



ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSESS AND MANAGE THE RISKS POSED BY TERRORIST RISK OFFENDERS

**A REVIEW OF THE MULTI-AGENCY
REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS IN
NORTHERN IRELAND**

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June 2026

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under Section 49(2) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, as amended by paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 13 to The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010 by the Department of Justice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAIN	Conflict Archive on the Internet (University of Ulster archive)
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
DoJ	Department of Justice
ERG 22+	Extremism Risk Guidance (risk assessment framework)
HMICFRS	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
HMI Prisons	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (in England and Wales)
HMI Probation	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (in England and Wales)
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (in England and Wales)
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (in England, Wales and Scotland)
MAPPS	Multi-Agency Public Protection System
MARA	Multi-Agency Review Arrangements
MARAP	MARA Panel meeting for making decisions about MARA management and supervision
nDelius	National Delius system (HMPPS case management system used to assist with the management of individuals on probation in England and Wales)
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
OASyS	Offender Assessment System (HMPPS risk assessment tool)
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PDP	Personal Development Plan
PDU	Prisoner Development Unit
PPANI	Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland

TRO(s)	Terrorist Risk Offender(s)
TRODA	Terrorism Risk Offender Dynamic Assessment (risk assessment framework developed for use in Northern Ireland)
UK	United Kingdom
VERA-2R	Violent Extremism Risk Assessment 2 (risk assessment framework)
ViSOR	Violent and Sex Offender Register

TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this report the abbreviated term 'MARA' will be used to refer to the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements as they are commonly known in Northern Ireland.

There are various different terms used by partner organisations to describe those individuals who have been convicted of terrorist-related offending and are managed under MARA. This includes Terrorist Risk Offender (TRO), prisoner, service user and nominal. For consistency, except where quoting from published documents or legislation, this report will use the umbrella term 'individual(s) under supervision' or 'individual(s) under MARA supervision' as appropriate.

'Supervising Officer' refers to the Probation Officers within HMPPS who undertake the supervision of individuals under MARA in the community (unless otherwise specified).

Notes:

1. Electronic links to documents and information sources referenced within this report are correct at time of publication but may be subject to change where the information is outside CJI's control.

CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FOREWORD

Effectively managing the risks to our community from terrorist offenders requires real collaboration and strong partnerships. The public rightly expects that this will be exercised professionally and robustly both in prison and in the community.

The current and future threats to our community are not just from republican and loyalist terrorists so our risk management arrangements need to be fit for purpose and ready to respond to our constantly changing world.

The Minister of Justice asked CJI to undertake a Review of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements established in 2021 following the withdrawal of services provided by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland after a threat against their staff.

Reassuringly, Inspectors found strong relationships, specialist and dedicated staff and a bespoke risk assessment tool that reflected local circumstances. The work of the Police Service of Northern Ireland was a particular strength and mostly Supervising Officers were able to effectively engage with those they supervised and had developed respectful and productive relationships.

However, there are opportunities for improvement at strategic and operational levels including better information sharing and case records.

While I appreciate the challenges for the Northern Ireland Prison Service in working with prisoners in the separated population and general population who will be subject to the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements on release; there needs to be a clearer role for the Prisoner Development Unit and Supervising Officers on the work needed in custody to address all offending behaviour, planning for release and transition back into the community.

This Review Report makes three Strategic and five Operational Recommendations aimed at strengthening the current arrangements as well as consideration by all relevant parties of what needs to be in place to enable the design of a future service delivery model with local Supervising Officers.

My thanks to all those who engaged with Inspectors during this Review including the Department of Justice, Northern Ireland Office, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Prison Service, Probation Board for Northern Ireland and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. The difficult work they do together in keeping us safe is much appreciated.

I am also grateful to those service users who shared their experiences with the Review Team.

This Review Team was led by Rachel Lindsay supported by Maureen Erne and Shellie Adams from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation whose expertise assisted us throughout, we also benefited from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons support. I am grateful for all your work on this important and complex Review.



James Corrigan

Acting Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

June 2026

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Northern Ireland**
a better justice system for all



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

The Multi-Agency Review Arrangements in Northern Ireland were established in 2021 to assess and manage the risks posed by individuals convicted of terrorist-related offences. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) was asked by the Minister of Justice to undertake a Review of the effectiveness of the arrangements in September 2024. The Review found that the delivery of community supervision by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Supervising Officers filled a critical gap after the withdrawal of probation services by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland following a threat against the organisation.

The Department of Justice, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland worked together to deliver the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements. The arrangements were underpinned by statutory guidance under Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (Article 50 Guidance) and supported by a Strategic Management Board, chaired by the Department of Justice, which was responsible for overseeing their implementation and development. The arrangements had been upheld by recent legal judgments, confirming their legitimacy.

There were clear lines of accountability within most partner agencies and delivery had been strengthened by the development of risk assessment tools tailored to the Northern Ireland context.

However, the Review found that the arrangements lacked an overarching vision and strategy to guide future development. Clear objectives, performance indicators and identification of the optimum service delivery model needed to be established. The Strategic Management Board needed to ensure that outstanding operational objectives and emerging risks were addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The absence of a finalised Manual of Practice and delays in agreeing an Information Sharing Protocol created operational difficulties and impacted service delivery. A Review of the Article 50 Guidance and finalisation of these policy frameworks was needed.

Within the Northern Ireland Prison Service there was no overarching policy framework to guide the management of individuals in prisons subject to Multi-Agency Review Arrangements. The absence of a dedicated policy framework resulted in uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Prison Service within the arrangements.

DELIVERY

The delivery of Multi-Agency Review Arrangements benefited from dedicated teams within the Department of Justice, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, with specialist staff providing supervision and risk management. The engagement between Multi-Agency Review Arrangements Supervising Officers and individuals under supervision was a notable strength. In the main, there were strong and respectful relationships, which were essential for supporting rehabilitation, resettlement and risk management.

The Review identified several areas for improvement. There was not a consistent approach or understanding of the role of the Northern Ireland Prison Service in supporting the delivery of the arrangements, with a lack of clarity and consistency in the roles of the Prisoner Development Unit staff and Supervising Officers. There was a need for a multi-agency training strategy to address gaps in knowledge and enhance skills. The financial investment required to sustain the significant current service delivery and risk management model was acknowledged, and ongoing consideration was needed to ensure efficiency and staff safety.

The arrangements for classifying and reviewing cases and sharing information between agencies were not always effective, leading to duplication of information and delays. Case management processes for supervision were often reactive rather than planned, and there was insufficient recording in the case files of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Prisoner Development Units and the Supervising Officers to evidence work undertaken. There was an inconsistent approach to assessment, sentence planning, or preparation for release. There was a need for further clarity and rationale about decision-making, which could be addressed by the Article 50 Guidance or a finalised Manual of Practice.

The Review highlighted the need for improvements in the administration and a review of the membership of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements Panels, the use of a single case management record and improved audit and assurance activities of the supervisory function.

OUTCOMES

The Review found that there had been a low level of recall and licence revocation since the arrangements had been introduced in 2021. However, there was limited analysis of outcomes and no formal approach to exit planning for individuals leaving the arrangements. The supervisory process filled an important gap in community supervision and contributed to public safety.

Individuals under supervision benefited from the support of Supervising Officers, and there was evidence of constructive relationships within partner agencies. The arrangements promoted desistance and disengagement from offending behaviour, although there was a lack of structured interventions and psychological support available to address complex needs.

Feedback from individuals under supervision was positive, particularly in relation to support for personal circumstances, access to services, and family engagement. There was a lack of formal mechanisms to capture the views and experiences of individuals under supervision or registered victims. A performance framework would help to assess the contribution of Multi-Agency Review Arrangements to meet strategic objectives as well as a role for the Lay Advisors, appointed to provide public accountability under the Article 50 Guidance, to provide support and challenge.

Overall, the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements in Northern Ireland provided an appropriate framework for managing the risks posed by individuals convicted of terrorist-related offences. The engagement between Supervising Officers and individuals under supervision was a key strength. The future development of the arrangements should build on this foundation, with a clear vision, strategic governance and accountability framework to ensure effective delivery, a commitment to longer-term planning and continuous improvement and building public confidence in the arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 1

Within nine months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements should:

- agree and set out the vision for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements and strategic short, medium and long-term objectives with actions for implementation, including designing and agreeing the optimum service delivery model that establishes the circumstances under which local supervision arrangements could be implemented;
- ensure ongoing analysis of future sentencing and release dates, with caseload forecasting to prepare for future demand;
- establish a performance framework with key performance indicators;
- establish a subgroup/task and finish group structure to develop mechanisms to deliver agile responses to emerging risks, threats and issues arising from this Review; and
- include the Lay Advisors in the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements.

Paragraph 2.20

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 2

Within three months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements should:

- review the Article 50 Guidance, including the definitional criteria for a Terrorist Risk Offender; and
- finalise outstanding policy frameworks, including the Manual of Practice and Information Sharing Agreement.

Paragraph 2.25

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 3

Within six months of report publication, the Northern Ireland Prison Service should develop a policy framework for its work with those classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders from committal to release, including the roles of the Prisoner Development Units, Psychology and Security and partnership working with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

Paragraph 2.26

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 1

Within six months of report publication, the training and development sub-group of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements Strategic Management Board should develop a multi-agency training and development strategy, with independent academic-based input, to provide:

- awareness raising within the Northern Ireland Prison Service of the arrangements and role of the Supervising Officers;
- Northern Ireland context-specific training and access to training on the Healthy Identity Intervention programme for Supervising Officers; and
- an effective training and development evaluation methodology.

Paragraph 3.15

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 2

Within six months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board should review the membership of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Panels to:

- ensure the Panels are chaired by a suitably qualified and experienced risk manager;
- provide input from Northern Ireland Prison Service operational staff in relevant cases; and
- include input from non-justice agencies in appropriate cases.

Paragraph 3.37

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 3

Within three months of report publication, the processes for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Classification Panel and Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Panel need to be reviewed and improved by the Department of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to ensure:

- a scheduled and staged approach to reviewing individuals under supervision according to key dates, risk levels and changes in risk;
- improved timescales for sharing schedules and agendas to enable better forward planning and preparation for meetings;
- shorter timescales for circulation and approval of minutes and actions;
- all case discussions are on the substantive agenda and the use of 'Any Other Business' for case discussions is by exception: and
- a fully documented rationale for decision-making.

Paragraph 3.39

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 4

Within three months of report publication, the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements partners should ensure that guidance is issued to staff that sets out a consistent use of the Violent and Sex Offender Register for individuals they are involved in the supervision and management of.

Paragraph 3.52

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 5

Within three months of report publication, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should implement an effective system of audit and assurance activity to ensure sufficient case recording, assessment and reviewing activity for individuals supervised under the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements.

Paragraph 3.58

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

MANAGEMENT OF SEXUAL, VIOLENT AND TERRORIST OFFENDERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND INTERNATIONALLY

- 1.1 Multi-agency arrangements to assess and manage the risks posed by particular categories of offenders have been established across the world in response to national and transnational threats posed by individuals or groups. In most countries, including the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland these arrangements are a partnership between police, probation, prison and other agencies with responsibilities to safeguard children and adults and protect national security infrastructures. Despite differences in legal and safeguarding systems, threat profiles and levels of risk across the world, there has been a general consensus that multi-agency partnerships are most effective in addressing the risk posed by sexual, violent and terrorist offenders.
- 1.2 In England and Wales, Sections 325 to 327 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003¹ established Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). Through the MAPPA process the police, probation and prison services work together with other agencies to assess and manage the risks posed by individuals convicted of serious violent, sexual and terrorism offences who are living in the community to protect the public.² They are operated locally by 42 Strategic Management Boards across England and Wales.
- 1.3 Professionals assess all MAPPA managed individuals to establish the risk of harm they pose to the public and develop individual risk management plans to minimise those risks, by, for example:
 - ensuring individuals have suitable accommodation, which can include requiring them to reside at an Approved Premises on release;
 - placing controls on their behaviour through strict licence conditions which can include having no contact with a named individual and not entering a defined exclusion zone;
 - intensive supervision by a probation officer and/or community public protection police; and/or
 - ensuring they attend identified accredited programmes and other interventions (such as drug and alcohol programmes) aimed at reducing further offending.

1 See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/44/part/13/crossheading/assessing-etc-risks-posed-by-sexual-or-violent-offenders>.

2 See <https://mappa.justice.gov.uk/MAPPA/groupHome>.

- 1.4 In response to terrorist attacks in 2019 and 2020 in London by known terrorist offenders who were subject to licence supervision, the National Security Division was created within the Probation Service, working alongside police Counter Terrorism Nominal Management arrangements. Together with existing prison and probation services, as part of MAPPA, these bodies were responsible for managing those convicted of terrorist offences or suspected of potential terrorist activity, even if they had no related convictions.
- 1.5 Similarly in Scotland, MAPPA were established in 2007 under the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2005.³ This legislation imposed a duty on the responsible authorities in a local authority area to jointly establish arrangements for assessing and managing the risks posed by certain categories of offenders. As well as registered sexual offenders and mentally-disordered restricted patients, MAPPA assesses and manages ‘other Risk of Serious Harm Offenders’ which includes those convicted of terrorism offences.
- 1.6 MAPPA in England, Wales and Scotland included individuals subject to notification requirements under the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008,⁴ individuals convicted of terrorism offences who have been sentenced to 12 months or more in custody or to detention in hospital and are living in the community; and those who have committed an offence and may be at risk of involvement in terrorism-related activity.
- 1.7 In the Republic of Ireland, the Special Detective Unit of An Garda Síochána investigates threats to State security and monitors individuals who pose a threat to this on both national and international fronts.⁵ Separate arrangements called ‘SORAM’ (Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management) exist for managing sexual offenders.⁶ Key statutory organisations work together within 28 local SORAM teams which have responsibility for public protection through the management of the risk posed by sex offenders living in the community.
- 1.8 Internationally some partnerships have been established in response to specific threats or incidents. For example, in New Zealand, the multi-agency disengagement framework ‘*He Aranga Ake*’, arose from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the March 2019 terrorist Christchurch Mosque mass shootings. The framework was a deliverable of New Zealand’s Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy’s Work Programme.⁷ It built on previous learnings obtained through working together to intervene early with individuals who agencies are most concerned about going on to cause harm (violence) within communities.

3 See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/reducing-reoffending/public-protection-multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa/>.

4 See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/28/contents>.

5 See <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/garda-national-crime-security-intelligence-service1/>.

6 See <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/organised-serious-crime/garda-national-protective-services-bureau-gnpsb-/sex-offender-risk-assessment-and-management-soram-/>.

7 See New Zealand Police, Counter-Terrorism, *He Aranga Ake*, available at <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/counter-terrorism/he-aranga-ake>.

The framework involved seven government agencies (Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children); Ministry of Social Development; Education; Corrections; Health; Security Intelligence Service and Police).

- 1.9 Voluntary arrangements to manage the risks posed by sexual offenders in Northern Ireland began in 2001, bringing together police, probation, prisons, housing and social services. Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008⁸ made provision for the Secretary of State, subsequently the Minister of Justice following the devolution of policing and justice,⁹ to issue guidance to agencies on the *'discharge of any of their functions which contribute to the more effective assessment and management of the risks posed by persons of a specified description.'* This Article therefore established the underpinning statutory authority for multi-agency co-operation. Under this authority, Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) was established in 2008 to manage, initially, the risk posed by sexual offenders, particularly against children, and subsequently, violent offenders, including those convicted of a domestic abuse related offence. Subsequently, this same authority was used to establish arrangements for the management of those classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders (see paragraph 1.11)
- 1.10 The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) is responsible for supervising all people sentenced by the Courts in Northern Ireland to a period of imprisonment followed by a period of community supervision on release. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) has undertaken inspections of the work of the PBNI.¹⁰ This supervision caseload had, prior to September 2017, included those who had been convicted of a terrorist and/or politically motivated offence. However, the PBNI's supervision of terrorist and politically motivated offenders had ended following a threat against the organisation. The Department of Justice (DoJ) therefore took responsibility for establishing alternative supervision arrangements to manage the risk posed by certain terrorist offenders.¹¹
- 1.11 In September 2021 the Minister of Justice issued her Department's Article 50 Guidance on Multi-Agency Review Arrangements (MARA) to the DoJ, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), the PBNI and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).¹² The Article 50 Guidance required organisations: *'to share information and work together to:*
- a) *support the assessment and management of the risk posed to the public by individuals classified under these arrangements as Terrorist Risk Offenders; and*
 - b) *support the rehabilitation of Terrorist Risk Offenders.'*

8 See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2008/1216/article/50>.

9 Schedule 1 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010 transferred the functions of Secretary of State under Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 to the DoJ, except for Chapters 4 and 7 of Part 2. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/976/contents>.

10 See <https://www.cjini.org/report-category/probation-board-for-northern-ireland/>.

11 The Northern Ireland Court of Appeal judgment in the matter of an application by Thomas McWilliams for Judicial Review and in the matter of a decision of the DoJ [2024] NIKB 62 sets out the background to the introduction of MARA in further detail, see <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/2024-08/Thomas%20McWilliams%27%20Application.pdf>.

12 DoJ, *Arrangements to Assess and Manage the Risks Posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders: Article 50 Guidance, September 2021*, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/mara-policy-guidance-article-50-guidance.pdf>.

It stated that the PBNI was not responsible for, or involved in, the supervision or management of individuals classified as a 'Terrorist Risk Offender' under the arrangements. The PBNI's role, where applicable, was to contribute to the classification process, share relevant information and provide Supervising Officers with access to existing programmes/services and voluntary bodies. In 2021, the National Security Division of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) were commissioned by the DoJ to provide the probation supervisory function for individuals managed under MARA.

