Widely used internal and external resources within risk management plan, liaison management and initiative effectively delivered.	Work demonstrates up to date knowledge of 'what works', reviewed and critically assessed to inform future practice.
GOOD	Structured, accountable assessment of re-offending harm and need.	According to risk and not less than national standards.	Structured, planned and delivered.	Needs addressed appropriate referrals made.	Work planned, reviewed tasks allocated, clear expectations and enforced.	Work conforms to effective practice principles and methods.
SATISFACTORY	Some assessment of risk.	Meets national standards	Offending addressed in unstructured way in supervision.	Discussed in supervision.	Meets national standards.	Some work based on effective practice.
POOR	Absent or poor.	Less than national standards.	Absent	Absent or unrelated to offending.	Ad hoc practice.	Work unrelated to effectiveness principles.

Dimension of Quality

 Achieved in the majority of cases

 Achieved in a significant number of cases

 Achieved in some cases

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Chapter 2

Children's Cases

Introduction

60. Many adult sex offenders establish a pattern of sexual aggression in childhood or adolescence. Conviction statistics and studies of victim reports suggest that anything up to a third of sexual offences are committed by children and young people before they reach 18 years⁴. Focused work, such as personal change programmes with young people who are sexually aggressive, may prevent their behaviour becoming fixed and therefore contribute to reducing sex offending in the longer term. The Review included analysis of children's case records and interviews with strategic and operational managers of social work services for children, to find out how local authorities manage risk from sexually aggressive young people and what they do to reduce the likelihood of future offending. We examined 46 cases submitted by local authorities, of children and young people who had committed sexual offences or displayed sexually aggressive behaviour, and who may present risk to children or other vulnerable members of the community. Most of these children were looked after by the local authority under supervision requirements made by Children's Hearings, or other provisions in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. A small number were supported by social work services on a voluntary basis, usually after referral from the Reporter. Some cases were still at preliminary stages of child protection inquiries or investigation into allegations that a young person had committed a sexual offence.

61. We looked for information recorded about sex offending or sexually aggressive or inappropriate behaviour by the young people, and evidence that social workers or others had assessed the significance and seriousness of such behaviour. We identified what action the local authority had taken to reduce sexual offending or aggression and any perceived risk in these cases, for example by putting in place arrangements for the supervision of the young person or arranging for the young person to attend a personal change programme. We also assessed the

management of these cases against requirements and standards set out in legislation⁵ and guidance⁶ on work with children looked after by local authorities. The number of children's cases submitted for inspection by each authority varied from 1-13. Only one authority had no current cases in which a child or young person presented sexually aggressive behaviour.

Table 2: Breakdown of children's cases by local authority

Aberdeen	7 + 1 child protection case involving an adult offender
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	1
Dumfries and Galloway	8
Edinburgh	11
North Lanarkshire	13
Renfrewshire	4
Scottish Borders	2
Shetland	0
Total	46 (+1)

Individual circumstances of the cases

62. Of the 46 cases, 42 (91%) were boys and 4 were girls. Their ages ranged from 10 -17 years. Most were over 12 years old at the time of the inspection. Thirty-five of the children were looked after by the local authority, by virtue of a supervision requirement made by a Children's Hearing or other provisions in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Some young people were provided with accommodation under section 25 of the Act because their families felt unable to look after them. Local authorities held parental responsibilities in respect of 6 young people, some of whom were also subject to supervision requirements, and one young person was serving 12 months in custody for a sexual offence.

63. Twenty-four young people were looked after away from home. Nineteen of these young people (54% of the "looked after children" in the sample) were placed in residential settings, including children's homes, residential schools, close support units or supported semi-independent living. The 5 young people looked after away from home were in family placements (either in foster care or with relatives other than their parents), two were girls and one was shortly to move to a residential school. Many young people whom local authorities thought might present a risk of sexual aggression were, therefore, living with other young people in residential settings - a situation with important implications for the management of these settings.

64. Thirty-six young people had been charged with sexual offences, ranging from rape to indecent exposure and breach of the peace involving some form of sexual misconduct or motivation. Five young people had been convicted of a sexual offence in a criminal court. Seventeen cases had been dealt with within the Children's Hearings system but only nine of these resulted in offences being accepted or established. Other offence referrals were discharged by Reporters or subsequent

Hearings, found 'not established' as grounds for referral, or outcomes were not clear from the files. Ten young people who displayed sexually aggressive behaviour had never been charged with any offence. Therefore social work services had been given clear authority to tackle sexually aggressive behaviour by courts or Children's Hearings in less than a third of cases. In others the status of the behaviour or concerns about sexual aggression was far from clear.

65. The young perpetrators generally knew the victims of their sexual aggression. Many were neighbours, friends of younger siblings or family friends. In six cases the victims were family members, usually younger female siblings. In three cases these were half-siblings. Over half the victims were female. Only two identified victims were not known to the perpetrator and one of these was an adult woman. Nearly a quarter of case files did not identify a victim. These often involved young people whose sexual aggression aroused more general concern.

66. Many of these young people needed help and support from the social work department for problems other than sexual offending. Seventeen of the young people were involved in other forms of offending, including assault, theft, vandalism and motor vehicle-related crime. Nineteen had a history of difficulties and disruption in their education, with truancy and aggressive behaviour common. Ten were placed in, or had experience of residential schooling, and 4 had been placed in secure accommodation. In almost half (22) of the cases there was a history of problems in the young person's birth family. These problems included mental illness, attempted suicide, inter-generational sexual abuse, misuse of alcohol, and domestic violence. Many of the young people had experienced multiple changes of carer. Some were beyond their parents' control or relationships had broken down because of the young person's offending. In some instances the young person's sex offending had precipitated parental rejection. The social work department also accommodated some young people to reduce risk to other children, particularly where the victim and perpetrator were in the same family.

67. The pattern of sex offending and characteristics of these sexually aggressive young people were consistent with much of what research tells us about adult offenders. Almost all were male and referrals came from a range of socio-economic groups. The majority of the young people in this sample had committed offences outside their own family. Some appeared to be developing personal profiles similar to those common amongst adult non-familial sex offenders; they had experienced sexual abuse, were involved in other forms of delinquency, displayed poor social and communication skills and had experienced significant family disruption and breakdown. Some of the offences or aggression against children involved coercion and substance misuse⁷.

15 year old Steven is one of several children who live with Steven's mother and her partner. Some are Steven's siblings or cousins and some are children of her partner. Steven began to truant regularly when he was 13. He was placed under supervision last year because he was using alcohol and drugs, and committing offences. One of Steven's younger sisters says that Steven has been touching her sexually for a long time. More recently other local children, aged 9 and 10 years, have separately reported that Steven has touched their genitals. The police notified the Reporter of the allegations but there was insufficient evidence to press charges. Steven's family asked the local authority to look after him and he is now living in a residential children's unit. He will shortly undergo assessment by a child psychiatrist.

Assessment of risk from sexual aggression

68. There are fewer frameworks in use for assessing risk posed by children rather than adults, and few existing initiatives outside specialist services. In all the authorities assessment was hampered by a lack of information about the index offence. Most authorities relied upon other resources for assessment, such as child mental health services, specialist projects or independent consultants.

Even where these were available locally, few young people had undergone assessment. There were often significant delays in obtaining appointments in Departments of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. If a child denied an offence other professionals might withdraw on the basis that intervention would be purposeless. Nevertheless, the local authority looking after the child should address wider issues such as whether the young person has received adequate sex education, and whether he may need counselling about personal and sexual relationships.

69. Where assessments had taken place, authorities rarely used these to inform plans to reduce risk. For example 13 cases included an assessment of the risk of further sexual aggression. Less than half recorded clear arrangements for the young person's supervision in circumstances of risk. Some of these arrangements placed a high level of responsibility for reducing risk to other children onto the young person's family. Whilst families can obviously make an important contribution to risk management, they need sufficient information, advice and support to do this reliably and confidently.

5 year old Jane alleged sexual abuse by her 14 year old half-brother, Brian. There was no evidence to corroborate Jane's disclosure and the grounds for referral were 'not established' at a Sheriff's proof hearing. With the family's agreement, the Reporter referred Brian to social work services for assistance on a voluntary basis. Brian went to stay with his maternal grandparents pending an assessment. The social worker explored with Brian his relationships, behaviour, and social skills and assessed him as presenting medium risk of abusing Jane again. Personal safety work was carried out with Brian's half-sister, involving the mother. Eight months later Brian returned home, with family members committed to monitoring and overseeing his behaviour.

