



# **Joint Thematic Inspection of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements**

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**PREPARED FOR HER MAJESTY'S  
INSPECTORATE OF PROBATION**

Written by

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## WHO WE ARE

Penal Reform Solutions (PRS) is an organisation that focuses on transforming penal culture, creating spaces that are meaningful, trusting and nurturing. PRS strives to change the conversation around punishment, working with practitioners and service users and making them central to the change process. It is an evidence-based organisation, which draws on academic research, practitioners' expertise, and the experiences of people who have served a prison sentence. PRS has extensive experience in growth, professionalism and relationship work in correctional environments and specialises in service user involvement, supporting a variety of institutions within the criminal justice system. PRS's work is informed by research carried out in the Norwegian prison system, and it uses this knowledge to support organisations to promote humanity, meaningful relationships and hope, in order to reduce social harm and promote social good, for all.



## 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this report was to capture the experiences of those who were subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). This included an exploration into how people understood and experienced MAPPA and the impact this had on their lives, specifically examining the extent to which MAPPA supported or hindered desistance. 41 participants were interviewed from a selected sample of people being supervised by the Probation Service in the Cornwall, Cumbria, Harrow and Barnet, Leeds, South Manchester and North Wales Probation Delivery Units. PRS consultants with lived experience of the criminal justice system designed, delivered and analysed this element of the MAPPA thematic, including telephone interviews with those in the community.

A creative project was also designed to increase the accessibility of this work, asking participants to summarise their experience of MAPPA in five words or a short sentence. To aid effective and accessible dissemination of the findings, a podcast was produced to summarise the findings verbally. The key themes that emerged from the research were; a need for greater communication, support, meaning/purpose, control and relationships. Suggested solutions were presented to address some of the key challenges of MAPPA, which were reported.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This thematic aimed to explore the experiences of those who had been subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The work was designed and co-produced with PRS consultants, who had lived experience of the criminal justice system and training in research. It featured two methodological elements: (1) telephone interviews; and (2) the creative project. The creative project was optional to participants and offered to participants, to help engage people, by asking participants to summarise their experience of MAPPA in 5 words (or a short sentence), with an image attached (see the creative project at [www.penalreformsolutions.com](http://www.penalreformsolutions.com)).

The three key research questions of the thematic were:

1. How do people on probation understand the MAPPA process?
2. How do people on probation experience the MAPPA process?
3. What impact, if any, did MAPPA have on the lives of those on probation, including their rehabilitation?

The sample of prospective participants was provided to the Inspectorate of Probation, by probation services and PRS in turn initiated contact with potential participants directly via text. Safeguarding measures were put in place by PRS to ensure they had a point of contact throughout the duration of the data collection, if information was disclosed, which posed a risk to others or those being interviewed. PRS reiterated to the participants that the interview was voluntary and that participants could withdraw their contributions prior to data analysis.

Data was stored securely and deleted after the project was completed in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018. The PRS team designed the interview schedule and carried out a thematic analysis on the data. For this report, the creative element was used to enrich the findings and provide participants an alternative way to express their views and experiences. For a full copy of the report and creative project please visit [www.penalreformsolutions.com](http://www.penalreformsolutions.com)

As part of the MAPPA thematic research, PRS conducted 41 telephone interviews. 35 of those interviewed identified as male and six identified as female (see Figure 1). The age of participants ranged between 21 and 62 years old and 54% of participants were MAPPA Level 1, 21% were Level 2 and 25% were unsure, as information regarding MAPPA levels was not available to either participants or PRS (see Figure 2).