DEFINITIONAL CRITERIA FOR A TERRORIST RISK OFFENDER

- 1.12 The Article 50 Guidance set out the definitional criteria for a Terrorist Risk Offender.¹³ This outlined that an individual would be classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender where they met the following criteria:
- a. *the individual has been convicted of an offence under terrorism legislation for which he/she is currently serving a sentence; or*
 - b. *the individual has been convicted of, and is currently serving a sentence for offences where the sentencing judge has made explicit reference to, or indicated connection to terrorism, or terrorist activity; or*
 - c. *the individual has been convicted of, and is serving a current sentence for offence(s) where MARAP [MARA Panel] is satisfied offence(s) was committed in connection to terrorism, or connection to terrorist activity; or*
 - d. *the individual has been convicted of, and is serving, a current sentence in custody or on licence within the community and MARAP partners are satisfied there is information that indicates the individual is of terrorism concern.*
- 1.13 It further specified the types of sentence that the criteria applied to, all of which would include a period of time in custody as follows:
- a) *An individual currently serving:*
 - i. *Determinate Custodial Sentence*
 - ii. *Extended Custodial Sentence*
 - iii. *Indeterminate Custodial Sentence*
 - iv. *Terrorist Sentence (introduced by Counter Terrorism and Sentencing Act 2021);*
 - v. *Serious Terrorist Sentence (introduced by Counter Terrorism and Sentencing Act 2021); and*
 - vi. *Life Sentence*
 - b) *An individual on licence, with the exception of anyone released on licence under the terms of the Belfast Agreement 1998 (known as the Good Friday Agreement) who has not been convicted and currently serving a sentence (listed above) since their release under the Belfast Agreement.*

13 See pages 15-16.

There were also arrangements in place to provisionally classify an individual whose case was progressing through the Northern Ireland criminal justice system prior to the conclusion of the Court proceedings. For individuals who were provisionally classified a MARA Supervising Officer would prepare a pre-sentence report for the Court. Following conviction and sentencing, a determination would be made on full classification. If fully classified, individuals were issued a letter to advise them of their classification under MARA. If the individual was not classified as MARA, then licence supervision in the community (where such a sentence was imposed) would be undertaken by the PBNi in due course.

INSPECTIONS AND REVIEWS OF MULTI-AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION OF TERRORISM CASES

- 1.14 CJI has previously undertaken a number of inspections of the PPANI with the most recent report published in 2019.¹⁴ CJI has also inspected the PBNi, most recently the Probation Practice Inspection Report in 2020¹⁵ with a Follow-Up Review Report published in August 2024.¹⁶ However, CJI has not previously inspected or reviewed specific arrangements for managing or supervising individuals convicted of terrorism offences in Northern Ireland.
- 1.15 In December 2015, members of the Fresh Start Panel were appointed by the Northern Ireland Executive to produce a report by the end of May 2016 with 'recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups.' This task flowed from the Fresh Start Agreement which included commitments to help bring about an end to 'paramilitary activity.' *The Fresh Start Panel report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland* was published in June 2016 and made a number of recommendations in relation to 'Support for Transition.'¹⁷ This noted that, at that time there were no measures 'specifically designed to work with 'paramilitary' offenders or ex-offenders to equip them for return to society and reduce the risk of them being drawn into criminality. The Panel made two recommendations of particular relevance to this Review Report:

14 CJI, *Public Protection Inspection III: A thematic inspection of the public protection arrangements Northern Ireland*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/reports/public-protection-inspection-iii-a-thematic-inspection-of-the-public-protection-arrangements-northern-ireland/>.

15 CJI, *Probation Practice in Northern Ireland: An inspection of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, December 2020*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/reports/an-inspection-of-the-probation-practice-in-northern-ireland/>.

16 CJI, *Probation Practice in Northern Ireland: A Follow-Up Review of the Inspection Recommendations, August 2024*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/reports/probation-practice-in-northern-ireland-a-follow-up-review-of-the-inspection-recommendations/>.

17 Fresh Start Panel, *The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland, May 2016*, available at <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/fresh-start-panel-report-disbandment-paramilitary-groups-northern-ireland>.

- *Recommendation B10: the DoJ and the PBNi should work together with others to urgently develop and implement specific interventions to prepare offenders with links to paramilitary groups for return to society and to assist with reintegration.*
- *Recommendation B11: The DoJ should also work with law enforcement agencies and the PBNi to improve the monitoring arrangements for 'paramilitary' offenders when on licence.*

1.16 As part of the UK Government's response to the terror attack in London at Fishmonger's Hall in 2019, Jonathan Hall KC, the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, was asked to review the effectiveness of MAPPAs in managing terrorist offenders and other offenders who may pose a terrorist risk. The *Independent Review of Statutory Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements* (the Independent Review) was published in September 2020.¹⁸

1.17 The Independent Review found that MAPPAs was a well-established process and did not conclude that wholesale change was necessary, although a number of recommendations were made on how the management of Terrorist Risk Offenders could be improved. It reported that:

- *clearer means of identifying Terrorist Risk Offenders was needed, so that the right offenders are referred to MAPPAs at the right time;*
- *police needed additional powers so that management of Terrorist Risk Offenders was effective;*
- *resources available to other multi-agency bodies should also be made available for MAPPAs;*
- *intelligence needed to be shared so that better assessments of risk could be made, and the right tools can be selected to manage risk; and*
- *MAPPAs day-to-day management should move from formal periodic meetings towards active case management by a core group of professionals from police, probation and prisons. This would enable professionals to do their job better on the basis of the right information.*

1.18 As a result of the Independent Review, the UK Government implemented a number of changes to existing arrangements including amendments to the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008; changes to MAPPAs (the establishment of Category 4, to ensure all offenders convicted of terrorism offences were automatically referred to and managed under MAPPAs and the ability for offenders assessed as presenting a terrorism risk to be managed under MAPPAs, even where they have not been convicted of terrorism offences); and improvements to information sharing between agencies.

18 Jonathan Hall KC (*Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation*), *Terrorist Risk Offenders: Independent Review of Statutory Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements*, May 2020, available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f4f73a1e90e07469b7d02f8/supervision-terrorism-and-terrorist-risk-offenders-review.pdf>.

1.19 In July 2023 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) led a *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection*, in partnership with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons), looking at the work of the Probation Service's National Security Division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of terrorist attacks.¹⁹

1.20 The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* looked at the management and progress of the strategy to supervise these individuals. It found:

- *the National Security Division, probation, police and prison services worked well together and were approaching managing counter terrorism cases collectively;*
- *supervision within the community was robust overall, balancing rehabilitative needs with tight risk management;*
- *probation practitioners within the National Security Division were well trained specialist officers, holding a small and restricted caseload, delivering high quality case assessment and supervision;*
- *terrorist offenders were subject to additional oversight throughout their sentences;*
- *the arrangements to protect others from harm from terrorist cases in custody were effective;*
- *there had been significant financial investment to improve services dealing with counter terrorism, and staffing levels were appropriate;*
- *prison governors and directors were clear about the terrorist risk posed in their prisons and were actively managing this; and*
- *leadership across the National Security Division and police Counter Terrorism Nominal Management was strong, and there were clear lines of accountability, enhanced by national multi-agency governance arrangements.*

1.21 The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* Report highlighted potential issues around the way data and important information was stored. While Inspectors were encouraged by the joined-up way in which bodies were embracing the need to share information around known or possible terrorists, the way in which this was being recorded and stored was disjointed. The inspection also found that, in some cases, only terrorist related behaviours were considered and addressed, rather than taking into consideration all offending-related risks, for example, in relation to domestic abuse. The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* Report also called for improvements to the way prison staff were trained in issues related to counter terrorism and for prison offender managers to have more involvement in the way the risks of terrorism were managed in custody, with some indicating that they did not have the skills or confidence to challenge terrorist offenders. Fourteen recommendations were addressed to the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office, HMPPS and its bodies, the Joint Extremism Unit and Counter Terrorism Policing.

¹⁹ HM Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HM Inspectorate of Prisons, *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection - National security division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of terrorist attacks, July 2023*, available at <https://ciji.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/inspection-report/counter-terrorism-joint-inspection-national-security-division-and-multi-agency-arrangements-for-the-management-of-terrorist-offenders-in-the-wake-of-terrorist-attacks/>.

1.22 In November 2025 the final *Report of the Independent Commission on Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice* was published.²⁰ This noted that, while the UK's counter terrorism system remained among the most capable globally, it had expanded in scope and complexity, sometimes at the expense of focus, transparency, and public confidence. Key recommendations included:

- a major overhaul of the Prevent programme, placing it within a local, multi-agency safeguarding model that covers a range of violence-related risks to public safety;²¹
- a narrower statutory definition of terrorism, ensuring precision, proportionality, and protection for lawful protest;
- reform of proscription powers, raising the legal test, introducing automatic reviews, and ensuring stronger parliamentary scrutiny;
- reform of terrorism offences, tightening evidential thresholds and improving guidance to ensure prosecutions are proportionate, fair, and grounded in clear intent;
- restoring fairness and equality in citizenship law, limiting deprivation of citizenship to narrowly defined circumstances, strengthening safeguards and judicial oversight, and ensuring equal treatment under the law;
- a national strategy for social cohesion, recognising that long-term security depends on inclusion, equality, and community resilience;
- expanded oversight powers for the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, and systematic, transparent evaluation across all counter-terrorism measures.

THE CJI REVIEW OF MARA

1.23 Paragraph 1.5 'Review of Arrangements' in the Article 50 Guidance stated that 'The organisations have a duty, under Article 51(1) of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, to keep any arrangements under review with a view to monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements.' This specified that the responsibilities of the Senior Management Board (including the DoJ, NIPS, PSNI and the Independent Lay Advisors) should include 'planning the longer-term strategic operational development of the arrangements in the light of regular (at least every three years) reviews of the arrangements, having regard to legislative and wider criminal justice changes.' In September 2024 the Minister of Justice, under Section 47 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, requested that the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland conduct a Review of the arrangements.

20 Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, *Report of the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice*, November 2025, available at <https://binghamcentre.biicl.org/publications/report-of-the-independent-commission-on-uk-counter-terrorism-law-policy-and-practice>.

21 Prevent is a national early intervention programme which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. See Home Office, *Statutory guidance: Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023)*, March 2015, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>.

1.24 This Review aimed to principally consider the work of the DoJ, HMPPS (specifically the MARA team operating within the National Security Division), the NIPS and the PSNI in delivering the MARA. The role of the PBNI insofar as it contributed to the operation of the arrangements was also reviewed. The Review considered the effectiveness of the arrangements including strategy and governance, partnership working, resources, information sharing, desistance and keeping people safe. The full methodology for the Review is contained in Appendix 1 and the Terms of Reference in Appendix 2. CJI were assisted by an Inspector from HMI Probation, as a team member, throughout the Review, as well as by HMICFRS and HMI Prisons for specific fieldwork periods.

1.25 The DoJ, HMPPS, the NIPS, the PBNI and the PSNI were requested to complete a self-assessment against CJI's inspection framework (strategy and governance, delivery and outcomes) at the start of this Review. Supporting documentation was provided to evidence the self-assessment. Fieldwork included interviews with stakeholders from oversight bodies, legal representatives, the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland, the Youth Justice Agency, a staff association and academia. Meetings were also conducted with the DoJ, HMPPS, the NIPS, the PBNI and the PSNI. Inspectors sought feedback from victims registered with the PBNI Victim Information Scheme. In addition, Inspectors consulted with individuals who were managed and supervised under MARA both in custody and in the community.

1.26 Four case record reviews were conducted during the fieldwork as follows:

- PSNI case records relating to those managed under MARA in the community - conducted by Inspectors from HMICFRS;
- prison records relating to preparation for release for individuals in NIPS custody who had been allocated a Supervising Officer - with support from an Inspector from HMI Probation;
- NIPS security records for those in custody - conducted by an Inspector from HMI Prisons; and
- HMPPS case records for individuals released from custody and supervised by Supervising Officers in the community - conducted by Inspectors from HMI Probation.

Further details on the case file reviews methodologies can be found in Appendix 1.

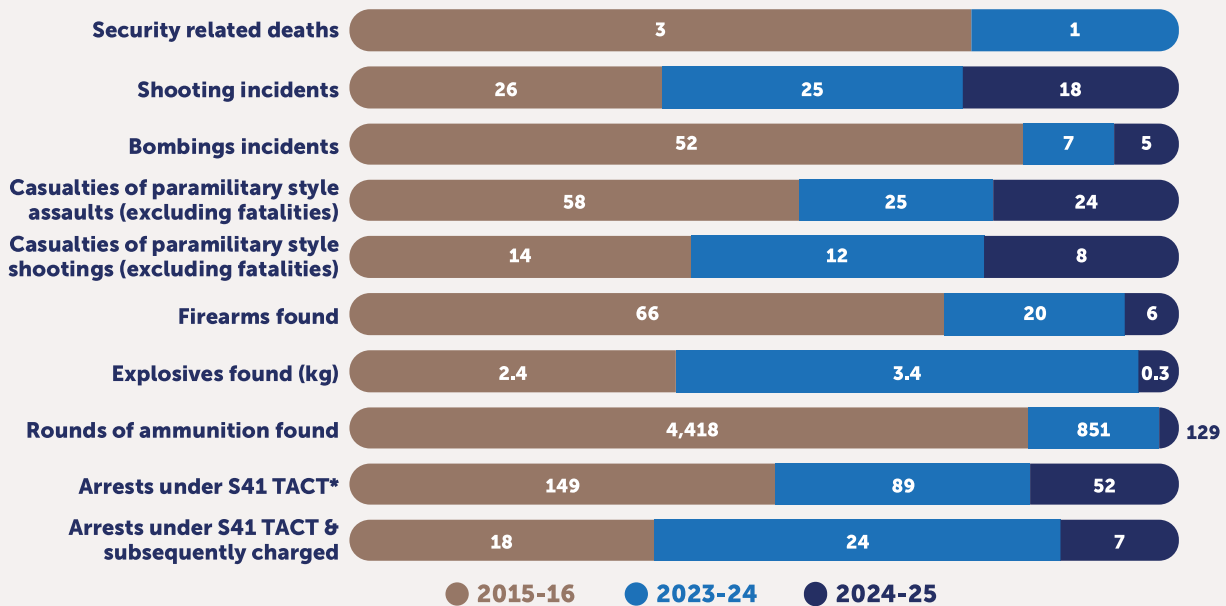
TERRORIST-RELATED OFFENCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1.27 The PSNI's security statistics provided the main source of official information on trends in statistics relating to the security situation from 1969, throughout the period of the Troubles, up to the present day. The PSNI produced statistics on incidents relating to the security situation that have been reported to the police, including security related deaths, shooting and bombing incidents, paramilitary style attacks and arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

These statistics only include those incidents that are brought to the attention of the PSNI and some such incidents may not have been reported, therefore a level of under-reporting may exist. These incidents therefore provide an illustration of the changes in Northern Ireland-related terrorism over time. This is distinct from other types of terrorism experienced in the UK and internationally from Islamist or far-right groups. In addition, it should be noted that there are overlaps in the concepts and use of the terms 'terrorism' and 'paramilitarism', with the latter noted to be complex and contested in Northern Ireland.²²

1.28 PSNI statistics on security related incidents for 2024-25 showed a continuing decline in offences related to terrorist activity in Northern Ireland. Figure 1 summarises the number of security related incidents during 2024-25 compared to the previous year (2023-24) and 2015-16. This showed decreasing numbers of security related deaths, shooting and bombing incidents, casualties of paramilitary style assaults and shootings as well as finds of firearms, explosives and rounds of ammunition both in the past year and in the past 10 years. Police arrests under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 had also reduced to 52 in 2024-25, compared to 89 during the previous year. Seven people were subsequently charged in 2024-25 compared to 24 in the previous year. These were the lowest numbers of arrests and charges since records began in 2001-02. These statistics suggested a reducing number of individuals would be eligible to be referred for classification by the MARA Panel in the short to medium-term.

Figure 1: Comparison of security incidents between 2024-25, 2023-24 and 2015-16.



* Figures include only those arrests that are linked to the security situation in Northern Ireland; persons who have been arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act (S41 TACT) for other reasons are excluded.

²² House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, *The effect of paramilitary activity and organised crime on society in Northern Ireland: Second Report of Session 2023-24, January 2024*, available at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/report.html>.

- 1.29 In December 2025 the eighth report of the Independent Reporting Commission was published. The report welcomed the positive development that 2024-25 was the first financial year since records began in 1969 in which there were no security related deaths reported by the PSNI in Northern Ireland. It also noted the decline in paramilitary-related violent crime but noted that *'paramilitarism remains a live and serious issue, with paramilitary groups still posing a threat to communities, individuals, and society.'*²³
- 1.30 The Northern Ireland Office also published annual statistics on Northern Ireland Terrorism legislation. This included data on those convicted of an offence under terrorism legislation including the Terrorism Act 2000, Terrorism Act 2006 and Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. As shown in Table 1, during 2024, there were 13 persons convicted of an offence under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006 or the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.²⁴ Two were convicted at the Crown Court and 11 at the Magistrates' Court.

Table 1: Persons convicted in Northern Ireland of an offence under Terrorism Legislation.

Year	Persons convicted of an offence under Terrorism legislation at Crown Court	Persons convicted of an offence under Terrorism legislation at Magistrates' Court	Total persons convicted
2020-21	10	4	14
2021 (April - December)	1	19	20
2022	2	34	36
2023	6	9	15
2024	2	11	13

Source: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (provided as unvalidated management information sourced from administrative systems).