70. Following an audit of sexual aggression or offending by children in local placements, North Lanarkshire had devised and piloted an assessment framework jointly with criminal justice staff. The framework comprises guidelines for staff, and a range of methods and tools adapted from different sources. Exercises carried out with young people over an average of eight sessions explore their view of themselves and their family, their knowledge of sex and perceptions of normal and abnormal sexuality and the circumstances of their offences or sexually aggressive behaviour. Social work records indicated that this work attempted to challenge young people's attitudes and beliefs about sex and women or children, raise the young person's awareness of any emerging offending cycle and provide alternative responses and strategies to risky situations in which they might offend. Assessments were jointly carried out by field social workers and staff in specialist services in the authority. In this authority two thirds of young people identified as sexually aggressive had undergone some degree of assessment. This represented the highest proportion amongst the authorities inspected. **This framework is a very useful start, to be welcomed and encouraged.**

Access to personal change programmes

71. Eleven young people had undergone personal change programmes to address their sexual aggression, including 7 who had experienced aspects of the package outlined above. In the other 4 cases, authorities had referred the young person to a specialist resource, or a department of child and adolescent psychiatry. Some young people were receiving counselling for their own experience of sexual abuse, and sometimes this included attention to the young person's potential for abusive behaviour. In one case a young person who had abused three younger siblings over a period of several years was receiving therapeutic counselling for his own experience of sexual abuse, although this alone seemed unlikely to reduce risk.

72. Six of the eight authorities we inspected had no local strategy or guidelines for staff in

children's services working with sexually aggressive young people. In one authority knowledge about existing guidelines seemed limited. Most authorities relied on referral to other agencies, which themselves did not always have specialist knowledge or skills in working with young sex offenders. Where social workers did attempt offence-focused work on sexual aggression, in a minority of cases they did not draw conclusions from the information they gathered during direct work. Some young people appeared to undergo repeated and protracted 'assessment', with sessions taking place over a period of 18 months to two years without review of goals and outcomes. In other cases, at the end of an assessment the social worker concluded that the young person no longer presented a risk without apparent evidence that there had been any change in his attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour.

73. Where a child's account seemed inconsistent with what assessment models led them to expect, some workers dismissed the child's account prematurely. In some cases, work focused solely on a sexual offence that had taken place up to three years previously, at the expense of immediately pressing problems, such as serious and escalating non-sexual offending. As with some adult cases, this may reflect both the recent strong emphasis on work to reduce the risk of sexual offending and the relative inexperience of some workers with such approaches. In attempting to challenge some of the thinking of young people, workers need to take sufficient account of the child's stage of development, level of denial and current individual needs.

74. In at least 10 cases the young person consistently denied any sexually aggressive behaviour or offending. In some cases denial continued despite conviction or a sex offence having been established at a Sheriff's proof Hearing. As with adult offenders, young people may have strong incentives to deny or minimise any sexually aggressive behaviour. In the absence of corroborating evidence, denial may prevent a prosecution or an offence being established at a Children's Hearing. Young people may fear rejection by family or peers. Parents and families may support young people's denial by attributing blame to child victims or dismissing behaviour as adolescent experimentation.

75. Adult sex offenders often present significant denial and minimisation. Personal change programmes to tackle offending are designed with this in mind, and explore and challenge offenders' thinking in ways that enable them to take increasing responsibility for their behaviour. Similar approaches are needed to tackle denial in younger offenders but in order to be effective these must take account of the young offender's age and stage of development and should be discussed with his parents or carers. Professionals should assess the young person's ability to talk about personal or sexual problems, and consider the likely impact on the young person of the age and gender of the worker.

76. Parents and carers will need relevant information about sexual offending and help to support their child in work to address sexual aggression. The NSPCC have developed a family assessment programme for work with parents or carers of young people who have abused others⁸. This starts from the assumption that parents or carers involvement and support is essential to enable a young person to engage effectively in personal change work, but that families are likely to need a lot of help to understand how sexual offending develops, and its impact on victims. Several of the cases we reviewed demonstrated the importance of parents in influencing, both positively and negatively, the child's capacity to undertake personal change work.

16 year old David lives at home with his mother and is the subject of a supervision requirement. In 1996 professionals became worried about David's sexually aggressive behaviour. He has touched female school staff on their breasts and buttocks, continued this behaviour in his IT centre and verbally abuses women using sexually explicit language. David attempted to sexually assault a female peer. This was not reported to the police. In 1997 the social work department began risk assessment sessions with David. David and his mother repeatedly stated that they did not see the need for this and both failed to co-operate for over 18 months. The Children's Hearing terminated David's supervision requirement in 1998 with no significant change having taken place. Social workers may have to adopt an alternative approach to families who are reluctant to engage in focused work on sexual offending or aggression. They should make a preliminary assessment of risk on the basis of what is known about the young person's offence(s) or sexually aggressive behaviour, his social circumstances and the attitude of his family. Thereafter the social worker should acknowledge this, put in place protective measures as far as these are possible, and focus on other areas of need whilst remaining alert to any further sexually aggressive behaviour, or any window of opportunity that might occur as supervision progresses.

Delay

77. In some cases there were lengthy delays between the reporting of an offence and a criminal trial. In these cases police, Procurators Fiscal or Reporters advised social workers not to discuss the alleged offence with the child and family, and they felt unable to talk about this area at all. If the social work department is responsible for the supervision or placement of a child charged with a sexual offence, as a minimum the social worker should have details of the charges and the circumstances of offences to inform planning for the child's care and education. Social workers may not be able to discuss details of an alleged offence with the child, family or carers. Nevertheless they should provide advice about the child's contact with other children, and agree arrangements for adequate supervision and any desirable precautions to reduce the likelihood of further allegations against the child, pending the outcome of a criminal trial.

15 year old William has pleaded not guilty to charges of lewd and libidinous practices against three local girls and has been awaiting trial for some time. He is the subject of a home supervision requirement. He attends a community project providing education and support, with other young people including girls. William's records do not contain any information about the alleged offences and state that the Reporter has advised the social worker not to discuss details of the alleged offences with William or his family in case this prejudices the criminal trial pending. The social worker is worried about whether William's attendance at the project may place other young people at risk

Managing the risks

78. We found cases in which managing risk from the young person's sexual aggression was an integral part of planning and work with the child and family; these cases were well managed and demonstrated a high standard of social work practice. However none of the authorities were able to consistently demonstrate satisfactory management of risk from sexual aggression by young people.

79. Children's services in two authorities have begun to develop ways of tackling the problem locally. North Lanarkshire has identified the scale of the problem through local audit and, with colleagues in criminal justice services, has developed a framework for assessment and intervention worthy of consideration by others. The City of Edinburgh Council has linked into a local network of expertise and advice on work with young sexual abusers, but could draw more on the extensive skills and experience on work with sex offenders within its own criminal justice services. Although other authorities were taking the problem seriously, they had not developed reliable strategies for managing risk and, perhaps in view of small numbers of cases, had not identified any need for local development in this area of work. This contrasted strongly with our

findings in the same authorities' criminal justice services, where priority was given to work with very small numbers of adult sex offenders according to the nature and impact of their offending on victims, and the risk they present.

80. Some specialist projects working with sexually aggressive young people in Scotland are collaborating with the Adolescent Sexual Abuser Project (ASAP). This is a research project linked to the Home Office funded research programme on effectiveness in managing and reducing risk from sex offenders. ASAP is working with 32 specialist projects and 3 Young Offenders' Institutions in the UK to develop and test assessment measures for young abusers, help projects delivering personal change programmes examine the impact of these and identify some of the developmental characteristics of sexually aggressive young people. Appendix 3 provides some information on the profiles of the young people referred to these services.

Case management and compliance with statutory regulations and guidance

81. We assessed the 35 cases of children looked after against minimum expectations set out in relevant legislation and guidance. These describe the statutory requirements of local authorities when looking after children and young people. The local authority must prepare a written care plan for each young person. This should contain information about the child's circumstances and background, the services the local authority intends to provide to safeguard and promote his or her welfare and arrangements for placement if the child is looked after away from home. Care plans should describe how the child's educational and health needs will be met and how long the plan will last. They should describe arrangements for involving parents in planning and in the child's day to day care, and details of their contact with the young person if he or she is living away from home.

82. Only two of the 35 cases included a discrete written care plan. Neither complied fully with regulations, although one was of a high standard. This plan was prepared by a support worker in a housing association, and was linked to the field social worker's community care assessment of a young person with a learning disability making the transition to semi-independent supported living. The plan set out in detail the arrangements for the young person's accommodation, support and contact with birth family, and also included written details of the supervision planned to reduce the risk of him abusing children and young people.

The local authority has parental responsibilities for 17 year old Andrew and his younger sister. Whilst in foster care both children disclosed protracted sexual abuse by their parents and other adults. No one was prosecuted but a Sheriff found that grounds for referral to a Children's Hearing were established. Andrew has learning disabilities. Professionals are worried about his sexualised behaviour. He approaches younger children to ask if they will have sex with him. With the help of a voluntary housing agency, the local authority assessed Andrew and agreed a care plan which includes detailed arrangements to reduce the risk he presents to children. Andrew is now successfully living in housing association accommodation under close supervision, with extensive support.

83. Although only one case included a satisfactory written care plan, most of the case records did contain information about the areas set out in regulations and schedules governing care plans, usually in the body of reports for other purposes, or in records of review meetings. Health and medical information was missing in a majority of cases including those in which the local authority was providing accommodation for the young person or had parental responsibilities.

84. Reviews had been held at the required statutory intervals in less than half of the 35 cases of children looked after, although most cases had been reviewed at least once during the previous

year. Some included regular professionals' planning meetings in addition to statutory child care reviews. There was little evidence of children's or parents' views being considered in Reviews, and little reference to these in records.

85. The frequency of social workers' visits to children looked after away from home generally, although not always, met statutory requirements. These are not demanding. The statutory minimum of three-monthly visits by a social worker to a child in placement is insufficient to tackle the range of complex needs and problems presented by young people in our sample. National guidance on home supervision recommends that during the first three months of a supervision requirement social workers should maintain at least fortnightly contact with a child under supervision because of offending⁹. SWSI recommends that social workers should visit children in secure accommodation every week for the first six weeks and a minimum of fortnightly thereafter, in order to properly assess children's needs and implement care plans effectively¹⁰. Where sexually aggressive young people may pose risk to others, social workers should maintain regular and reliable contact at least consistent with standards set out in guidance.

86. Health and education professionals did not take a sufficiently active part in planning, other than when the child was placed in residential school or secure accommodation. One authority has introduced inter-agency assessments similar to their local multi-disciplinary assessments for children with special educational needs. The field social worker, an educational psychologist, residential staff and any other professionals involved with the child, carry out assessments, and prepare reports for discussion at a multi-disciplinary meeting. This meeting explores all options for meeting the child's educational and care needs and formulates a plan. Where health, social work and education professionals worked collaboratively, long-term plans were much clearer.

87. We found cases in which there was little evidence of purposeful and planned direct work with a child or family to tackle long-standing problems, bring about change in the family relationships or improve the child's social or educational adjustment. Decisions were made in response to crises brought about by children's behaviour, and focused predominantly on arrangements for young people's placement and basic care. Although some cases demonstrated very high standards of professional practice, most gave insufficient attention to young people's wider needs. Planning discussions and reviews focused predominantly on young people's problems and difficulties. Assessments made little reference to strengths, interests and skills within the young person and their family that might be harnessed to achieve more positive outcomes.

88. At the time of the inspection some local authorities we visited expressed an interest in using the assessment and planning programme for looking after children away from home, *Looking After Children in Scotland: Good Parenting, Good Outcomes*, which has been promoted by the Scottish Executive. All the local authorities we visited now intend to begin using the materials. One local authority implemented the package fully in July 1999 for all children being newly accommodated by the authority, with those already being looked after included in the programme at each subsequent statutory review. Another intends partial implementation of the package alongside existing local assessment and planning records. Implementation of this programme should help improve local authorities' compliance with statutory requirements and practice in care planning and review of children's cases.

Managing the interface between Hearings and Courts/ Children's Services and Criminal Justice

89. In most cases there was no reference to a child's sexual aggression in the written decisions of Hearings which made or renewed a supervision requirement. The absence of reference to sexual aggression as a specific factor of concern may lead social workers to conclude that this is not seen as a significant problem to be tackled in supervision of the young person. Hearings are only well-equipped to respond to referrals concerning sex offending if social work departments provide clear guidance in Social Background Reports and offer realistic and feasible supervision plans which include work to tackle offending behaviour. We found that those local authorities with more flexible functional boundaries between children's and criminal justice services were better equipped to tackle risk and offending behaviour by young people, and we say more about this in the section dealing with strategic and organisational issues.

Placement of children who are sexually aggressive

90. The majority of these young people looked after away from home were placed in residential settings. These settings will often include young people who have experienced sexual abuse or who may be particularly vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. A number of the group of young people identified as sexually aggressive had themselves been sexually abused, and were also vulnerable. Some of the young people were living in local authority or other residential accommodation before their sexual aggression became apparent. If a young person is known to have a history of sexual aggression or sexual offending, decisions about placement must be based on careful consideration of any likely risks to other children or young people. This applies whether the placement be in residential or foster care or with carers in the young person's own family. The local authority should set out in the young person's written care plan arrangements for supervising his contact with other vulnerable people and for work to change and control their behaviour.

91. The culture and ethos of any home are most important in making sure children are adequately protected from abuse. In one local authority staff in a residential unit for younger adolescents became concerned about the extent and nature of sexualised play emerging within the resident group. Police and social workers were asked to investigate a number of incidents, under local child protection procedures, in order to identify the perpetrator or perpetrators of what were defined as sexual assaults. After several inconclusive investigations it became clear that the problem was a collective one. Staff needed training and help to identify parameters of normal sexual behaviour for their home, and to help young people to maintain appropriate personal boundaries. Some of the young residents displayed sexualised behaviour related to their experience of sexual abuse by adults. The Centre for Residential Child Care has produced guidelines for residential workers which describes the problems and dilemmas which arise in residential settings caring for vulnerable young people, and strategies for developing a supportive and safe culture in which the risks of sexual abuse by peers is minimised¹¹.

92. A Church of Scotland residential school has built up substantial experience of managing the care of older sexually aggressive adolescents over recent years. In the light of this, the Board of Social Responsibility decided to pilot a specialist residential service to provide assessment and personal change programmes integrated with care and education for young people who present risk of sexually abusing others. With some start up development funding from The Scottish Executive, the service is now established in a purpose built six bedded unit and a groupwork programme is in place. A specialist unit for young sex offenders has opened at St Mary's Kenmure, where residents will undergo specialist risk assessment, individual personal change programmes and groupwork. These developments represent welcome additions to the continuum of services for this group

Information issues

93. Good offence information is essential to enable local authorities to tackle offending by young people, as well as meet their social and developmental needs. We concluded that social work departments do not have adequate information about sex offending by young people whom they look after. Information is poor in three areas:

- local authority strategic managers have difficulty in achieving a clear overview of the extent and pattern of local offending, including sexual offending, by individual young people, and how offences have been dealt with;
- local authority social workers have poor information about the number and outcome of sexual offences committed, or alleged to have been committed, by young people whom they look after;
- social workers also have very limited, or no, information about the circumstances and content of established or proven offences, other than the perpetrator's account, making accurate and timely assessment of future risk impossible.

15 year old James had been charged with an offence of lewd and libidinous practices, following an alleged assault on a younger girl. When James' family moved to another area the local Reporter requested a social background report on James and referred him to a Children's Hearing, which made a supervision requirement. There was no information about nature of the offence, the age of the child victim, or details of the abusive behaviour. The social worker recorded that the Reporter would not provide details of the offence James had committed, but had offered to give details to a child psychiatrist verbally. As no criminal prosecution was proposed, it was not clear why this information was withheld from James' social worker.

94. The social work departments we inspected did not collate information about offending by children whom they look after. Local authorities reported that information about sexual offences committed by young people under their supervision would normally be retained only on the child's case record. Managers responsible for strategic planning therefore did not know the scale or nature of sexual offending by young people looked after by their authority.

95. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) gathers aggregate statistics on referrals to Children's Hearings. These statistics include referrals of children because they are, or live in the same household as, a victim of a sexual offence, and referrals of young people who have committed offences. SCRA no longer gathers information about specific offences or types of offence and therefore it is not possible to identify how many offences referred to Reporters and Children's Hearings are sexual offences. The numbers of children who have committed offences in a particular area cannot be identified solely from the number of referrals.

96. Social work departments' information about current and previous offending by individual children was often patchy and incomplete. Less than half of the 46 current case records submitted for inspection included comprehensive details of the sex offence or the sexually aggressive behaviour that was causing concern. Twenty-six of the young people had committed more than one offence or had a history of repeated incidents of sexual aggression, but less than half of their case records included any information about these other incidents and 58% gave no details of previous offences, incidents or sexually aggressive behaviour.

97. Local authority case records did not link information about charges and offence notifications to the Reporter to outcomes, such as decisions made by the Reporter or a Children's Hearing. In other parts of the UK comprehensive information about offending by individual children is accessible through police and court records, and local authorities automatically receive information about young people's charges, outcomes, convictions and disposals. In the absence of such systems in Scotland, local authorities should maintain a discrete record of alleged, accepted or established offences and outcomes in respect of every child whom they look after, so that the number of times a young person comes to the attention of the police, and patterns of offending behaviour or allegations, are clearly visible. This should be taken into account when devising care plans and identifying appropriate placements for young people.

98. Although SCRA's current information systems do link referrals on offence grounds to particular children, this information cannot be accessed quickly. Neither is it always easy to identify a clear outcome for each offence referral. A supervision requirement may be made in response to several or only one of a number of grounds for referral put to the Hearing, which may include truancy or lack of parental care as well as a sexual offence committed by a young person. Where offences are recorded, SCRA statistics include only the most serious offence, which may be non-sexual, as the basis for the making of a supervision requirement. Furthermore, referral grounds which are not accepted cannot form the basis of a subsequent supervision requirement.

99. At present only Reporters' manually kept records have all the information necessary for an overview of a child's offending career. This will inform his or her judgement about how to deal with subsequent referrals. Social work departments need equivalent information to carry out credible assessments and determine the need for personal change programmes with young people. Without up-to-date collated information about charges or offence notifications to the Reporter, and information about the circumstances and nature of established offences, social workers may not discern patterns of behaviour to help them identify and decide upon appropriate action to tackle escalating offending.

