



HM Prison &  
Probation Service

Action Plan Submitted: 07 January 2025

A Response to: Serious Further Offence Annual Report 2023-2024

Report Published: 28 November 2024

## INTRODUCTION

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and HM Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales are independent inspectorates which provide scrutiny of the conditions for, and treatment of prisoners and offenders. They report their findings for prisons, Young Offender Institutions, and effectiveness of the work of probation, and youth offending services across England and Wales to Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). In response to the report HMPPS / MoJ are required to draft a robust and timely action plan to address the recommendations. The action plan confirms whether recommendations are agreed, partly agreed, or not agreed (see categorisations below). Where a recommendation is agreed or partly agreed, the action plans provide specific steps and actions to address these. Actions are clear, measurable, achievable, and relevant with the owner and timescale of each step clearly identified. Action plans are sent to HMIP and published on the GOV.UK website. Progress against the implementation and delivery of the action plans will also be monitored and reported on.

Term	Definition	Additional comment
Agreed	All of the recommendation is agreed with, can be achieved and is affordable.	The response should clearly explain how the recommendation will be achieved along with timescales. Actions should be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) as possible. Actions should be specific enough to be tracked for progress.
Partly Agreed	Only part of the recommendation is agreed with, is achievable, affordable and will be implemented. This might be because we cannot implement the whole recommendation because of commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.	The response must state clearly which part of the recommendation will be implemented along with SMART actions and tracked for progress. There <b>must</b> be an explanation of why we cannot fully agree the recommendation - this must state clearly whether this is due to commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.
Not Agreed	The recommendation is not agreed and will not be implemented. This might be because of commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.	The response must clearly state the reasons why we have chosen this option. There <b>must</b> be an explanation of why we cannot agree the recommendation - this must state clearly whether this is due to commissioning, policy, operational or affordability reasons.



## ACTION PLAN: Serious Further Offence Annual Report 2023-2024

1. Rec No	2. Recommendation	3. Agreed/ Partly Agreed/ Not Agreed	4. Response Action Taken/Planned	5. Responsible Owner	6. Target Date
	<b>Recommendations</b>				
	<b>His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:</b>				
1	Promptly review the SFO review document format to maximise the opportunity to produce high quality and informative SFO reviews that meet the needs of victims and their families. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b>	Agreed	HMPPS will continue work already commenced on a new approach to completing SFO reviews. This will include a revised format which will place an emphasis on key actions to protect the public and organisational accountability. The proof of concept will be tested imminently, ahead of a six-month regional pilot, which will inform a decision about national roll-out in August 2025.	Deputy Director Public Protection Group	August 2025
2	Ensure that the learning identified is translated into meaningful and impactful actions. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b>	Agreed	<p>The national SFO team will continue to quality assure SFO action plans to ensure that they identify meaningful actions to address missed opportunities to protect the public including making links with wider improvement activity.</p> <p>More broadly, and in alignment with recommendation four, HMPPS will conduct a comprehensive review of how the Probation Service addresses identified organisational weaknesses, including those highlighted in SFO reviews.</p> <p>In collaboration with Performance Assurance and Risk (PAR), Central Operations Support (COS) will develop a process for the analysis of national themes arising from SFO quality assurance. COS will provide support and advice to national operational action plan leads in the development of actions to ensure that they address the issues raised, deliver the intended impact and ensure actions are measured and monitored.</p>	<p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, Performance, Assurance and Risk</p> <p>Central Operations Support, Probation Operations Directorate</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>April 2025</p> <p>April 2025</p>



3	<p>Ensure that where applicable, all learning linked to the Probation partnership working is identified and shared with the relevant agencies. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b></p>	Agreed	<p>The national SFO team will continue to quality assure SFO reviews to ensure that where issues related to partnership working have contributed to missed opportunities to protect the public that these are identified, and actions set to share with the relevant agency.</p> <p>The broader review of the approach to organisational improvement will include considerations on how actions are communicated and shared with partners.</p>	<p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p> <p>Deputy Director, Performance, Assurance and Risk</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>April 2025</p>
4	<p>Develop a process to ensure that learning from SFO reviews is fed back into the organisation to inform and shape developments within probation regions and more widely across HMPPS. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b></p>	Agreed	<p>HMPPS will conduct a comprehensive review of how the Probation Service addresses identified organisational weaknesses. This review will include the development of a clear approach to organisational improvement, incorporating findings from SFO reviews to ensure continuous learning and development across probation regions and HMPPS.</p> <p>As part of the process, as outlined in recommendation two, learning from SFO reviews will be collated centrally by COS and analysed for any significant national themes. COS will work with regions to identify good practice and/or capture developments to contribute to improving policy and practice.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, Performance, Assurance and Risk</p> <p>Central Operations Support, Probation Operations Directorate</p>	<p>April 2025</p> <p>April 2025</p>
5	<p>Ensure that robust and rigorous countersigning takes place on all SFO reviews before they are submitted for quality assurance. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b></p>	Partly Agreed	<p>This recommendation is partly agreed for operational reasons, the role of the countersigning manager will be considered as part of a wider review of the Policy Framework.</p> <p>HMPPS will continue to work with the existing Policy Framework which sets out the expectation for countersigning. The countersigning checklist to support managers undertaking this role will be refreshed and promulgated.</p> <p>HMPPS will continue the work already commenced, in collaboration with the HMI Probation Quality Assurance inspectors, with operational colleagues in the regional SFO Teams to: -</p>	<p>Regional Probation Director, Performance &amp; Quality</p> <p>Regional Probation Director, Performance &amp; Quality</p>	<p>October 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>jointly benchmark first line internal quality assurance to improve the number of SFO reviews which achieve an initial rating of good.</li> <li>engage with regional SFO Leads to identify any barriers to effective countersigning practice.</li> </ul>		
6	Put robust processes in place to ensure that, following quality assurance feedback, all required changes to the SFO review document are made timely <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b>	Partly Agreed	<p>The recommendation is partly agreed for capacity and affordability reasons. In the current environment and with increasing demand on SFO procedures, Public Protection group will require reviewing managers to continue to prioritise prompt action to make amendments in response to quality assurance in all cases where: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review to be shared with victims has been identified.</li> <li>Where there is significant quality issues and the review has been rated inadequate under HMIP quality assurance standards and ratings.</li> <li>There is significant public interest.</li> </ul> <p>In other reviews which require improvement, regions will continue to prioritise feedback which indicates that changes to the action plan are required to ensure that opportunities to act on learning are not delayed.</p>	Deputy Director Public Protection Group	Completed
				Regional Probation Director, Performance & Quality	Completed
7	SFO reviews, particularly those of the most serious offences, should where possible be undertaken by a separate probation region to that responsible for supervising the case at the time of the SFO. And consideration should be given to raising the grade of SFO reviewers, particularly for the most serious or complex cases. <b>(Repeat Recommendation)</b>	Partly Agreed	<p>This recommendation is partly agreed for affordability reasons. In the current resource environment, HMPPS do not consider raising the grade of SFO reviewers to be a priority given the challenges at front line operational delivery.</p> <p>As part of a wider review of the Policy Framework, alternative options to raise the quality of reviews will be tested.</p> <p>HMPPS will continue to work to the Policy Framework which is in place and allows for SFO reviews to be completed by a separate region.</p> <p>In addition, HMPPS will allocate the most serious and complex cases to a separate region.</p>	Deputy Director Public Protection Group	October 2025
				Deputy Director Public Protection Group	Completed
				Deputy Director Public Protection Group	Commencing January 2025



