

The HARP Protocol

Housing And Returning Prisoners



**A framework to reduce homelessness
amongst people returning from custody**

Housing And Returning Prisoners – The HARP Protocol

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Housing and Returning Prisoners - the need for Joint Working

Richard Taylor, Partnership & Accommodation Manager, National Probation Service – Northumbria explains how stakeholders are working together to address the housing needs of offenders

It would be no understatement to say that offenders and returning prisoners experience difficulties in gaining housing. Until recently:

- Many housing providers were reluctant to accommodate offenders.
- Prisons, whilst having begun to address resettlement activities have largely focussed their attention on security.
- The Probation Service has been reliant on the voluntary sector for offender housing through the Probation Accommodation Grant Scheme.

The last two years have seen major changes in the law and policy towards offenders with further changes to come.

- The Homelessness Act has identified vulnerable returning prisoners as a priority homeless category.
- *Supporting People* views offenders as a priority group.
- The Prison Service is focussing more on resettlement with a Accommodation performance indicator implemented.
- Many local authority homelessness services realise that they could be facing increasing numbers of homeless prisoners 'on their doorsteps'.

In short, the environment has dramatically changed towards needing a common approach to planning for the housing of prisoners.

A shared appreciation of reality

A shared appreciation of this reality has resulted in the development of a strategy to bring together statutory and voluntary sector housing providers in Tyne & Wear with the prisons and probation services, to create a common approach to planning for the housing of returning prisoners.

This has resulted in the creation of the HARP protocol which seeks to address:

- Statutory housing authorities' duties towards the prevention of homelessness
- Prison and Probation's commitment to effective resettlement.
- The promotion of community safety.
- Maximising the contribution of RSL's and the voluntary sector to housing and supporting offenders.

The protocol, which has been developed by the housing and correctional services agencies in the region has taken an approach which begins prior to a person going into custody, makes best use of the time spent in prison and plans for release. The framework also recognises the need for managed short notice action and support for prisoners.

Prior to custody

Probation staff discuss options about managing housing in the event of a person being sent to prison. Properly terminating or securing a tenancy results in reduced rent arrears and damage to the property increasing potential for rehousing on return. Information booklets which contain standard letters to the landlord have been created to support the work.

On Reception in Prison

Within 48 hours of arrival in prison, everyone is expected to have an interview which identifies and acts on areas such as:

- Contacting the landlord to secure or terminate the tenancy
- Regularising Housing Benefit
- Arranging for possessions to be safeguarded.

During Custody

Applications to register for housing are made at the beginning of sentences with housing providers, making 'in principle' decisions. Sentence plans include work to help prisoners improve their chances of gaining housing through Tenancy Awareness programmes and life skills input. Applications for housing will be made four months prior to release date if possible and should no likely accommodation be found two months before release, Homeless LA Homeless Teams will be engaged.

On Release

Wherever possible people released from prison will be accompanied to the provider's office to sign up, get keys and ensure that benefits are applied for. Appropriate support will also be provided through a variety of sources such as LA, *Supporting People* and Probation.

Communication, communication, communication.

The key to the effectiveness of the HARP protocol lies in clear communication, jointly understood risk assessment and trust between the agencies involved. It is currently in draft form and now the real work for partners begins - gaining agreement within their agencies. The project will have succeeded if providers are able to sign up to similar approaches which enable prisons and probation to effectively work in partnership with Local Authorities and other community based accommodation providers.

Joint Working

The HARP Protocol has been developed by staff from,

- Tyne & Wear Housing Authorities
- District Housing Authorities in Co. Durham
- District Housing Authorities in Northumberland
- National Probation Service Northumbria
- The Prison Service North East Area
- Voluntary Sector Housing Providers
- Government Office North East
- Housing Action North East

Contact

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HOUSING AND RETURNING PRISONERS ('HARP') PROTOCOL

PURPOSE OF PROTOCOL

To create a framework to help Local Authorities, the Prison & Probation Services and Voluntary sector Housing Providers to prevent homelessness amongst people returning from custody.

STRUCTURE OF PROTOCOL

The 'HARP' protocol seeks to address the housing needs of people in custody prior to, during and following the making of a custodial sentence.

The protocol also supports:-

- Statutory Housing Authorities' duties towards the prevention of homelessness
- Prison and Probation commitment to effective resettlement.
- Contributions towards Community Safety objectives.
- The contribution of RSL's and the Voluntary sector in Housing and Supporting Offenders.

The protocol strives to develop a culture of understanding, effective forward planning and communication which will not only enable agencies to meet their statutory and organisational responsibilities but will ensure that staff time is deployed efficiently and effectively thereby achieving better outcomes for prisoners and saving time for workers.

The protocol intends that offenders subject to MAPPA procedures should not normally be dealt with through the homelessness route. (This is dealt with on page 16 of the protocol.)

REGIONAL STRATEGY

The 'HARP' protocol will seek to support and implement:

- The Regional 'Resettlement of Offenders Strategy'
- The Regional Housing Strategy
- The Tyne & Wear Housing Partnership
- Local Authority Housing and Homelessness strategies and
- Local Supporting People Strategies

'END TO END' MANAGEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION

TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this protocol:-

1. Statutory Housing Authority – a local authority acting in its strategic and statutory role in relation to housing. Councils which have transferred their housing or the management of their housing to a housing association or company retain this role.
2. Housing Provider – an organisation in the statutory or voluntary sector who provides housing and who is a signatory to this protocol.
3. Housing Support Provider - an organisation in the statutory or voluntary sector who provides support to tenants which helps them to sustain their tenancy.
4. Prison - a prison in the North East Prison Area.
5. Probation - The National Probation Service
 - Northumbria Area
 - County Durham Area.
 - Teesside Area
6. Person in Custody - A person who has either been remanded in custody or who has been sentenced to a period in prison. A person who has been remanded in custody may not be found to be an offender.

Stage 1: “Before Custody”

The period prior to a person being sentenced to custody is usually extremely short, very uncertain but important in the planning for accommodation.