100. SCRA is developing a computerised information system, the Children's Reporter Information System (ChRIS), to replace manual collection of statistics. ChRIS will record information about notifications and referrals to the Reporter that should identify the nature of any offence, the outcome at every stage of the referral process, and link information about offence referrals to individual children referred. The system will be piloted in mid 2000, for national implementation in early 2001, and should generate much more powerful aggregate information about sexual offending by children in Scotland. We think that local authorities ought to be able to make use of this information, but recognise that there may be some impediments to this. Poor information about aggregate offending makes it difficult for social work managers to identify the need for personal change programmes and plan and allocate resources to services to reduce sexual offending by children and young people. Poor information about the nature and level of offending by individual children makes it hard to identify patterns of offending and, coupled with limited details of offences or victims, hinders credible assessment of risk.

101. Even if comprehensive management information about offending were in place, some significant problems would remain. When a child is referred for an offence, the Reporter may decide to take no further action. He or she may do so before the child is involved with any support agencies, or may decide no further action is needed because the child is already subject to supervision and in a stable placement, or a care and supervision plan is progressing well. Reporters do not normally give information about previous offence notifications to subsequent

Children's Hearings or the local authority, although SCRA have indicated that it may be competent for a reporter to do so if the information is significant and relevant. As well as previous established grounds for referral, previous offence notifications on which no further action has been taken are relevant, even if only to indicate when a young person has come to the attention of police or other helping agencies before. Lack of information about previous charges, notifications and referrals prevents Children's Hearings and local authorities from taking into account the nature and full extent of a child's potential behavioural difficulties when making decisions about the best way to help him and his family.

102. The police do retain information about the outcome of their notifications to the Reporter, but there are no existing protocols for using or sharing this information with other agencies, such as local authorities, to inform assessment of risk from sex offending. Because they do not have access to the full range of information which could assist them in their task, local authorities are not well-equipped to assess and work with sexually aggressive young people effectively. Although other agencies often hold the required information, sharing this with local authorities or others may give rise to challenges under the Human Rights Act 1998, which implements ECHR legislation in Scotland. These difficulties may not be overcome easily. However the Scottish Executive should continue to work closely with SCRA, local authorities, the police and other relevant interests to find a solution that allows the sharing of appropriate information, in order to prevent sexual crime and manage risk from sexual offending.

103. Across all authorities, children's case records were poorly organised and far too large to be used effectively as a working tool. Some case records included well-ordered, good information, but in many, significant information was extremely difficult to find and was not up to date. It would be very difficult for any new or duty social worker to identify a child's history of sexual aggression or offending and risk factors from many of these case files.

104. All authorities used multi-purpose case files for use across client services. Social workers did not appear to follow a common structure for organising their files in any of the authorities. There was no evidence that line managers had reviewed or read the files. In only one authority were all the case files legible, easily understood and recorded salient points. One of these reached an exemplary standard.

105. Case records were often unstructured chronological accounts of client contact, with little clarity about the purpose and content of contact. All case records would have benefited considerably from periodic summaries. In many instances, Social Background Reports to Children's Hearings appeared to be the main source of information about the family's history and professional involvement over time. Unsurprisingly these lacked basic details which would not have been relevant to Panel members. Nevertheless some reports were unacceptably long.

Conclusions

106. Many of the social workers demonstrated very high levels of commitment and concern for the families with whom they worked, often in difficult and stressful circumstances. Eleven (24%) of the children's cases we inspected were managed satisfactorily and of these, five reached high standards. In a further nine, case management was fair, but with areas of important weakness. The remainder, over half the total sample, were poorly managed, or the case record did not record sufficient information to allow evaluation. Social workers in cases which reached high standards of case management were better equipped to tackle the young person's difficulties and problems,

including sexually aggressive behaviour.

107. The range of practice we found in the sample is illustrated in Figure 2 below. This indicates a different pattern of need for development in work with sexually aggressive young people from that in local authority criminal justice services. Over recent years the impetus to reduce risk and improve monitoring and supervision of convicted adult sex offenders has resulted in a growing body of skills and expertise. We found fewer of the children's cases met criteria associated with best practice in managing sexual aggression.


108. Poor cases were characterised by low levels of contact with children and their families, a lack of basic information and little analysis of the families' history and problems, an absence of planning resulting in reactive intervention, and inflexible, and sometimes highly critical, attitudes towards children or their families. Some intervention appeared cursory; for example young people were asked to complete self-assessment questionnaires but there was no analysis or interpretation of the results, and they did not appear to inform further planning or intervention. There was little evidence of active supervision or oversight of these cases by line managers.


109. The best cases were those in which social workers had maintained consistent and regular contact with young people and their families and had formed good relationships which encouraged families to talk about their very personal concerns. There was evidence that intervention was based on comprehensive information and assessment of the child's and family's circumstances and needs, including the child's sexual aggression or offending. Social workers provided advice and information to families alongside emotional support. These cases demonstrated that the social work department had considered the child's wider needs within his family and social context and had involved other professionals appropriately. Some cases demonstrated very skilled assessment and high standards of casework.


Figure 2


	Assessment	Care plan	Direct work with child	Direct work with carers	Monitoring and review
Best	Comprehensive and structured assessment of needs and risk, takes account of current research and theory into causes of sex offending; use of relevant assessment tools and measures	Comprehensive written care plan, includes work to reduce sexual aggression and supervision in risk situations, multi-agency, multi-skilled approach; capacity for flexibility; sets clear outcomes	Social worker has regular, reliable contact with child consistent with needs and risk; good relationship; addresses child's personal and social needs and risk management; personal change programme in place	Regular, reliable contact with child's family/ carers; provides advice, information and emotional support; work to improve family's understanding of sexual aggression and impact on victims; family fully involved and informed verbally and in writing	Care plan reviewed with child and family and other agencies, as required; level of risk reassessed and plans amended to reflect changing circumstances;

Good	Assessment of individual needs and risk of sexual aggression Care plan written down; sets out services designed	to reduce risk	Social worker sees child regularly, tackles risk and needs; good relationship	Regular contact; information given verbally, family consulted before decisions made, attend planning meetings	Care plan reviewed with child and family and other agencies at statutory intervals
Fair	Assessment of needs does not take account of sexual aggression; some information about family circumstances	Care plan focuses on arrangements for child's immediate care, not written down, service-led rather than needs-led	Social worker visits child at intervals required by statute	Regular contact, family attend significant meetings	Care plan reviewed by local authority at statutory intervals; family invited; limited evidence of management supervision
Poor	No assessment of needs, lack of information about family history and circumstances	No care plan; activity dependent on crises brought about by child, family or administrative demands; inconsistent service _ e.g. no allocated social worker	Social worker reliant on information from other agencies; contact with child does not meet minimum requirements; punitive or critical attitudes	Limited or no contact with family; no evidence of partnership	Little evidence of management supervision or oversight, case not reviewed at statutory intervals, no record of significant decisions

 = 0 cases

 <10% cases

 <25%cases

 >50% cases

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Chapter 3

Strategic and Organisational Issues

110. Whether dealing with adults or young people, the supervision of sex offenders in the community is a complex task, undertaken under the gaze of a sometimes hostile public. Within the cases we examined, some of the offenders were dangerous, and almost all presented some risk of re-offending and consequent harm. Many of the adult offenders had intractable social problems and in all adult cases a network of protective arrangements was needed to increase community safety. The complexity of the task of addressing offending behaviour, managing risk and dealing with associated or underlying problems was thrown into even sharper relief in the cases of sexually aggressive children or young people.

111. Almost all the cases we inspected were very demanding, requiring co-operation between different sections of the social work department, between social work and other departments within the local authority, and between these departments and external agencies. In addition to the inter-agency approach which is often essential, those supervising sex offenders in the community need to be well informed about sex offending, need to have high levels of skills and need to be well supported.

Strategic issues

112. We were interested to know to what extent authorities had been able to adopt a strategic approach to the management of sex offenders in the community, involving other departments within the local authority or, indeed, external agencies. Most of the authorities we inspected were at an early stage in developing a strategic approach, although many were considering how to take this forward on a corporate basis within the authority. The implementation of the Sex Offenders Act 1997, and attendant requirements for social work departments to work more

closely with the police, had given particular impetus to such initiatives. Most senior managers spoke of improved formal and informal links with other key departments such as education and housing.

113. Dumfries and Galloway had developed structures for joint planning between health, social services, housing and education departments. It had also been agreed that the Housing Department would provide advice to social workers in relation to accommodation issues facing individual sex offenders, and would be willing to make temporary accommodation available in appropriate cases. Another authority had established a set of agreed arrangements between the housing and social work departments which was intended to form the basis for a corporate approach to accommodating sex offenders.

114. The City of Edinburgh Council introduced a "corporate Council approach" to the management of sex offenders in April 1998. The approach is part of the authority's community safety strategy, and involves social work, housing, education and recreation and leisure departments. It establishes core principles which will underpin the work of the various departments, including disclosure of information only on a "need to know" basis, and application of existing allocation criteria to homeless sex offenders. The strategy also recognises the need for "informed discussion" with other local authorities about accommodation issues, and the development of "national protocols and guidelines...to ensure appropriate exchanges of information and supervision of offenders moving from one area to another".