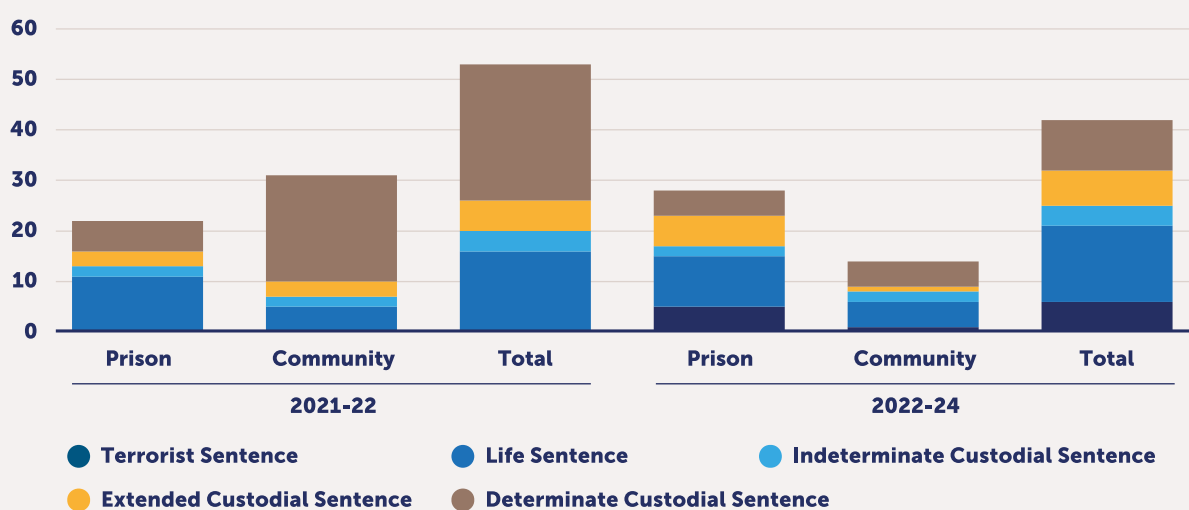
- 1.31 Terrorism threat levels in the UK are set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and the Security Service (MI5) and published by the UK Government. Separate threat levels indicate the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) and in Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland-related terrorism specifically. The Northern Ireland-related threat level was reduced from 'severe' (an attack is highly likely) to 'substantial' (an attack is likely) in March 2022. Following the attempted murder of an off-duty Police Officer in February 2023 the threat level was raised to 'severe' in March 2023. It was then lowered again to 'substantial' in March 2024 and remained at this level during Review Report drafting.

²³ Independent Reporting Commission, *Eighth report, December 2025*, available at <https://www.ircommission.org/publications/irc-eighth-report>.

²⁴ Northern Ireland Office, *Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2024, September 2025*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/northern-ireland-terrorism-legislation-annual-security-statistics-2024>.

1.32 MARA Annual Reports for the periods September 2021 to August 2022²⁵ and September 2022 to March 2024²⁶ provided figures for the caseload of individuals managed under MARA as shown in Figure 2. This showed a reduction in overall numbers of the caseload from 53 in 2021-22 (22 in prison, 31 in the community) to 42 in 2022-24 (28 in prison, 14 in the community). Data provided by the DoJ for the end of 2025 indicated a broadly similar total of individuals managed under MARA at 43 in total (23 in custody, 20 in the community). Inspectors were advised that a further Annual Report for the years 2024-26 was likely to be published in July 2026.

Figure 2: MARA caseload 2021-22 and 2022-24.



	2021-22			2022-24		
	Prison	Community	Total	Prison	Community	Total
Terrorist Sentence	0	0	0	5	1	6
Life Sentence	11	5	16	10	5	15
Indeterminate Custodial Sentence	2	2	4	2	2	4
Extended Custodial Sentence	3	3	6	6	1	7
Determinate Custodial Sentence	6	21	27	5	5	10
Total	22	31	53	28	14	42

Note: 2021-22 figures for Life Sentences include two Life Sentence prisoners who were also subject to a Determinate Custodial Sentence.

25 DoJ, Multi-Agency Review Arrangements: Managing and Assessing the Risk posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders: Annual Report: Covering the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022, unknown publication date, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/mara-smb-21-22-annual-report.pdf>.

26 DoJ, Multi-Agency Review Arrangements: Managing and Assessing the Risk posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders: Annual Report: Covering the period 1 September 2022 to 31 March 2024, unknown publication date, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/mara%20annual%20report%2023.pdf>.

CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

VISION AND STRATEGY

- 2.1 In February 2025 the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a *Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most.'* The Programme for Government outlined the priorities for the three-year period, which included the priority of 'Safer Communities' and a target for 2027 including '*an Executive agreed approach to reducing offending and reoffending.*'²⁷
- 2.2 In July 2025 the DoJ published its *Corporate Plan 2025-28 and Business Plan 2025-26* which included a number of strategic priorities in line with the Programme for Government.²⁸ Of relevance to this Review Report were strategic priorities relating to reducing offending and community safety.
- 2.3 The Departmental Business Plan deliverables for 2025-26 included a specific deliverable under the community safety strategic priority, relating to public protection. The action '*Through drawing on recommendations within the 'PPANI Demand Review' and any findings from the CJINI Review of MARA - enhance public protection through further improvements to multi-agency risk management arrangements for serious sexual and violent offenders and Terrorist Risk Offenders'* was owned by the Deputy Secretary for Safer Communities.
- 2.4 There was no specific MARA business plan in existence, but the MARA Annual Report 2022-24 noted two key objectives to help strengthen MARA processes and management: the appointment of Lay Advisers (as already existed for the PPANI) and the development of a Manual of Practice. It was unclear how these key objectives had been determined. The corporate documents of partner agencies did not have specific objectives or actions relating to MARA, but MARA responsibilities could be linked to wider objectives relating to tackling the threat posed by terrorism, managing offenders and rehabilitation and resettlement.
- 2.5 There had been an initial action plan developed for implementing MARA with phases of implementation, deliverables and key milestones for 2021-22. However, there had been no subsequent action plans for delivery.

27 Northern Ireland Executive, *Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most, March 2025*, available at <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/publications/programme-government-2024-2027-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most-documents>.

28 DoJ, *DoJ Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and Business Plan 2025-2026, July 2025*, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-09/corporate%20business%20plan%20%202025-28%20and%202025-2026.pdf>.

- 2.6 The Article 50 Guidance set out overall arrangements for the multi-agency working and the responsibilities of each organisation. It outlined the structures oversight and accountability arrangements, identification, the operational practice of the MARA Panel principles of co-operation, information sharing and disclosure, risk assessment and the role of the Lay Advisors. The Article 50 Guidance was descriptive in relation to some policy requirements, including travel and the notification of address and yet was not explicit in terms of managing other key risk factors, and expectations of other key agencies, including housing, health and safeguarding.
- 2.7 Outside of these original documents, there was no overarching vision or strategy for the current arrangements or that set the strategic direction. This risked a lack of direction and cohesion in the long-term delivery of the arrangements and there had been drift in terms of the overall objectives, with a lack of focus on developing a collaborative strategy for future delivery and what this would look like.
- 2.8 A notable feature of the current arrangements was the delivery of the supervisory function by HMPPS, the only partner agency to be based outside of Northern Ireland. While acknowledging the positive contribution of HMPPS, other MARA partners articulated views to Inspectors that the desired long-term approach for the management of Terrorist Risk Offenders was for an entirely Northern Ireland-based solution, delivered by local partners in the way that existed for PPANI. It was clear, however, that this was not a feasible option in the short to medium-term. To deliver a local solution, it was recognised that the current downward trajectory of the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism would need to continue over a longer timeframe until the risk environment and circumstances are such that local service provision could be implemented. Inspectors would encourage ongoing communication between all partners and consideration of the circumstances required to enable a return to a local service delivery model at the appropriate time.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 2.9 The Article 50 Guidance set out the requirement for a Strategic Management Forum, later referred to as a Strategic Management Board (the Board), required to meet not less than biannually, although the Board had only met once in 2023 and 2024 and once to date in 2025 (a second meeting was planned at the end of 2025). The seniority of Senior Management Board membership for some organisations had decreased since its inception, but partners felt that appropriate decision makers were in attendance. There was insufficient evidence of how the Board was used to best effect to maintain oversight and set strategic direction. It is important that the Strategic Management Board operates at a sufficiently senior level, with appropriate levels of seniority representing each organisation, to ensure attendees can take strategic decisions and hold those responsible for operational delivery to account.

- 2.10 Within the DoJ, HMPPS and PSNI there were clear lines of responsibility and governance for MARA-related activity at senior and operational levels. In the NIPS this was spread across headquarters and establishment functions.
- 2.11 There was a lack of strategic input from partners outside the criminal justice system at the Strategic Management Board, with no representation from health, housing or social services safeguarding partners. There had been no involvement of the Lay Advisers, appointed to the PPANI to 'provide a challenge to the professionals by acting as a 'critical friend',²⁹ in MARA despite Inspectors being advised that the current postholders were willing to do so.
- 2.12 The delivery of HMPPS supervision services was set out in a Memorandum of Understanding and this was supported by monthly bilateral meetings between the DoJ, as lead agency and contractor, and the HMPPS senior manager, to address any delivery issues. Despite these arrangements, it was not evident how the DoJ, measured or was assured about the quality of services being delivered. There was no identifiable delivery plan to which HMPPS, or other MARA partners, were working to, at the point of Review.
- 2.13 A risk register existed and was reviewed in advance of the infrequent Strategic Management Board meetings rather than on a more regular basis. Some of the issues highlighted to Inspectors during the Review, such as the potential for different forms of terrorist offending and the need for better arrangements for the sharing of protected information, did not appear to be included in the risk register nor in the discussions held at Board meetings. In addition, some actions did not appear to have been addressed in a timely manner or did not have specific target and review dates.
- 2.14 Inspectors found there needed to be a greater strategic focus, by the Strategic Management Board, on the assessment of data and key performance indicators to enable effective strategic planning, address emerging risks and drive the direction of MARA for the medium to longer-term. This included closer monitoring of current and projected caseload for custody and supervision. Specifically, it would be beneficial to consider the breakdown of sentences, key dates, licence variation, recalls to custody and greater understanding the outworkings of MARA processes. The creation of Strategic Management Board subgroups, as existed for PPANI, would assist in ensuring outstanding operational objectives, such as the finalisation of policy documents, or emerging risks, threats and issues could be responded to in an informed, effective and timely manner, while ensuring the focus of the Board remained at a strategic level.

29 See <https://www.publicprotectionni.com/public/>.

2.15 Importantly, a number of legal challenges had resulted in the underpinning principles of MARA being upheld. A significant judgment delivered in July 2024, upheld the decision of the DoJ to vary the appellant's licence to include a requirement to be supervised under MARA and that questioning by the Supervising Officer about his past was not intrusive or illegal.³⁰ The Court also refused an application for judicial review on the grounds that the introduction of MARA did not constitute a breach of the applicant's rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to a private life). An appeal was subsequently heard, challenging the dismissal order, relating to whether the appellant's case fell within the definition of a 'terrorist risk offender' but in April 2025 the judgment was affirmed and the appeal was dismissed.³¹

USE OF THE EVIDENCE BASE AND BEST PRACTICE

2.16 There was no evidence base of best practice about the delivery of services and interventions available to those convicted of terrorist offences in Northern Ireland to inform the operating model in place. There was a significant lack of academic insight or input to the arrangements to inform the delivery of services. The development of a bespoke risk assessment tool for Northern Ireland, the *Terrorism Risk Offender Dynamic Assessment* (TRODAs),³² had been an important exception to this, but there was a need for further evaluation to establish a strong evidence base.

2.17 Some emerging risks, threats and issues were raised with Inspectors as requiring further discussion, but these had not yet been fully considered and a collective strategic approach adopted across partner agencies. This included, for example the threat from non-Northern Ireland related terrorism such as Islamist or right-wing extremist groups or self-initiated violence by individuals. There also needed to be agreement on the planned introduction of terrorist sentences for children across the UK and the potential overlaps with MARA processes³³ and emerging discussions on how certain features of neurodiversity disorders may provide the context of vulnerability to engaging in offending behaviours related to terrorism or extremism.³⁴ Some initial discussions had been held within and between agencies, for example between the Youth Justice Agency and the PSNI in respect of children, but policy positions were yet to be developed. There was no evidence that these issues were being considered at a multi-agency strategic level to enable a more agile response to emerging threats, risks and issues.

30 Judiciary NI, *In the matter of an application by Thomas McWilliams for Judicial Review*, NIKB 62, August 2024, available at <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/2024-nikb-62>.

31 Judiciary NI, *Thomas McWilliams and the Department of Justice: On appeal from the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland*, NICA 23, available at <https://www.judiciaryni.uk/judicial-decisions/2025-nica-23>.

32 Silke, A. (2023), *European Approaches to Risk Assessment of Terrorist Offenders*, in Stockhammer (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Terrorism*, Chapter 35, August 2023, available at <https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/en/publications/european-approaches-to-risk-assessment-of-terrorist-offenders/>.

33 Home Office, *News story: Government outlines new action to tackle radicalisation*, December 2024, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-new-action-to-tackle-radicalisation>.

34 See for example the work of Professor Claire Allely, Forensic Psychologist at the University of Salford at <https://www.salford.ac.uk/our-staff/clare-allely>.

- 2.18 Some partners pointed to the lack of a wider intervention or prevention programme as a gap, particularly to address the increase in non-Northern Ireland related terrorism. It was highlighted to Inspectors that there was no equivalent to the 'Prevent' programme in England and Wales, as an early intervention which aimed to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.³⁵ However, criticisms of the Prevent model³⁶ and difficulties with its suitability for the Northern Ireland context were acknowledged.
- 2.19 The work of MARA appeared to stand alone from other risk management measures operational within Northern Ireland, most notably the PPANI, and more could have been done to learn from the delivery of other strategies to improve the approach with this cohort. For example, equivalent processes within the PPANI are managed and delivered by organisations and managers with operational risk management experience, with representatives of the DoJ undertaking a role within the Policy and Practice Sub-group. This was different to the significant role DoJ had at the time of Review Report drafting, in the operational delivery of aspects of the MARA, for example chairing the MARA Panel meetings. There is therefore an opportunity to consider the appropriateness and resource implications of the DoJ's role within MARA over the medium to longer-term and how there could be greater alignment with the PPANI model.
- 2.20 Inspectors assessed that a programme of work needed to be undertaken by the Strategic Management Board to address the issues identified by the MARA partners and other stakeholders as outlined in this Chapter. Several important issues articulated to Inspectors did not appear to have been discussed at the Strategic Management Board meetings nor effectively addressed. While it was positive that MARA had been established it is important that the Strategic Management Board clearly sets out the vision and objectives for the short, medium and longer-term. This should include identifying the optimum service delivery model and developing an understanding of the conditions under which arrangements for local supervision and involvement of wider Northern Ireland partners, aligned more closely to the multi-agency public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, could be implemented.

35 Home Office, *Statutory guidance: Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023), March 2025*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance#:~:text=Details,terrorism%20to%20disengage%20and%20rehabilitate>.

36 Prevent has been subject to review since terrorist acts were committed by those who had engaged in the programme including by Lord Anderson KC, the Interim Independent Prevent Commissioner (see *Independent report: Lessons for Prevent, July 2025*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lessons-for-prevent>) and the Independent Commission on UK Counter Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice (see *Report of the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice, November 2025*, available at <https://binghamcentre.biicl.org/independent-commission-on-counter-terrorism-law-policy--and-practice->).

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 1

Within nine months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements should:

- agree and set out the vision for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements and strategic short, medium and long-term objectives with actions for implementation, including designing and agreeing the optimum service delivery model that establishes the circumstances under which local supervision arrangements could be implemented;
- ensure ongoing analysis of future sentencing and release dates, with caseload forecasting to prepare for future demand;
- establish a performance framework with key performance indicators;
- establish a subgroup/task and finish group structure to develop mechanisms to deliver agile responses to emerging risks, threats and issues arising from this Review; and
- include the Lay Advisors in the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements.

DEFINITIONAL CRITERIA FOR A TERRORIST RISK OFFENDER

- 2.21 As outlined in the Introduction, the Article 50 Guidance set out the definitional criteria for a Terrorist Risk Offender across four categories (conviction of a terrorism-related offence; connection to terrorism by the sentencing Judge; connection to terrorism by the MARAP; and terrorism concern). The Article 50 Guidance further specified the types of sentence that the criteria applied to, all of which would include a custodial period.
- 2.22 The MAPPA guidance in England and Wales used broadly similar criteria to categorise individuals as Terrorist Offenders. It specified that a qualifying sentence for a terrorist conviction included imprisonment or detention in youth detention accommodation for a term of 12 months or more, or a suspended sentence with a term of 12 months or more. However, it used a broader definition where the individual had committed an offence and may be at risk of involvement in terrorism-related activity, to include conviction for any offence (current or historic, within the UK or abroad) or a formal caution.³⁷ This meant those individuals who received relevant community sentences were in scope if they were considered to be a terrorist risk. Inspectors were told of some examples where individuals in Northern Ireland, whose offending was connected to terrorism, had received a community sentence or a suspended sentence and therefore had not met the criteria to be classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender. This could potentially lead to inconsistencies in how individuals were supervised and the risks posed by them were managed.

³⁷ See pages 37-28 of Ministry of Justice, *National Offender Management Service & His Majesty's Prison Service, Statutory Guidance: Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA): Guidance, February 2024*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance>.