It is likely that the tenant will be aware of the possibility they will be sentenced to a term in prison but this is not always the case. It is also probable that they will have contact with a Probation Officer to compile a pre-sentence report.

There are occasions when either, due to the nature of the offence or the view of the court, that a person may be sentenced to custody immediately.

Task	Initiating Body¹
1. When compiling Pre-Sentence Report the impact of custody on a person’s housing status will be discussed.	Probation Staff
2. Tenant provided with information ² about options and supported to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide whether to take action at this point • Consider contacting the housing provider.³ • Consider contacting a specialist agency.⁴ • Consider provisionally giving notice of Tenancy⁵ • Taking action in securing Tenancy. • Gain a reference from the Housing Provider for future applications. 	Probation Staff
3. Tenant to nominate a family member or friend to look after their property and interests should they be sentenced to/ remanded in custody. This could apply whether or not the tenancy is terminated.	Probation Staff to suggest.

¹ The ‘Initiating Body’ is the person or agency which holds the responsibility for ensuring that the action or process is started. Subsequently, responsibility may pass to other agencies or held jointly. It is vital that if responsibility is transferred that the ‘receiving’ agency is clear in its expectations.

² Use of Booklet such as ‘Facing Prison – What to do with your Home?’ available from richard.taylor@northumbria.probation.gsx.gov.uk

³ It is expected that partners in the protocol will operate within the spirit of the arrangements and that contact with a Housing Provider who is party to the protocol will be a safe action to take i.e. no approaches would be taken to undermine a tenants rights.

⁴ For example a local CAB, Law Centre or firm of solicitors.

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Task	Initiating Body
4. If it is likely that a tenancy is to be terminated arrangements to be considered for removal and storage of property and possessions.	Probation staff to advise
5. Information on Housing issues passed to prison.	Probation staff

Stage 2: "At Sentencing"

Again the experience in Court will be variable dependant on the time of day i.e. whether the prisoner spends a period in the cells after sentencing or is taken away immediately by the transport contractor.

Task	Initiating Body
<p>If it is possible:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Events at Stage 1 undertaken 2. Housing provider informed of prisoners status⁶ 	Probation Staff who may seek support of Defendants Solicitor.

Stage 3: On Reception in Prison

Within 48 hours of reception into prison:

Task	Initiating Body
1. Prisoners housing status identified and actions identified to secure or terminate tenancy.	Prison Staff
2. Landlord contacted about prisoner's status and interventions regarding property.	Prison Staff
3. Should the tenancy be terminated negotiations with landlords regarding rent notice period/ future offers of property.	Prison Staff

⁵ See Appendix A – Letter to provisionally terminate tenancy.

⁶ See Appendix B – Letter to Landlord to terminate tenancy.

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Task	Initiating Body
4. If tenancies are terminated removal and storage of property and possessions organised, where possible.	Prison Staff
5. Should property be maintained arrangements made for security and housing benefit ⁷ / rent to be continued / paid. Nominated friend or family member identified / confirmed. ⁸	Prison staff to inform appropriate person

Stage 4: "During Custody"

Again, circumstances are variable. Many prisoners spend only a matter of weeks in prison, others may spend years and move between prisons. Most prisoners remain within the region of their origin.

Task	Initiating Body
1. As soon as is practicable, applications made to Local Authority and/or RSL for accommodation ⁹ using Housing Providers standard application form plus a letter of support.	Prison Resettlement staff
2. Housing Provider considers application and responds in writing to prisoner informing them as to whether their application has been accepted in principle, deferred or refused. The assessment at this stage is likely to be a 'desktop' consideration against the agency's acceptance criteria. If the application has not been accepted the housing provider should specify reasons for declining their application and indicate areas of change/ achievement expected of the prisoner for their application to be acceptable.	Housing Provider.
3. Should the application be refused, prisoner informed about any available professional advice/support regarding appeals. ¹⁰	Prison staff.

⁷ Housing Benefit can be paid whilst a person is in prison under certain conditions.

⁸ See Stage 1, 3. above.

⁹ It is of value to apply to register with a Housing Provider as early as possible as many providers count length of time on the waiting list as a significant factor. It should be born in mind that some authorities have different policies in this area.

¹⁰ For example Shelter Helpline or own solicitor.

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Task	Initiating Body
<p>4. Action plan drawn up to address issues as part of individual Sentence Plan.</p> <p>This may include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging for contributions towards rent arrears to be made by prisoner. • Undertaking housing related life skills programme • Drugs related programmes. • Monitoring of cell condition. • Addressing any previous anti-social behaviour. 	Prison staff
<p>5. Should prisoners be transferred to another establishment the Sentence Plan and any arrangements such as payment of rent arrears should be continued.</p>	Prison staff (sending establishment)
<p>6. Initial assessment undertaken of likely support needs of person in custody.</p>	Prison staff
<p>7. Four months prior to release or as soon as possible for prisoners serving sentences of less than six months in custody contact made by prisoner with housing provider to formally request housing¹¹. This application, wherever possible, should include the assessment of achievements whilst in prison, attached to the request. The assessment of achievements should be forwarded in line with the Information Sharing Protocol¹².</p>	Prison staff.
<p>8. For prisoners who are not clear about either their options or are having difficulty in identifying possible housing, access should be available to Housing Advice and the development of Prisoner Peer Housing Advice Services are encouraged.</p>	Prison staff.
<p>9. Housing Providers respond to request within two working weeks outlining the process to be followed and the likely outcome.</p>	Housing Providers

¹¹ See Appendix C – Formal Request for Housing.