115. Whilst most authorities had taken some early steps towards developing a corporate or strategic approach to the management of sex offenders in the community, for many such a strategy remained a distant goal. Obstacles to be overcome included public and media hostility and the risk of local vigilante activity, resistance from elected members, legitimate concerns about community safety, lack of suitable accommodation for sex offenders, and concerns about confidentiality and the exchange of information between different departments or agencies.

116. The management of sex offenders in the community also highlights the important interface between criminal justice social work services and services provided by children and families teams within the same Department. Areas of joint interest include the overall management of child abusers within the community, the management of intra-familial sexual abuse of children, and the management of children who are themselves sexually aggressive or who have been convicted of sexual offences.

117. In most of the departments we inspected, these responsibilities were drawn together at second tier level- i.e. at the level immediately below the Director. In all authorities, criminal justice and child care managers had joint discussions about individual cases which were causing concern. However, only in 2 authorities was there evidence of an integrated strategic approach between different parts of the social work department to the shared problem of dealing with sex offending and its impact on victims and the wider community. We gained an impression in the other 6 authorities that the interface was managed on an ad hoc, case by case basis.

118. In 6 of the 8 authorities we found disappointingly little evidence of any real "cross-fertilisation" or exchange of learning between criminal justice workers supervising adult sex offenders and child care staff responsible for the supervision of young people whose difficulties included sexually aggressive behaviour. Even in authorities where criminal justice social work practice was of a consistently high quality and based on principles of effective practice, children

and families services did not consistently tackle offending behaviour with young people under supervision or looked after by the local authority, and lacked tools for assessment of risk of re-offending and offence-focused work.

119. By contrast, in North Lanarkshire child care and criminal justice teams shared the same risk assessment framework, undertook joint training and worked together on shared cases. In Shetland there was clear evidence of effective case management at the departmental level, and both offender and victim work was undertaken by the criminal justice team. In a third authority we saw encouraging evidence of the development of a joint approach to the investigation and management of child protection cases involving sexual abuse, where a joint assessment visit was undertaken by the child protection worker and a criminal justice social worker. One case included a comprehensive joint assessment of a high standard, drawing on the respective skills and expertise of the 2 staff. This had been invaluable in helping a child protection case conference to agree a child protection plan.

120. However, we were advised that subsequently the authority had limited joint work by criminal justice and child protection social workers to cases involving convicted offenders currently under statutory supervision. This was said to be "due to resource constraints" and to increasing work pressures on the criminal justice staff. As a result, child protection staff could not draw upon the skills of criminal justice social workers, and their knowledge of sex offenders who were no longer on supervision, to inform risk assessments in specific cases. We were disappointed that such a positive development had been limited in this way.

Management responsibilities

121. The supervision of cases is not an individual responsibility but is an organisational one, requiring practitioners and managers at all levels within the organisation to take appropriate responsibility and, where necessary, contribute to the management of risk. This requires clarity and a shared understanding throughout the organisation, about the organisation's aims and objectives in its work with sex offenders, and clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities held by staff and managers at each level in the organisation.

122. Where organisational responsibility is not clearly demonstrated, individual workers can feel unsupported, isolated and de-skilled, a situation which can lead to poor practice and increased risk. By contrast, where the organisation actively supports and assists staff in their task, workers are helped to approach such complex tasks with confidence and imagination, often displaying a capacity to respond innovatively and flexibly to the individual challenges of each case.

123. Organisational responsibility of this type may be demonstrated in a number of different ways. For example through:

- the provision of staff training, to help workers feel better equipped to deal with sexual offending;
- the development of a joint approach to case planning, management and review, involving the worker's line manager at these key stages;
- regular case discussions between the worker and line manager, the content of which may be reflected on file;
- the use of formal co-working arrangements which provide opportunities for both shared

learning and peer support in difficult cases.

124. Effective quality assurance and management information systems have a key role in securing organisational ownership and responsibility. In order to exercise their responsibilities for the efficient and effective management of services and staff, managers at all levels must have reliable information about the extent to which services are being delivered in accordance with key indicators such as National Standards or local policies and procedures. Where such mechanisms are in place, operational managers are able to identify service shortfalls, skills deficits and associated training needs, and examples of innovative local practice which might be developed more widely throughout the organisation. They are better placed to identify emergent issues at an early stage and to respond quickly and appropriately to these. For strategic managers, such systems provide essential data to inform service planning and development, whilst at the same time ensuring that the basic foundations of services are in place and of the desired quality.

125. We found a variety of these mechanisms in place to secure appropriate organisational responsibility for the management of adult sex offenders in the authorities we examined. In 5 of the 8 authorities, organisational responsibility for the management of sex offenders was clearly demonstrated. Staff were given specific training; first-line managers provided focused support and oversight of individual practice which was reflected in the files, and attended formal case reviews at which decisions were taken about the future management of individual cases. Systems were in place to monitor adherence to National Standards and regular sampling exercises or, in some cases, inspections, were undertaken to assess the quality of the work undertaken. Arrangements were made to ensure that there was no interruption in work plans during the supervising social worker's absence on annual or sick leave, and co-working of particularly difficult or demanding cases provided opportunities for staff to learn from and support one another.

126. The latter arrangements in particular seemed to help develop a supportive organisational culture which encouraged learning, promoted the concept of shared endeavour, and assisted workers to seek help from colleagues or managers when they were struggling with difficult cases. In these authorities we also saw the active involvement of senior managers in particularly problematic or high profile adult sex offender cases, some of which were attracting considerable local press interest. Such involvement provides staff and local communities with a tangible demonstration of organisational responsibility.

127. In 2 authorities there was no evidence in the files of management oversight of individual criminal justice cases, although one of these authorities was in the process of implementing systems to monitor adherence to National Standards. In neither authority were systems in place to measure the quality of the work being undertaken by staff.

128. No authority consistently demonstrated effective systems for providing management information or quality assurance in the children's cases we examined. There was little evidence of mechanisms enabling managers to measure either compliance with statutory requirements set out in legislation, or how well these cases reflected practice standards set out in Scottish Office guidance on work with children looked after by the local authority. Some case files included paperwork recording the dates of statutory child care reviews but seemed to be for administrative use, and a high proportion of cases lacked care plans or had not been reviewed at the intervals specified by law. Line managers attended reviews but these rarely focused on the

quality of the child's experience or the effectiveness of intervention to reduce offending or risk, even where the child was under supervision because of offending.

129. One local authority had provided training and resources to assist workers to manage sex offenders effectively, and there was evidence of management concern and involvement in difficult cases. However, senior managers did not receive regular reports on, or information about, the quality of supervision in children's or criminal justice cases and, with the exception of one team, there was little evidence of operational management oversight of cases.

130. Renfrewshire had invested considerable resources in the development of a training programme for all first-line managers in the Social Work Department. This had focused on clarifying departmental expectations of these managers, the development of leadership skills, issues surrounding Best Value, planning, and monitoring and evaluation. The training had been developed and delivered in-house, and had involved a combination of presentations by senior managers, planners and finance staff, and action learning groups comprising groups of first-line managers working with mentors to take forward their own learning. In this authority we found a consistently high quality of work by criminal justice social workers, clarity of focus in individual cases, and a consistent approach on the part of first-line managers to staff supervision, the oversight and management of workloads and to quality issues. By contrast, in another authority whose first-line managers had not received management training, we could discern no coherent or consistent approach to the management task and little evidence of an understanding of effective, good quality practice. Although we saw examples of good practice in individual cases in this authority, we saw no evidence of first-line managers (or, indeed, more senior managers) taking steps to ensure that good practice of this type was generalised across the staff group.

131. We concluded that first-line managers of all social work services have a critical role in assuring the quality of those services and ensuring that cases are supervised and managed in accordance with both national and local policies and guidance. In order to achieve this, they must have a clear and shared understanding of agency aims and objectives, and of their own contribution to the achievement of these. They must be clear about their own role in assuring quality, must understand what constitutes "quality" in different circumstances, and must understand the full range of their responsibilities as managers. Qualifying training for social work is unlikely, alone, to equip first-line managers to undertake this vital role effectively. They may need additional training to refine the particular skills needed to fulfil their management responsibilities or to bring them to a full understanding of the different tasks involved.

132. As part of our review, we asked Directors and managers in the 8 social work departments what would help them to manage sex-offending issues more effectively. Senior managers in 3 authorities indicated that improved computerised information systems (either within criminal justice services or across the whole department) would be of assistance, whilst other suggestions were

- additional specialist training, especially of front-line staff;
- closer working between criminal justice and childcare workers within departments;
- closer working between social work departments and the Scottish Prison Service in relation to throughcare and planning for the release of imprisoned sex offenders;

- the development of a national policy or guidance on accommodating sex offenders;
- the development of "structured information" on sex offending, for elected members;
- better dissemination at a national level of research findings and information about tools and methods for assessment and offence-focused work with adults and children.

