

# Towards protection.

Managing sex offenders  
in your community.

# An introduction.

Thank you for picking up this leaflet. It has an important purpose. It aims to answer any concerns you may have about people with a conviction for a sexual offence who are now living in your community.



# What do we mean by sex offenders and sex-related crime?

These are broad terms covering many different types of crimes. They can include rape, sexual assault, sexual activity with someone under the legal age, internet offending, child sexual abuse, indecent exposure amongst others. Furthermore, the nature of individual cases will vary considerably.

It should be remembered, not all sex offending is against children and not all sex offenders are paedophiles. There's also a common myth that most sex offences are carried out by strangers.

The reality is very different.

The vast majority are known to the victim. Often they're an acquaintance or family member. In 86% of child protection referrals where action was required the primary known or suspected abuser was the child's natural parent. In only 1% of cases was the abuser unknown to the child or their family.

This underlines the importance of friends, neighbours and other community members raising concerns when they have them – as well as thinking about 'stranger danger'.



# 10 years of progress.

There have been some considerable reforms over the last 10 years, including:

- **Strengthening the Sex Offenders Register**

As well as names and addresses, every sex offender must now give the Police information such as passport number, national insurance number, bank account details and DNA samples, fingerprints and photographs. Compliance is high, at 98%.

Having more information means it's easier for the Police to identify and find the small number who try to evade the responsible agencies.

Failure to comply with notification requirements of the Sex Offenders Register is punishable by a prison sentence of up to five years.

- **People convicted of a sex offence abroad (whether British citizens or foreign nationals) who then come to the UK, are now subject to the same registration regime as if they had committed the crime in this country**

- **The introduction of Sex Offender Liaison Officers who oversee cases where offenders are housed in local authority or housing association accommodation**

- **Increased Police powers to search sex offenders' homes**

- **Introducing Sexual Offences Prevention Orders**

These impose legal restrictions on the activities of particular sex offenders living in the community, e.g. restrictions on making contact with children, going near a playpark or school.

- **Use of electronic tagging in certain cases – a tactic now used for a broad range of crimes including many non-sexual offences**

- **Establishing multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)**

This requires the Police, Scottish Prison Service, Social Work Services and other authorities (such as local authorities, housing authorities and the NHS Health Boards) to work together to assess the potential risk each offender may pose.



- **Establishment of a new database called ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offenders Register)**

This gives the Police, Social Work Department and Prison Service access to all available information when assessing the risk to society posed by an offender as well as individuals who have not been convicted of an offence, but who are considered to pose a potential risk.

- **Information about the identity of known sex offenders can now be shared with certain members of the public, if an offender is thought to pose a specific threat to that person or their immediate family**

- **High-risk child sex offenders who evade the authorities**

Child sex offenders who go missing can have their photograph posted on a 'most wanted' website which the public can access and this can be published more widely in the media.

- **Stopping unsuitable people from working with children**

- **Introducing the Disqualified from Working with Children List**

This is a list of people deemed unsuitable to work with children. The list applies to people who have been convicted of previous harmful behaviour towards children, (which could include sexual harm), and who pose a continued risk.

- **Creating new criminal offences such as 'grooming' children**

# What information about known sex offenders do I have access to?

For the first time, annual MAPPA reports were published for your area. This reviews what has happened in your area and outlines plans for the coming year. It also details how many known sex offenders there are within your area.

If the Police, Prison Service, Social Workers and health professionals are concerned about a direct risk to you or a member of your family, either through their own investigations or because of a report you have made, they will share any information with you that is necessary to keep you and your family safe.

This can include identifying specific offenders and providing personal details such as their home address or place of employment.

This would be done through a face-to-face meeting. People in your community such as head teachers, employers and landlords may also be given details about sex offenders in the area to help them protect the people they have responsibility for.

# Using information responsibly.

People receiving this information have a responsibility to ensure it is used for the purpose it was intended. It should not be used to harass offenders as this can encourage some to 'go underground'. This poses a greater risk to the public as the offender can no longer be supervised and monitored.