¹² See Appendix D – Draft Information Sharing Protocol

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Task	Initiating Body
10. Any prisoner who has no realistic prospect of housing on their release and is being released within two months should be notified to the appropriate local authority's named Homelessness Officer ¹³ .	Prison staff
11. Named officer in Homelessness Section will work with person in custody and prison staff to secure accommodation prior to release. If an applicant is not assessed as being in priority need or has been found to have become homeless intentionally, the Homeless Section will provide advice and assistance tailored to the individuals needs. Staff supporting the applicant should consider such actions as:-	Housing Provider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring sources of funding to secure vacancies for short periods to ensure that properties/places are available. This may include housing providers being able to maintain a void for a short period. • The granting of 'Release on Temporary Licence' (ROTL) to attend interviews and view properties. 	Prison / Probation / Housing Provider Staff as appropriate.
12. In collaboration with the LA Homelessness officer prison staff should continue to pursue applications through the voluntary sector.	Prison resettlement staff
13. In preparation for release Housing Support needs of prisoner to be identified. These may result in:	Prison resettlement staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High / Medium Support – Referral to specialist scheme. • Low Support – Identify need and negotiate with Probation staff / Housing Provider¹⁴ 	
14. Support agreement created with prisoner and shared with Housing Provider as appropriate in line with Information Sharing Protocol.	Prison resettlement staff

¹³ Regard should be taken of the authority's "Local Connection" rules.

¹⁴ Support may be offered by Local Authority or RSL as part of their tenancy conditions. Certain support may be provided in the short term by Probation.

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Stage 5: "On Release"

a. If no accommodation secured

1. Phone call to appropriate Homeless Section through established link officer to confirm NFA status of prisoner. If a Homelessness Assessment has already been completed it would be helpful to remind the Homelessness Section.	Prison staff.
2. Details of Homelessness section given to prisoner and if appropriate appointment time.	Prison staff.
3. Details of local emergency accommodation provided to prisoner.	Prison staff.
4. Details copied to supervising Probation staff if appropriate.	Prison staff.

b. Accommodation Secured in Approved Premises or Voluntary Sector Supported Accommodation

1. Arrangements made for person leaving custody to access transport to probation office, approved premises or project and arrangements for placement confirmed with provider/ probation and offender.	Prison staff
2. Arrangements made for offender to be transported to accommodation / housing office.	Probation staff

c. If Independent Accommodation Acquired

1. Arrangements made for person leaving custody to travel to appropriate probation office / premises.	Prison staff
2. Arrangements made for offender to be transported to accommodation / housing office.	Probation staff

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<p>3. Provide information to offenders on licence to help them access support to ensure that,¹⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing benefit claim has been submitted with all appropriate evidence. • Tenancy agreement understood and signed. • Utilities connected. • Sources of furnishings have been identified, furniture acquired. • Keys acquired and offender moved to property. 	<p>Probation Staff</p>
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Stage 6: “Living in the Community”

Note: Not all people released from prison will be formally supervised or supported by the Probation Service. Where there is a statutory responsibility this protocol will outline the agreed actions. Where this is not the case the protocol will be seen as good practice guidelines. By 2006 it is likely that all people returning from prison will be supervised by a criminal justice agency.

<p>1. Support Programme commences.</p> <p>2. List of named contact workers created for contact and circulated to all parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Probation - Support Provider - Housing - Tenant - Other appropriate <p>3. List updated when changes.</p> <p>a. <u>All Going Well</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reviewed at least monthly via telephone contact. • Where relevant, Introductory Tenancy converted to Secure Tenancy, or Starter Tenancy converted into Assured Tenancy. • Support programme terminates • Independent tenant. 	<p>Support Provider Probation</p> <p>All parties.</p> <p>Housing Provider</p>
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¹⁵ This may be best achieved through signposting an offender to a local partnership or community service such as CAB or a Law Centre.

<p>b. <u>Difficulties</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties identified by any party shared with other named worker. • Difficulties addressed • If difficulties persist and unacceptable staff meet to plan termination of tenancy. • Alternative accommodation sought • Termination of Tenancy 	<p>All parties</p> <p>Support Worker Probation / Housing As appropriate</p> <p>Support worker Probation</p>
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COMMUNICATION

1. Named Staff

Housing Providers, Prisons and Probation Areas who are part of this protocol will provide and update lists of staff in three areas:-

- i. List of contact staff within the agency with their function, e.g. Contact for Referrals. This would include address, telephone number and other contact information.
- ii. Named staff who are dealing with individual cases.
- iii. Named managers who can be contacted in emergencies or at times of concern or uncertainty

All agencies¹⁶

2. Information Sharing

- i. Applications for Housing / support would be normally made on the provider's applications forms.
- ii. Applications for Housing where it would be helpful to include further details of the applicant's behaviour whilst in custody should attach a completed form – "Information on applicant from Prison"¹⁷.

¹⁶ See list of Contact Staff at end of Protocol.

¹⁷ See Appendix E – Information on applicant from Prison

- iii. A comprehensive risk assessment can be provided on request using the “National Probation Service – Northumbria Standard Application Form”¹⁸

Information will be shared in line with the Data Protection Act, the Information Sharing policies of the Housing Providers and in relation to ii & iii above the information Sharing Protocol attached to this protocol.¹⁹

STRATEGY INTO ACTION

Currently there are a number of areas where local authorities through their roles as Statutory Housing Authority or Supporting People administering authority have responsibilities and powers which can enhance housing and supported housing for offenders.

Local authorities will ensure that:-

- i. The Statutory Housing function is applied broadly to prevent homelessness for returning prisoners wherever appropriate.
- ii. Strategic housing authorities ensure that they make use of their nomination rights to RSL's as fully as possible.
- iii. Supporting People Commissioning Bodies ensure that supported accommodation and accommodation support is widely accessible to returning prisoners and that specialist providers are working with an appropriate mix of offenders, e.g. level and nature of risk.
- iv. Long term housing providers, particularly those within the public sector actively collaborate to ensure that residents living in supported accommodation have access to long term, general needs housing to free supported accommodation places up for higher priority applicants.

Statutory Housing
Authorities / Supporting
People Commissioning
Bodies

¹⁸ See Appendix D – Draft Information Sharing Protocol

¹⁹ See Appendix D – NPS-Northumbria standard Application Form as part of Information Sharing Protocol

CASE MANAGEMENT

For every returning prisoner there will be a named member of staff who will be responsible for the delivery of each agency's responsibilities. Should an agency cease to have formal responsibility other agencies involved should be informed in writing together with a contact name for any future involvement which may be necessary.