Quality assurance

133. Effective quality assurance requires staff and managers at all levels within an organisation to have a clear, and shared, understanding of organisational and individual tasks, roles and responsibilities and the knowledge and skills to carry them out, robust management information, and a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation.

134. The essential feature of all effective approaches to quality assurance is that they must measure performance rather than simply rely on anecdote - they must be based firmly on evidence, rather than on assumptions about what might be happening within the organisation. In order to achieve this, systems must be in place to ensure that information about activity and performance is fed up through the organisational hierarchy, at differing levels of detail according to the roles and responsibilities of those receiving the information. Whilst information technology and computerised systems clearly have much to offer, "low tech." approaches, involving manual data collection, focused review and routine monitoring of this information, can also yield positive results. In the course of our review we saw effective approaches at either end of this spectrum in relation to criminal justice social work services, but little evidence of a consistent approach to quality assurance in the children and young persons cases we examined. In most authorities work on the development of quality assurance systems seemed at an early stage, but was better developed in relation to criminal justice cases.

135. The starting point for any quality assurance system must be the performance of the organisation's core business, in this case the management of sex offending issues by social work departments. This means that first-line managers must be familiar with the work being undertaken in individual cases, and must be able to provide evidence that service requirements, including those derived from National Standards and, in children's services, from legislation, regulations and guidance, are being met. Some authorities had introduced simple but effective checklists to monitor compliance with key standards such as timing, frequency and location of contacts with adult offenders, and dates of formal reviews. One authority had begun piloting the Scottish Office assessment and planning tools for Looked After Children. These include a summary of essential information about a child, recording, for example, changes of placement, and areas for recording action taken in response to identified needs. In Dumfries & Galloway, the computerised case recording and management information system for criminal justice social work services ensured that these data were readily available to workers and managers, and could be monitored at any time. Both these approaches provide a useful way of measuring and assuring quality in relation to process and procedures (inputs), but neither addresses quality relating to the content or practice of supervision (outputs).

136. Quality assurance of supervision practice in criminal justice cases, including those dealt with by the Children's Hearing system, must be based on an examination of the extent to which the practice reflects current (and developing) knowledge and understanding of what constitutes

effective criminal justice social work practice. First-line managers need to be fully conversant with these approaches, and should be looking for evidence of use of this knowledge within the day-to-day work of those staff for whom they have managerial responsibility. Aspects of practice to be monitored should include the presence of:

- risk and needs assessments (to be revised at key points throughout the supervision period);
- a clear plan for supervision based on this assessment (for children under supervision this should meet the standards set out in Scottish Office guidance on Home Supervision¹²);
- clear targets and goals for the supervision period;
- action to achieve these, including the provision of
- structured programme(s) to address offending behaviour (delivered on either an individual or groupwork basis).

137. Practice could be reviewed in the course of the regular supervision of individual staff, and by examining case files. Increased scrutiny of case files by line managers should also point up any weaknesses and inconsistencies of recording practice, such as we identified in our examination of files in some authorities, and should assist the development of a more consistent, focused and efficient approach to case recording. In most authorities we found no evidence of a consistent Departmental approach to recording. This led to a plethora of different approaches, most of which reflected a poor understanding of the purposes behind this task. First-line managers have a key role in ensuring that speedy action is taken to remedy any identified weaknesses or deficits in individual cases, and to flag-up to others (including their own managers) any innovative work or learning which might be implemented more widely within the workforce.

138. In addition to providing quality assurance in individual cases, data derived from such an exercise could be collated on a regular basis for submission to senior management, and could inform subsequent decisions about training needs, service shortfalls and programme development.

139. However, quality assurance should not simply be a mechanism for monitoring "grassroots" service quality - the principles must be applied at all levels within the organisation. The organisation must set clear expectations about the role of managers and put in place arrangements to show that these are met. Management tasks, such as staff supervision, service and workforce planning and the implementation of change should all be taken forward in a way which reflects best practice in the exercise of these functions, in order to best achieve organisational goals. If these various approaches are implemented across all social work department functions, local authorities will be better placed to manage the issues presented by sex offenders in their areas.

140. Although all authorities had commenced work on the development of quality assurance systems in relation to the management of sex offending, most had yet to develop the "total quality" approach outlined above. In order to implement such an approach effectively, local authorities will need to be sensitive to staff anxieties about its introduction. It is essential to

highlight to staff the benefits of quality assurance - and the risks in its absence. What is required is a culture which welcomes and promotes quality assurance as a means to improved job satisfaction, performance and effectiveness, rather than as a means of checking up on staff and "catching them out". Training may be necessary, to help staff understand the principles underpinning quality assurance generally, and to make best use of local quality assurance arrangements.

141. Finally, any quality assurance system is only as good as the information on which it is based. Quality assurance in social work practice must be based on good information about both the processes and the content of social workers' activity, which in turn must be reflected in case files. We have commented elsewhere about the variable quality of recording in the files we examined, but poorly-structured and poorly-maintained case files are unlikely to provide the essential information required to implement effective quality assurance arrangements.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

142. It is clear that the protection of the public from adult sex offenders has been a high priority for social work departments since publication of "A Commitment to Protect" in 1997. Considerable progress has been made on inter-agency work, particularly between social work departments and the police, and local authorities are making good progress towards establishing corporate approaches to managing the problems presented by sex offenders in the community. Social workers are supervising the majority of adult sex offender cases in accordance with, and sometimes significantly above, the requirements of National Standards. Some cases were managed in an exemplary fashion: we found consistently high quality practice across all the teams in Renfrewshire, and throughout the caseload of one team in Edinburgh. Shetland demonstrated work of the highest quality in both the cases it was managing. Elsewhere, best practice was not generalised across a team or an authority, but was the work of committed and skilled individual practitioners. In most authorities, therefore, work was needed to bring the quality of work in all cases up to that of the best.

143. Risk assessment and management is a crucial task for social workers and others involved in the supervision of sex offenders in the community. We found that increased use was being made of structured approaches to risk assessment, although many of the staff whose work we inspected had only recently begun to use risk assessment tools. They were developing their skills in this complex area, and had still to integrate the relevant principles fully into their day-to-day practice. Overall, however, practice was improving, leading to better targeting of effort and improved management of the risks posed by sex offenders. Good progress has been made, but more work is required to ensure that supervision plans are explicitly based on a structured

assessment of risk and are designed to reduce both the incidence of re-offending and the level of harm associated with re-offending.

144. Most authorities had introduced co-working arrangements in relation to adult sex offender cases, as recommended in the McManus Report. At their best, such arrangements were focused, purposeful and contributed to both the management of the case, and the management of risk. Most authorities were undertaking some structured offence-related work with sex offenders, either in groups or on an individual basis. None of the groupwork initiatives had been subject to formal evaluation. Where structured work was being undertaken with individuals, it was often based on local adaptations of groupwork programmes elsewhere. Effective practice principles underpinned much of this work, but further action was required in most authorities to ensure that interventions were properly focused on the profiles and needs of individual sex offenders.

145. The supervision and management of the cases of sexually aggressive children and young people has yet to reach the general standard of the adult cases, although some authorities were beginning to establish a local agenda for action and one was making excellent progress. Poor information about the extent of sexually aggressive behaviour by children is hindering effective work with this group. Work with children and adolescents who are involved in sexually aggressive behaviour requires a combination of skills, knowledge and expertise, which draws on best practice from both children's services and criminal justice social work. In addition to the capacity to engage effectively with children and their families in order to meet children's needs and secure their welfare, workers in these cases also need to demonstrate skills in managing sexual aggression. Although many of these young people have not been convicted of an offence, there is a risk that some might go on to offend as adults unless there is purposeful intervention at this early stage. There is scope for children's services to learn from some of the more recent developments in criminal justice social work, although current arrangements in some authorities do not facilitate this.

146. Most authorities had taken some steps towards the development of strategic or inter-departmental responses to adult sex offending, but had some way to go to achieve the integrated and detailed approach we found in one authority. Management arrangements and quality assurance systems for both adult and children's cases required further attention and development in many authorities. Overall, progress has been made but requires to be built upon further, in order to manage the risks presented by sex offenders in the community. The following recommendations address weaknesses in current arrangements.

Recommendations

Interface between prison and the community

Recommendation 1

The Scottish Executive should require local authorities to nominate a supervising officer at the start of sentence in all cases where a sex offender is imprisoned for 4 years or more, and should also require them to promote the use of voluntary social work assistance for all sex offenders sentenced to shorter periods of custody. The Scottish Executive should provide additional funding to support such work.

147. "A Commitment to Protect" identified the need for greater collaboration between social work

services and the SPS, particularly in relation to the sharing of risk assessments at key transition points between prison and the community. Imprisoned sex offenders will often be able to access personal change programmes in the course of their sentences, and for those who will be released subject to mandatory supervision it is vital that social workers are well-informed about both the nature of the work undertaken and the offender's response. Whilst there are some encouraging local developments in relation to collaboration between the 2 agencies, for example, between Glasgow City Council and HMP Peterhead, there is considerable scope for improvement across the country.

