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Tuesday, 16 November 2004

HOME OFFICE

**Inquiry into the death of PC Gerald Walker: Response to the Report
Recommendations**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Paul Goggins): On 25 March I placed in the House Library a copy of the report by Professor Rod Morgan which I and the Minister for Policing had commissioned into the circumstances leading up to and following the death of PC Gerald Walker as a consequence of the actions of David Parfitt, who was then unlawfully at large following the revocation of his licence and recall to prison. I also placed in the Library a copy of the Action Plan which I had agreed with the Director General of National Probation Service representing the police, prison and probation services and which set out a clear plan for delivering changes to national policy and practice recommended by Professor Morgan in light of his inquiry findings.

The Director General of the National Probation Service has now reported to me on the progress achieved in delivering the Action Plan and I am today placing a copy of that report in the House Library.

I am very pleased that the Director General is able to confirm that, of the 10 recommendations in Professor Morgan's report, 2 have already been met in full, a further 4 will be the subject of comprehensive advice which will be issued during November, and 3 other recommendations will result in guidance being issued before the end of December. Progress is being made to reach agreement with the employing authorities for probation staff on the final recommendation, which requires a change to the terms and conditions of some probation grades, but the Director General is hopeful that there will be agreement in time for changes to be implemented early in 2005-06.

As I made clear in my written statement to the House on 25 March, PC Walker's death was an irreplaceable loss to the Nottinghamshire Constabulary and to the community they serve, and a personal tragedy for his wife and 2 children. The changes to national practices which Professor Morgan recommended, and the Action Plan is delivering, cannot make up for that loss. Those changes will, however ensure that the legacy of PC Walker's sacrifice will be better supervision of offenders, more effective inter-agency working between the police and correctional services, and, by reducing the risk of similar events recurring, greater security to the public in future.

Inquiry into the death of PC Gerald Walker

Report on the Delivery of the Action Plan to respond to the recommendations made at Part 2 of the Inquiry Report which was laid in the House Libraries by Paul Goggins MP, Minister for the Correctional Services, on 25 March

Paul Goggins MP, Minister for the Correctional Services and Hazel Blears MP, Minister for Policing, requested Professor Rod Morgan, the then-HM Chief Inspector of Probation, to carry out an inquiry into the circumstances leading up to and following the death of PC Gerald Walker as a consequence of the actions of David Parfitt. At the time of the immediate events in January 2003 which resulted in the death of PC Walker, David Parfitt was unlawfully at large following the revocation of his licence by the Home Office and his recall to prison as a consequence of a report by the Nottinghamshire area of the National Probation Service that he had failed to comply with the conditions of his licence whilst being supervised by that Service.

Professor Morgan commenced his Inquiry in December 2003 and reported on 25 March 2004. His report covered the details of the actions taken

- by the Prison Service during the second half of 2002 leading to the release from prison on licence of David Parfitt and the revocation of his licence in December of that year;
- by Nottinghamshire probation area to supervise Parfitt on licence in the community from September 2002 until his recall to prison and the start of the period of one month when he was unlawfully at large; and
- by Nottinghamshire Constabulary following the notification of the licence revocation until his arrest on 8 January 2003.

Professor Morgan was also asked to look at and report on the actions of the police service, Nottinghamshire probation area and the Home Office, principally the National Probation Directorate, following the incidents of 7 January 2003, when PC Walker received the injuries from which he subsequently died.

Professor Morgan's report provided a detailed and comprehensive record of the facts of the circumstances leading up to and subsequent to the events of 7 January 2003. Part I of that report set out his findings in respect of the actions locally of all three services (prison, probation, police) before and after PC Walker's death and of the Home Office subsequent to January 7 2003. He made no formal recommendations at this part of his report.

In Part II of his report, Professor Morgan identified a number of areas of national policy and practice which he assessed contributed to the failings in local practice identified in Part I, or which he believed could, if addressed, reduce the risk of similar events recurring. He made 10 recommendations, each of which has been accepted by the Government and the 3 services to which they are directed. With the publication of the Morgan report on 25 March, the Minister for the Correctional Services also placed

in the House of Commons Library a copy of the Action Plan which the Home Office had prepared detailing how the prison, probation and police services would implement the recommendations set out in Professor Morgan's report.

This report describes the actions which have been taken or which are in process of being taken to ensure that the lessons of the events leading up to and after the death of PC Walker are learned and that changes are made as recommended by Professor Morgan. While the overview of the whole action plan has been the responsibility of the Director General of the National Probation Service, the delivery of change on individual recommendations is for the individual responsible services who have carried out their own internal reviews where appropriate or have set up joint review working groups where a proposal bridges more than one service.