2.23 A review of the Article 50 Guidance would be timely to consider how effectively the criteria enabled the appropriate offending and risk profiles to be managed within the MARA. The recommendations of the final *Report of the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice*, particularly relating to the definition of terrorism, prosecution and precursor offences and managing terrorist offenders, will be an important consideration by the MARA Strategic Management Board in longer-term planning.³⁸

POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.24 A Manual of Practice for MARA had been drafted in 2024 but had not been finalised. This set out policies and processes to deliver MARA at an operational level. There was therefore a gap within the agreed operational policies available to staff and this impacted service delivery. In England and Wales MAPPA guidance had been updated in April 2024.³⁹ It set out the responsibilities of the police, probation and prison services and touched on how other agencies might become involved, for example the Youth Justice Board as responsible for the care of children who have offended. The guidance was detailed in respect of the operational approach to identification, notification, information sharing, disclosure, risk assessment and management, multi-agency working and included standards across each area of the MAPPA processes. Learning from this detailed approach could be beneficial when finalising the MARA Manual of Practice.

2.25 An Information Sharing Protocol had been agreed in August 2021 between the DoJ, NIPS, PBNI and PSNI 'to facilitate the legitimate and secure sharing of protectively marked information'⁴⁰ although this did not cover the sharing of protected information. An Information Sharing Agreement between the PSNI, DoJ and HMPPS had been developed by the PSNI and was in draft form at the time of Review Report drafting. The lack of progress on finalising and agreeing this had created operational difficulties in information sharing, particularly protected information. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Delivery.

38 Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, *Report of the Independent Commission on UK Counter-Terrorism Law, Policy and Practice*, November 2025, available at <https://binghamcentre.biicl.org/publications/report-of-the-independent-commission-on-uk-counter-terrorism-law-policy-and-practice>.

39 National MAPPA Team, *HM Prison and Probation Services Public Protection Group, Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA): Guidance*, April 2024, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance>.

40 DoJ, *Arrangements to assess and manage the risk posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders - Information Sharing Protocol*, August 2021, internal document.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 2

Within three months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board for the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements should:

- review the Article 50 Guidance, including the definitional criteria for a Terrorist Risk Offender; and
- finalise outstanding policy frameworks, including the Manual of Practice and Information Sharing Agreement.

2.26 As noted, within the NIPS, MARA activity was spread across the areas of the Prisoner Development Units (PDUs) in the three establishments as well as the licencing and security functions. Within Maghaberry Prison and Hydebank Wood Women's Prison there was provision for a separated regime for republican and loyalist prisoners, some of whom were classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders under the criteria in the Article 50 Guidance. Other individuals managed under MARA were in the integrated population across the three prison establishments. Within the security function and PDUs there had not been any strategic direction or guidance at a pan-Northern Ireland level about the approach to managing individuals classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders. At the establishment level, Security Managers saw the use of separated conditions as the primary method for managing these individuals. Overall, there was no overarching policy framework that set out the roles and responsibilities of the various functions within the NIPS specifically in relation to MARA cases.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION 3

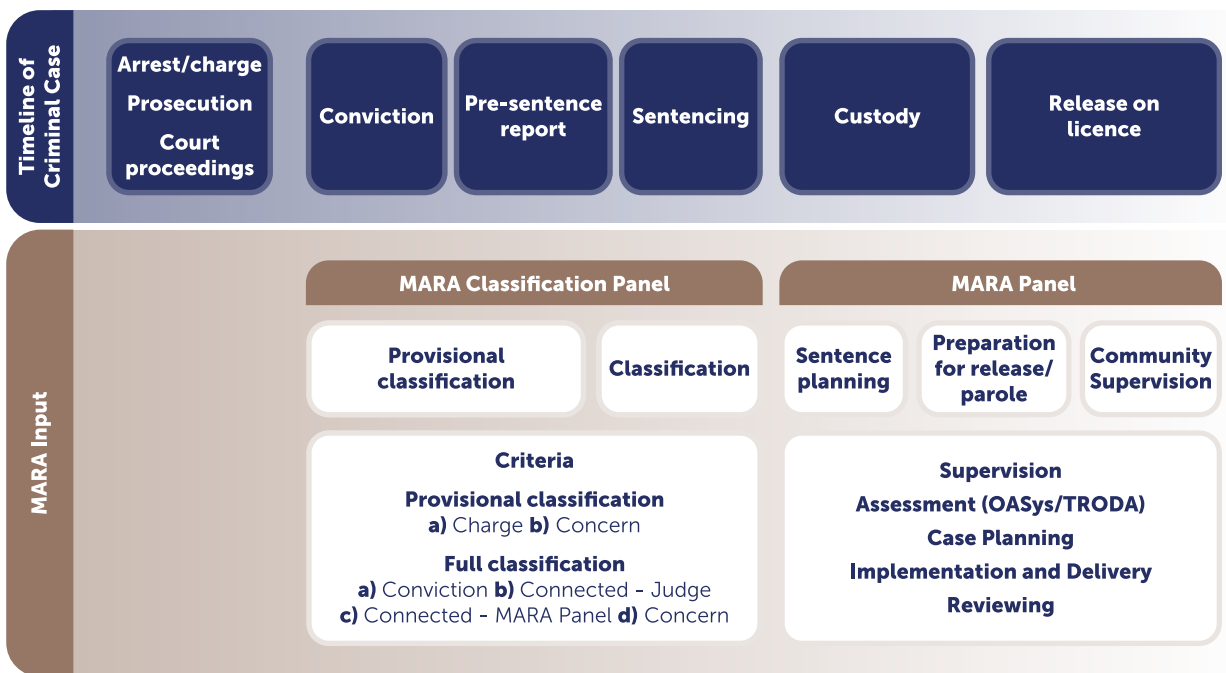
Within six months of report publication, the Northern Ireland Prison Service should develop a policy framework for its work with those classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders from committal to release, including the roles of the Prisoner Development Units, Psychology and Security and partnership working with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

2.27 A Memorandum of Understanding between the DoJ and HMPPS for the delivery of offender management services to Terrorist Risk Offenders had been signed in 2023. HMPPS worked to a set of Supervising Officer standards, specifically developed for supervision in Northern Ireland. HMPPS oversight included regular case supervision against the standards, however there was a lack of focus on the assessment, planning and delivery of services, including the recording, or lack thereof, of contacts which impacted on evidencing the quality of work being delivered. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Delivery. The work of HMPPS in delivering supervision would benefit from the finalisation of the Manual of Practice.

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERY

3.1 This chapter is informed by the audits conducted of MARA cases within NIPS custody, managed by the PSNI and supervised by HMPPS in the community, as well as observations of MARA meetings, discussions with leaders and staff across the criminal justice system, stakeholders and individuals supervised under MARA in custody and in the community. The chapter considers the evidence presented at each stage of the individual's journey through the criminal case and associated MARA processes. These stages, and the input from the criminal justice agencies, are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Key stages of the timeline of the criminal case and MARA input.



NB OASys is the Offender Assessment System risk assessment tool used by HMPPS.

3.2 In custody, Inspectors conducted case audits to look at:

- initial assessments of risk and needs;
- sentence planning, review and interventions; and
- preparation for release planning.

The audit aimed to assess work undertaken by the NIPS Personal Development Plan (PDP) Co-ordinators within the PDUs with input from the Supervising Officer allocated to the case, as well as contributions from NIPS Psychology and other partner agencies within custody. Inspectors conducted 13 case audits where a Supervising Officer had been allocated and reviewed records on the prison case management system, minutes of case conference meetings and parole documentation.

3.3 In the community, Inspectors conducted case audits to look at:

- contact pre-release between the individual under supervision, NIPS PDU staff and the HMPPS Supervising Officer, as well as input by MARA partners into the pre-release planning;
- initial assessments of risk and needs, sentence planning, implementation and delivery of services and review in the community⁴¹; and
- interviews with Supervising Officers.

The focus of this audit was to assess work undertaken by the Supervising Officers. Inspectors conducted an audit of all 22 MARA cases in the community and reviewed HMPPS case records, associated documentation, Offender Assessment System (OASys) assessments and interviewed, in seven of the cases, the HMPPS Officers supervising the individual.

3.4 Within the PSNI, Inspectors conducted a review of police records relating to 15 cases allocated to the Terrorist Offender Management Unit. This included over half of the total cases allocated to the Terrorist Offender Management Unit where individuals were in the community on licence and supervised under MARA, as well as being subject to notification requirement under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008⁴² (see Appendix 1: Methodology); all those supervised under MARA on licence only (not subject to Part 4 notification requirements) in the community; and two individuals classified as MARA cases in prison. Cases were reviewed using the methodology developed for the England and Wales *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* to consider activity relating to risk management, record keeping and information sharing, partnership working and ensuring adherence to reporting requirements. Inspectors discussed cases with the PSNI Officers responsible for managing the individual during the Review.

41 This approach is taken from the methodology of HMI Probation which looks at the life cycle of a case through the initial assessment of risk and needs using appropriate risk assessment tools, the development of an initial sentence plan and risk management plan based on the factors identified in the assessment, the implementation and delivery of interventions and services to support desistance and disengagement and finally the review of the initial assessment and progress against the sentence plan and risk management plan.

42 Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/28/part/4>) provides a notification regime for individuals sentenced to 12 months or more imprisonment for a specified terrorism offence or (in England, Wales and Scotland) an offence with a terrorism connection (the Act does not contain corresponding provision for Northern Ireland on aggravated sentencing for offences with a terrorist connection, therefore the notification provisions will apply in Northern Ireland only to terrorism offences falling within Section 41). This requires notification to the police of information about individuals' names and dates of birth, addresses at which individuals stay and foreign travel.

STAFFING AND RESOURCES

- 3.5 In this section Inspectors considered whether MARA had sufficient capacity and capability to support the delivery of high-quality services to manage the risk of serious harm posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders in Northern Ireland. It considered whether MARA had an operating model that was sustainable and used resources efficiently.
- 3.6 There were specific teams with responsibility for MARA delivery in the DoJ, HMPPS and PSNI, located within specialist areas of each organisation with a focus on terrorism or public protection. This provided assigned leads and points of contact with an opportunity to build relationships through MARA activity. The Supervising Officers were qualified specialist Probation Officers working within HMPPS. They had been supported since the beginning of the MARA process by the PSNI and this joint working relationship was pivotal in delivering the arrangements.
- 3.7 Within the DoJ it was acknowledged that there had been a lack of dedicated resource for MARA, resulting in insufficient capacity to respond proactively to delivery requirements alongside other priorities. There had been efforts to address this at the time of Review Report drafting but it was too early to assess the impact of this.
- 3.8 For non-MARA cases a Service Level Agreement between the NIPS and the PBNI set out the case allocation processes and the roles of the prison and PBNI Personal Development Plan Co-ordinators. No such framework was in place for MARA cases. There was a lack of clarity and consistency about the role of the NIPS in supporting MARA processes specifically in providing opportunities to address offending behaviour and discuss ideologies. An agreed Manual of Practice should address this (see Strategic Recommendation 2).
- 3.9 Understanding and knowledge of the MARA arrangements among staff and prison leaders of the NIPS was mostly poor. Staff reported having had little or no specific training on MARA. As outlined previously within the NIPS MARA activity was split across different functions and the NIPS licencing function also covered a number of priority areas. Strategic Recommendation 3 emphasises the need for a policy framework that clarifies the role of NIPS staff within MARA across each of its functions. There had been ongoing difficulties with the delivery of the NIPS Prisoner Development Model (the function within prisons responsible for assessment sentence planning, interventions and resettlement work)⁴³ and this had been subject to a NIPS commissioned review. CJI had not had sight of this report at the time of the MARA Review.

43 CJI's report of an inspection of the governance and operation of the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland outlined that performance against the Preparing for Release health prison test had declined in recent inspections and that the NIPS were planning to review the Prisoner Development Model. See CJI, *The Governance and Operation of the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland, October 2024*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/reports/the-governance-and-operation-of-the-parole-commissioners-for-northern-ireland/#key-findings-of-the-inspection>.

- 3.10 In the Maghaberry Prison PDU Inspectors identified similar difficulties for those supervised under MARA, as for non-MARA prisoners, with a significant increase in the prison population, particularly of the remand population, further impacting on depleted resources available to support assessment, sentence planning and preparation for release functions.
- 3.11 The role of Supervising Officers and the responsibilities they had for working with individuals in the period pre-release was not well understood across prison establishments. There were agreements in place about HMPPS writing parole reports, but this was often frustrated by the lack of notification and the subsequent need for delivering reports at pace, when there were limited resources to do it. HMPPS were not funded specifically to deliver in-reach probation services in prisons in the way that PBNi delivered services to non-MARA prisoners, therefore there was a gap. The finalisation of the Manual of Practice, along with associated training and awareness raising for MARA partners on its contents, would assist in clarifying these respective roles. It would also present an opportunity to inform key stakeholders, such as the Judiciary and legal representatives, about the arrangements.
- 3.12 During Review Report fieldwork, HMPPS had one Supervising Officer vacancy, and given the small size of the operational team, this was impacting on workloads. Where cases had been handed over from the departing Supervising Officer in the months prior to this Review, there had been a disruption to the supervisory relationship with individuals supervised. The DoJ funded the costs of a full time Team Manager, Supervising Officers and a Business Manager, with a Senior Probation Manager funded on a 0.5 full time equivalent basis. Inspectors heard that the available time allocated to business support/administration meant there was a risk of a lack of momentum to the tasks being completed.
- 3.13 Staff within the PSNI and HMPPS teams were allocated to teams as specialists in this particular type of work. MAPPA training had been undertaken by staff at different levels in both organisations related to managing Terrorist or Terrorist Risk Offenders and chairing decision-making panels. The PSNI were part of UK-wide counter terrorism networks and could seek specialist training, peer support and benefit from the experience of other police forces where appropriate.
- 3.14 Although all Supervising Officers were qualified probation practitioners, with access to training specific to terrorism, there was a lack of sufficient knowledge about the context of the political background and terrorist offences in Northern Ireland. This was detrimental to the quality of service delivery. Supervising Officers required Northern Ireland specific training to equip them to confidently manage those who pose a terrorist risk and support release and resettlement processes. Academic input which provides a factual overview of the timeline of the Northern Ireland conflict and a reference point for working with those under supervision would be beneficial. For example, the CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) Archive is a collection of information and source material on 'the Troubles' (from 1968 to 2007) and politics in Northern Ireland.⁴⁴

44 CAIN is located on the Magee Campus of Ulster University (www.ulster.ac.uk) and available online at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/violence/paramilitary.htm>.

3.15 The Healthy Identity Intervention was a HMPPS accredited offending behaviour programme designed to address the psychological and social factors impacting individual engagement and involvement in extremism. An interim outcome evaluation in March 2023 found positive change was demonstrated as a result of participation across a number of measures and *'does appear to address some of the psychosocial factors impacting engagement and involvement in an extremist group, cause or ideology.'*⁴⁵ Although the context for this intervention is not Northern Ireland-related terrorism, it may be beneficial for Supervising Officers to have access to training for the Healthy Identity Intervention programme. This would enable them to draw on the principles of the Healthy Identity Intervention to support individuals under supervision progress towards desistance and disengagement from terrorism.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 1

Within six months of report publication, the training and development sub-group of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements Strategic Management Board should develop a multi-agency training and development strategy, with independent academic-based input, to provide:

- awareness raising within the Northern Ireland Prison Service of the arrangements and role of the Supervising Officers;
- Northern Ireland context-specific training and access to training on the Healthy Identity Intervention programme for Supervising Officers; and
- an effective training and development evaluation methodology.

3.16 HMPPS delivery of the MARA supervisory function cost to the DoJ approximately £500,000 per year. This covered the staff team and travel and subsistence costs. The PSNI had incurred additional costs, since the introduction of MARA, in providing logistical support to the Supervising Officers. Failure to secure and sustain funding for the model was included on the risk register but it was acknowledged that this additional resource would be required to deliver services for the foreseeable future. Inspectors would encourage ongoing consideration of cost maintenance or reduction through efficiencies, while ensuring a focus on service quality and staff safety.

3.17 In terms of the capability across the organisations to assess and manage risk, the development of the TRODA had been a significant contribution to MARA as a specialist tool for assessing the risk posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders in a Northern Ireland context. The TRODA had been developed by Professor Andrew Silke from Royal Holloway, University of London and was a structured professional judgement assessment. In this regard it was similar to other assessments designed to inform

45 Keane et al, *The Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) - Findings from an interim outcome evaluation*, Ministry of Justice Analytical Series, March 2023, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-identity-intervention-findings-from-an-interim-outcome-evaluation>.

operational decisions for individuals with extremism-related convictions used across Great Britain and across Europe,⁴⁶ however the TRODA had some distinctive factors to Northern Ireland.

- 3.18 Inspectors heard some positive feedback on the development of the TRODA. However, given the small size of the MARA caseload and therefore limited number of occasions where TRODA and the OASyS⁴⁷ reports were used in Northern Ireland, there was a need to undertake further research to demonstrate to key stakeholders the reliability and validity of the tools and ensure their appropriate use to inform risk.⁴⁸ The MAPPA Review Report by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation⁴⁹ stated: *'I recommend that assessing risk should not be the function of one particular tool (such as OASyS or ERG 22+[Extremism Risk Guidance 22+]) but should depend on the totality of what is known, and can be inferred about the individual offender as their case progresses. It notes that 'Faced with uncertainty as to what works, it has been suggested that it is better to use a "tiered system" involving a "menu of choices", and to integrate risk assessment and management so that there is a continuous feedback and adjustment of interventions.'*⁵⁰ Inspectors would concur with the need for such an approach.
- 3.19 When a new Supervising Officer joined the team a delay in their TRODA training created an additional resource requirement on other members and could lead to a perceived lack of confidence in Supervising Officers when interpreting the tool and presenting its outcomes, for example at parole hearings. Further awareness raising about the TRODA and its robustness among partner agencies and key stakeholders would also be beneficial.