148. However, the necessary improvements are not facilitated by current National Standards for throughcare, which do not require the identification of a supervising officer until the pre-release stage of a long-term prison sentence. In sharp contrast to this, the guidance on extended sentences requires local authorities to appoint a supervising officer within days of such a sentence being passed, in order to allow for long-term planning for release, and for effective liaison and co-ordination between prison and social work staff in the community. In the interests of risk management and public protection, local authorities should be required to make similarly early contact with all sex offenders serving long-term prison sentences, and should be offered additional funding to ensure this happens.

149. Many sex offenders are sentenced to relatively short periods of custody on summary procedure, and will not, therefore, be subject to compulsory supervision on release. Although such offenders will have been convicted of less serious offences, they will present varying levels of risk, including, in some cases, high risk, on return to the community. Local authorities have a duty to provide voluntary assistance to any ex-prisoner, on request, within 12 months of his or her release from custody. During the inspection we saw some encouraging examples of workers adopting a pro-active approach to engagement of these offenders in purposeful work, but the practice was not widespread. Without the active promotion by the Scottish Executive of such an approach, coupled with appropriate funding, opportunities to work with such offenders to manage risk will continue to be lost.

Information about children's cases

Recommendation 2

Local authorities should take steps to ensure that they have access to the best possible information about the scale and severity of sexually aggressive behaviour by children and young people in their area, on both an individual and aggregate basis.

150. Work with children and young people was often hampered by poor information. In particular, information about current or previous offending by individual children was often patchy, reflecting weaknesses in current information systems and in how agencies share information. Simple improvements in recording practice, such as ensuring that key information about sexually aggressive behaviour is transferred onto the current file and that the outcome of alleged or established offences is recorded in all cases, would help address this problem.

151. The development of a computerised information system (ChRIS) by SCRA will provide detailed information which could assist local authorities to manage individual cases more effectively, if constraints on sharing this information can be overcome. In the meantime, local

authorities should maintain a discrete record of alleged, accepted or established offences in relation to every child whom they look after, in order to identify emerging patterns of offending, inform the assessment of risk, and devise appropriate care plans which take account of this risk.

152. At a strategic level, aggregate data on the scale and severity of young people's sexual offending is currently unavailable, although this too will be addressed by CHRIS. In the interim local authorities should collate information locally, to identify the extent of sexually aggressive behaviour by children in order to inform service planning and development.

Improving practice with sexually aggressive children

Recommendation 3

Local authorities should ensure that their work with sexually aggressive children and young people is informed by emerging knowledge about effective practice in addressing offending behaviour, whilst continuing to safeguard and promote their welfare and take account of their needs. Training for Children's Panel members should include information about tackling sexual aggression and offending by young people. The new Scottish Initiative for Training in Residential Child Care is tasked to deliver core and specialist training for care staff including work with sexually aggressive young people. In collaboration with the Initiative, local authorities should assess the training needs for staff currently looking after sexually aggressive young people in residential settings and make this an early priority.

153. It is clear that the quality of case management and supervision of sexually aggressive young people overall has not yet reached the standard that we observed in the supervision by criminal justice services of convicted adult sex offenders. Development of this area of work was at an early stage in all authorities although some were making significant progress in setting a local agenda. Whilst there is increasing awareness amongst some workers that sexual aggression in young people may be a precursor to adult offending, this is not yet fully recognised by the public, some sentencers or by the Children's Hearing system.

154. The framework for intervention set out in *A Commitment to Protect*, of monitoring, supervision, treatment where necessary, and personal change programmes is relevant to managing sexually aggressive behaviour in young people. Some of our proposals to strengthen supervision, which have been adopted by criminal justice services, may be equally pertinent to some young people. However, although children's services can learn from colleagues in criminal justice services, adapting methods of work with adult sex offenders and importing them wholesale into children's services will not answer the problem. Personal change programmes for young people should be based on the most up to date knowledge of effective practice with this group, including, in particular, the emerging findings of the ASAP research. When assessing a child's suitability for such a programme, workers should, as far as possible, identify the child's perspective on his behaviour within the context of his family and social relationships as well as his emerging sexuality.

155. Sexually aggressive young people have other needs; for care and education, for help to repair relationships within their family and achieve their optimum personal and social development. Regardless of the nature of the children's offending, local authority children's services have to discharge their statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children, whether they are living at home with their families or are looked after in local authority

accommodation. A greater focus on engaging young people in offence-focused work must go hand in hand with a continuing focus on their needs. Effective care planning must be a central element of any strategy for improving how local authorities deal with this group of young offenders and sexually aggressive young people. The care plan should be the means by which these elements of work with sexually aggressive young people are drawn together with the local authority's welfare responsibilities to this group. Written care plans should include attention to children's offending and the risk of harm they pose, as well as to those matters set out in legislation.

156. Local authorities need to develop strategic approaches to dealing with sexually aggressive children and young people, as is happening in respect of adult sex offenders. Such strategic approaches should be developed on an inter-agency basis, and should address agency roles and responsibilities, describe local arrangements to deliver effective practice, and include proposals for staff training and management and quality assurance. Local authorities should determine the best forum in which to achieve this locally but should ensure that inter-agency forums for reducing risk from sex offending and Child Protection Committees endorse such approaches. The implementation and effectiveness of such approaches should be monitored regularly.

Social work records

Recommendation 4

Local authorities should institute recording policies which will ensure that social work case records are more clearly focused on the reasons for intervention, the expected outcomes of such intervention and the methods for achieving these. Such policies should also ensure that information relevant to the management of the case is readily accessible, and that recording methods are consistent across the department.

157. Recording practice was variable across many of the authorities we inspected. Although we found good practice in some areas, we also found poorly organised and maintained records which did not support effective management of the case or enable evaluation of activity. Practice within teams was often inconsistent, with no apparent shared view about the purpose of recording or how best to undertake this task.

158. Social work recording should, in all cases, make clear the reason for the contact, the plans for achieving desired outcomes, and the methods for delivering these. Relevant information, particularly relating to concerns about behaviour or risk (to the subject or to others) should be recorded in such a way as to remain readily accessible at any stage during the period of social work contact. Recording should be relevant and succinct, and of use to practitioners, managers, and service users alike.

159. Improving the quality of recording is a vital first step towards improving and developing the quality assurance arrangements operating in local authorities. Local authorities may wish to adapt and build on the guidance on recording for residential social work staff in children's services "*Setting the Record Straight*"

Quality assurance

Recommendation 5

Local authorities should put in place quality control and quality assurance systems for social work practice in respect of both criminal justice and children's services, to ensure that practice is of the best possible standard and is appropriately focused on risk.

160. We were concerned at the variable nature and scope of the quality control and quality assurance arrangements in place during the inspection. All inspected authorities had systems for monitoring adherence to National Standards in criminal justice services, but the information thus generated was not always readily available, and senior managers were rarely provided with aggregate information about how the service was performing in this regard. Compliance with guidance on work with children looked after by local authorities was patchy. Some authorities were undertaking local inspections of their own service, to evaluate quality, and were seeking to improve quality through targeted training. Many individual social workers were delivering good quality services, and some criminal justice teams were achieving high standards across all cases. However, in only one authority was sufficient attention paid to the quality of the service and the needs of practitioners by the most senior levels of the organisation. Where senior managers, the Director and local authority members took an interest and actively supported staff efforts, the standards were high.

161. Arrangements need to be in place in all local authorities to ensure high quality work is achieved and maintained, and to support staff in their efforts. We noted the following characteristics of well-managed services which achieved these objectives:

- appropriately-trained staff, who are afforded opportunities for professional development;
- a variety of resources to assist the case manager in his or her supervision of the offender. These resources might include consultancy advice; co-working; access to a groupwork programme; developmental /training resources (books, journals, videos etc.); access to specialist advice, for example in relation to offenders with learning disabilities; case discussions with colleagues;
- first-line management oversight of cases and support to staff, including chairing statutory reviews with adult offenders;
- the availability of aggregate information about the quality of work and compliance with National Standards in criminal justice services, and performance against regulations and guidance in children's services, with associated action by staff and managers at all levels to remedy any deficits;
- the development of strategic approaches between local authority departments and external agencies designed to increase public protection and manage the risk presented by sex offenders in the community;
- action by senior managers to increase public understanding of the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to managing sex offenders.

