



His Majesty's Coroner Ms Alison Mutch
Senior Coroner for the Coroner Area of South Manchester
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

16 September 2024

Dear Ms Mutch,

RESPONSE TO REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

Thank you for Report to Prevent Future Deaths on 29 May 2024 regarding the unlawful killing of Elizabeth Sarah Jayne McCann.

Thank you for your conduct of the inquest and for your identification of a number of matters of concern, which are set out in the Report. These failings are shocking and I am clear that the lessons must be learned across Government and beyond. In providing this response to the Coroner's Report, the Home Office wishes to repeat the offering of its sincere condolences to Elizabeth's family, and we emphasise our commitment to addressing the matters of concerns raised.

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government and we will treat it as a national emergency. Our mission is to halve levels of violence against women and girls using every lever available to us. This means reforming the police response to these crimes, strengthening the criminal justice system, and empowering victims by providing access to specialist support when they need it. The Home Office is working closely with other departments and stakeholders in developing plans to achieve this mission.

We will build on the existing work I outline below, ensuring that wholesale systematic changes are made in response to the findings from your report. Making these changes will take time as we must guarantee they are delivered effectively, and that we are getting it right. Too often piecemeal changes have failed to deliver effective and lasting improvements. We are determined not to make the same mistakes.

The Home Office's response to your report focuses on two matters of concern raised, specifically concerns five and nine.

Matter of concern five

The inquest was told that nationally a significant number of police forces were struggling to adequately staff their Sexual Offender Management Units. As a consequence, the level of supervision of sex offenders in the community was being risk managed posing a risk to communities.

Increasing police capacity

Decisions on how funding and resources are utilised is a matter for chief constables and elected police and crime commissioners (including mayors with Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions). However, it is vitally important that every police force has the specialist officers and other resources necessary to support victims of rape and sexual violence, bring perpetrators to justice and manage the risks they pose.

The total number of officers nationally is 149,769 (headcount). Funding has previously been provided to forces to support the maintenance of officer numbers. In 2024/25 the police funding settlement provides funding of up to £18.5 billion for policing in England and Wales. Overall police funding available to PCCs will increase by up to £965.4 million. The Home Office will also provide additional Government grant funding of £175 million to policing in 2024/25, to support the costs of the 2024 police pay award.

On 31 March 2024, there were 8,189 police officers in Greater Manchester Police. Greater Manchester Police's funding will be up to £815.6m in 2024-25, an increase of up to £56.4m when compared to 2023/24.

However, I recognise your concerns regarding the lack of sufficient staffing amongst sexual offender management units and the impact that this has in ensuring sex offenders are being effectively managed in communities. I am committed to making our streets safer. As part of our mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade, we will ask the police to relentlessly pursue those perpetrators who pose the greatest risk to women and use all the tools at their disposal to protect victims and get dangerous offenders off the streets. We are currently working at pace to look at our national expectations on the management of the highest-risk offenders.

I also recognise that visible neighbourhood policing has been the cornerstone of the British consent-based model. In too many areas it has been eroded, leaving the police a reactive service focused on crisis response, rather than preventing crime.

This Government will introduce a new Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, restoring patrols to our town centres by recruiting thousands of new police officers, police and community support officers, and special constables. Communities and residents will have a named officer to turn to when things go wrong.

Enhancing policing capability

In addition to providing the police with sufficient capacity to improve its response to violence against women and girls, we will ensure the police has the necessary tools and capabilities.

The regime for managing registered sex offenders and those who pose a risk was reformed under the previous Government through the Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Act 2022 (“the Act”). Sexual harm prevention orders and sexual risk orders were amended to specify that the court should apply the lower civil standard of proof (balance of probabilities) when deciding an application for these civil orders. In addition, the Act enables the courts to impose positive obligations (in addition to restrictions) via these orders where appropriate, for example, requiring an individual to engage in a behaviour change programme or substance misuse services.

Violence against women and girls has been included in the Strategic Policing Requirement since 2023. All police forces in England and Wales are implementing a new National Operating Model for the investigation of rape, developed through Operation Soteria. The aim is to ensure forces have the right specialist capability and use all available levers to respond to sexual offending effectively.

Section 325 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 requires the police, probation and prison services in each local Criminal Justice Board area to work together to manage the risk posed by sexual and other offenders. These multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) provide a common framework for the identification, assessment and management of violent and sex offenders living in the community.