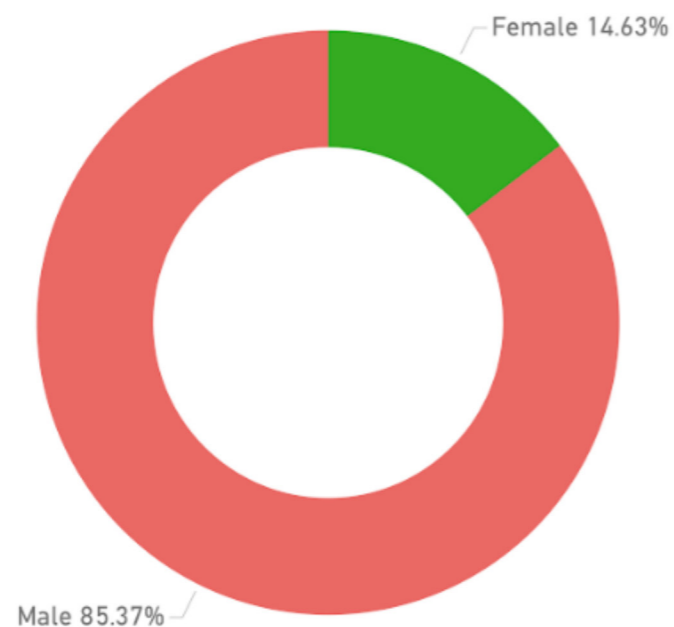


Figure 1: A pie chart to represent how the participants identified, with respect to gender



Figure 2: A pie chart representing whether participants knew what level of MAPPA they were.

With respect to ethnicity, 78% of the participants were white British and the remaining participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, as shown in Figure 3.

With respect to diversity, 46% of participants stated they had mental health issues, 12% said they have issues associated with physical health, 5% reported that they had mental and physical health conditions and 37% disclosed that they had no diversity needs (see Figure 4).

ETHNICITY	
<b>WHITE</b>	
British	30
Irish	1
Any other white background	3
<b>MIXED or MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS</b>	
White & Black Caribbean	1
White & Black African	1
White Asian	2
<b>BLACK, AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN or</b>	
<b>BLACK BRITISH</b>	
Caribbean	1
<b>ASIAN or BRITISH ASIAN</b>	
Pakistani	1
Any other Asian background	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>

Figure 3: A table that outlines the ethnicity of the participants.

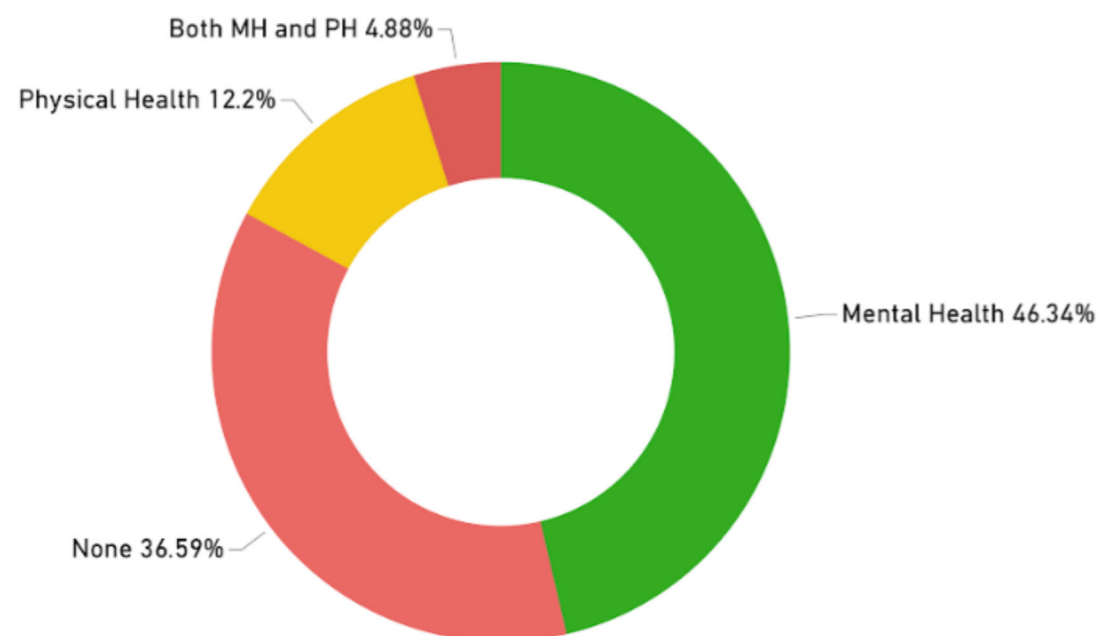


Figure 4: A pie chart outlining the diversity needs of participants.