162. COSLA has recently undertaken work to adapt the PQASSO quality assurance arrangements, originally devised for voluntary sector agencies, to tailor them more to the needs of the local authorities. This approach may be piloted in a number of criminal justice social work services in the near future.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Publications
online

15 March 2004

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Publications](#) > [Education](#)

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Annex A

The Inspection Team comprised:

Val Cox, Assistant Chief Inspector

Jackie McRae, Inspector

Stella Perrott, Inspector

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Publications
online

15 March 2004

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Publications](#) > [Education](#)

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Appendix 1

A Structured Approach to Programme Review (model used by 2 workers in one local authority)

NAME OF OFFENDER:

DATE:

VENUE:

PRESENT:

EXERCISE: SEE ATTACHED LIST

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

CONTENT:

OUTCOME:

ISSUES RAISED AND FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

EXERCISES

Compiling Relapse Prevention Plan

Discussion Regarding Assessment Paper and Information given regarding Relapse Prevention Plan

Work Sheet - to review last session and assess clients understanding of his offending cycle

"Hot Seat", client took turns to sit in his "offending seat", "honest seat" or "victim seat"

Offence Cycle

Network - to obtain information about clients' current relationships

Sexual Fantasies

Chain of events

'Walk through' of offence

Homework - listing seriousness of offences

Active 'walk through' of offence

One to One work using Walls exercise and recording on flip charts

Walls 2 - Overcoming your environment

One to One exercise using Walls and Flip Charts

Walls exercise - complete wall one and start wall 2

Starting Walls Exercise

Barriers, climbing over chairs - to introduce client to the idea that in order to commit the offence against victim it was necessary for him to have motivation, plan and manipulate the environment to create opportunity

'Walk through' of offence

Road Map - obtain social history

Pen Picture - Introduction to offence related work and "ground rules" for sessions.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Appendix 2

Guidance on Recording

1. This guidance on social work recording is based on examples of best practice from the inspection of local authority files. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but to provide a useful checklist for local authorities when considering their recording and information systems.
2. This guidance does not cover issues of data protection, confidentiality or access to files. Further information on these matters can be obtained from the Data Protection Act 1998 which replaces the 1984 Act, the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 and associated Regulations. Social Work Services Inspectorate Guidance on this legislation is due to be issued shortly.

Purpose of recording

3. Social workers keep records for a number of purposes. They keep records so that accurate information can be shared with service users and others, and to account for their work. Records are used by practitioners to assess, plan, monitor and review their work, and by managers to exercise oversight and to monitor and evaluate work. Internal and external inspectors will use files for inspection or monitoring purposes whilst service users may use the file to record personal information as part of a "life story" or other work.

Types of information recorded

4. Whilst each service - child care, community care or criminal justice social work services - may have different requirements, there is a broad range of information that is usually recorded on

files: background history; information from others e.g. doctors, psychiatrists or the police; assessments, plans and reviews; records of events and reports and court orders. In some cases the information to be recorded is specified in social work guidance, such as SWSG Circular SW1/1998 which specifies the information that must be recorded about children residing in children's homes. In other cases, recording requirements may be implicit rather than explicit. Criminal justice National Standards, for example, specify certain activities to be undertaken by social workers when supervising offenders. Recording these activities is implicit in the requirement of the agency to be accountable for this work.

Some key principles of effective record keeping

- Information is readily accessible to all those who need it and files are constructed and maintained to achieve ease of access.
- A single file contains all the relevant information.
- Records are accurate and up to date.
- Recording reflects the purpose for which it is written and is succinct and relevant.
- Records differentiate between fact, opinion and judgement.
- The record is written in plain English and service users can understand the contents.
- The same basic recording system is used across the agency although some services may need to adapt the recording systems to meet specific service requirements.

5. In addition to files *about* service users there is merit in having a "file" or compendium of information *for* service users. Such a file might include:

- A leaflet explaining the order or service, relevant agency policies and complaints procedure.
- A copy of any statutory orders.
- An appointments card or diary.
- Contact numbers and emergency procedures.
- Copies of assessments, reviews and reports where appropriate.
- Copies of the user's contributions such as life stories or "tackling offending" work sheets.

Constructing a file

6. Local authority files vary in their construction but there are a number of sections common to most. These include:

- Basic case information including relevant history
- Contact log - including all contacts or failed contact, details of letters or messages and notes of significant events such as court appearances, case reviews etc.
- A planning section to include assessments, summaries, work plans and reviews
- Correspondence and notifications
- Reports
- Statutory orders
- Detailed work sheets
- **Third party information**

7. Ring binders ease recording and the ordering of papers but are also expensive. Colour coding

of file sections can help to identify sections of the file.

Basic case information

8. Included under the heading "basic case information" are all the pieces of information that enable practitioners, managers and others to quickly get to grips with the case. It includes information that identifies the service user, why they are in contact with the service and any significant issues that may impact on service delivery.

9. In most files there is a 'front sheet' which includes the service user's basic details such as their name, address/es, date of birth and age and any 'warning flags' to indicate information such as a history of violence towards staff or registration on the sex offender or child protection register.

10. Other essential basic information that will need to be easily accessed, where it is relevant, includes the names and contact points of other agencies; information about significant others, particularly the families of children looked after; and, personal circumstances that may impact on how the service is delivered, for example, English being a second language, mobility problems or limited availability.

11. The reasons for **current** contact also forms part of the basic case information. This will include full details about the nature of the referral, the referring authority or person and significant dates.

12. A record of previous convictions or Children's Hearing appearances might be located in this part of the file in criminal justice and child care cases. In all cases where there has been a long history of social work involvement or there have been a number of significant events, a summary of the relevant history is also very useful. This summary might include a record of agency referrals, critical incidents in the life of the service user such as a non accidental injury to a child and any other events that staff will need to be quickly aware of. These summaries work best when they are regularly reviewed and amended.

13. In some cases full details of significant incidents should be recorded and retained in this section, for example details of incidents leading to a 'warning flag' on the file, particularly in those cases where a repetition is feared and other staff members need to be alert to the warning signs.

Contact log

14. Generally, for each contact there are a number of items that should be recorded:

- Date
- Contact person (or attendance at a group etc.)
- Work undertaken, record of event or contact
- Key issues
- Action
- Next appointment

15. In some cases, such as work with offenders where national standards require certain tasks to be undertaken at particular points in the course of supervision, more information may need to be recorded. For example, recording the serving of the probation order or licence, explaining its contents and the action that the supervising officer will take if the conditions are breached.

16. Significant information may also need to be recorded in the section on the file if that information is to be accessible now and in the future.

17. Messages from colleagues about a service user, once recorded can be destroyed. Full details of a session may not need to be recorded particularly if the collated work sheets are included in the file or work is summarised at case reviews.

Planning and review

18. Many authorities use proformas or planning schedules for assessments, planning interventions and reviews of progress. These can ensure the recording of essential information and encourage greater work focus. Although designed to meet the requirements of a particular service, most are likely to include:

- Social work assessments of needs and risks.
- Intended outcomes, goals or objectives.
- How the service user, social worker and others intends to achieve these.
- Methods of review.
- Date of review

19. Review records should include a summary of contacts or appointment kept or not kept with action taken; a summary of the work undertaken in the review period and, a review of progress, achievements, and any set backs including any outstanding work. When the order or contact has ended it is helpful to have a final review to review progress over the whole period of social work involvement and conclude with a final assessment.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)



Managing the Risk

An Inspection of the Management of Sex Offender Cases in the Community

Appendix 3

Adolescent Sex Abuser Research Project (ASAP)

1. The Adolescent Sex Abuser Project (ASAP) is a research project linked to the Home Office funded research into effectiveness in managing and reducing the risks presented by sex offenders. The researchers have carried out some preliminary analysis of assessment profiles of over 200 young people referred to their service¹³. The average age of the young people at the time of assessment was 15 years. The average age at which they reported starting to abuse was 12 years. Young people who abused both male and female victims tended to begin abusing earlier with an average age of onset at 11 years. Over half the sample abused female victims only and these tended to have a later average age of onset at 14 years. The average age of child victims (that is excluding sexual abuse of peers or adult women) was 6 years, with a modal age of 8 years and a maximum of 13 years. There was no significant difference between the average age of child victims of perpetrators who abuse boys, girls or both sexes. 42% of the sample had abused one victim but just under half (45%) of the sample reported more than one victim and most abuse involved physical contact or 'contact offences'. Most of the small proportion (5%) with more than 5 victims had committed non-contact offences such as indecent exposure or obscene telephone calls.

2. When test scores for cognitive distortion amongst these adolescent abusers was compared with that of adult offenders and non-offending adult men there was no significant difference between those of adolescent and adult abusers. The adolescent abusers had significantly greater cognitive distortion than non-offending adult men. When similar comparisons were made of victim empathy, adolescents had significantly higher 'error' scores than non-offending adult males but adult abusers scores were significantly higher again, suggesting there may be a valuable window of opportunity in bringing about greater empathy in young people. Over a quarter of the sample of young people have mild or moderate learning difficulties, a similar

proportion had been themselves sexually abused and almost a third had experienced physical abuse. Nearly 40% of the young people had experienced emotional abuse or neglect. Half of the sample had had involvement with social services before incidents of offending or abuse came to light, with many being the subject of child protection inquiries, looked after away from home or at risk from an abuser in their family.

3. These findings bear out some of the messages from retrospective studies of the profiles and experience of abusive adults. They are also consistent with the characteristics of many young people in our inspection sample.

[< Previous](#) | [Contents](#) | [Next >](#)

[Home](#) | [Topics](#) | [About](#) | [News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Consultations](#) | [Search](#) | [Links](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Help](#)

[Crown Copyright](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Content Disclaimer](#) | [General enquiries](#)