

An inspection into national security division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of a terrorist attack. Response from Simon Foster, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

Published on the 20th July 2023, this Counter Terrorism (CT) inspection examined national security division and multi-agency arrangements, for the management of terrorist offenders, in the wake of terrorist attacks. It was conducted jointly by HM Inspectorate of Probation, HMICFRS and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

Three key organisations are responsible for managing terrorist and high concern terrorist risk cases:

- 1) The National Security Division (NSD), part of the Probation Service;
- 2) The Counter Terrorism Nominal Management (CTNM), part of Counter Terrorism Policing; and
- 3) HM Prison Service (HMPS).

This response focuses on the recommendations made for Counter Terrorism Policing, as all 9 police counter terrorism units (CTUs) were visited, including West Midlands Police CTU. Three recommendations were published for CT Policing:

1. The senior national coordinator should review the Registered Terrorism Offender Assessment Framework process to ensure that it is fit for police led cases

The Inspectorate noted that changes in extremist activity and police tactics, have led to an increasing number of offenders arrested for terrorism risk activity under other legislation for lower-level terrorist offences, as opposed to under s.41 of the Terrorism Act 2000. These offenders receive shorter sentences and are released quicker. This has meant that the police are having to manage a higher number of registered terrorist offenders (RTOs) after their sentence-end date. Additionally, case load will likely increase with the introduction of the National Security Act 2023, which will make a number of changes to the Terrorism Act 2000, including strengthening existing or introducing new safeguards.

Whilst it is encouraging that the Inspectorate noted good practice within CT policing, in the form of comprehensive planning for onwards management, when a case has exited NSD management, more concise assessments are needed. CT Nominal Managers notified the Inspectorate that additional assessments were often needed as the Registered Terrorism Offender Assessment Framework (RTOAF) was too broad, without enough focus on policing risks.

I support a review of the RTOAF, to ensure it is fit for purpose and all forces should be informed of the outcome of this review as soon as possible.

2. The senior national coordinator should work with the National Security Division and Joint Extremism Unit to develop and implement a risk assessment process for those tasked with visiting counter terrorism nominals in the community

The inspection found that Counter Terrorism Nominal Management (CTNM), which is the police process of protecting the public from individuals who have been involved in or engaged with terrorism, did not have an agreed national process for the risk assessment of all cases that it leads. The CTNM is delivered by the Counter Terrorism Policing Network through the CTUs. It was noted that the lack of an agreed process was leading to disparities in practice across the CTUs.

The inspection also found that there was no formal risk assessment being undertaken before the police carry out home visits, putting officers in potential risk. This is not acceptable and the safety of officers should always be at the forefront of risk assessment processes. Given the fact that these nominals often pose some of the highest risk, more needs to be done to ensure that officers have been properly assessed against any risks of violence.

I am therefore, supportive of a unified risk assessment process, that explicitly mandates a formal risk assessment being undertaken, before police officers carry out home visits.

3. The Head of Interventions (Prevent and Nominal Management) should ensure that guidance is issued to regional Counter Terrorism Nominal Management teams that set out consistent use of ViSOR to support Counter Terrorism Nominal Management in the period before MAPPs is implemented and in any transition that may follow

The Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR), is the shared national database for police, probation and prisons to jointly register, risk assess and manage sex offenders and dangerous violent offenders, including terrorism offenders. The Inspectorate found that across all 3 agencies, ViSOR was 'rarely used to any benefit' and that not enough staff were adequately trained to use it.

Whilst the Multi-agency Public Protection Service (MAPPs), is currently in development to replace ViSOR, there has been no date for introduction. It is therefore imperative that formal guidance is issued on ViSOR, so that CTNM teams can develop a consistent and effective way of using it to better share information, assess risk and protect the public from terrorism offenders. The guidance will allow for better consistency in the sharing of information and lead to a more holistic threat and risk picture, for those managing nominals in the West Midlands.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner