

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	CPPB/21/25



**Highland**  
Community  
Planning  
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas  
Dealbhadh  
Coimhearsnachd

**na Gàidhealtachd**

**Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – 19 September 2025**

**Highland Public Protection Chief Officers Group (HPPCOG)  
Annual Report 2024-2025**

**Report by: HPPCOG Chair, Derek Brown**

**Summary**

The Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group (HPPCOG) was established in December 2018. It is an autonomous body comprising legally accountable Chief Officers, Independent Chairs of relevant Committees and Partnerships and other key Officers. The remit is based in legislation and national guidance in respect of public protection matters.

It is recognised that public protection has a key role in wider community planning considerations, and it has been agreed that an annual report to the Community Planning Partnership Board is an appropriate mechanism to update Community Planning Partnership about progress, risks and future plans for the various groups and Committees that report to the HPPCOG.

This report summarises key progress and achievements of each Committee and Partnership during 2024 - 2025, highlights key risks for delivery and outlines priorities for future development.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The HPPCOG was developed in response to national reviews of Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection leadership and governance arrangements and responsibilities. Additionally, recommendations were made in relation to governance of Violence Against Women Partnerships, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for Offender Management and Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships.
- 1.2 The HPPCOG first met in December 2018 and agreed a Terms of Reference that included a schedule of quarterly meetings with extraordinary meetings to consider findings from initial and significant case reviews.
- 1.3 In 2020, the Community Justice Partnership was added to the HPPCOG structure in recognition of its links to the wider public protection agenda. In 2025, the Prevent Multi-Agency Panel (PMAP) was also added to the HPPCOG structure. The Terms of Reference were reviewed in July 2025 to take account of other key national drivers.

## 2. Governance

2.1 The HPPCOG provides formal oversight and governance for:

- The Highland Child Protection Committee
- The Highland Adult Protection Committee
- Offender Management (MAPPA)
- The Highland Violence Against Women Partnership, including Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Prevent Multi-Agency Panel (PMAP)

2.2 In recognition of the links between public protection and alcohol and drugs and criminal justice, the HPPCOG receive reports from, and monitors delivery of partnership plans from:

- The Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
- The Highland Community Justice Partnership

2.3 Formal oversight and governance of these two partnerships is directly to the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board.

### Recommendation

The Board is asked to note:

- i) The progress of the work of the Committees and Partnerships that report to the Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group
- ii) The risks to delivery of the public protection agenda
- iii) The priorities for future action

**Author:** HPPCOG Chair, Derek Brown

**Date:** 12 September 2025

**Appendices:** **Appendix 1** Highland Public Protection Chief Officers Group Annual Report 2024-2025



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# Highland Public Protection Chief Officers Group

## Draft Annual Report 2024-2025



## **Our values**

We are here to serve the communities of the Highlands and Islands and will do this with fairness, integrity and respect. We will challenge each other constructively when necessary to ensure we deliver beyond expectations for these communities.

Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group Chair is Derek Brown, Chief Executive, The Highland Council.

## **Introduction**

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## **Recommendations**

The Community Planning Partnership Board is asked to note:

- The progress of the work of the Committees and Partnerships that report to the Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group
- The risks to delivery of the public protection agenda
- The priorities for future action

## **Background and Governance**

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This report summarises key progress and achievements of each Committee and Partnership during 2024 - 2025, highlights key risks for delivery and outlines priorities for future development.



## Highland Violence Against Women Partnership (HVAWP) 2024 - 2025

### Progress and Achievements

- Annual HVAWP Development Day held which focussed on how we obtain and use available data to identify trends and local issues that can be addressed.
- Development and launch of new website and social media platforms.
- Continued delivery of the MARAC process.
- Completion and submission of the Equally Safe annual return to Scottish Government providing high level of local achievement.
- Purchase of ring doorbells for those affected by domestic violence to provide safety and reassurance.
- Full review of MARAC operating protocol.
- Reviewed and updated the HVAWP Priority Action Plan following the launch of the reviewed National Equally Safe Strategy and the Quality Standards and Performance Framework.
- Launch of 'Spider in the Glass' poem in collaboration with a local artist who designed leaflets to promote the poem and enhance the story through illustration.
- Review of the structure, format and achievable outcomes of each of the four HVAWP Delivery Groups.
- Formation of a Highland Safety on Public Transport Group to identify any safety issues for women and girls and identify steps to alleviate any fear and concerns through media campaign.
- Continued delivery of training including MARAC Level 2 and MARAC Chair, GBV Level 1, GBV Trauma and Abusive Relationships.
- 'Reclaim the night' march through the streets of Inverness was well attended and supported.
- 'Imagine' poem and video was released and shared nationally.
- Delivery of Safe and Together Core Practitioner and Manager/Supervisor training across Highland to over 300 practitioners.
- NHS Public Health undertaken to deliver GBV Level 1 training.
- Procurator Fiscal attendance and involvement as a member of Addressing Perpetrators Delivery Group and HVAWP meeting.