8	<p>Introduce training and development for those working in SFO teams in a way that enables reviewing managers to undertake the role in a meaningful way and supports a shared learning culture amongst SFO reviewing teams and across probation regions</p>	Partly Agreed	<p>This recommendation is partly agreed as the national SFO team in Public Protection Group already offers significant support to the regional SFO teams and further work is required to understand what additional training would be most beneficial.</p> <p>HMPPS will review the learning package for SFO reviewers which was introduced in 2021. This will include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Via qualitative feedback, evaluate how effectively this package supports new entrant and existing SFO Reviewing Managers in performing their roles meaningfully and contributing to a learning culture.</li> <li>Identify opportunities for continuous improvement and gather learner views on any additional or ongoing support required in the workplace.</li> <li>Working closely with SFO Teams, use the above to potentially form the basis for some recommendations on amendments to the existing learning, new commissions and/or for embedding the learning more locally.</li> <li>The Learning Delivery team will receive updates from the SFO Team on recruitment to ensure access to the learning is prompt for new SFO reviewers.</li> </ul> <p>The formal training packages are one element of what supports staff to do an effective job, therefore induction sessions will continue to be delivered to staff new to role. Workshops and targeted support will also be delivered to staff in post and will design the content of sessions to reflect key findings from quality assurance. HMI Probation will be consulted on themes for engagement events.</p>	<p>Deputy Director, Workforce and Capability</p> <p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p>	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p>
9	<p>In conjunction with the SFO procedures being reviewed, specific focus is given to the transparency of the process and how the review findings are shared with those staff members who were involved in the management of the case</p>	Agreed	<p>HMPPS recognise the need for transparency for all staff in SFO Procedures. A task force has been set up specifically to promote an SFO learning culture and enhance staff support. In addition, a timely review of the current guidance will commence in respect of: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The support package staff can expect when notified of an SFO.</li> </ul>	Deputy Director Public Protection Group	March 2025



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How staff who contribute directly to the SFO review receive feedback about how their practice will be reflected in the review and the learning for them.</li> </ul> <p>Alongside this HMPPS will consider whether the revised format lends itself to greater sharing of the review itself.</p>	Deputy Director Public Protection Group	October 2025
10	Action is taken to ensure the resourcing of SFO reviewing teams can meet the requirements set out in the SFO policy framework, and that specific focus is given to addressing the backlog of SFO reviews and their ongoing completion in a timely manner	Agreed	<p>HMPPS agree there is a need to provide timely and high quality SFO reviews. To achieve this, current processes will be reviewed to develop a model where this can be achieved within available resource and in a proportionate and sustainable model of delivery. The new approach will be piloted and once confirmed will form an update via a revised Policy Framework.</p> <p>In the meantime, PPG will continue to provide monthly data on timeliness to Area Executive Directors so that they can consider options for improving timeliness in their area.</p>	<p>Executive Director South West, South Central &amp; Public Protection HM Prison &amp; Probation Service</p> <p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p>	<p>October 2025</p> <p>Completed and monthly</p>
11	Review the effectiveness and impact of the SFO policy framework and approach to analysing practice when serious further offences occur to ensure meaningful learning is identified at the right level	Agreed	<p>HMPPS will sequence the test and pilot of a new approach to SFOs to inform a fundamental change to the SFO Policy Framework.</p> <p>The operational guidance in the current Policy Framework will be updated to strengthen the support for staff in SFO procedures.</p>	<p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p> <p>Deputy Director Public Protection Group</p>	<p>October 2025</p> <p>March 2025</p>

Recommendations	
Agreed	7
Partly Agreed	4
Not Agreed	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>