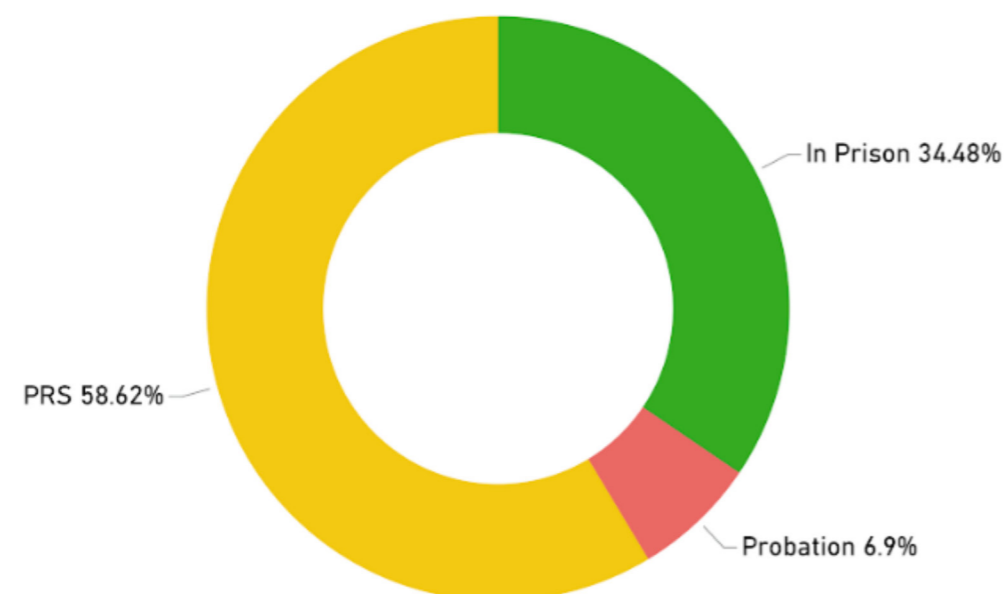


Figure 5: A pie chart outlining how participants found out they were on MAPPA.

#### 4.0 THE FINDINGS

Following a thematic analysis, the key themes that emerged from the findings were:

- THE NEED FOR GREATER COMMUNICATION
- SUPPORT
- MEANING/PURPOSE
- CONTROL
- RELATIONSHIPS

These themes were evident throughout the findings, when participants were asked about their understanding and experience of MAPPA, alongside the impact being on MAPPA had on their life. Each theme will be examined in turn, drawing on the words of the participants. The names of participants have been changed within this report, to protect their identity.

#### 4.1 THE NEED FOR GREATER COMMUNICATION

Communication issues were a strong theme within the findings. It was evident that there was a lack of communication and understanding around MAPPA for those on MAPPA, in all key areas. 58.62% of the participants that we interviewed were not aware they were on MAPPA or what level they were until they were contacted by a member of the PRS team. For the remaining participants, 34.48% found out they were on MAPPA by prison staff and 6.9% of participants were informed by probation staff (see Figure 5). Following concerns raised by PRS that it was inappropriate that people subject to MAPPA should become aware of their status via our contact, the Inspectorate fed this back to the Probation Service. This may have influenced the following weeks of research and it is believed that, considering this, this issue may be greater than reported.

Participants reported that finding out via an external organisation was unsettling. One participant who found out he was on MAPPA from PRS stated that *“it’s been playing on my mental health, am I really a danger to the public and to myself? Am I really a big bad monster?”* (Adam). Aaban said he felt as though he was, *“sitting alone in the dark with all of this,”* outlining that he had not been able to contact his probation officer to get more information, since discovering he was on MAPPA. Due to a lack of information regarding his MAPPA status, Aaban conducted his own research online and was



“They were more interested in waiting for me to slip up, than helping me stay on the straight and narrow.” Charlie

under the impression MAPPAs were for “terrorists, rapists or murderers”. This was similar to Darren’s experience, who informed PRS that he had to Google the term MAPPAs, as he had not heard of it prior to his engagement with PRS.

Misinformation was also an experience for some participants, who were given incorrect information around MAPPAs. To illustrate, Ben said, “prison staff told me I wouldn’t be MAPPAs” and after he found out he was on MAPPAs through the PRS team his probation officer told him that “everyone is MAPPAs”. It was evident from the interviews that there was a breakdown of communication between probation and those who participated in this thematic, as well as a stigma around the label of MAPPAs, especially for those who did not understand what MAPPAs was and had to rely on online information to inform themselves. This communication breakdown highlights a picture that upholds the notion that MAPPAs is ‘done to’ people rather than ‘done with’ people and therefore communication associated with this status is not viewed as necessary by probation, particularly for those who were Level 1.