46 See Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG22+) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extremism-risk-guidance-22-an-exploratory-psychometric-analysis> and VERA-2R <https://www.vera-2r.nl/>.

47 OASyS is a core risk and needs assessment tool used by HMPPS to assess an offender's likelihood to reoffend or harm others and to identify their needs to inform sentence planning and rehabilitation. It is therefore used in an equivalent manner to the PBNI's Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation risk assessment tool.

48 Professor Silke's chapter on European Approaches to Risk Assessment of Terrorist Offenders explores how the evidence base connected to the use of VERA-2R, ERG and TRODA has evolved in recent years and outlines some of the strengths and limitations of the frameworks. It notes: *'The evidence base supporting the use of the frameworks has improved considerably though some significant concerns remain. Especially important is the current lack of available data on the predictive validity of the frameworks.'* See Silke, *European Approaches to Risk Assessment of Terrorist Offenders in Routledge Handbook of Transnational Terrorism* (edited by Stockhammer), 1st edition, August 2023, available at <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003326373/routledge-handbook-transnational-terrorism-nicolas-stockhammer?refId=663db970-eef4-417a-bec5-238eb871f9c4&context=ubx>.

49 Jonathan Hall KC (Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation), *Terrorist Risk Offenders: Independent Review of Statutory Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements*, May 2020, available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f4f73a1e90e07469b7d02f8/supervision-terrorism-and-terrorism-risk-offenders-review.pdf>.

50 Logan, C & Lloyd, M, *Violent extremism: A comparison of approaches to assessing and managing risk*, *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, Volume 1, Issue 24, February 2019, available at <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/lcrp.12140>.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND INFORMATION SHARING

Partnership working

- 3.20 In this section of the Review Inspectors considered whether arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies were established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services through MARA.
- 3.21 Structures and processes, as provided for within the Article 50 Guidance, had been established for the purposes of assessing whether an individual met the definitional criteria for classification and for ongoing case management review during the period of MARA supervision. The purpose, membership and roles of the MARA Classification Panel and MARA Panel are outlined in Table 2.⁵¹

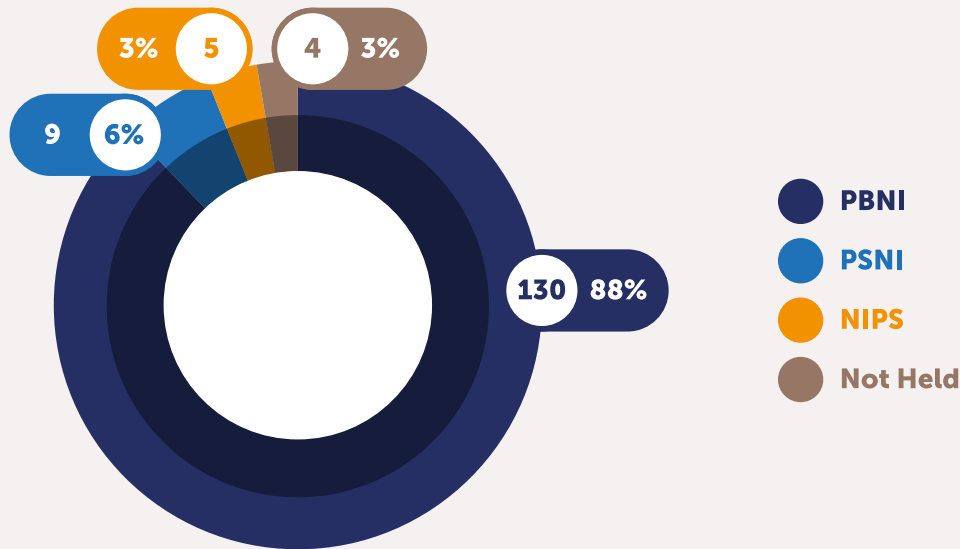
Table 2: MARA Classification Panel and MARA Panel.

	MARA Classification Panel	MARA Panel
Purpose	To assess and determine if individuals meet the definitional criteria set out in Section 3.2 of the Article 50 Guidance to be classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender	To review MARA cases at appropriate points during supervision
Frequency	Convened when required on receipt of referral(s)	Weekly as required
Chair	DoJ	DoJ
MARA partners standing members in attendance	DoJ NIPS (Licencing) PSNI	DoJ HMPPS NIPS (Licencing) PSNI
Agenda setting/scheduling	DoJ	HMPPS
Minute-taking	DoJ	HMPPS

- 3.22 Referrals to the MARA Classification Panel could be made by the DoJ, NIPS, PSNI and the PBNI (when a request was received for a pre-sentence report or following sentencing). Since the introduction of MARA in 2021, 148 referrals were made and considered. The majority of referrals (88%) were made by the PBNI as outlined in Figure 4.

⁵¹ The Article 50 Guidance refers to 'MARAP' (MARA Panel) as being responsible for both these processes, despite different organisations being represented at the two stages. For the purposes of this report CJI will refer to 'MARA Classification Panel' and 'MARA Panel' to avoid confusion.

Figure 4: Number and percentage of referrals made by each criminal justice organisation.



Data provided by the DoJ

3.23 Both the MARA Classification Panel and MARA Panel were chaired by a representative of the DoJ. HMPPS had, for a time, chaired the MARA Panels but had withdrawn from this role due to differences in the operating framework in Northern Ireland compared to England and Wales. Chairing responsibility had therefore reverted to the DoJ. The MARA Classification Panels and the MARA Panels were therefore not chaired by an individual with the operational experience, or knowledge of risk management, to make informed operational decisions. This was different to the approach of both PPANI Local Area Safeguarding Panels (chaired by a PBNI Area Manager) and MAPPA (chaired by a HMPPS Probation Manager). Inspectors heard that previously there had been use of the ‘four pillars’ approach to risk management⁵² which was more effective than the current approach. MARA Panels should utilise a structure that supports multi-agency decision-making to ensure effective risk management, support for desistance and disengagement and victim safety.

3.24 For MARA Classification Panels, in some cases, there was a need for greater analysis and evidence as to why the referring agency believed the criteria for classification had been met. There was also a need, in most cases, for a fully documented rationale for decision-making, with more detailed explanation provided to the referrer, particularly where the MARA Classification Panel had determined that the evidence did not support classification.

52 The Four Pillars of risk Management is an approach to the planning and delivery of risk management developed by Professor Hazel Kemshall at De Montfort University. The model is based on the four pillars of Supervision, Monitoring and Control, Interventions and Treatment and Victim Safety Planning. HMPPS have adopted this approach for management of risk of serious harm and it is used within MAPPA. See HMPPS, *HMPPS risk of serious harm guidance, December 2023*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmpps-risk-of-serious-harm-guidance-2020>.

- 3.25 Referral documentation for the MARA Classification Panel and classification category was not held on the HMPPS case management records and Supervising Officers were not sighted on why particular cases were adopted, or the rationale for doing so. It was unclear from HMPPS records whether MARA classification had been determined in a timely way, and particularly if this was at a suitable point pre-release to allow for planning and relationship building with the allocated Supervising Officer. Of the 22 HMPPS cases reviewed, 12 had been identified as MARA cases prior to release, with the remainder having been released prior to MARA supervision being operationalised in 2021.
- 3.26 Where the decision was made to provisionally classify an individual as a Terrorist Risk Offender the case was allocated to a Supervising Officer within HMPPS, for the preparation of a pre-sentence report only. Similarly, where the decision was made to fully classify an individual as a Terrorist Risk Offender, the case was allocated to a Supervising Officer to assume full MARA case management responsibilities. Supervising Officers completed OASyS and TRODA assessments and received contributions from other partners, including the PSNI. In cases not classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender, the referring agency was informed of the outcome by letter and the individual was, depending on the stage the referral was made, passed to the PBNI for the preparation of a pre-sentence report, or to be supervised by the PBNI.
- 3.27 Allocation of new cases to Supervising Officers appeared reactive rather than a clearly planned and structured process. It was not clear at what point Supervising Officers would begin to work with individuals under supervision or the role of the Supervising Officers for custody cases and this ambiguity meant some of those individuals had little input prior to release. This was a missed opportunity to align the supervisory experience for those approaching release with what their subsequent licence supervision would look like.
- 3.28 The MARA Panel structure and processes had been established to ensure there was ongoing multi-agency case management and review during the period of MARA supervision. However there did not appear to be defined stages at which cases would be scheduled for discussion at the MARA Panel that were clear to all partners. Inspectors believe that cases should be reviewed at regular intervals, appropriate to the assessed level of risk and stage of the individual's licence, including at key sentence dates such as sentence planning, preparation for pre-release testing and the parole process, setting and variation of licence conditions and applications from the individual under supervision for travel, change of address or transfer/resettlement outside of Northern Ireland.
- 3.29 In the 12 cases identified as subject to MARA, parole reports were produced by HMPPS to aid decision-making by the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland regarding suitability for release in some of these cases. Records however were not always updated, or reports uploaded, to evidence what had been provided to the Parole Commissioners. In some instances, Supervising Officers had struggled to obtain offence and prosecution related documentation to inform their parole reports, impacting on the objectivity and robustness of their assessments.

- 3.30 The PSNI and HMPPS were appropriately represented at the MARA Panels however, the NIPS was not always represented by operational staff or managers who had knowledge of the individuals in custody and neither was information about the individual requested from the PDUs or prison establishment Security Departments by the attending NIPS representatives. When individuals were approaching release there was therefore no contribution to the management of individuals in the community, outside of licencing requirements other than information brought to the meeting by Supervising Officers. The wealth of behavioural information from PDUs that would help inform their supervision was not presented at MARA Panels. There was no evidence of the routine sharing of OASyS, pre-sentence reports or TRODA assessments by HMPPS with PDU staff within the NIPS, as would be seen under existing Prisoner Development Model processes. The PSNI contributed research outputs to the pre-sentence report but did not have access to the final report.
- 3.31 Prison Security Teams were not involved in MARA Panels for those classified as being supervised under MARA and there was little evidence that prisons routinely considered referring individuals to the MARA Classification Panel. There was also little evidence of work to raise awareness of individuals classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders at each establishment or develop the intelligence picture in relation to them. This was especially the case for those in integrated conditions.
- 3.32 Where there had been an input from the NIPS, Inspectors saw added value when Supervising Officers engaged with NIPS Personal Development Plan (PDP) Co-ordinators to support the individual in the lead up to release. This, however, was not the case for all individuals and there was often a lack of inclusion of HMPPS involvement during the period of pre-release testing. Following Review fieldwork in Maghaberry Prison, the PDU was beginning to address this. However, this needed to be replicated across all required prison sites and underpinned by an agreed policy approach, which encompassed all aspects of the NIPS, including prisoner development, psychology and security (see Strategic Recommendation 3).
- 3.33 Planning for release discussions took place at the MARA Panels. The PSNI advised Inspectors there had been some cases where they were not informed when individuals were moved to the pre-release testing phase. Inspectors also heard from some partners about occasions where there had been release from prison to the community at short notice, particularly following a parole hearing. One individual under supervision told Inspectors about his experience of being released at short notice which caused significant difficulties in finding accommodation and meeting his health needs, although he was positive about the role of his Supervising Officer in supporting him through this. This again emphasises the importance of operational input to weekly MARA Panel meetings.

- 3.34 There was no agreed corporate position on the role of NIPS Psychology for those subject to MARA and the existing Prisoner Development Model did not address this. In a very small number of cases, Inspectors were told that NIPS Psychology had completed reports at the behest of the Parole Commissioners, however there was no evidence of contact with any of the cases inspected as part of this case audit.
- 3.35 There was a need for the PSNI Terrorist Management Offender Unit to have a greater input into proposed licence conditions. Section 4.14 of the Article 50 Guidance notes *'Measures which impose external controls and prohibitions such as: conditions in licences, including residence requirements, and other provisions, such as Terrorist Notification Requirements can provide the offender with a clear and partly self-policed set of boundaries. These boundaries can enhance public protection practice, for example, police and Supervising officers undertaking joint visits to offenders and working closely with prisons to establish suitable licence conditions for offenders prior to release.'*⁵³ This section highlighted the importance of collaborative working between agencies to ensure licence conditions are meaningful and enforceable. While engagement did occur at the MARA Panels, the PSNI need clear support mechanisms, such as the authority to require individuals to present devices or comply with conditions at the point of enforcement.
- 3.36 The Article 50 Guidance described decision-making using the same phraseology as in the Guidance to Agencies on Public Protection Arrangements that *'Agreement on risk management between organisations is a goal rather than a requirement.'*⁵⁴ However, in cases of disagreement there was a need for further clarity and rationale about decision-making so that partner organisations could be confident that the decision-making upheld their individual statutory obligations and wider responsibility for public protection. Inspectors heard of examples relating to compliance and enforcement activity which partners felt did not enable them to meet these obligations. Inspectors believe that the Article 50 Guidance or a finalised Manual of Practice should provide greater clarity on this issue.
- 3.37 In addition to the lack of strategic input from non-justice partners at the Strategic Management Board (as outlined in Chapter 2), there was a similar gap at an operational level. The MARA Panels lacked inclusion of key agencies required to support the successful resettlement of those under supervision. This included housing, health and safeguarding representatives and therefore the value added by the MARA Panel discussions were limited, with some examples of difficulties experienced by Supervising Officers in accessing information from safeguarding partners. This was in contrast to the important contribution of these agencies to PPANI at an operational level.

53 DoJ, *Arrangements to Assess and Manage the Risks Posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders: Article 50 Guidance*, September 2021, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/mara-policy-guidance-article-50-guidance.pdf>.

54 DoJ, *Guidance to agencies on public protection arrangements*, October 2017, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-agencies-public-protection-arrangements>.

Inspectors saw one positive example of engagement between the Supervising Officer, an individual under supervision and other agencies, to obtain access to counselling, drug-related services and employment and training. This, however, was due to the tenacity of the Supervising Officer, rather than as the consequence of MARA Panels. There was also an inability to access Approved Premises for individuals where this would be appropriate on initial release from custody, or as a risk management strategy as an alternative to recall.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 2

Within six months of report publication, the Strategic Management Board should review the membership of the Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Panels to:

- **ensure the Panels are chaired by a suitably qualified and experienced risk manager;**
- **provide input from Northern Ireland Prison Service operational staff in relevant cases; and**
- **include input from non-justice agencies in appropriate cases.**

3.38 The processes for agenda setting, minute-taking, action circulation and finalisation for the MARA Panels were ineffective. There was no clear rationale as to when or how often an individual would have their case reviewed by the MARA Panel and a lack of clear strategic approach to these meetings. Cases were routinely discussed outside of the formal agenda under 'any other business' which was not conducive to effective minute-taking and action setting. The contribution of the MARA Panel to support planning for future releases, outside of licencing discussions, needed to improve and cases approaching release were not always identified in a timely way. Inspectors expected to see that there is a scheduled plan for reviewing cases, which all partners were sighted on, but this was not evident. The purpose of the meetings and the intended outcomes were unclear, and they added little to the overall management of cases. MARA Panel discussions and outcomes or actions were not routinely recorded on the NIPS or HMPPS case records. This resulted in gaps in understanding how the individual was progressing and the current situation in the case from a MARA Panel perspective.

3.39 Inspectors heard there had been a lack of clarity about who was responsible for the monitoring of the generic MARA email inbox with frustration expressed by those under supervision about delayed responses but were assured by the DoJ that this had been resolved by Review Report drafting stage. These issues created delays and duplication and risked important actions being missed. In addition, the requirement for HMPPS staff to use multiple information technology devices for recording and electronic communication across different systems was not conducive to efficient case management and timely information sharing.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 3

Within three months of report publication, the processes for Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Classification Panel and Multi-Agency Review Arrangement Panel need to be reviewed and improved by the Department of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to ensure:

- **a scheduled and staged approach to reviewing individuals under supervision according to key dates, risk levels and changes in risk;**
- **improved timescales for sharing schedules and agendas to enable better forward planning and preparation for meetings;**
- **shorter timescales for circulation and approval of minutes and actions;**
- **all case discussions are on the substantive agenda and the use of 'Any Other Business' for case discussions is by exception; and**
- **a fully documented rationale for decision-making.**

3.40 There was often a lack of direction or action setting within the MARA Panel arrangements, and this was a missed opportunity to ensure collaborative and cohesive risk management of cases by all partners. Some practitioners felt disempowered to make timely and effective risk management decisions outside of the MARA Panels.

3.41 Enforcement of licence conditions discussions were also evidenced using email, although this was often cumbersome and time consuming, and was impacted by the lines of accountability for decision-making, sitting outside of those operationally managing the individuals on licence. This included delays in decision-making about adding or amending proportionate licence conditions to manage emerging risks and a lack of support for pro-active risk management using licence variation. There was also contact between the partners by email regarding address and travel requests and these tended to be responded to swiftly, although not in every case.

3.42 There was evidence of constructive relationships outside of formal meetings, particularly between Supervising Officers and PSNI Officers in the Terrorist Offender Management Unit, with regular contact and information sharing in order to ensure supervision sessions were managed sensitively and safely. There could be benefit from a formal debrief following a supervision session between the Supervising Officer and the designated PSNI Officer.

3.43 The PSNI Officers felt more confident in their role and responsibilities where individuals under supervision were also subject to notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008. Inspectors believe required risk management activities by partner agencies should be dynamic and responsive, without being delayed by the need to seek approval by the MARA Panel. This needs to be clarified in the Manual of Practice.