All Agencies

A number of local authorities have protocols and policies which relate to offenders. The protocol will seek to support practice which reduces risk to offenders and the community and does not seek to gain precedence over such policies and practice.

Appropriate Agency

MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)

A three level structure for managing risk exists within each MAPPA²⁰ area:

Level 1 – Risk posed by the offender can be managed by one agency (usually the Probation Service)

Level 2 – Where active involvement of more than one agency is required.

Level 3 – The Multi Agency Public Protection Panel is the means by which the role of various agencies in the management of a particular case is coordinated.

For the purposes of this section levels 2&3 are being considered.

This protocol intends to support Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) which would always take precedence over these arrangements.²¹

Probation / Police

There is a requirement on the Prison Service to share relevant information and take part in risk management meetings. These responsibilities are outlined in Prison Service Order 4745, an excerpt of which is attached as Appendix F.

Prison staff

²⁰ MAPPA – Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

²¹ MAPPA arrangements for the Northumbria Area are outlined in the Northumbria Area Annual Report 2003 which will be circulated to all signatories to the protocol.

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Currently authorities may seek information regarding offender's previous convictions from the police. This information can be limited in its scope and it would be recommended that authorities seek risk assessments from prison and probation staff which is able to often provide a more complete picture of the applicant.

Local Authorities

For these Public Protection arrangements to work effectively there is a need for all involved agencies to take part in planning meetings.

Local Authorities

PRACTICAL PROVISIONS

This protocol has focused on the provision of accommodation for returning prisoners and the support for them in their housing.

It is recognised that a significant factor in whether a vulnerable tenant is likely to succeed in their tenancy is creating a reasonably comfortable home. This would include the provision of the basics of furniture and furnishings.

Whilst some accommodation is furnished most local authority tenancies would not be.

The provision of furniture and equipment should, where possible, be addressed by the appropriate workers as part of the resettlement process.

Whenever it is available, 'starter boxes' containing basic food, personal hygiene and cleaning products should be provided.

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CONTACTS

1. Housing Authorities

Authority	Homeless Contact	Allocations Contact	Senior Manager
Tyne & Wear			
Gateshead			
Newcastle			
North Tyneside			
South Tyneside			
Sunderland			
Northumberland			
Alnwick			
Berwick			
Blyth			
Morpeth			
Tynedale			
Wansbeck			
Co. Durham			
Chester le Street			
Derwentside			
Durham City			
Easington			
Sedgefield			
Teesdale			
Wearvalley			

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Approved Premises

Area	Referral Contact	Management Contact
Northumbria		
Teesside		

Probation Areas

Area	Housing Contact	Management Contact
Co. Durham		Keith Norman 091 383 9083
Northumbria	Richard Taylor 0191 420 4265	Hana Knotek 510 1859
Teesside	Sandra Sam Drysdale 01642 456811	Lucia Saigar 01642 230533

Prison Resettlement

Prison	Head of Resettlement
HMP Acklington	Stewart Wilson 01670 726300
HMP Castington	Neil Gibson 01670 726100
HMP Deerbolt	John Cauldwell 01833 633200
HMP Durham	Dave Egglestone 0191 332 4000
HMP Frankland	Glynis Gilbert 0191 332 3000
HMP Holme House	Gilbert Bolton 01642 744000

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HMP & YOI Low Newton	Bronia Banecki 0191 376 4000
HMP Kirklevington	Neil Turver 01642 792600

APPENDIX A

Letter to Landlord/lady to provisionally terminate tenancy

To

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Name:

Home Address:
.....
.....

I am the tenant of the above premises. I am writing to inform you that I will be appearing in court on and may be sentenced to a period of custody.

If this were the case, it would be my wish to terminate my tenancy on the following day. I would ask that you consider this as provisionally giving my notice.

Should I not be sentenced to custody, I will immediately inform you and would wish to withdraw my notice.

I hope this early notice would help a future consideration for rehousing on or near my date of release.

Please would you let me know if there are any problems with this proposal.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully

APPENDIX B

Letter to Landlord/lady to terminate tenancy

To

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Prisoner Housing Matters

Prisoner's Name:

.....

Home Address:

.....
.....
.....

Prison number:

.....

The above prisoner is a tenant of your authority / company and is currently in custody at the above prison.

His/her expected date of release is

(Use paragraphs as appropriate)

He/She will be absent from their home for more than 13 weeks and will not be entitled to housing benefit. As such they have informed me that they wish to immediately terminate their tenancy. As they have no means to pay further rent, I would ask you to consider waiving the rent due for any notice period.

They would wish to be considered for re-housing on or near their release date (please see above for expected date of release).

The above prisoner is a tenant of your authority/company. I am writing to inform you that they are currently in prison.

Their tenancy is therefore temporarily unoccupied, but they are planning to return to the property on their release. He/She expects to be released on/ the date of their release is not known at present.

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He/She has applied for housing benefit to cover the rent during their absence and have asked that payments be made direct to you.

I shall be maintaining contact with you in line with the 'HARP' protocol to which your organisation is a signatory.

Please let me know if there are any difficulties.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully

APPENDIX E

Letter to Housing Provider to Formally request Accommodation

To

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Name:

Previous Home Address:
(if applicable)
.....

Prison Address:
.....
.....

Prison Number:

(Use Appropriate Paragraphs)

I am registered with you for housing – Reference Number: and have been since.....

As you are aware I am serving a sentence in prison.

I will be released on and would like to be housed in
(town) on my release.

I have previously completed an application form for housing from you and I understand that there have been discussions between yourselves and my support worker *(Name)*.

I attach a short report on my progress whilst I have been in custody and hope that this demonstrates that I have made real efforts to make myself an acceptable tenant to you.