Communication associated with the process and practices of MAPPAs were also vague to participants, who felt excluded from the process. To illustrate this point, the majority of those interviewed said they felt that they should have some involvement regarding meetings held about them. Simone expressed that she felt it was “unfair” for people to make decisions based on risk assessments alone, especially those who have served a long custodial sentence and who would be considered a rehabilitated individual. It would infer that positive identity changes are not necessarily fully appreciated, nor acknowledged within the current assessment system and acknowledging progress would encourage people on probation to recognise their personal growth and motivate them to maintain positive changes in their lives.

#### 4.2 SUPPORT

Support was another key theme to emerge from the findings, especially when participants discussed their experience of MAPPAs. PRS asked each participant whether they were offered support from any of the agencies involved with MAPPAs. 52% of participants said no, 41% said yes and 7% said yes and no (see Figure 6). Those who were offered support, 39% of those were Level 1, 28% were Level 2 and 33% were not aware what level they were.

Numerous participants reported that they were not offered support from services, as a result of their MAPPAs status. For example, Reon stated that the police would “interfere” with him trying to find suitable accommodation, which he believed hindered him with his progression back into society. Reon did however express that he was aware that due to the nature

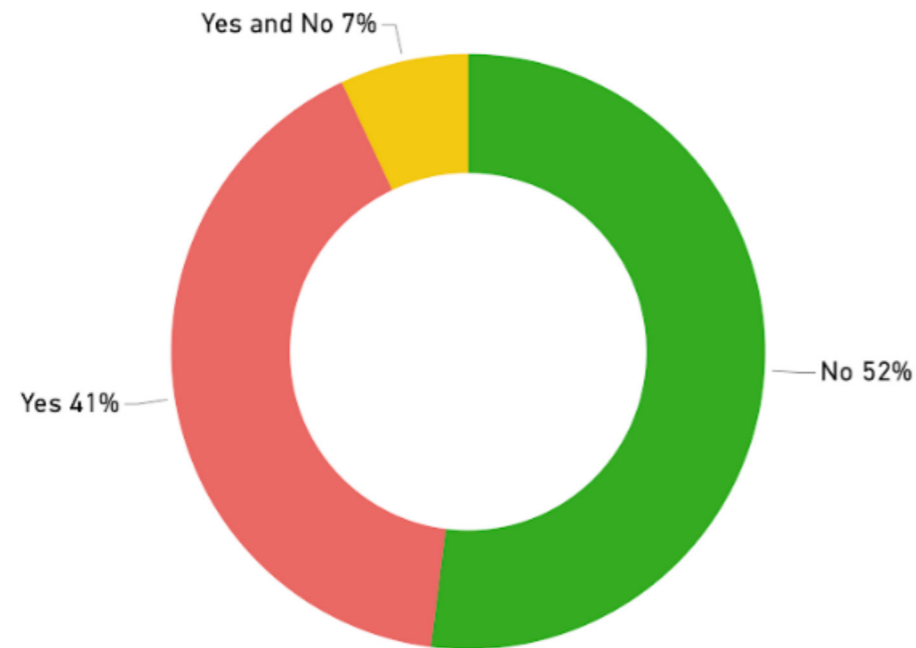


Figure 6: A pie chart outlining the responses of participants, when they were asked if they had been offered support under MAPPA.

of his offence, the police had to be involved. However, when finding and securing suitable accommodation, Reon stated that the police were encouraging the landlords to “google him,” which further hindered him from finding suitable accommodation. Reon also shared that the police kept seizing his phones and not returning them, despite his probation officer having all the information relating to his mobile devices. Reon expressed that this made him feel isolated and targeted, saying “all they care about is what you have done and how they can protect the public”. He reiterated that his experience of being subject to MAPPA did not support rehabilitation and instead symbolically conveyed to him that he was not part of society, but outside it. Sam reinforced this message and expressed, “there is a lack of care, they’re more focused on public protection than helping people mend their ways.”