Information Sharing

- 3.44 Inspectors considered whether timely and relevant information was available to support high-quality services to manage the risk of serious harm posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders in Northern Ireland.
- 3.45 There was effective information sharing on PSNI and UK-wide systems about those classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders and two-way information flow by email, briefings and record markers between the Terrorist Offender Management Unit and District Policing. Local Policing Teams conducted activity to manage any known threat towards or from the individual under supervision and were tasked to complete licence condition checks such as alcohol testing and phone examinations on behalf of Supervising Officers. In one case of offending by an individual under supervision who had been recently released from prison against another, the Local Policing Team dealt with the safeguarding issues and investigated the offences. The PSNI Officer responsible for managing the individuals updated the MARA Panel about the incident.
- 3.46 District Commanders reported overall positive relationships with the wider Terrorist Investigation Unit. There were some cases where an individual was also a registered sex or violent offender and there was an overlap with PPANI management. Inspectors saw a positive example of joint working where the Terrorist Offender Management Unit team explained the role of, and introduced, the individual's managing Police Officer from the PSNI Public Protection Branch and the Supervising Officer. The information sharing could have been enhanced further by the use of a single case record for all those involved in supervising the individual (see paragraphs 3.48 - 3.52). The PSNI also reported good co-operation with An Garda Síochána in relevant cases.
- 3.47 Supervising Officers liaised with partners, mainly within the PSNI, to ensure a proactive review of supervision activity and risk management. However, Inspectors saw a lack of routine sharing of work products, including case assessments, sentence plans and risk management plans which would have supported the end-to-end management of cases through custody and into the community. Joint visits to individuals under supervision were rare. Where the risk management plan for those under MARA supervision who were released on licence (but not subject to other notification requirements) was shared, it was positive that both PSNI and Supervising Officers were working to one plan to avoid confusion or duplication. However, in cases where the individual under MARA supervision was also subject to notification requirements under Part 4 of the Terrorism Act 2008, the PSNI had an additional police focused risk management plan to fulfil these requirements. Inspectors believe there may be future risks of this approach with the potential for duplication or conflicting risk management activities.

- 3.48 The Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) is a database that allows the police, probation and prison services to share sensitive information in order to identify, risk assess and manage sexual offenders, violent offenders and potentially dangerous persons, including terrorist offenders.⁵⁵ The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* in England and Wales⁵⁶ found a lack of use of ViSOR and that information shared was not to a high standard across prisons and probation. It noted a lack of training within prisons, duplication within ViSOR and across multiple information systems and a view across policing and probation that it was ineffective and used inconsistently.
- 3.49 The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* noted that the approach to information sharing *'has the potential to lead to duplication, multiple accounts of single occurrences and no single version of the truth...Most of the people that we spoke to were aware of this issue and the risks it presented. They were aware of the planned introduction of [the Multi-Agency Public Protection System] MAPPS to replace ViSOR, which it was hoped would provide the solution. Many at both regional and national level expressed doubts that MAPPS would completely solve the issue. MAPPS is still in development and its implementation is some way off. The risk is present and continuing.'*
- 3.50 The *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* report recommended that The Home Office and Ministry of Justice should *'commission the development of an efficient and effective Counter Terrorism Nominal Management case management system that enables all users to process a case through full lifetime management. The system should also enable the collection, analysis and reporting of appropriate performance and management information. The Multi-Agency Public Protection System (MAPPS) should be reviewed to consider whether it meets these needs.'* An update by HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice in March 2025 advised that the original dates for the delivery of MAPPs for counter terrorism was not achievable. It was awaiting confirmation that a revised date of November 2027 was possible, but that in the meantime, there had been improvements to the use of ViSOR.⁵⁷
- 3.51 Inspectors found similar issues in this Review. The PSNI were the only partner organisation using ViSOR during the Review and were responsible for creating records for individuals once they were classified under MARA. ViSOR was not routinely used by Supervising Officers as a mechanism for recording case related information and it was not being used to its full potential as an information sharing platform.

55 College of Policing, *Authorised Professional Practice: Managing public protection information*, October 2020, available at <https://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection/managing-sexual-offenders-and-violent-offenders/managing-public-protection-information>.

56 HM Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HM Inspectorate of Prisons, *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection - National security division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of terrorist attacks*, July 2023, available at <https://ciji.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspection-report/counter-terrorism-joint-inspection-national-security-division-and-multi-agency-arrangements-for-the-management-of-terrorist-offenders-in-the-wake-of-terrorist-attacks/>.

57 HMPPS and Ministry of Justice, *Policy paper: A response to: Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection, 18 month update - March 2025*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-response-to-counter-terrorism-joint-inspection>.

The NIPS had been awaiting planned UK-wide developments in relation to the new national information sharing database (the Multi-Agency Public Protection System; MAPPS) but, following anticipated delays, had begun to pilot ViSOR, although not for MARA cases. The DoJ did not have access to ViSOR.

- 3.52 Despite records being created and updated by the PSNI there was an over-reliance on email and information storing on individual organisational systems. This led to duplication of information and created the potential for errors and delays. Minutes and actions from MARA Panels were not consistently added to ViSOR records. For both the NIPS and HMPPS there was a need for improved record keeping on their own organisational systems to better evidence case allocation, work with the individual under supervision, Court reports, OASyS, TRODA or other assessments and documentation relating to parole and licencing. This should be addressed to ensure that information shared is to a high standard across prisons and probation functions.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 4

Within three months of report publication, the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements partners should ensure that guidance is issued to staff that sets out a consistent use of the Violent and Sex Offender Register for individuals they are involved in the supervision and management of.

- 3.53 The lack of a signed information sharing agreement between the PSNI, DoJ and HMPPS, was a barrier to sharing protected information in an effective and timely manner. Supervising Officers and senior managers did not have routine access to high level intelligence in respect of those they were supervising. Although Inspectors were reassured that steps were taken to share information when required, the processes for this were not straightforward or as efficient as they could be. This needs to be expedited as outlined in Strategic Recommendation 2.
- 3.54 There was no existing single database for the MARA cohort which contained key information and dates relating to the period of supervision or data in relation to risks, needs and Section 75 characteristics.⁵⁸ Individual organisations had their own lists of MARA cases, which led to potential duplication and inconsistency. HMPPS had undertaken a useful piece of analysis of the risks and needs for those under supervision in the community, which was a positive start in order to inform future service requirements.

58 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on public authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in respect of religious belief, political opinion, gender, race, disability, age, marital status, dependants and sexual orientation. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>.

- 3.55 Community background and equality and diversity characteristics were not routinely recorded in all cases across any of the partner organisations case management systems. In the HMPPS data regarding community background and religion was absent in approximately two thirds of cases. Such characteristics and personal circumstances were not always considered in initial assessments, however, were sufficiently considered in the subsequent delivery of supervision activity in most cases.
- 3.56 There had been little review activity of the MARA processes and activities to drive improvements since the initial design and implementation phase of the arrangements. This had led to drift and unclear boundaries about roles and responsibilities. Routine business as usual activity remained convoluted and cumbersome with operational staff needing to navigate processes that cause delay and barriers to effective case management.
- 3.57 Inspectors saw examples of the escalation of issues relating to accessing information from children services to the DoJ, however the outcomes and learning to improve access to information and subsequent service delivery, were not evident. This impacted on the management of cases.
- 3.58 The auditing of HMPPS cases was somewhat restricted by the lack of sufficient recording of contact, and assessments completed, in 11 out of the 22 cases reviewed. Overall, there was little evidence of assurance activity on the HMPPS cases, with several of those cases inspected lacking sufficient case recording or assessment and reviewing activity. This had not been addressed by line management at the point of this Review. Audit, quality and performance activities were insufficient, failing to identify and address the gaps identified through the Review. HMPPS staff indicated that they had regular supervision, and this included case discussions and full case reviews. These case discussions were not, however, routinely recorded within case records and that was a gap.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATION 5

Within three months of report publication, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should implement an effective system of audit and assurance activity to ensure sufficient case recording, assessment and reviewing activity for individuals supervised under the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements.

- 3.59 The processes in place within the PSNI Terrorist Offender Management Unit were effective in ensuring timely and relevant information was shared within the team. Supervisors attended the weekly MARA Panel meetings and MARA Classification Panels when required and promptly updated the team about actions arising. Supervisors were also responsible for dealing with intelligence and making requests to the MARA Panel for risk management actions, such as variations to

licence conditions, and could escalate issues if required through to the Terrorist Investigation Unit Chief Inspector and Superintendent.

- 3.60 PSNI Prison Liaison Officers advised that information sharing for MARA cases operated effectively. They reported being aware of the individuals being managed under MARA and saw all Security Intelligence Reports generated within the prison establishments as a matter of course.

PROMOTING DESISTANCE AND DISENGAGEMENT

The contribution of the NIPS to promoting desistance and disengagement

- 3.61 In 10 of the 13 custody cases reviewed the assessment of prisoners' needs and risks of harm was assessed by Inspectors as poor and not sufficiently good in the remaining cases. In induction contacts, needs profiles, PDPs and case conference minutes Inspectors saw very few references to pre-sentence reports, sentencing remarks, OASyS, TRODA or other assessment outcomes and how they informed sentence and pre-release testing plans.
- 3.62 In eight of the 13 custody cases reviewed Inspectors found that PDPs poorly reflected individuals' assessed risk of harm and needs and insufficient opportunities for prisoners to discuss and address their risk of harm and needs even though in many of the cases they had indicated they were willing and ready to do so. In a further four cases Inspectors assessed this area as not sufficiently good. Inspectors saw a list of factors related to offending behaviour, attitudes and needs in one PDP but no specific objectives to address the factors which had been listed.
- 3.63 Sentence plans mostly contained generic objectives rather than person specific ones. For those serving lengthy custodial periods, although there was reference to offence focused work commencing prior to tariff expiry, there was not a clear plan for how the sentence was to be navigated. In one case Inspectors judged the quality of sentence planning to be reasonably good. This case demonstrated good collaborative working, involving a range of statutory and other agencies. It was evident that discussions were person focused and needs had been identified and appropriate referrals made. The Supervising Officer worked closely with the PDP Co-ordinator and had been an integral part of progression planning.
- 3.64 Despite prisoners reporting that they were willing and ready to engage in discussions about their offending and treatment, there was very limited evidence that this had been followed-up. In some cases, NIPS Psychology had conducted assessment and one-to-one intervention work but in others it was recorded that NIPS Psychology did not work with Terrorist Risk Offenders. Apart from psychological support provided by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, there were missed opportunities to provide psychological support in many cases and in particular to those serving very lengthy sentences. Prisoners reported engagement with health care staff as being particularly positive.

- 3.65 The quality of engagement between prisoners and their PDP Co-ordinators was noticeably better at Magilligan than the other two prison sites. Co-ordinators there promptly identified MARA cases and spoke to prisoners about the arrangements, their index offending and risks and actively sought to identify the allocated Supervising Officer and collaborated closely with them.
- 3.66 With the exception of those accommodated at Magilligan, prisoners generally reported receiving very little engagement and support from PDUs. They said they mostly self-referred to education, work and other interventions. The quality of PDU inmate notes and case conference records was generally not satisfactory. Most were brief and general in nature. While it was positive that updates were recorded on engagement with purposeful activity, very few evidenced any discussions around current and future risk and needs, offending, motivations, attitudes and views on progress and release. Only one made reference to recommendations made by the Parole Commissioners and how these were being progressed.
- 3.67 There should be equal access to behaviour programmes and other interventions that support desistance and disengagement. These were not being routinely offered or delivered within the custodial environment, especially to those within separated conditions, even when individuals had indicated their willingness to engage in offence-focused work.
- 3.68 Not all cases had yet reached parole review and release planning stages. In the six cases that had, Inspectors assessed that support for prisoners to prepare them for release was reasonably good in one case, not sufficiently good in three cases and poor in two cases. This worked better when Supervising Officers had opportunities to engage with prisoners and PDP Co-ordinators at an earlier stage in the sentence. In one report regarding an individual who had served 20 years of his sentence no-one other than the Supervising Officer had had a conversation with him about his offence, behaviours or attitudes and plans for release. His release was refused at his tariff expiry review to allow for work with his Supervising Officer to progress. This represented missed opportunities to complete this work at an earlier stage in the sentence.
- 3.69 Community background was not recorded in any case and there was no evidence that assessments of equality and diversity characteristics were made to inform the prisoners ability and capacity to engage in the PDP process.
- 3.70 There was no evidence of the interface between MARA Panels and prison custody planning processes. NIPS staff reported that as Public Protection Branch in DoJ collated dossiers for those individuals supervised under MARA who were in custody, they were unsighted on dossiers and parole and licencing functionality on the NIPS case management system was not being updated for these cases.

3.71 It was unclear at what point Supervising Officers were allocated to custody cases. In one case the name of the Supervising Officer was recorded on the prison records management system (but against a previous custodial period and was not readily accessible). It was not evident in most records to what extent information about telephone, visits or associate monitoring informed assessments of risk of harm.

3.72 Individuals in custody reported that their preference was for face-to-face contact rather than interviews being conducted by video conference, however some prisoners reported not having yet met their allocated Supervising Officer. Some difficulties were reported with cancelled appointments and the logistics of online appointments.

The contribution of HMPPS to promoting desistance and disengagement

3.73 Most Supervising Officers maintained strong and respectful relationships with individuals under supervision which is known to be imperative in supporting and facilitating change. There was limited evidence of individuals under supervision being able to access services in the community which supported ongoing desistance and disengagement from previous offending behaviour. Some individuals did access mental health services and were supported to address alcohol and drug related issues, but not all Supervising Officers were confident about how to access community-based services across Northern Ireland.

3.74 As noted earlier in this report there was a lack of psychology resources accessible to the HMPPS team at an operational level. Supervising Officers accessed psychology support for case consultations in the community to support their engagement with individuals under supervision, however this did not result in direct psychological interventions for those with complex needs. Access to this support was not part of the agreed service delivery model funded by the DoJ and was not costed as part of its provision. In some instances, individuals under supervision were able to access health and counselling services in the community, but not in all cases where it would have been beneficial, even when there was evidence of significant trauma experience, linked to desistance and risk of serious harm, and the individual was willing to engage.

3.75 Key factors linked to desistance included attitudes to offending, thinking and behaviour, lifestyle and family and associates. There were no approved structured interventions available for exploring or addressing these factors with individuals under MARA supervision at the point of this Review.

3.76 Where assessments had been completed, these were largely strength focused and identified the protective factors which supported desistance. This included engagement with family members to support the supervisory relationship and consideration for the motivation and readiness to engage and comply with supervision. Sentence planning, however, largely lacked meaningful engagement by the service user and changes in factors linked to desistance were not always considered within reviews.

3.77 There was an over-reliance on lack of known re-offending as a sign of compliance and engagement, without a deeper analysis of desistance or disengagement factors that were contributing to the changes in behaviour. Although this may be one indicator of a reduction in the risk of harm it is not considered that it should be the only one.⁵⁹ The lack of understanding of the Northern Ireland context and the complexity of the offending behaviour undermined effective disengagement strategies.

KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

3.78 The lack of structured psychological assessment and intervention limited the depth of risk understanding and subsequent management. Clear identification of risk of harm to others was present in most (10 out of 14) completed assessments by HMPPS, with victim specific concerns being considered in these cases. There were, however, five cases that did not have an up-to-date recorded assessment or plan of work to manage risk of harm.

3.79 The HMPPS assessed level of risk of serious harm mostly aligned with Inspectors' views (in 18 out of 22 cases) however there was little recording of case discussions with managers, partners or through MARA Panel reviews that detailed the justification for reduction in risk level, leading to gaps in accountability and transparency. Two cases lacked clarity on the assessed level of risk and a further two had been reduced to medium risk of serious harm, where Inspectors believed they should have remained assessed as high. Reductions in risk levels were often based solely on lack of recent convictions, rather than any evidenced change in attitudes.

3.80 Accessing information pertaining to risk was inconsistent in the HMPPS case records, specifically in relation to child safeguarding concerns, with sufficient responses to request for information only being evidenced in five out of 14 relevant cases. Escalation routes existed but appeared to be ineffective in overcoming these barriers.

3.81 There was insufficient evidence of how pre-release testing periods were being used to support resettlement and there was a lack of proactive involvement, or recording, of contact with Supervising Officers in most cases during this period, or how these periods were being appropriately risk assessed and managed.