The statement of delivery of the action plan follows the order of the original recommendations as set out in Part II of Professor Morgan's Inquiry Report.

- **Recommendation 1**

The NPD, together with the CPS, should take further steps to ensure that all court reports are written with the benefit of sight of the prosecution papers in the case.

Probation service reports to court (Pre-Sentence Reports or PSRs) are intended to provide the court with a factual account of the offence and a verified assessment of the offender. Increasingly they draw heavily on the use of the Offender Assessment System (OASys) tool which has been jointly developed by the prison and probation services to provide an objective assessment of the offending behaviour and resettlement needs of offenders, together with an assessment of the predicted risk of future offending and of the risk of harm which the offender presents to the public.

The probation service depends for the production of comprehensive PSRs upon the Crown Prosecution Service to provide factual statements of the offence, previous criminal behaviour and other relevant information which can be tested by a face to face interview and the service's own information, where this is available. A national protocol has been in place for a number of years requiring the delivery of such information to the probation service no less than 3 days following the date on which the court has requested a PSR. That protocol was revised in 2002 to address identified blockages in the process following the work of a tri-partite group (police, CPS and probation) and again at the end of 2003. As currently constituted the national protocol provides for the police to provide probation with early photocopies of information in certain instances at the same time as they forward the original documents to the CPS. The particular circumstances in which simultaneous copying is required include all cases where there is a clear expectation of a custodial sentence, among others.

It is clear that, while all 3 agencies (police, CPS, probation) notified the requirements of the 2003 protocol to their relevant local bodies, implementation of the new arrangements on the ground has been at best patchy, either because the new guidance was not received by the appropriate staff or because available resources have limited the opportunity for the new early notification scheme to be introduced on the ground.

Revised guidance on the 2003 protocol is being prepared and will be issued before the end of the year. The new guidance will be reinforced through a review of effectiveness by the National Probation Directorate towards the autumn of 2005 and subsequent routine monitoring. The opportunity will also be taken to consider how strengthened guidance on the national protocol may be made more widely known through later reviews of the Criminal Casework Management Framework, which was published earlier this summer and sets out in detail the roles and responsibilities of all agencies associated with delivering criminal casework through the courts.

In the longer term, the development of secure information exchange between all of the relevant criminal justice agencies will provide a firm IT platform for the quick transfer of information. The development of the National Offender Management Service has already led to the bringing together of responsibility for IT strategy across the prison and probation services in a way which was not easily achieved earlier but inter-agency links are dependent upon the introduction of a secure network serving the whole of the National Probation Service, which is still being developed. More

immediately, the National Probation Directorate, together with the Criminal Justice Information Technology (CJIT) will carefully monitor the planned roll out of the Xhibit programme (eXchange of Hearings Information By Internet Technology) from December 2004 to identify whether the use of internet technology to electronically notify the probation service of a request for a PSR might provide further opportunities to systematise requests for and the provision of offender information for PSR purposes.

- **Recommendation 2**

The guidance from Prison Service HQ for HDC decision making should make explicit the need to consider security information report-based evidence and the manner in which that evidence is held should be more accessible to HDC Board members.

- **Recommendation 3**

In HDC cases information about prisoners' behaviour and participation in programmes while in prison should be built into the Prison Service HDC documentary process and transmitted to home probation supervisors.

Recommendations 2 and 3 are both concerned with ensuring that decisions taken by the Prison Service about a prisoner's suitability for early release subject to Home Detention Curfew (HDC) is fully informed by reports, and specifically reports detailing internal security information and the prisoner's behaviour and participation in programmes while in custody. Recommendation 3 further proposes that information about the offender's behaviour and participation in programmes is always transmitted to the home probation officer who will be responsible for supervising the resettlement aspects of an offender subject to HDC and to supervision in the community under licence conditions.

With certain exceptions, all prisoners serving a sentence of more than 3 months but less than 4 years are eligible to be considered for a period of Home Detention Curfew as they approach the point in their sentence where they will be released back into the community, whether under the supervision of the probation service or at the end of their sentence. The decision whether or not to grant HDC is a matter for the relevant prison governor, informed by internal prison reports and by a home circumstances report currently prepared by the probation officer in the area to which the prisoner will return.