Whilst some participants conveyed hope in the MAPPA process and what they could achieve with the support it offered, there was a pattern amongst participants that said MAPPA “over promised and under delivered”(as articulated by Tom). Charlie described his experience as “shocking,” and explained that he believed he would get the help and support he needed, but was disappointed to find that there was nothing on offer for him. Charlie further stated that he did ask for help, which he believed MAPPA would bring, but was shocked when he opened up about his mental health and was later recalled. He said, “I was stupidly recalled when I tried to talk about my mental health, as it was categorised as bad behaviour, but I was trying to say how I felt.”

He then went on to say, “they were more interested in waiting for me to slip up, than helping me stay on the straight and narrow”. This seemed to lead to a detachment or distancing from services who were initially viewed as possible support mechanisms, but due to a reduction in trust, participants reported that they were too frightened of the consequences, if they sought support.

It was evident that a number of participants wanted some form of extra individualised support, however there seemed to be a lack of access to services, resulting in negative experiences. Mohammad said, “I am having to go out of my way to get the support that I need, as nothing has been offered to me,” with Jack adding that he was told by his probation officer that the help he needed around his mental health issues should be sought through his doctor independently, instead of being referred to the mental health support team on probation. Situations such as this left individuals without the support they needed to progress, especially as some people were unaware of the procedures to seek support.

Some participants felt they were not supported through their whole licence. Paul described his experience and explained that when he was released from prison, he undertook a twelve-week course with the personality disorder team and which placed him into supported accommodation, which he was very grateful for. However, after the course was completed, Paul was left to his own devices and needed extra support but couldn't get it, he said, *"I'm just going round in circles, and no one is telling me what to do."* He shared that the only way he felt he could get help was to commit another crime, which he knew would lead to a recall back to prison. Other participants who have accessed appropriate support, did not feel there was a consistent stream of support, which inhibited meaningful relationships to be formed with the services associated with MAPPA.

The need for consistent support was also highlighted by Clark, who had experience of working with a charity as part of his support network. He described the changes to his support worker and how this left him feeling a lack of stability in his life. Clark said, *"don't get me wrong they (the charity) are good, but I have had four workers over the last couple of months, which has been quite unsettling for me...it has been a mess about."* Another participant felt that they did not receive support, due to having a strong family network and not needing certain support services as much as others. They said, *"They disregarded the help I needed as an individual, because I have support around me, so I'm pushed aside as I don't need as much support, I was somewhat forgotten."* This indicates that assumptions may be made, associated with the level of need an individual, which might not sufficiently respond to the personal circumstances of the individual. It also suggests that the support offered by MAPPA changes in visibility over the course of an individual's experience and this is not necessarily aligned to their level of need. Participants conveyed that when support was offered, it was not consistently delivered and this left people feeling invisible.

The findings suggested that support (or the lack of support) has affected individuals, their views associated with the value of the MAPPA process and their faith in the system on broader levels. To illustrate, Charlie stated that *"MAPPA has changed the way I think about the system. It's made me resent the system"*.

Charlie conveyed his drive and commitment to change his life but expressed that his motivation was negatively impacted, due to his mental health. Paul also said, *"I feel like they (MAPPA) don't think I've changed, as they see me as high risk, even after being released from prison"* sharing that this lack of support was hindering his growth.

Conversely, a minority of participants did feel supported by the MAPPA process, which included various charities, supported housing, drug and alcohol addiction services, domestic abuse services, mental health services, education and employment. In Taylor's eyes, MAPPA was a positive experience and he recognised the benefits MAPPA had on his life and the potential benefits MAPPA could have, on other people's lives. He said, *"it gives opportunities to those who generally won't get support, but want to change their lives"*. This was also the case for Simon, who was subject to home visits and said the police and probation were *"very pro-active and left me feeling very supported after attending my property."* Throughout the criminal justice journey, participants conveyed that they were left to rehabilitate themselves, but used correctly, MAPPA has the power to promote change. For those who have managed to utilise the support offered, MAPPA has opened doors to help people progress in life.


Philip discussed police support and said that during his home visits, the officers would advise him on how to avoid certain behaviours and offered coping techniques to support him through his day to day life. This showed Philip that he was being valued and cared for. As a result of his offence, he had been isolated and felt there was no way to get back on track, but as an outcome of MAPPA he saw a path, to put everything behind him.