Should you have any queries please would you contact my support worker *(Name, Role, Address, Tel.No.)*

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Could you please let me know whether you will be able to offer me accommodation on my release.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully

(Attach completed Appendix E)

APPENDIX D

Protocol for Sharing Information between the National Probation Service, Voluntary Housing Providers and Local Authority Housing Departments

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol sets out the arrangements for the disclosure of risk information about offenders who are subject to statutory supervision by the Probation Service and certain ex-offenders, who apply for housing or who are accepted as Homeless.
- 1.2 The protocol seeks to assist the partners to the agreement to work together to ensure that offenders and certain ex-offenders gain access to appropriator housing. It acknowledges the central role of stable accommodation in the rehabilitation process and in managing risk which may be posed by individual offenders.
- 1.3 The protocol aims to ensure that offenders and ex-offenders understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a tenant and a good neighbour.

2. Scope of Protocol

This protocol relates to the agencies and persons outlined below:

2.1 The National Probation Service

- Staff of the National Probation Service Northumbria who are engaged in the supervision of offenders and management of services which involve may involve accommodation.
- Staff of other Probation Areas who make referrals into the Northumbria Area. This includes Probation staff based in prisons outside of Northumbria who make referrals to the Area.

2.2 Local Authority Housing Departments

- Staff as designated in this protocol employed by Local Authority Housing Departments in the Northumbria Probation Area who are signatories to this agreement.

2.3 Voluntary Sector Housing Providers and Housing Support Providers

- Organisations who provide Supported Accommodation for Offenders and are signatories to this protocol.
- Organisations who provide accommodation support services to offenders and are signatories to this protocol.
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer and Arms Length Management Organisations which provide Housing Services on behalf of a local authority and are signatories to this protocol.

2.4 Offenders

- A person subject to current supervision or licence by the Probation Service.

2.5 'Certain' Ex-Offenders

- A person who has been subject to Probation supervision in the past two years and is currently receiving accommodation or accommodation support services from an agency who is a signatory to this protocol.

3. Disclosure of Risk Information

3.1 The purpose of the disclosure of risk information about offenders to Housing providers is:

- To assist in the allocation of appropriate housing, including temporary or shared housing for homeless persons, especially in terms of the type and location of housing for offenders and ex-offenders.
- To enable Housing Departments and Voluntary Housing providers to safeguard the interests of current and future tenants and to protect housing and support staff.
- To enable Housing Departments and Voluntary Housing providers to safeguard the interests of offenders and ex-offenders applying for housing, or who are accepted as homeless.

3.2 Information will only be shared between the parties subject to this agreement:

- i. With the consent of the offenders
- or,
- ii. To enable the housing authority to exercise its statutory function of housing allocation with due regard to the need to prevent crime, to not prejudice the prevention or detection of crime and to ensure that the health of any individual is not injured or damaged.

3.3 Before making a disclosure in accordance with ii, above, each case must be considered on its merits.

3.4 All offenders and ex-offenders, where additional risk information is sought by the housing provider/support organisation, will be shown a completed copy of the 'Standard Application Form' Sections A & C (where appropriate) [**See Appendix 1**] and asked to sign that they agree to this being submitted to the Housing / Housing Support provider.

3.5 All disclosures must comply with the National Probation Service Northumbria Boards 'Managing Personal Information about Offenders and other Service Users Policy'.

4. Multi Agency Public Protection Panels

4.1 Offenders who are considered to pose an exceptional danger to the community at a particular time are discussed at the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels. MAPPs are a joint initiative developed by Northumbria Police and Probation. The role of the panel is to share

relevant information in relation to risk and devise action plans to reduce risk.

Housing issues will be considered as part of a planned and agreed action plan. Housing Authorities and Voluntary providers play an active role in the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels in every authority in Northumbria. Housing Authorities and Voluntary agencies are already therefore privy to the disclosure of information about certain offenders.

5. Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 enables some criminal convictions to become “spent”, or ignored, after a “rehabilitation period”. A rehabilitation period is a set length of time from the date of conviction. After this period with certain exceptions, an ex-offender is not normally obliged to mention the conviction when applying accommodation.

The ex-offender whose convictions are spent is not obliged to disclose those spent convictions to a Housing Authority or RSL and **no prejudice** can follow for failure to disclose on spent convictions.

The length of the rehabilitation period depends on the sentence given, not the offence committed. For a custodial sentence the length of time actually served is irrelevant, the rehabilitation period is decided by the original sentence given. Custodial sentences of more than 2 and a half years can never become spent.

6. Process for Disclosure of Information

- 6.1 Northumbria Probation Area will only provide information to those Housing Departments and Voluntary organisations that are parties to this protocol and are registered for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1984.
- 6.2 Each Housing Department and Voluntary Organisation will identify an officer or officers responsible for liaising with the Probation Service. Each Housing Department and Voluntary Organisation will provide the Probation Partnership & Accommodation Manager with a list of the liaison or link officers.
- 6.3 When a Probation Officer knows that a current client is applying to a Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation, or presenting as homeless, they will forward a completed ‘Standard Application Form’ to the Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation’s liaison officer if the applicant meets the criteria at paras 2.4 and 3.2. If the convictions are spent the PO will not include these in the application.
- 6.4 The fact that information has been disclosed and the reason for disclosure must be entered on the offenders Contact Event Log by the responsible probation staff member.

- 6.5 If the applicant is not on statutory supervision but meets the criteria in para's 2.5 and 3.2 a liaison officer from a Voluntary Organisation seeking accommodation on behalf of the ex-offender will complete / update a 'Standard Application Form' as far as they are able making sure that Spent Convictions are not included and any areas which cannot be accurately filled in are marked as such.
- 6.6 On receipt of the information the Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation liaison officer will advise the Lettings Officer (or equivalent) if there are specific concerns about the location or type of any potential offer of accommodation.
- 6.7 In all cases where the applicant is currently under statutory or voluntary supervision the Probation Officer will complete Section [*To be created*] which describes to the Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation's liaison officer the nature and level of support the Probation Service are able to offer to the applicant once they are re-housed, how long the contact will last and what its limitations are.