Prison governors already receive comprehensive guidance on the factors which they should take into account when assessing the risk that may be posed by a prisoner if granted HDC, and should not approve release where that assessment does not justify such action. The Prison Service has recently carried out a review of HDC procedures and is preparing revised guidance which they anticipate will be issued to prisons in the form of a Prison Service Instruction (PSI) before the end of the year, although earlier publication in November remains a possibility. The new guidance will incorporate amendments to HDC forms arising from the Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Unit's report earlier this year. It will also implement recommendations 2 and 3 of the Action Plan by emphasising that all relevant security information in relation to risk, including relevant security information, should be considered as part of the assessment of suitability for HDC.

In advance of the formal guidance, governors and HDC clerks in prisons have been made aware of the proposed changes in relation to recommendations 2 and 3 of the Action Plan and of the forthcoming PSI through the October edition of the Prison Service HDC Bulletin.

Plans to introduce arrangements to electronically link up the prison and probation services to receive joint OASys data on individual offenders are moving forward and once the implementation programme is in place, supervising probation officers will have direct access to information about an offender, including assessments of risk and other relevant information gathered throughout the custodial period. In the interim the proposed new PSI will require governors to refer copies of relevant HDC assessment papers for those who are released on HDC to home area probation officers.

- **Recommendation 4**

The NPD should amend the Probation National Standards so as to remove the requirement that prisoners released on HDC be visited at home within ten days of release.

Probation Service National Standards for the supervision of offenders are issued by the direction of the Home Secretary and set out the standard to be observed by the National Probation service when carrying out its statutory functions. The National Standards were first published in their current form as a Ministerial direction in 2000, immediately prior to the introduction of the National Probation Service, which replaced 54 local probation services from April 2001. The National Standards were last reviewed in 2002 but will require a further comprehensive review in the light of the new sentences and sentencing framework introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003. That review will be undertaken by the National Probation Directorate or its successor body within the National Offender Management Service, prior to the commencement by Parliament of the new sentencing provisions.

The Standards relating to the requirement to undertake a home visit for prisoners released on HDC are set out at Part D13 of the National Standards. It provides that required levels of contact will normally include one 'home visit, which will be arranged to take place within 10 working days of release unless the offender is resident in approved premises, in which case a home visit will not be necessary.'

The recommendation to amend the National Standards so as to remove the requirement undertake a home visit within 10 days of the date of the offender's release on HDC has been considered by the National Standards Reference Group in advance of the planned comprehensive review. The Reference Group comprises National Probation Directorate Regional Management and Performance managers and experienced regional and area staff with personal experience of supervising offenders in the community. The commitment to a home visit is designed to confirm or provide the opportunity to review the pre-release assessments of the likely risk of release on HDC. As such it supports the National Probation Service's key duty to ensure the protection of the public.

Following their review, the Reference Group has concluded that there is scope to remove the mandatory nature of the present National Standard requirement, but was concerned that simply deleting the provision could have the unwanted effect of

discouraging such visits where there might otherwise be good operational reasons for continuing them. The National Probation Directorate has therefore concluded that the National Standards should be amended to insert a discretionary authority to make home visits where they are considered necessary on a case by case basis in place of the current mandatory provision. Guidance will be issued in the form of a Probation Circular giving effect to this change of provision in November.

- **Recommendation 5**

Pending universal introduction of an electronic case recording system capable of automatically triggering enforcement actions when offenders meet breach criteria, the NPS should give front line PSO staff dealing with offenders greater responsibility for initiating enforcement processes.

While case management of an offender under supervision in the community has always been a requirement on the probation service, no universal case management structure is currently in place, nor does the National Probation Service's IT functionality yet support a national electronic case recording system.

Since the introduction of a single national service from 1 April 2001, the National Probation Directorate has recognised that the development of an integrated national case management and recording scheme should be a priority. That has been re-enforced by the Government's acceptance of the Carter Report Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime in January this year which proposed establishing a National Offender Management Service which would provide new ways of working with offenders throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. Such an offender-based approach requires clear and effective case management and work on developing the probation service's national case management scheme has recently transferred to the National Offender Management Service.

Enforcement of an offender's compliance with the conditions of a community sentence order or a licence is essential, regardless of the form of case management or recording, if the courts and, more importantly, the public are to have confidence in the community supervision aspects of the criminal justice system. Probation Service National Standards for the supervision of offenders quite properly set clear criteria for the actions which should be taken where the supervising probation officer is satisfied that an offender has, without good reason, failed to observe the requirements of an order or licence, including, where appropriate, the initiation of breach procedures.