Your report is clear that more must be done to enhance the police’s capability to sufficiently manage sex offender in the community, and I agree that is the case. To make sure that the police, prisons, probation service and others have the right systems in place to do this and share pertinent information on registered sex offenders and other dangerous individuals, the Home Office is developing a new

multi-agency public protection system (MAPPS) which will provide improved functionality that will better meet the future needs of frontline offender managers. It will enable more effective and efficient offender and risk management, improve data sharing between frontline agencies and the management of additional cohorts of offenders.

In April 2023, the Home Office published an independent review of the police's management of sex offenders undertaken by former chief constable Mick Creedon. Chief Constable Creedon recommended that PCCs include MAPPA/sex offender management within their police and crime plans to ensure they are able to appropriately hold chief constables to account and provide them with the opportunity to inform the public of realistic expectations for sex offender management within the community.

The Government welcomes primacy being given to offender management in police and crime plans. Offender management is the mechanism that prevents reoffending and revictimization. Placing an emphasis on it in police and crime plans will raise awareness of the important preventative work that police offender managers do, which will in turn increase the level of informed accountability that police offender managers are subjected to.

I would like to assure you that I will be reviewing this as we develop our plans to halve the levels of violence against women and girls in the next decade. We will monitor closely and robustly if these systems are working.

Matter of concern 9

It was accepted that there needed to be a level of professional curiosity by staff dealing with high-risk offenders such as in this case and that training for probation officers and police staff needed to reinforce that.

I would also like to respond to your concerns relating to the lack of professional curiosity by staff dealing with high-risk offenders. This is – to my mind – perhaps the most concerning finding that you make given the significance of the task and the responsibilities that are conferred upon every individual involved in offender management.

I recognise that it is crucial that offender managers understand the importance of their role; how to interrogate the data and information they hold about offenders and when and how to act to protect the public from harm.

We must deliver better protection for the public and outcomes for victims. The Government will be working closely with the College of Policing and NPCC to improve training for officers.

Chief officers are encouraged to create and promote opportunities for officers and staff to enhance their subject matter knowledge and skills relating to vulnerability. This can be achieved through various mechanisms, for example, briefing, policy, continuing professional development (CPD) and training.

The College of Policing's evidence-based guidelines on vulnerability and risk aim to support officers to spot the signs of vulnerability and create a safe, trusting environment to identify risk, encourage the disclosure of harm and elicit information required to inform appropriate actions to keep people safe.

One of the core elements of the Vulnerability and Risk guidelines from the College of Policing for police responders includes 'Curiosity', which outlines core components for officers and staff to consider as part of exercising professional curiosity to identify and respond to vulnerability. Another product produced by the College of Policing includes a one-day vulnerability training package which encourages frontline officers and staff to look beyond the obvious and feel empowered to use their professional curiosity when dealing with those who are vulnerable.

In addition, the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is an up-to-date source of policing practice which police officers and staff are expected to have regard to in discharging their responsibilities. The APP module on identifying, assessing and managing risk sets out a range of information and intelligence that police officers and staff should draw on to consider risk for the purpose of public protection. This includes reviewing a range of historical and dynamic factors, such as offending history, biographical and relationship factors, access and proximity to victims and other criminogenic factors.

The College of Policing also has a Managing Sexual and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) learning package which is designed to prevent sex offenders from reoffending. The learning package trains offender managers in conducting an active risk management assessment to identify risk factors that may increase the propensity of a given offender to reoffend. There is a specific module within that learning package that focuses on understanding offenders' motivation and what works in deterring offenders and encouraging desistance. The College reviews the course continually based on feedback from trainers and trainees as well as changes to the operating environment. Lastly, the Home Office currently funds the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP), which works with the National Police Chiefs' Council's Violence and Public Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls portfolios. The VKPP engages with forces and key partners to identify promising practice and share knowledge to shape future responses to serious crime that exploits vulnerability. This is with a view to improving policing's overall response, reducing threat and harm, bringing more offenders to justice and improving outcomes for victims.

The VKPP has a workstream to consolidate learning from case reviews into death and serious harm, which analyses and draws together police learning across several types of reviews, including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) (previously Serious Case Reviews); Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs); and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). I acknowledge that this work is only the beginning, but I will use every tool available to target perpetrators and address the root causes of abuse and violence. For too long, violence against women and girls has been ignored. Our landmark mission to halve violence against women and girls in a decade will require a step change in our approach to it nationally.

That starts with tougher enforcement and protection. Under this Government, we will be introducing specialist rape and sexual offences teams in every police force. The most prolific and harmful perpetrators will be relentlessly targeted, using tactics normally reserved for terrorists and organised crime.

Once again, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for highlighting these matters of concern, and for giving us the opportunity to respond. We will continue to work with police forces to make sure we continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system that supports policing to manage sex offenders and prevent them from committing further harm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', is centered on the page.

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary