

# CHILD PROTECTION

## CURRENT PICTURE

Sexual abuse of children in Jersey in common with other jurisdictions is most frequently carried out by family members or those trusted to care for children rather than the more publicised “stranger” incidents. Most offenders abuse their own children, stepchildren or others with whom they have a family relationship where ease of access and trust plays a part.

Sexual abuse accounts for approximately one third of referrals received by the police. Physical abuse also accounts for one third of referrals and the remainder is made up of emotional abuse, neglect and multiple combinations.

46% of all referrals to the family protection team are from Children’s Service. The police themselves account for 37% of referrals to the team and the other partner agencies and members of the public account for the rest.

Victims often report abuse historically once they have reached adulthood. This results in a sex offender potentially being active over a significant period of time before he or she is identified. In Jersey fewer than 10% of cases reported are historic. It is highly likely that many instances of sexual abuse both recent and historic are still going unreported.

There is still no registration of sex offenders in Jersey. There are, however, currently 5 UK registered sex offenders who are resident and working locally. In addition there are a number who travel to Jersey on holiday and are notified to the police.

## TRENDS AND FUTURE ISSUES

It is highly likely that Jersey will see the introduction of Sex Offenders Registration legislation in the near future. This will result in the formal capture and monitoring of sex offenders locally. Whilst the new legislation affords law enforcement greater powers to improve the levels of child protection there will be a number of challenges brought about by the implementation of the new legislation.

- The number of offenders who would require to register in terms of the new legislation is as yet unknown.
- The force must ensure that suitably trained and experienced staff are in place to collectively manage such offenders.
- The potential increase in human and financial costs in terms of the management of offenders requires to be assessed to ensure compliance.

The effective management of offenders requires partnership working to ensure the effective sharing of information and it is expected that Jersey will soon move towards establishing a MAPPA (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangement) system in common with the rest of the UK.

Technological advances – with the proliferation of new technology such as digital cameras, webcams 3G mobile telephones and the internet available in cafes, fast food restaurants, public libraries and areas where children are present, the determined offender has a broader range of means not only to gain access to children but also to minimise the risk of detection. Extensive broadband coverage raises the threat of increased online child sex abuse. Multiple images can be swiftly downloaded from websites and stored on personal hard drives. Offenders can assume false identities with relative ease, with the intention of grooming children. More computer-literate offenders may use software to erase data from their hard drives or even securely store hard drives at other locations.

As a result of this threat the force must ensure that suitably trained staff are available to investigate this type of offence and ensure that the need for modern up to date legislation to recognise offences, such as grooming is recognised as a priority by the States.

#### **Intelligence Priorities:**

- Collate and disseminate intelligence on current methods and advances in information and communication technology used to commit child protection crime.
- Develop a better integrated database which is more readily available to all officers in the force.
- Increased debriefing of returned missing children and abscondee to obtain intelligence on criminality.
- Continued identification of covert techniques that can provide intelligence on child protection.
- Increased use of media to enhance community awareness of child protection issues.

#### **Enforcement Priorities:**

- Exploitation of new legislation with regard to the registration of sex offenders.
- Drafting of legislation to take account of modern technology and new offences such as grooming.

**Prevention Priorities:**

- Exploit and fully influence bail conditions of those charged with a child protection crime.
- Fully publicise protection measures in regard to internet safety on the Force website.
- Develop an internet safety package to be delivered through the school liaison officer.