Reference of an offender back to court or to the Parole Board for consideration of breach proceedings is a serious decision which may have consequences for either the offender, through the deprivation of liberty, or the public, which may be put at risk if inappropriate action is taken. For this reason, the Probation Service National Standards require that the decision on whether to initiate breach action should be taken by a probation officer, after reference to a supervising senior officer.

The National Probation Directorate recognises however that in recent years, and increasingly since the introduction of the National Probation Service, local practice and procedures have been changing and developing across all areas of probation responsibility. This has led to a broadening of the roles and responsibilities which

may be undertaken by staff at grades below that of full probation officer, and particularly by Probation Service Officers (PSO).

While increasingly flexible use of staffing resources is to be encouraged, the piecemeal nature of the changes introduced through local practice is less welcome. That position is made more difficult because local area probation staff (with the exception of the Chief Officer) are not Civil Servants and are not employed by the Crown, but are employees of the local Probation Board, who set their terms and conditions of employment. The National Probation Directorate has accordingly established formal negotiating arrangements with the employing local probation boards to consider questions of this kind.

In line with the agreed practice, the recommendation that “front line” PSO staff should be given greater responsibility for initiating enforcement procedures has been discussed with the appropriate negotiating body. This recommendation is now being taken forward within broader discussions about the future development of the PSO grade, including the proposed introduction of a PSO Plus grade, which would be given wider responsibilities and powers than the current PSO grade, together with appropriate training. While those negotiations are making good progress, any formal proposals would also need to be considered with the relevant trades unions, through the mechanism of the National Negotiating Committee. If approved, any changes to National Standards to implement this recommendation are unlikely to be in place earlier than April 2005.

- **Recommendation 6**

The NPD should take further steps to clarify for NPS staff the enforcement criteria and procedures for the different orders and licences involving drug tests.

The probation service is currently authorised to require an offender to submit to post-sentence drug testing in only 3 sets of circumstances.

The first of these is where an offender is subject to a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO), which is a community sentence order imposed by the courts. DTTOs are intended for offenders who have a significant offending history, where the offences are often committed to fund a serious drug habit. Drug testing is part of an overall programme of interventions which is intensive and which involves both clinical interventions and resettlement/rehabilitation work. DTTOs are therefore clearly a gateway into treatment for offenders who have a seriously chaotic lifestyle and who will benefit from the available structured treatment interventions. DTTOs were introduced as a national provision in 2000 and are available throughout England and Wales

Drug testing may also be a mandatory requirement of a community sentence where it is imposed as either a Drug Abstinence Order (DAO, a free standing community sentence order), or as a Drug Abstinence Requirement (DAR) within a broader community sentence order. As the terms imply, DAOs and DARs were not intended to act as a gateway into treatment, but simply to add an external reinforcement to the offender’s own decision to become abstinent from drug misuse. The target offender population for DAOs and DARs typically exhibit a lesser offending history than those who qualify for a DTTO and are less drug-dependant. Drug testing as a condition of

a DAO or DAR was introduced in 3 pilot probation areas during 2002 and subsequently extended to a further 6 areas later that year. It has not been rolled out nationally and is therefore still only available in those 9 pilot areas.

The final circumstances in which drug testing can be authorised were introduced at the same time as drug testing as a condition of a DAO or DAR. It applies to certain designated prisoners being released on licence supervision into one of the 9 probation pilot areas operating drug testing as a DAO or DAR. The purpose behind a drug testing licence condition is the same as that for a DAO or DAR, that is, to reinforce the offender's own commitment to remain drug free. Where the criteria are met, a prisoner's licence may require that the offender submit to drug testing arranged by the probation service.

While both the DTTO, DAO/DAR and licence drug testing condition require that an offender submit to regular drug testing, the very different purposes behind testing under a DTTO and for a DAO, DAR or licence condition have necessarily influenced the enforcement criteria following the submission of positive tests. The DTTO is an order which supports treatment for drug misuse – drug testing provides an objective measure of the offender's progress towards becoming drug free but the submission of one or more positive tests is not, of itself, grounds for initiating breach action. By comparison, DAOs, DARs and drug testing licence conditions require that the offender should abstain from drug taking – where the criteria are met, positive drug tests on their own are sufficient to justify initiating breach action, and in some circumstances are a mandatory criterion for so doing..