7 Confidentiality:

- 7.1 All parties to this protocol agree that disclosure of information outside of the agencies liaison officers (or other officers directly involved with the individual) is a breach of the subject's confidentiality and a breach of the confidentiality of the parties to the protocol.
- 7.2 Any breach of confidentiality should be investigated by the signatory to the protocol or their nominee. A breach of confidentiality should be addressed as a disciplinary issue by the employer of the staff member involved.
- 7.3 Breaches of confidentiality may result in exclusion from the protocol.
- 7.4 The Housing Departments and Voluntary Organisation who are party to this protocol agree to:
- 7.4.1 Provide a liaison officer/s responsible for requesting information from NPS Northumbria or appropriate Voluntary Organisations.
 - 7.4.2 Abide by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 whereby all information kept in a computerised form can be accessed (by right) by the subject of the information
 - 7.4.3. Establish procedures covering the internal transmission of information disclosed by NPSN which:
 - Ensure that information on convictions provided by NPSN is to be kept *strictly confidential*. Mark all documentation **CONFIDENTIAL NOT TO BE DISCLOSED WITHOUT CONSENT**

- Ensure that the information is only disclosed to officers of the Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation who are directly concerned with the individual concerned
- Ensure that the information is not disclosed to tenants

7.4.4. Establish procedures to deal with information “leaking” to the public and or the media outside of the formal disclosure arrangements which include:

- Liaison with relevant local agencies, e.g. police, probation, social services
- Arrangements for transfer to a more suitable property if appropriate
- Arrange for protection of the individual and other members of their household if an adverse reaction from the local community is anticipated
- Vary the terms of the tenancy of the individual where possible
- Eviction if the tenancy conditions have been broken. The housing organisation should consider the implications of the offender becoming homeless.

7.5 NPSN agrees to

7.5.1 Ensure that information on convictions will be provided in writing by post or fax to the Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation’s liaison officer only, marked **CONFIDENTIAL FOR ADDRESSEE ONLY**

7.5.3 Ensure that Probation Officers complete the Standard Application Form in a complete and frank fashion.

7.5.4 Inform offenders of the disclosure of information to Housing Department or Voluntary Organisation protocol (The applicant may wish to withdraw their housing application at this point)

7.5.5 Assist the Housing Authority or RSL if information is leaked to the public and or the media outside of the formal disclosure arrangements. This may include:

- Public Relations support to deal with the media
- Support by the Probation Officer and Management

'HARP' Protocol

- Participate in any inter-agency meetings to assess or re-assess the options for the individual concerned
- Offer temporary supported accommodation options where appropriate

8. Review of Protocol

8.1 The protocol will be reviewed twelve months after implementation by a group representing all parties to the agreement.

NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE - NORTHUMBRIA STANDARD APPLICATION FOR SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR OFFENDERS

Introduction

This form is to be used for **all** applications for Supported Accommodation for Offenders to:

- Byker Bridge Housing Association
- Haven Tyneside
- Norcare
- Phoenix House
- Stonham Housing Association and
- Tyneside Cyrenians

Details of the various projects are attached as Accommodation Information Sheet. Please ensure that you discuss the type of project i.e. location, regime and the contents of this form with the applicant.

Confidentiality

The information contained in this form will be treated with the strictest confidence and used solely by Project staff for internal purposes. The only exception would be if, in the opinion of the Project staff the interests of public protection take priority over confidentiality.

Offender Contribution

Section A is to be completed by the referring Probation or Prison Officer.

Section B is expected to be completed by the applicants themselves. This may be completed together with the referring officer or alone. However, both Sections A and B should be submitted together.

Section C should be completed for serving prisoners or offenders recently released from custody to reflect any programmes undertaken whilst in prison or other relevant information which may inform an application.

Additional Material

Whilst this form covers the basic information required in making an application, referring officers may be asked to provide further information if asked by Project staff.

Do not rely on being asked to provide information. Please complete the form fully and frankly. This will both speed up applications and ensure risks and needs are properly managed.

Out of Area Applications

All applications from outside the National Probation Service, Northumbria area, must be discussed with the local Service Liaison Manager. Without the agreement of the SLM, referrals cannot be processed.

Service Link Managers

<u>Norcare</u> :	Gateshead	-	Mark Lamb	(0191 414 5626)
	Newcastle	-	Jeff Fiddes	(0191 213 1888)
	Northumberland	-	Geoff Pooley	(01670 352 441)
	North Tyneside	-	Phillip Lloyd	(0191 296 2335)
	South Tyneside	-	Richard Booth	(0191 455 2294)
	Sunderland	-	Mark McGovern	(0191 514 3093)
<u>Haven</u> :		-	Don Nesbit	(0191 274 1153)
<u>Byker Bridge</u> :		-	Mary Ord	(0191 276 6666)
<u>Phoenix House</u> :		-	Richard Booth	(0191 455 2294)
<u>Stonham Housing Association</u> :				
	North Tyneside	-	Philip Lloyd	(0191 296 2335)
	Northumberland	-	Geoff Pooley	(01670 352 441)
	Newcastle	-	Jeff Fiddes	(0191 213 1888)
<u>Tyneside Cyrenians</u> :		-	John Mills	(0191 261 9091)

Concerns Regarding Applications

Any concerns regarding the handling or outcome of an application should be dealt with, initially, through the Supported Accommodation project and, if necessary, through the Service Link Manager.

SECTION A: COMPLETED BY REFERRING AGENCY

Please complete as fully as possible and send to **project address** with Sections B & C (as appropriate).

Project Applied to (specify which unit if The agency has more than one):

When is the accommodation needed:

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Name of Applicant:

National Insurance Number:
 (If a serving prisoner) Prison Number:
 Present Address/Contact Telephone Number:

Gender:

Date of Birth:

Ethnic Category:

White	British	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other white background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	White & Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	White & Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	White & Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed Background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian or	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian British	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Black or Black British	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other ethnic group	
Chinese or other Ethnic Group Not Stated	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>				

Does the applicant need any help in communicating either in writing or verbally. If so, what support is required.