59 Johnathan Hall KC also noted the need for caution about this issue: *The index offence is very important but is not always a reliable guide to future serious harm....Terrorism convictions tend to involve precursor behaviour such as mere collection of information useful to terrorists (Section 58 Terrorism Act 2000). A person convicted of such an offence, who will receive a relatively short sentence, may well present a risk of carrying out a lethal attack. Secondly, offenders may seek to glorify or encourage terrorism, or raise funds, without ever intended to carry out attacks themselves. The real harm comes from others who may be inspired, or enabled, to carry out attacks. See Jonathan Hall KC (Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation), Terrorist Risk Offenders: Independent Review of Statutory Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, May 2020, available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f4f73a1e90e07469b7d02f8/supervision-terrorism-and-terrorism-risk-offenders-review.pdf>*

- 3.82 Due to insufficient recording in HMPPS case records, it was difficult to ascertain that the level of contact during the supervisory period was adequate to manage risk in all cases, however this was positively evidenced in 15 out of the 22 cases inspected. Restrictive measures, using licence conditions and MARA involvement, were consistently recorded and explained to individuals under supervision.
- 3.83 Contingency planning within risk management plans was largely too broad and not linked to signs of increasing risk factors or signs of re-engagement with those factors linked to offending behaviour. They lacked personalisation and were overly generic. In some cases, the PSNI Terrorist Offender Manager Unit Officers used the information contained in them to inform any subsequent police risk management plans created, particularly for those who had longer-term terrorism notification requirements. For example, in one risk management plan where the Supervising Officer had assessed the individual under supervision as scoring highly on 'disengagement from terrorism' the PSNI had used this information to help them grade the future risk and how the individual should continue to be managed. The provision of a standardised handover pack from HMPPS to the PSNI would be beneficial.
- 3.84 Reviewing activity was insufficiently evidenced in 12 out of 22 HMPPS cases, even when new risk information emerged and this was a concern. Changes in risk factors were identified in eight cases but subsequently used to inform reviews in only three of those cases. Updated risk management plans were accurate and comprehensive in only three of 15 relevant cases. The PSNI were not always sighted when the risk management plan was amended by the Supervising Officer.
- 3.85 Supervisory relationships appeared largely positive, however had the potential to be superficial. The genuineness of these relationships was important for the management of risk, however the lack of knowledge of community backgrounds and suitable interventions challenged the efficacy of what was being delivered.
- 3.86 Overall, Inspectors believe that the building blocks for MARA supervision are in place and there have been positive elements evidenced in delivering the supervisory process. The delivery of MARA supervision in the community had filled an important and significant gap since the withdrawal of probation services by the PBNI. There was a clear commitment and dedication by practitioners to working with those under supervision in the community to support their rehabilitation and resettlement, as well as important conversations about ideologies and motivations which led to offending. It is vital now that improvements are delivered in the processes, procedures and working arrangements to ensure effective delivery of MARA in the future.

CHAPTER 4: **OUTCOMES**

PROMOTING DESISTANCE AND DISENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 Supervising Officers noted the progressive steps that had been made since the commencement of MARA, including the quality of the working relationships fostered with individuals under supervision, the high level of compliance and the engagement achieved to date.
- 4.2 At the time of this Review there was no formal way of seeking feedback from individuals supervised under MARA, either in custody or in the community. HMPPS had provided the DoJ with an adapted version of their 'Your Views Matter' survey to capture the views of those individuals under supervision in the community but this had not yet been agreed for use with this cohort. A mechanism to seek feedback would be important in order to capture learning from the experiences of individuals supervised under MARA, both in custody and the community.
- 4.3 To assess the outcomes for those subject to MARA Inspectors sought feedback from individuals who had been notified that they had been categorised as a Terrorist Risk Offender under MARA both in custody and in the community. There was a lack of knowledge and understanding of many of those in custody as to what MARA were and a perception of inconsistencies as to why some were managed under MARA and others not. Inspectors heard examples of prisoners receiving an information bundle and a letter advising them they were subject to MARA without further explanation, inconsistencies in the point of meeting the Supervising Officer and some confusion over the supervision process, restrictions and requirements during periods of pre-release testing compared to post release on licence.
- 4.4 Those in custody at Maghaberry Prison in particular said that when they asked for clarification from staff and leaders they could not assist, including from PDP Co-ordinators. The exception was at Magilligan Prison where PDP Co-ordinators were able to advise and explain what the arrangements meant and how they operated. The custody case audits demonstrated that this was being done promptly. Lack of knowledge could undermine confidence in the arrangements and be a barrier to promoting desistance and disengagement.
- 4.5 Based on this feedback, action to improve understanding of those classified as Terrorist Risk Offenders and under MARA supervision, is needed. This needs to be addressed by awareness raising for staff working in the partner organisations, as

recommended in Operational Recommendation 1 (see staffing and resources) and greater consistency in engagement with the Supervising Officer. It could also be aided, for example, by the development of a leaflet in language appropriate to the needs of those receiving it or awareness sessions for those in custody. Explanatory booklets for both individuals managed under PPANI and registered victims related to PPANI cases were available and this approach could be adapted.

- 4.6 For those who had a Supervising Officer in the community the feedback was mainly positive. Inspectors heard examples of support and assistance given by Supervising Officers in relation to personal circumstances, access to other agencies, living arrangements and resettlement and rehabilitation. Inspectors were told of positive engagement by Supervising Officers with families through home visits, meetings and telephone contact which assisted in promoting family relationships and supporting desistance. In addition, some individuals who had been through the NIPS pre-release testing phase in the Working Out Unit after a long period in custody, were extremely positive about the support they had received from NIPS staff during that time.

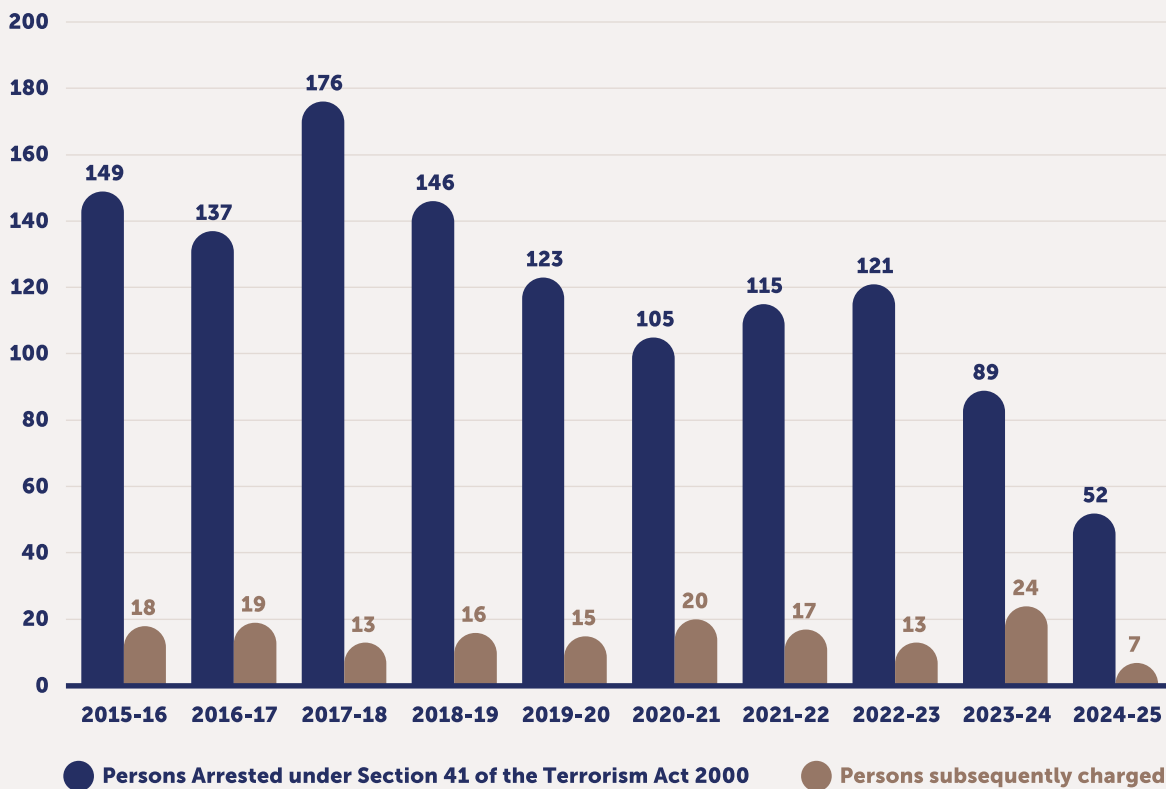
KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

- 4.7 For MARA-related cases victims could register with the Victim Information Scheme managed by the PBNI. CJI's 2020 *Inspection of Probation Practice*⁶⁰ found that victim work was a strategic priority for the PBNI and the Victim Information Unit had recorded increased numbers of registered victims over the previous three years. A survey conducted for that inspection found that people registered with the Victim Information Scheme were mainly positive about the work of probation and the PBNI had established victim forums to seek feedback on their experiences. In this MARA Review Inspectors used a paper-based survey to seek the views of those who were registered with the PBNI Victim Information Scheme about the service received. The survey was issued to victims registered in respect of five individuals supervised under MARA. One response was received to the survey and positive feedback was provided. No work had been undertaken by MARA to assess the views of victims.
- 4.8 There had been a downward trend in recent years in both police statistical data relating to the security situation, which was an indicator of the level of Northern Ireland-related terrorism, as well as the Northern Ireland threat assessment (see Chapter 1). Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 enables Police Officers to arrest persons whom they reasonably suspect to be a terrorist. Following arrest under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act an individual may be charged with any offence (for example attempted murder) and not necessarily an offence listed under the Terrorism Act, however these individuals may still be classified as MARA cases on conviction, if the Judge's sentencing remarks or MARA partners indicate the offence was committed in relation to terrorism.

60 CJI, *Probation Practice in Northern Ireland: An inspection of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, December 2020*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/reports/an-inspection-of-the-probation-practice-in-northern-ireland/>.

4.9 Figure 5 illustrates PSNI statistics on Section 41 Terrorism Act arrests and subsequent charge by the PSNI over the last 10 years. This data gives an indication of the numbers of individuals who may, following a conviction and qualifying sentence, be classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender and managed by MARA. This type of data, as well as other statistical information in relation to the security situation, should be used by MARA partners to develop an understanding of projected future demand.

Figure 5: Persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act and subsequently charged 2015-16 to 2024-25.⁶¹



4.10 Official statistical data was not available about reoffending or licence variation or revocation for the MARA cohort. Inspectors heard of examples where licence variations were requested by MARA partners to address changes in risk or circumstances, but that amendments had not been forthcoming as a result, however there was no data collected to monitor this. DoJ advised CJI that there had been six recalls to prison between the introduction of MARA and the time of Review Report drafting, with two individuals having been recalled twice and a further two individuals recalled once. This was positive, particularly given the increasing number of overall recalls to prison recommended by the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland.⁶²

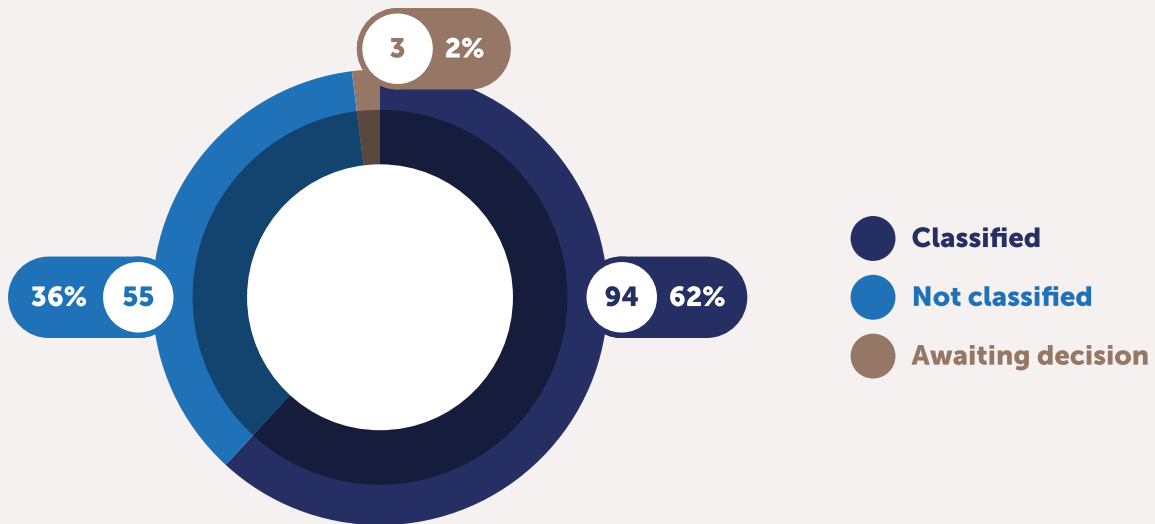
61 PSNI, *Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics: 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, May 2025*, available at <https://www.psnipolice.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Security%20Situation%20Statistics%20to%20March%202025.pdf>.

62 Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland, *Annual Report 2024-25: Report for the year end 31 March 2025, July 2025*, available at <https://www.parolecomni.org.uk/publications/annual-report-202425>.

However some partners noted that licence variation may address escalating risk and reduce the likelihood of a need to recall an individual to custody. It is important to monitor key performance metrics, as outlined in Strategic Recommendation 1, to ensure the risk of harm is being appropriately addressed and that the arrangements are sufficiently robust to keep people safe.

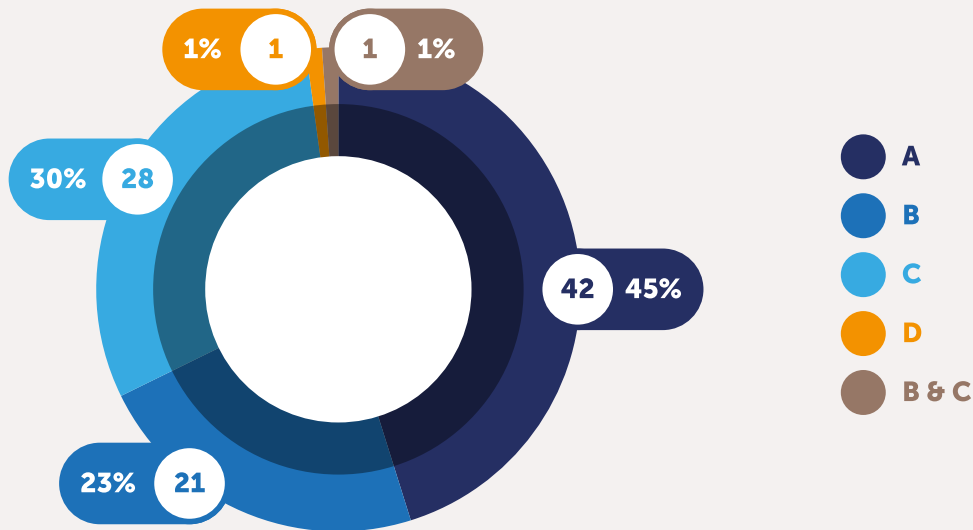
- 4.11 Data on cases referred for MARA classification was provided to Inspectors for this Review. Analysis of this data, as outlined in Figure 6, showed that just under two-thirds of referrals (62%) resulted in classification as a MARA case.

Figure 6: Outcome of referrals made to MARA Classification Panel.



- 4.12 The classification data also included details on which criteria had been met for those cases which were classified as a Terrorist Risk Offender and would be managed under MARA. As can be seen in Figure 7, just under half of the cases (45%) were classified under criteria 'a' (conviction of a terrorism offence), with just under a quarter (23%) classified as category 'b' (connection made by sentencing Judge) and just under a third (30%) classified as category 'c' (connection made by MARA Panel). Only one case had been classified under category 'd' (concern). It was unclear to Inspectors why this category was used so infrequently but there had been no analysis or consideration of this at a multi-agency level. It was important that MARA Strategic Management Board was assured that the right people were being managed under the arrangements.

Figure 7: Classification criteria for MARA cases.



- a. The individual has been convicted of an offence under Terrorism legislation for which he/she is currently serving a sentence; or
- b. The individual has been convicted of, and is currently serving a sentence for offences where the sentencing judge has made explicit reference to, or indicated connection to terrorism, or terrorist activity; or
- c. The individual has been convicted of, and is serving a current sentence for offence(s) where MARAP is satisfied offence(s) was committed in connection to terrorism, or connection to terrorist activity; or
- d. The individual has been convicted of, and is serving, a current sentence in custody or on licence within the community and MARAP partners are satisfied there is information that indicates the individual is of terrorism concern.

4.13 Inspectors found no evidence of how exit planning, for individuals under supervision exiting the arrangements, would be managed. For non-MARA life licence cases under Article 8 of the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001⁶³ the PBNi could make a request to the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland to have conditions related to supervision cancelled. This same process could therefore be used for individuals supervised under life licence by MARA, although it was unclear whether all partners were aware of this. The process had not yet been used, despite at least one individual Inspectors believed to be worthy of consideration. Conversely the Article 50 Guidance did not provide the opportunity to manage an individual within MARA beyond the expiry of their licence, which the DoJ had identified as a gap. A review of the Article 50 Guidance, as outlined in Strategic Recommendation 2, should consider how to address this.

4.14 Supervising Officers felt safe doing this work and that all reasonable measures to ensure their health and wellbeing had been considered and appropriately responded to. Those working within local agencies had ongoing concerns, to a greater or lesser extent, about the potential risks of working with those supervised under MARA. There should be ongoing attention paid to ensuring the safety and confidence in risk mitigation measures of all those working within the arrangements.

63 See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2001/2564/article/8>.

4.15 Overall, there had been a lack of analysis and review as to how data and other available information demonstrated MARA outcomes. As outlined in Chapter 2, there needs to be a greater focus on identifying measures of success to develop a performance framework against which to assess and evaluate the contribution of MARA to the Programme for Government priority of ‘Safer Communities’, organisational and overall justice outcomes. The role of the Lay Advisors will be important in providing a support and challenge function to the arrangements.

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Desktop research, scoping meeting and development of inspection Terms of Reference and question areas

The Article 50 Guidance, relevant legislation and documentation provided by DoJ by way of background information was reviewed at scoping stage. Other relevant documents reviewed included information on arrangements for managing terrorist offenders and inspection reports from other jurisdictions.

A scoping meeting was held in 2024, facilitated by CJI with support from HMI Probation. Each organisation represented on the Senior Management Board, as well as the PBNI were invited to send a strategic and operational representative. The DoJ, HMPPS, NIO, NIPS, PBNI and the PSNI presented on their input to the MARA process in order that the Review Team had an informed understanding of how the process operated in practice.

The Terms of Reference development was informed by the methodology utilised in the *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection* in England and Wales (by HMI Probation, HMI CFRS and HMI Prisons)⁶⁴ as well as the specific approach of MARA in Northern Ireland, mapped out in the scoping workshop.