Comprehensive guidance was issued at the time of the introduction of the DTTO, and subsequently of DAOs, DARs and drug testing on licence covering the purposes behind and enforcement criteria in relation to those provisions. The National Probation Directorate recognises however that the guidance already in probation areas can usefully be supplemented by further guidance which specifically compares and contrasts the relevant enforcement criteria in a single concise document. That additional guidance was issued on 13 August to Chief Officers in the 9 probation pilot areas where DAOs, DARs and drug testing licence conditions are available. The National Probation Directorate does not propose to circulate this additional guidance to the remaining probation areas – DTTOs, DAOs and DARs will disappear as discrete community sentences when the relevant provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 for the new drug rehabilitation requirement of the generic community sentence are commenced by Parliament. Specific guidance on the operation and enforcement of the drug rehabilitation requirement will be issued to all probation areas at that time.

- **Recommendation 7**

The NPS should ensure that offenders subject to supervision are always told about the enforcement criteria and processes with respect to their orders and licences and what steps are being taken to enforce their orders and licences when they are non-compliant.

The National Probation Service takes very seriously the responsibility to ensure that offenders are not allowed to “get away” with any unacceptable failure to comply with the conditions of a community sentence order or a licence. It is implicit in the

Probation Service's National Standards for the supervision of offenders [in the community] that at the first meeting with the supervising probation officer an offender should be made aware of the consequences of any such failure, and that this should be repeated at the point at which the offender is deemed to have failed so to comply.

National Standards set out in detail the steps which should be taken when enforcement action is to be considered and the National Probation Directorate regularly monitors performance against a challenging target that enforcement action should be taken in 90% of cases within 10 working days of the criteria being met. Currently performance stands at 84% nationally (April - August 2004) against the target. This compares with a baseline figure of only 45% at March 1995 (ACOP enforcement audit), when the enforcement criteria were less restrictive (requiring action after 3 unacceptable failures to comply, in place of the present 2 such failures).

Performance improvement in this area is a continuing priority for the National Probation Service, which is working closely with the Parole Board, the Early Release and Recall Section of the Home Office and the Courts Service of the Department for Constitutional Affairs to examine every aspect of the processes by which offenders' failure to comply are reported to the appropriate authority for action. Particular attention is currently being focussed on the business processes which ensure that those who breach their community sentence orders are identified and returned to court, whether immediately to answer the breach report, or following a failure to attend the breach hearing and on issue of a warrant for their arrest.

As an early outcome from that work, and in response to recommendation 7, the National Probation Directorate issued Probation Circular 43/2004 to all probation areas in July 2004. PC 43/2004 sets out revised guidance on good practice which probation areas should adapt to meet their local circumstances and adopt.

- **Recommendation 8**

The Murder Investigation Manual should be revised so as to suggest that Family Liaison Officer logs include reasonably full accounts of what victims of serious crime are told, particularly when the information is of a confidential nature.

Recommendation 8 misstates the position in suggesting that guidance on the role of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is set out in the police Murder Investigation Manual, which is not the case. Guidance to FLOs already provides that a full record should be kept of discussions between the FLO and victims of serious crime but the guidance on this point has been reviewed as part of a comprehensive review of the FLO Manual.

While there is no intention to discontinue the position of FLO, the way in which this officer works with victims will be influenced by the development of local protocols based upon the Memorandum of Understanding developed in response to Recommendation 10 of the Inquiry Report

- **Recommendation 9**

Decisions to recommend and recall to prison should be taken as quickly as is just and as efficiently as possible. The present system is not as efficient as it might be and the

police do not accord prison recalls the priority that they should. The system for communicating and executing prison recalls should be reviewed by the Home Office.

It is the responsibility of the supervising probation officer, working within the Probation Service National Standards, to identify circumstances in which an offender being supervised in the community is or may be in breach of licence conditions and to report those circumstances to the Early Release and Recall Section (ERRS) for reference to the Parole Board. The ERRS is required to consult the Parole Board before taking a decision whether to recall, unless the risk of re-offending is so high that it is clearly expedient to revoke the licence immediately and consult retrospectively. The probation service has no powers of arrest and the practical responsibility for apprehending a licensee whose licence has been revoked rests with the police. Present practice requires that, following a licence revocation, the ERRS notifies the supervising probation area for information, and New Scotland Yard to ensure that the individual's details are placed on the Police National Computer for nationwide notification.