2. REFERRING AGENCY

Name of Referring Officer:

Office/Establishment²

Address:

Telephone Number:

Current contact with Probation:

Reason	Start	<u>Completion/</u> <u>Anticipated</u> <u>Completion</u>
• Bail		
• Community Rehabilitation Order		
• Community Punishment Order		
• Young Offenders Institution		
• Automatic Conditional Release		
• Discretionary Conditional Release/Parole		
• Home Detention Curfew		
• Other (Please Specify)		
• None		

Any outstanding Court Appearances:

Give details of current offence and/or most recent conviction(s):

² e.g. HMP Low Newton, Northumbria Probation Gateshead

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

Does the applicant present a risk to:

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Very High</u>
Children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Known adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self Harm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Offending Linked Issues – Please give brief history in appropriate areas including summary of offences.

a. Drugs

Yes No

If yes, give brief history –

b. Alcohol

Yes No

If yes, give brief history –

c. Sexual Offences

Yes No

If yes, give brief history –

'HARP' Protocol

d. Arson

If yes, give brief history –

Yes No

e. Violence

If yes, give brief history – Please specify the nature of violence e.g. use of Weapons, public order etc. (Note Domestic Violence is next category).

Yes No

f. Domestic Violence

If yes, give brief history -

Yes No

g. Racially Motivated Offences

yes, give brief history –

Yes No

Victim Location

Please note any issues to be considered in relation to Victim Location.

4. SPECIAL NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

a. **Substance Misuse** Yes No
If yes, give brief history, including any treatment

b. **Mental Health issue** Yes No
If yes, give brief history -

c. **Self Harm/Suicide** Yes No
If yes, give brief history -

d. **Risk from Others** Yes No
If yes, give brief history -

e. **Medication** Yes No
If yes, give brief history -

'HARP' Protocol

f. **Disability**

If yes, give brief history – including any physical considerations e.g. ground floor accommodation.

Yes

No

g. **Financial Difficulties**

If yes, give brief history – including outstanding debts or fines.

Yes

No

h. **Other Needs and Problems**

If yes, give brief history –

Yes

No

Please list significant other agencies with whom liaison is appropriate e.g. substance misuse, mental health, child protection and victim liaison.

Name

Agency/Address

Contact Tel No.

Are there any plans for the applicants resettlement in the longer term?

Please list any special concerns or needs not included above.

'HARP' Protocol

What support would you like the Project/Hostel to provide and in what way will it contribute to the supervision plan, or build on work done in prison?

Please give details of the applicants:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Address: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of Accommodation where lived over past two years: 	1. 2. 3. 4.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If lived in Supported Accommodation previously provide details: 	

Have you discussed this application with your client? Yes No

Is He/She willing to come if accepted? Yes No

Is He/She aware of project rules and likely to accept them? Yes No

Thank you for completing the details of this application form.

Signed (by referring officer):

Date:

Signed (by applicant):

Date:

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

Name of Applicant:

As you know an application for support accommodation has been made for you at:

This application is for accommodation with support. You will be expected to help in the creation of a plan to help you gain and keep a home. If you are seeking accommodation only, this is not a suitable application.

Your Probation or Prison Officer will answer any queries about what Supported Accommodation is and how you will be helped to address any personal issues.

This Section is an opportunity for you to tell us something about yourself that will help us decide whether we should offer you an interview. If you need further space to write on, please use the back of the form.

Shared Facilities

Much of the supported accommodation is in property where such things as kitchens and bathrooms are shared. Bedrooms are not shared, other than for very particular reasons.

If you have concerns about sharing facilities, please make any comments below:

1. What ideas or plans for the future to you have, such as where you want to live, what work, training or education you would like to do?

2. Do you have any special interests that you would like to develop?

(b) How do you think we could help?

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

Signed:

Date:

Thanks for answering all these questions. If we offer and you accept accommodation with us, it will also help us plan the best way of working together. The information, which you have provided, will be treated with strictest confidence and used only by Project staff for internal purposes. The only exception to this would be if in our view the interests of public protection took priority over confidentiality.

PLEASE RETURN THE FORM TO:

Supervising Officer
Or
Project

SECTION C: INFORMATION FROM PRISON

This section should be completed by Prison or Probation staff to reflect relevant information regarding the applicant.

Name of Applicant:

'HARP' Protocol

Prison Number:

Prison/YOI:

1. How long was the applicant in custody at your establishment.
2. Did the applicant undertake any programmes which would be relevant to their application for supported accommodation. If yes please give details:
3. Did the applicant maintain their cell in a satisfactory fashion. If any concerns please give details:

4. Does the applicant present a risk to:

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Very High</u>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Residents/Prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please give details of any Risk Factors.

4. Please provide your assessment of the applicants suitability for living in both shared accommodation and supported accommodation.

'HARP' Protocol

5. Is there any other information you would feel could be relevant to this application.

Completed by:

Post:

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX E

INFORMATION ON APPLICANT FROM PRISON

This section should be completed by Prison or Probation staff to reflect relevant information regarding the applicant.

Name of Applicant:

Prison Number:

Prison/YOI:

- 6. How long was the applicant in custody at your establishment.

- 7. Did the applicant undertake any programmes which would be relevant to their application for supported accommodation. If yes please give details:

- 8. Did the applicant maintain their cell in a satisfactory fashion. If any concerns please give details:

4. Does the applicant present a risk to:

<u>Risk</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Very High</u>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Residents/Prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please give details of any Risk Factors.

APPENDIX I

Extract from Prison Service Order 4745

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

Date of Implementation: 1st April 2004

The extract below contains all of section 2 of PSO 4745 which deals with the operational arrangements for the Prison Service's involvement in MAPPA.

THE PRISON SERVICE CONTRIBUTION TO MAPPA AT LOCAL (ESTABLISHMENT) LEVEL

Introduction

- 2.1 The Public Protection Standard requires establishments to agree and sign local protocols to ensure that information on a prisoner's risk is routinely shared with external agencies. This is the way in which the Service currently co-operates at local level with the Responsible Authority in MAPPA. With our new strategic responsibilities in MAPPA, a more workable approach in future would be the development of Area rather than establishment protocols:

Establishments must be incorporated into information sharing protocols for MAPPA areas as directed by the Area Manager.

- 2.2 Our co-operation with MAPPA at local level should not be regarded as a new function but the performance of existing functions so far as they concern sexual and violent offenders.

Levels of MAPPA risk management

- 2.3 A three level structure for managing risk exists within each MAPPA Area:
- | | |
|---------|--|
| Level 1 | where the risk posed by the offender can be managed by one agency. (usually the Probation Service) |
| Level 2 | where active involvement of more than one agency is required |
| Level 3 | the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) – the means by which the role of various agencies in the management of a particular case ("the critical few") is co-ordinated. Based on current figures it is estimated that level 3 cases represent about 3,000 of the total MAPPA caseload of around 53,000 (of which only a proportion will be in prison at any one time). |

Risk management and contributing to MAPPA in establishments

2.4.1 Identification

- *Following Reception, establishments must identify prisoners subject to MAPPA (see paragraph 1.3 of this PSO), record the fact on LIDS, and feed this into sentence planning arrangements.*
- Risk assessments will need to be linked into the roll out of OASys which will also help to identify offenders coming under MAPPA.
- OASys will not apply to those receiving sentences of less than 12 months unless the Probation Service has opened an assessment. Establishments will therefore need to be aware that an offender's previous convictions may make

him of interest to MAPPA even though his or her current offence does not fall within MAPPA criteria. This also applies to the unconvicted, who, while not subject to MAPPA, may be of interest to the Responsible Authority because of their history, and if they are subsequently convicted.

2.4.2 Risk Assessment

- Establishments have a duty to provide timely information to MAPPPS about continuing risk at key points in the sentence, in particular through gathering information about highly dangerous prisoners (e.g. paedophile networking patterns, contact with victims) to inform the handling plan on release.
- The risk management model at **Annex C** to this PSO is an example of good practice. The model provides for an Interdepartmental Risk Management team responsible for providing regular assessments for prisoners who pose the greatest risk. Key to this model is a Public Protection/Risk Assessment Co-ordinator. Establishments who have such a dedicated post have generally performed better in audits of the Public Protection Standard.
- If risk is regularly reviewed as in the good practice model, establishments' contributions to MAPPA will be more effective through the provision of a comprehensive assessment of a prisoner's likelihood of re-offending. Establishments would, for example, be best placed to inform the Responsible Authority where they think a prisoner is higher risk than realised by the Responsible Authority, and to refer prisoners to MAPPPS where appropriate.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels (MAPPPs)

2.4.3 The MAPPP is responsible for the management of the 'critical few' (see 2.3 above). The Responsible Authority may sometimes ask establishments to host or facilitate a MAPPP meeting.

- *Where a multi-agency meeting is required by the Responsible Authority prior to any specific prisoner's release, the Governor must ensure that any relevant information is presented to that meeting, including those held outside the local area, either by sending a representative or by submitting a report. Where a representative is sent he/she must be familiar with the processes of risk/needs assessment and management*
- It will be particularly important for a representative to be sent where there is an indication that there are specific actions which the prison may take to assist in the risk management plan. The measures which can be used to strengthen the management of risk on an offender's release from custody include:
 - the imposition of additional licence conditions;
 - the use of electronic monitoring (seek advice from NPD's Public Protection Unit);
 - transferring the prisoner to an establishment from which release can be better managed;
 - arranging for the offender to be accompanied on release from the establishment to the designated accommodation and/or appointments;
 - the use of Sex Offender Orders;
 - the use of a 'contract' agreed with the offender particularly in cases where there is a very short period of supervision on licence or none at all; and,

- in exceptional cases, the use of surveillance
- where meetings are convened under Level 2 of MAPPA risk management, *Governors will not be required to send a representative on a routine basis, but must ensure that any relevant information is made available to the meeting*
- Engaging in the MAPPA at operational level is not simply about representation at level 2 and the MAPPPs. More important is to ensure that all relevant information about an offender is shared, together with any additional advice about release arrangements. Effective information sharing can be more easily delivered where single points of contact are established. Governors will therefore need to consider whether establishing a full or part time Public Protection Co-ordinator post as in the model at Annex C, is the best way of meeting their commitment to MAPPA.

Release arrangements

2.4.4 At the time when release is being considered or prepared, the onus is on the Prison Service to ensure a timely exchange of all relevant information about an offender with the Responsible Authority.

- *Governors must ensure that the police and probation service as appropriate, are notified of the expected release dates of prisoners coming under MAPPA*
- The Responsible Authority will normally plan the release of offenders who are to be managed through a MAPPP at least three months - and usually six months where practicable - before that release. *Notification of the release dates of these offenders must therefore take place at the very least three months before release. Additionally, governors must ensure that they contribute fully to the risk assessment and the risk management planning before release occurs*
- Where a high risk prisoner's proposed area of release is some distance from the establishment he/she is held in, Governors are advised to consider the feasibility of early transfer to the area of discharge to assist in the handling of release arrangements
- It is recognised that even with early planning, the actual release date can vary if prisoners seek remission of 'added days' or are credited with time spent on remand or in police custody. Release dates brought forward unexpectedly can adversely affect release arrangements, particularly where the MAPPP is planning to a known date on which for example, a hostel place is becoming available for a high risk prisoner. It is obviously imperative that such prisoners are not released without an appropriate release plan. *Governors must ensure that all staff involved in sentence calculation, decisions to restore 'added days', and facilitating release arrangements for high risk prisoners are aware of the need to advise the police and probation service immediately of any unexpected changes to release dates or release arrangements*
- While Governors cannot withhold 'police days' or refuse to give back added days where this is reasonable, they are advised to look at ways of factoring into routine consideration of pre-release issues for high risk offenders, the advance identification of those whose release dates may be brought forward in this way.