#### 4.3 MEANING/PURPOSE

A substantial number of participants who were interviewed were unaware that they were subject to MAPPA, which meant they had minimal involvement with other agencies. This reduced the perceived meaning attached to the process and impacted on the way in which they viewed the MAPPA process more broadly. That said, the consistent reaction from participants when they were informed that they were under MAPPA was that of shock, anxiety and fear, suggesting that it mattered to them, and the stigma attached to the label of MAPPA had an impact on how they viewed themselves and how they felt society viewed them.

When asked whether being subject to MAPPA altered behaviour, participants felt MAPPA status does have an impact but only for those who use it for its correct purpose. Participants also described the importance of readiness and how people needed to be at a place in their lives where they are ready and willing to change. To illustrate, Nancy said that being on MAPPA had changed her life immensely, saying, *"I'm going places now, before I had no real future."* This shows that MAPPA has the power to offer opportunities to those who may have never had opportunities before. This





“It gives opportunities to those who generally won't get support, but want to change their lives.”  
Taylor

was the same for Mark, who said being subject to MAPPA and getting the extra support from his probation officer was; *“helping me change my path,”* as he was now getting access to services, which he could not access before.

Simon's overall experience of MAPPA was very positive, stating *“the whole thing appears very personal.... I am very impressed.... I do not feel just like a number or anything negative.”* This suggests that MAPPA provided direction for some people and assisted them in re-imagining how life could be, gaining perspective on what they wanted to achieve on a deeper level. Simon also referred to deeper relationships, which seemed to add greater meaning and create a more optimistic picture of MAPPA and what it was hoping to achieve.

There were some particularly positive experiences regarding the impact of MAPPA. Tom reported that he had a *“very caring and understanding”* probation officer and that MAPPA was the best thing to ever happen to him, giving his life purpose once again. Coming from the army, Tom embraced the routine and structure, and with rules to stick by and consequences outlined, he stated that it helped him stay out of prison, which is somewhere he did not want to be. Another participant stated that utilising the support from MAPPA gave them *‘a different experience of life’* and that their *‘life now has a meaning’*. This shows that executed correctly, MAPPA can produce meaningful results. By providing the support that is needed, participants are finding purpose in their lives, which in turn, is helping them move away from a life of crime.

#### 4.4 CONTROL & EMPOWERMENT

When the experience of MAPPA was discussed with participants, the theme of control (or lack of) emerged. Mohammad said, *“the controls placed on my life made me not trust anyone”*. This suggests that being subject to MAPPA restricts people and that this level of restriction impacts on their relationships with others. Harry said, *“I have a lack of control when it comes to the decisions made about my life”*. This was also expressed by Sarah who stated, *“they (MAPPA) are the ones in charge, so I can't really say anything.”* Participants conveyed that this lack of control removed a sense of purpose, which is needed for people to go on to live more meaningful lives. *“What is MAPPA designed for?”* seemed to be a reoccurring question from participants, who could not progress with their lives, due to the controls that were in place. Jack felt he was constantly having to jump through hoops, he could not do anything without MAPPA getting involved and felt as he had to keep everything to himself. He was under the impression MAPPA would support his progression, however when he was open about his mental health and other issues, they were more interested in how he could be seen as a threat. He felt like he had no control and said, *“I feel like they manipulate me with MAPPA.”*



“How is it right that all these people can make decisions on my life, without talking to me or letting me attend these meetings?”

Emmanuel

Some participants stated that a lot of decisions were made about them in their absence. Emmanuel questioned, “How is it right that all these people can make decisions on my life, without talking to me or letting me attend these meetings?”

This left some participants feeling like they had no purpose or meaning, as they believed that everything was taken away from them and their future was being planned by others without any personal input. However, this was not felt by all participants. Teresa said “she (the probation officer) lets me take the lead, which I like about her. She’s not proper on my case”. Handing this control back to individuals seemed to encourage positive change for Teresa and empower her, which contributed to growth and developing a sense of autonomy in her life.

#### 4.5 RELATIONSHIPS

It was clear some participants have built strong meaningful relationships, through their experience of MAPPA. Nancy reported that her positive relationship with her probation officer has transformed her life, saying they, “110% helped me with my mental health, they opened doors that were never open before...I can’t explain how proud I am of my probation officer. People comment on how well I am now.” Three different participants also expressed positive relationships with the police involved with their license. Philip stated “I was nervous at first but over more time, you get used to it. It is the same officers that come each time. Very nice, pleasant people”.