While this represents the formal decision and notification process, local arrangements have also been widely agreed between the various services to speed the procedure, for example by the regular exchange of information between the probation service and local police service in respect to dangerous or prolific offenders who may be moving towards a breach situation, and expedited procedures between the probation service and ERRS where urgent decisions are required on recall in order to protect the public. Such local arrangements have been effective in providing quicker decisions and improving the opportunities for the police to make earlier arrests where they are in place, but all services accept that there is considerable scope for rationalising the process and providing a national framework which ensures that all parts perform as effectively as the best.

A multi-agency working group comprising representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the National Probation Service, HM Prison Service and the Home Office ERRS has recently agreed a Joint National Protocol for the Supervision, Revocation and Recall of Prisoners on Licence, which will be circulated to all police, probation and prison service units in November this year. The Protocol sets out a framework of minimum standards to be observed by all agencies which will ensure the systematic and routine notification to the police by the probation service of the details of all licensees at the point at which they are released into probation supervision, together with the details of the licence conditions with which the licensee must comply. It further provides that the probation service should routinely notify the police locally when they are preparing to initiate breach action and provides an avenue for the police to advise the supervising probation area if there is intelligence of further offending or any other activity which in the view of the police might represent or contribute to a breakdown of supervision.

Where an offender's licence is revoked, the ERRS will, under the terms of the new protocol, continue to inform New Scotland Yard so that the details can be placed on the Police National Computer, but arrangements will also be made to provide simultaneous information to the local police service to facilitate early action to identify and arrest the revokee. Under existing legislation there will continue to be a requirement on the part of the ERRS to refer all breach reports to the Parole Board for

a recommendation, with an inbuilt delay of around 5 days (except where an expedited procedure is necessary to reduce the risk of harm to the public). However, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 introduces new arrangements for the revocation and recall of licensees sentenced to a determinate sentence. When these provisions are commenced by Parliament, responsibility for the decision on whether or not to revoke and recall will rest with the ERRS, who are currently determining what arrangements will be necessary to ensure that this can be completed within 24 hours of receipt of a breach report or notification.

Nationally agreed protocols are only as effective as the arrangements put in place on the ground. A key requirement of the protocol will be that each agency will nominate a single senior contact point for the sharing and subsequent distribution of information to ensure that there can be no confusion as to the responsibility for ensuring that the new arrangements work. All probation areas will be expected to agree with their police colleagues local protocols based on the National Protocol and to have these in place in the new year

- **Recommendation 10**

As offenders increasingly become subject to joint police and probation surveillance and supervision, it is important, when they commit serious crimes, for there to be a shared understanding between the agencies as to who is to be regarded as a victim of such crimes, who is to be judged an eligible complainant, and at what stage such persons are to be given information, when, by whom and about what. There is currently no shared understanding or procedure. This aspect of policy needs to be subject to a fundamental Home Office review and a joint protocol devised for use by the NPS, the police and other partner agencies.

All three services recognise the importance of ensuring that victims are put at the centre of the criminal justice system, in accordance with Government policy. The prison service has little direct contact with victims or their families in comparison with the probation and police services. The relationship of the police service with victims is, inevitably, slightly different to that of probation, contacts are established and maintained in different ways and at different stages of the criminal justice system, and the range of statutory, formal and informal responsibilities towards victims and their families have developed along different lines.

While there is little evidence that this has resulted in the development of any substantial or significant “rubbing points” to the disadvantage of victims and their families, the services accept that in occasional cases the separate cultures which have developed in probation and police can result in victims receiving confused, sometimes conflicting treatment which is unacceptable and unhelpful.

The services are committed to ensuring that victims and their families receive consistent and constructive support and information at appropriate stages in the criminal justice system. Over the last few years, an effective police and probation forum has been established to facilitate co-operative working under the MAPP (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) provisions through which the 2 services lead Public Protection Panels designed to plan and monitor the safe supervision of the most difficult and dangerous offenders in the community. A small police and probation working group set up under the MAPP national steering group

has reviewed the respective police and probation guidance in respect of victims of serious offences committed by offenders under the current supervision of the probation service and has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding on the respective agencies' roles and responsibilities.

Guidance on the agreed Memorandum of Understanding will be issued to all police and probation areas before the end of the year. The guidance will provide that probation Chief Officers should take a lead in establishing effective operational links with the police locally for high profile and serious offences by joining and participating as a member of the local Police Gold Group. Locally agreed protocols will also ensure that existing operational links between police victim liaison officers/FLOs and probation victim contact officers are placed on a clear footing, with effective exchange of information between the two services. The expectation is that local protocols will be agreed early in the new year.