Self-assessment

The DoJ, HMPPS, NIPS, PBNI and the PSNI were requested to complete a self-assessment process in relation to the Review key questions against a template framework across the areas of strategy and governance, delivery and outcomes. Governance, guidance, policy and practice documents and data were provided as supporting evidence for the self-assessment documents.

Document review

An assessment was undertaken of the documentation collated to cross-reference information against the Review framework. This was used to inform interview questions during the fieldwork phase as well as the development of the case review methodology.

Fieldwork

One-to-one and focus groups interviews were conducted with a range of personnel within the relevant agencies. Interviews were also conducted with stakeholders who had an interest in or involvement with MARA. Representatives from the following areas were interviewed during the fieldwork:

⁶⁴ HM Inspectorate of Probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HM Inspectorate of Prisons, *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection - National security division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of terrorist attacks*, July 2023, available at <https://ciji.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspection-report/counter-terrorism-joint-inspection-national-security-division-and-multi-agency-arrangements-for-the-management-of-terrorist-offenders-in-the-wake-of-terrorist-attacks/>.

Department of Justice:

- Deputy Secretary, Safer Communities; and
- Head of Public Protection Branch and staff.

HMPPS:

- Director, National Security Division;
- Head of Operational Function, National Security Division;
- MARA Team Leader;
- MARA Supervising Officers; and
- MARA Business Manager and Administrative Officer.

NIPS:

- Deputy Director, Operations;
- Director of Resettlement;
- Head of Security;
- Head of Licencing;
- Head of Psychology;
- Governors, Prisoner Development Unit (Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison, Maghaberry Prison and Magilligan Prison);
- Governors, Security (Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison, Maghaberry Prison and Magilligan Prison); and
- Prisoner Development Unit staff (Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison, Maghaberry Prison and Magilligan Prison).

PBNI:

- Chief Executive; and
- Assistant Director, Public Protection.

PSNI:

- Assistant Chief Constable, Crime;
- Detective Superintendent, Head of Terrorism Investigation Unit;
- Detective Chief Inspector, Terrorism Investigation Unit;
- Detective Inspector, Terrorist Offender Management Unit;
- Detective Sergeant, Terrorist Offender Management Unit;
- Detective Constables, Terrorist Offender Management Unit;
- District Commander, Belfast;*
- District Commander and Superintendent Operations, Derry City & Strabane;*
- Local Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team Sergeants and Inspectors, Belfast/Mid and East Antrim;*
- Neighbourhood Policing Team Sergeants, Derry City & Strabane/Causeway Coast and Glens;*
- Local Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team Constables, Belfast/Mid and East Antrim;*
- Local Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team Constables, Derry City and Strabane/Causeway Coast and Glens;* and
- Prison Liaison Officers.

* Interviews and focus groups with District, Local and Neighbourhood Policing Officers were undertaken as part of joint fieldwork for CJI's thematic inspection of child criminal exploitation and Follow-Up Review of the inspection of child sexual exploitation.

Stakeholders:

- Andrew Silke, Professor of Criminology, Royal Holloway University of London;
- Co-ordinator, Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland;
- Criminal Law Committee, Law Society of Northern Ireland;
- Forensic Management Care Network;
- Independent Reporting Commission;
- Jonathan Hall KC, Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation;
- National Association of Probation Officers;
- Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland; and
- Youth Justice Agency.

In addition, Inspectors issued a paper-based survey to individuals registered with the PBNI Victim Information Scheme, who were associated with five individuals under MARA supervision. One response was received.

Information was shared with individuals under MARA supervision in custody and in the community inviting them to contribute to this review. As a result, Inspectors spoke to nine individuals held in custody across Hydebank Wood Women's Prison, Magilligan Prison and Maghaberry Prison. Two telephone and three face-to-face interviews were conducted with those in the community and one written response was received.

Inspectors attended a MARA Classification Panel and two MARA Panels where cases were reviewed. Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to a sample of 27 cases which had been referred for classification.

Case file reviews

PSNI

A review was conducted of police records relating to MARA cases by Inspectors from HMICFRS. A question set was developed based on that used by HMICFRS for the England and Wales *Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection*. The questions considered the management of individuals under MARA by the PSNI as well as information sharing and partnership working with MARA agencies.

The PSNI Terrorist Offender Management Unit managed individuals who had been convicted of terrorist-related offending and were subject to either supervision under MARA or notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 or were subject to both sets of requirements. Part 4, Section 53 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 set out the period for which notification requirements applied as 30, 15 or 10 years, depending on the age of the person at conviction and the sentence length. Individuals who were subject to MARA were therefore usually subject to notification requirements under Part 4 for a longer period of time than the period under licence. These individuals

therefore continued to be managed by the PSNI Terrorist Offender Management Unit beyond the period of their licence conditions and MARA supervision (hence the 'Part 4 only' category above.)

The focus of this Review was on the supervision of MARA cases by the PSNI but where individuals were subject to notification requirements under Part 4 Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 there were overlaps in record keeping and information sharing. Where this occurred, Inspectors reviewed this information together. Inspectors did not however review records relating to those solely subject to notification requirements under Part 4 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008.

The question set was used to review records held on the PSNI's NICHE™ Records Management System⁶⁵ and ViSOR, which related to 15 cases allocated to the Terrorist Offender Management Unit at that time (September 2025). The case sample included:

- over half of the total cases in the category 'MARA and Part 4'
- two cases which were 'MARA only'; and
- two cases where the individuals had been classified as MARA who were in prison at the time of review.

NIPS

A review was conducted of two types of case records held by the NIPS.

Preparation for release

In July 2025 Inspectors from CJI and HMI Probation undertook a case audit of records relating to preparation for release. As of June 2025, there were 20 prisoners subject to the MARA in prison custody; the majority of whom were accommodated at Maghaberry Prison (Maghaberry Prison - 15, Magilligan Prison - three and Hydebank Wood Women's Prison - two). Nine of the 15 men at Maghaberry Prison were accommodated on the separated landings.

A case audit template was developed, based on the HMI Prisons Preparation for release case audit template adapted for use in Northern Ireland. The audit looked at i) initial assessments of risk and needs ii) sentence planning, review and interventions and iii) preparation for release planning. The audits entailed a review of prison case management records, minutes of case conference meetings and Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland decisions.

Inspectors used the case audit template to review the records of 13 prisoners held in custody in July 2025. Cases were inspected where a Supervising Officer had been allocated. Two of the cases were female prisoners and the remainder were male.

65 Niche™ Records Management System is a police operational platform developed by Niche Technology.

Prison security

In September 2025 Inspectors from CJI and HMI Prisons reviewed records on the NIPS case management system relating to prison security.

Inspectors attended Maghaberry Prison over two days and reviewed minutes from MARA Strategic Management Board and Strategic Security Group meetings, Local Tactical Assessments for each prison for the previous 12 months as well as all Security Information Reports relating to those supervised under MARA for the same period at Maghaberry Prison and Magilligan Prison.

Inspectors interviewed Security Managers for all three prisons, three PSNI Police Liaison Officers and the Head of Security Information Branch in NIPS Headquarters.

HMPPS

A review was conducted of case records held by the Supervising Officer team in HMPPS by Inspectors from HMI Probation.

In May 2025, there were 35 individuals allocated a Supervising Officer; the majority of whom were supervised in the community (22). All 22 in the community were men subject to licence following release from custody who had been allocated a Supervising Officer for up to a maximum of four years at the point of audit. Two-thirds of those under supervision were serving a Determinate Custodial Sentence of over 12 months and a third were subject to an Indeterminate Custodial Sentence or Life Sentence. All those under supervision were over 25 years of age, with 91% aged 36 years or over.

Inspectors conducted an audit of all community cases in June 2025. This included a review of nDelius⁶⁶ records, associated documentation, OASyS assessments and interviews, in seven of the cases, with the member of the HMPPS team supervising the individual.

The audit looked at i) contact pre-release between the individual under supervision, prison PDU staff and the Supervising Officer, as well as input by MARA partners into the pre-release planning ii) initial assessments of risk and needs, sentence planning, implementation and delivery of services and review in the community and iii) interviews with the Supervising Officer. The assessment was based on the HMI Probation thematic case inspection template adapted for use in Northern Ireland.

The auditing of cases was somewhat restricted by the lack of sufficient recording of contact, and assessments completed, in 11 out of the 22 cases reviewed.

Analysis and drafting

This Inspection was assisted by the use of Microsoft Copilot, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered tool, guided and reviewed by CJI Inspectors, in line with UK Government AI policy and CJI's interim AI policy.

⁶⁶ National Delius (or nDelius) is the name for the probation case management system used by HMPPS in England and Wales to assist with managing individuals under supervision in the community.

APPENDIX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE

A REVIEW OF THE MULTI-AGENCY REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) has been requested by the Minister of Justice to undertake a review of the arrangements to assess and manage the risks posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders (TROs) in Northern Ireland (the Review.) These arrangements are known as the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements (MARA) and were established by Guidance issued under Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.⁶⁷

In September 2021 the Minister of Justice issued her Department's Article 50 Guidance (the Guidance) on MARA to the Department of Justice (DoJ), the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and required the organisations to share information and work together to:

- a) support the assessment and management of the risk posed to the public by individuals classified under these arrangements as TROs; and
- b) support the rehabilitation of TROs.

Previous arrangements to supervise terrorist and politically motivated offenders by the PBNI had ended in response to a threat against the organisation. The Guidance therefore stated that the PBNI was not responsible for, or involved in, the supervision or management of individuals classified as TROs under the arrangements. In 2021, the National Security Division of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) were commissioned by the DoJ to provide the supervisory function for individuals managed under the MARA.

The Guidance placed a duty on the organisations to keep the arrangements under review with a view to monitoring their effectiveness. In September 2024 the Minister of Justice requested that the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland conduct a review of the MARA.

⁶⁷ DoJ, *Arrangements to Assess and Manage the Risks Posed by Terrorist Risk Offenders: Article 50 Guidance, September 2021*, available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/mara-policy-guidance-article-50-guidance.pdf>.

As this is the first time CJI has reviewed the arrangements for managing TROs and the services provided by HMPPS, support from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) has been sought to plan and undertake this review, drawing on the expertise and experience of the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection of Counter-Terrorism in England and Wales (see context section). CJI has previously worked with HMI Probation to inspect the work of the PBNI (the most recent report on Probation Practice was published in 2020⁶⁸) and with HMI Prisons on inspections of prisons in Northern Ireland (most recently inspections of Hydebank Wood Secure College and Women's Prison undertaken in June 2024 and published in November 2024⁶⁹). Scoping for this review commenced in late 2024 with introductory meetings with the partner organisations, followed by a workshop in February 2025.

This review will principally consider the work of the DoJ, the National Security Division of HMPPS, the NIPS and the PSNI. The role of the PBNI insofar as it contributes to the operation of the arrangements will also be reviewed.

Context

There are longstanding multi-agency arrangements to manage violent and sexual offenders across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) across England, Wales and Scotland, the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland (PPANI) and the Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management (SORAM) in the Republic of Ireland, although subject to differing legislation and guidance have the same underlying principles and intention. The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 placed previously voluntary arrangements onto a statutory footing, leading to the establishment of PPANI. CJI has previously undertaken a number of inspections of the PPANI, most recently in 2019.⁷⁰

In England and Wales MAPPA established arrangements for assessing and managing the risks posed by certain categories of offenders. Category 4 includes individuals subject to notification requirements under the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008,⁷¹ convicted of terrorism offences who have been sentenced to 12 months or more in custody or to detention in hospital and are living in the community; and those who have committed an offence and may be at risk of involvement in terrorism-related activity.

68 CJI, *Probation Practice in Northern Ireland: An inspection of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2020/October-December/Probation-Practice-in-Northern-Ireland>.

69 See published prison inspections at <https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2024>.

70 CJI, *Public Protection Inspection III: A thematic inspection of the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland*, available at <https://www.cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2019/October-December/PPANI>

71 See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/28/contents>.

In July 2023 the report of a Counter-Terrorism Joint Inspection in England and Wales was published by HMI Probation, HMICFRS and HMI Prisons.⁷² This inspected the work of the National Security Division (part of the Probation Service), the Counter Terrorism Nominal Management (part of Counter Terrorism Policing) and His Majesty's Prison Service. This inspection found that the National Security Division, probation, police and prison services worked well together and were approaching managing counter terrorism cases collectively but made 14 recommendations to strengthen practice and address the gaps highlighted.

The MARA was introduced to Northern Ireland in September 2021, specifically to manage those classified as TROs, separately to the existing arrangements for managing sexual and violent offenders under the PPANI. A statutory duty was placed on the DoJ, the NIPS, the PBNI and the PSNI to give effect to Guidance issued under Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 to contribute to the effective assessment and management of the risks posed by TROs and, where relevant, contribute to the assessment and management of the risks posed by this type of offender. The Guidance set out the specific roles of each organisation. A Manual of Practice was developed by the DoJ which set out the policies and processes to deliver MARA at an operational level. A MARA Casework Team was established by the DoJ to provide the main operational function of the arrangements and give effect to risk assessment and management of TROs alongside community supervision. In 2021 the National Security Division of HMPPS were commissioned to provide the supervisory function for MARA.

Aims of the review

The broad aims of the review are to:

- assess the effectiveness of the strategy, policy framework and governance arrangements underpinning the MARA and whether leadership supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach to managing the risk of serious harm posed by TROs in Northern Ireland;
- assess the extent to which partnership working between statutory partners, providers and other agencies is established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services;
- assess whether the MARA partners have sufficient capacity and capability to support the delivery of high-quality services to managing the risk of serious harm posed by TROs in Northern Ireland, with an operating model that is sustainable and uses resources efficiently;
- assess whether timely and relevant information is available to support high-quality services to managing the risk of serious harm posed by TROs in Northern Ireland;
- examine the effectiveness of the arrangements for promoting desistance and disengagement; and
- examine the effectiveness of the arrangements in keeping people safe.

⁷² *Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, Counter Terrorism Joint Inspection - National security division and multi-agency arrangements for the management of terrorist offenders in the wake of terrorist attacks, July 2023*, available at <https://ciji.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/inspection-report/counter-terrorism-joint-inspection-national-security-division-and-multi-agency-arrangements-for-the-management-of-terrorist-offenders-in-the-wake-of-terrorist-attacks/>.

Other matters of significance as they arise during the review will also be considered.

Methodology

The review will be based on the CJI Inspection Framework. The three main elements of the inspection framework are:

- strategy and governance;
- delivery; and
- outcomes.

Constants in each of the three framework elements and throughout each inspection are equality and fairness, together with standards and best practice. The CJI inspection methodology can be found in *The Inspection Process* on our website.

Design and Planning

Preliminary research

Information and reports were reviewed to inform the scope of the review and how it will be conducted.

Benchmarking, research and data collection

Inspection reports and guidance documents on arrangements from other jurisdictions were considered as well as published information and documents. The DoJ provided some policy documents and data which was reviewed.

Contact with agencies

A preliminary round of discussions took place with the DoJ, the National Security Division of HMPPS, the NIPS, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the PBNI and the PSNI. The Terms of Reference for the review will be shared with the DoJ, NIO and criminal justice organisations and a copy published on CJI's website.

Delivery

Stakeholder consultation

A range of stakeholders from the statutory and community and voluntary sectors will be consulted. This will include human rights organisations, legal professionals, victim organisations and organisations which support the rehabilitation of TROs. The Youth Justice Agency (YJA) will also be consulted as a stakeholder.

Self-assessment

The DoJ and each criminal justice organisation will be invited to nominate a liaison officer to support the review.

A self-assessment request will be issued to the DoJ, the National Security Division of HMPPS, the NIPS, the PBNI and the PSNI.

Development of fieldwork plan

Fieldwork will be conducted with criminal justice organisations and will include:

- reviews of a sample of referral forms submitted to the MARA panel for classification;
- reviews of a sample of TRO case files (undertaken by Inspectors from HMI Probation) and police and prison records for managing TROs;
- interviews and focus groups including with representatives of other criminal justice organisations (for example the YJA and the Northern Ireland Policing Board); and
- CJI will make efforts to reflect the voices of victims and TROs directly and/or by seeking the views of advocacy or support services.

CJI will liaise with organisational liaison officers to plan and schedule the fieldwork within their respective organisations.

Analysis of data

All material and data provided and produced during the review will be analysed and triangulated. Partner inspectorates including HMI Probation, HMI Prisons and HMICFRS who provide expertise as appropriate will be consulted to sense check review findings.

Initial feedback to agency.

Emerging feedback will be provided to each criminal justice organisation involved in the review.

Drafting of report

Following completion of the fieldwork and analysis of data a draft report will be shared with the reviewed organisations for factual accuracy check. The Chief Inspector will invite the reviewed organisations to complete an action plan within six weeks to address the recommendations and if the plan has been agreed and is available it will be published as part of the final review report. The report will be shared, under embargo, in advance of the publication date with the reviewed organisations.

Publication and Closure

A report will be sent to the Minister of Justice for permission to publish. When permission is received the review report will be finalised for publication. A press release will be drafted and shared with the reviewed organisations prior to publication and release. A publication date will be agreed and the review report will be issued.

Indicative Timetable

Scoping/Research:	December 2024 to March 2025
Stakeholder consultation:	April 2025
Agency fieldwork:	April 2025 - September 2025
Draft Report to agencies:	January 2026
Factual accuracy feedback received:	February 2026.

The above timetable may be impacted by factors outside CJI's control. The reviewed organisations will be kept advised of any significant changes to the indicative timetable.



First published in Northern Ireland in June 2026 by

**Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland**

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www.cjini.org

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