Those who were supported by the MAPPA process, described their relationships with probation to be positive overall, with many supportive relationships being formed. One participant discussing their probation officer and stated, “She’s my angel, she has done everything!” – (Nancy), and Clark expressed, “honest to God right, I cannot fault anything.....even with the difficulties of changing workers, they have all been amazing.” For others, they ‘could not fault’ MAPPA for all their support. Oscar expressed that “If she (probation officer) didn’t back me up, I wouldn’t of got the help I needed”. These participants felt that such relationships supported them with their rehabilitation and willingness to work with support services. It also indicates that the perceived success of MAPPA is situated in the relationships they had with probation and the extent to which they felt probation was ‘on their side’.

In contrast, when discussing the impact MAPPA had on people, participants discussed the broader relationships they had with society. The term “monster” was used frequently by participants to express how they felt they are being viewed by the public and this lack of perceived awareness from the public around MAPPA was reported by the participants, as



well as the negative impact it had on their life. Some participants reported that this stigma would make people question themselves, hide away and not open up, in the fear of people judged. This would stop some participants from progressing with their lives and was a barrier to engagement, to some extent.

Whilst positive relationships seemed to build legitimacy for the MAPPA process, leading to greater trust and honesty, negative relationships also had an impact on people. Due to his negative experience on MAPPA, Reon said *"It's made me more elusive, and I have no respect for the police and now I wouldn't tell them anything...It should be a working relationship, but they've failed me so many times, I'll never have any relationship with them now"*. It was clear that for some, poor relationships within the MAPPA process have created barriers to engagement and also contributed to a distancing between criminal justice agencies and those subject to MAPPA.

## 6.0 SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions were co-produced with those who participated in this project and PRS. They vary in levels of ambition but all key suggestions have been proposed, due to their significance and value-added potential:-

- There is a stigma associated with MAPPA, due to a lack of understanding of what MAPPA is and its purpose. It is encouraged that efforts to raise awareness would educate those subject to MAPPA and affected others (e.g. partners, landlords, employers), to help remove stigma and highlight the benefits that MAPPA could bring.
- There seems to be a lack of communication between different services and to make MAPPA more effective, better communication is needed at all stages and between services. Clear and accessible communication, in a variety of formats would improve communication, including materials that are accessible for those with additional learning needs. It is also suggested that probation staff actively verify that people on MAPPA understand the process, through their interactions.
- It is suggested that people are informed they are on MAPPA and what level they are, by notifying them at the first point possible. Explaining the process, expectations and benefits of MAPPA would build legitimacy and help people access the support they need.
- The majority of those on MAPPA felt they should play a part in MAPPA meetings regarding their future, and if not possible, to be given a chance for those professionals to take into consideration who they are now and who they want to be, not just who they were.
- To focus on relationships, consistency and trust-building, in order to magnify the potential of MAPPA. The findings



*"110% helped me with my mental health, they opened doors that were never open before...I can't explain how proud I am of my probation officer. People comment on how well I am now."*

*Nancy*



suggested that some participants acknowledged the need for restrictions, but how these were delivered caused upset and stress. It is suggested that more attention is paid to relationship building, procedural justice and communication skills in core staff training. By providing additional training that is offered to services that work under the umbrella of MAPPA, would not only ensure that service providers are aware of its purpose, but how MAPPA should be delivered, with humanity.

- In light of financial restrictions, it is suggested that staff teams associated with MAPPA spend time reflecting on their practice and which aspects of practice add most value, focusing on small changes, which could deliver big impact.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This thematic report provided a valuable insight into how MAPPA is being experienced and understood. The findings show the importance of meaningful relationships, individualised support and clear communication. Participants reported strong and positive relationships with agencies associated with MAPPA and this brought a sense of opportunity, trust and motivation to make positive changes. However, when relationships were poor and communication was absent, the MAPPA process appeared unable to deliver its intended goal. For those who have been offered support at a time when they needed it, MAPPA provided the structure to help people succeed and complete probation. However, the limited access to services (exacerbated by COVID 19) and inconsistencies within the system brought confusion, instability and led to an erosion of trust, in some cases. It was clear that a significant amount of participants interviewed were not aware that they were subject to MAPPA and due to this oversight, there were missed opportunities for people on probation, to help them progress in life and ultimately desist from crime.

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