# Looking to the future.

Currently in four locations in the UK, trials are taking place using a system where people can request information from the Police about named individuals, in specific circumstances – for example to find out if a new partner has relevant previous convictions.

A decision will be taken in the future as to whether this is in the best interests of public safety.

# What about a ‘name and shame’ approach?

Some parts of the United States have taken a ‘name and shame’ approach, particularly with regard to child sex offenders, with the identities of released offenders being made available to the public – usually via a website.



# What about victims and witnesses?

SurvivorScotland has been established by the Scottish Government to help improve services for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. As well as raising awareness about the issue, SurvivorScotland also develops training and skills for frontline workers. SurvivorScotland runs a website giving people access to a wide range of material about abuse, links to other useful sites and details of local and national support organisations.

# The website can be visited at [www.survivorscotland.org.uk](http://www.survivorscotland.org.uk)

Victim Support Scotland delivers free, confidential, emotional and practical assistance to victims and witnesses across Scotland including the parents, carers and other family members of people who have been victims of such abuse.

**Their helpline is 0845 603 9213 and is open  
Mon-Thur 9.00am-4.30pm and Fri 9.00am-4.00pm.**

Other developments aimed at understanding and respecting victims' needs includes witnesses under the age of 16 now being automatically eligible to use certain special measures to help them give evidence in court. These include giving evidence from behind a screen in court or by a live TV link from elsewhere in the court building or, indeed, another place altogether.

In addition, the Victim Notification Scheme (VNS) has recently been extended to victims of offenders sentenced to imprisonment of 18 months or over. The VNS provides victims with information about the release of an offender.

# Finding out more.

More information on the topics covered in this leaflet can be found at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/criminal](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/criminal) along with practical information on safety for adults and children.

## **MAPPA annual reports.**

Each MAPPA team publishes an annual report. This reviews what has happened in your local area and outlines plans for the coming year. A copy of the report can be found on the Scottish Government website.

<http://sh45inta/Topics/Justice/criminal/16910/mappa/MAPPA-Publications>

# Who to contact.

Here's who to contact if you have experienced a sexual crime, as an adult or child.

**Local police:** [www.scottish.police.uk](http://www.scottish.police.uk)

**Rape Crisis Scotland:** 08088 010302.

[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

**Victim Support Scotland:** 0845 603 9213.

[www.victimsupportsco.org.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk)

# If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger.

- Call **999**

Other people who can provide support include:

- Your local Police
- Your local Social Work Services
- Your Health Visitor

## **If you are concerned about the welfare of a child.**

Call the National Child Protection Helpline on **0800 022 3222**.

Or visit **[www.infoscotland.com/childprotection](http://www.infoscotland.com/childprotection)**

Parents and carers can call the national, free and confidential helpline ParentLine Scotland on **0808 800 2222**. The helpline is open 9am-5pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 9am-9pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or you can visit **[parentline@children1st.org.uk](mailto:parentline@children1st.org.uk)**

## **For advice on online and internet safety.**

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre at **[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)** provides a range of very useful advice for young people, parents, teachers and other professionals. The information to help parents can be found at **[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)**

CEOP also runs the 'most wanted' service for local police forces where members of the public can work with the police to locate some of the UK's most wanted child sex offenders. You can register to receive updates about these offenders by visiting **[www.ceop.gov.uk/wanted](http://www.ceop.gov.uk/wanted)**

# If you are a child or young person suffering abuse.

Call **Childline Scotland** on **0800 1111**. This is a charity that provides free, confidential counselling for any child with any problem.

**If you suspect someone close to you is showing signs of abusive behaviour, or if you are worried about your own sexual thoughts and behaviour towards children.**

**Stop it Now!** gives all adults totally confidential information, advice and support to prevent child sex abuse.

You can call the **Stop it Now!** Freephone helpline on **0808 1000 900** or visit **[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)**

**For general information about keeping children safe**

**CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup>**

83 Whitehouse Loan

Edinburgh

EH9 1AT

Tel: 0131 446 2300

Fax: 0131 446 2339

**Helpline:** 0808 800 2222

**Email:** [info@children1st.org.uk](mailto:info@children1st.org.uk)