## Impact

- Ring doorbells provide added safety and security for victims of domestic abuse and provide evidence in relation to criminal cases.
- Improved support to women and children affected by domestic abuse.
- 'Spider in the Glass' webinars have been delivered and attended by over 3000 people across Scotland and from a wide range of professions.
- Through an enhanced communications strategy and improved website and social media platforms, increased awareness of violence against women and the support available.
- Continued support to families affected by domestic abuse.
- 'Imagine' poem adopted nationally and used by Scottish Government and COSLA to launch the reviewed Equally Safe strategy.
- Improved networking and sharing of information across the partnership.
- Alleviate fear and encourage safe use on public transport for women and girls.
- Positive impact that Safe and Together training has on local workforces by assisting professionals who undertake domestic abuse assessments, engagements, and interviews.
- Recorded improvement in practitioners dealing with domestic abuse cases who have undertaken Safe and Together training.
- Opportunity for practitioners from different agencies and services to learn and train together.
- Improved knowledge and skills through delivery of the GBV training programme.

## Next Steps

1. Explore the possibility of identifying an elected member as a Women's Champion to promote women's rights and gender equality in Highland.
2. Review and update the HVAWP Learning and Development Strategy.
3. Formation of a sub-group to focus on national campaigns.
4. Further develop responses to keep women and girls safe in relation to commercial sexual exploitation.
5. Ensure that the membership of the delivery groups includes relevant partners and people who can make a difference.
6. Further chapters of 'Spider in the glass' highlighting the intersectionality of Gender Based Violence and its connection to all areas of Public Protection.
7. Explore opportunity of progressing and supporting the establishment of a Highland White Ribbon forum, which will look to support male voices opposing violence against women in Highland.
8. In partnership with Police Scotland, continue to support the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) and promote "Don't be that guy" campaign.
9. Work with CPC and other delivery groups to provide input to support the Highland Safe and Together Model.
10. Commencement to develop a National VAWG Needs Assessment Tool which is seen as an important aide in bringing together partners from across

different services and policy areas to raise awareness of everyone's role in tackling VAWG.

11. Continuing to roll out the Safe and Together training programme which will include co-operation with partners across the North of Scotland.

### **Emerging Risks**

- Ensure continued funding available for Safe and Together future training in Highlands through discussion with Scottish Government, COSLA and Social Work Scotland.
- Sustainability of community services to support women and families affected by Violence Against Women including risks in relation to security of funding impacting on the ability to deliver services.
- Ensuring Developing Equally Safe funding continues to support service providers to deliver support.
- Capacity to undertake all HVAWP functions with existing resources.
- Increase in MARAC referrals adding additional strain on existing staffing levels.
- Ensure attendance from all relevant partners at MARAC meetings to ensure all risks are identified and actions can be put in place.
- Identify issues for women and children who need access to safe accommodation, identify any gaps in Highland provision working jointly across agencies to resolve issues.
- Implementation of the National Strategic Commissioning and Funding Review of VAWG services.

### **CPP Considerations**

1. Note progress and achievements
2. Note the continued risk in relation to insecure funding for services and support continued investment in VAWG
3. Note risk in relation to increase of MARAC referrals.



## Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) 2024 - 2025

### Progress and Achievements

- With partners in Public Health, HADP produced a Health Needs Assessment (HNA), providing a systematic process to identify and evaluate health requirements of the population of Highland, in relation to alcohol and other drug use. Informed by the HNA findings, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) will develop a strategy for 2025/2026-2029/2030.
- Four 'Together We Can' events were hosted in partnership to may recovery support across Highland and hear voices of lived experience.
- Living Experience Engagement Group and Lived Experience Panel continue to develop.
- HADP attended the HMP Inverness Recovery Walk and the national Recovery Walk in Glasgow.
- [HADP website](#) was updated, improving user experience.
- HADP hosted two webinars, Money Matters and Commercial Determinants of Health.
- The Substance Aware School Awards were presented for the sixth year.
- Planet Youth primary prevention approach continued (Year 2 of Cycle 2), supported by a Learning Event.
- A Local Early Warning System (LEWS) was established.
- The Alcohol Over Provision Statement reduced allocated area for off-sales from 40sqm to 30sqm.
- HADP hosted a Residential Rehabilitation Action Plan Development Workshop with partners.
- Specialist Midwives tested Maternity Comfort Packs.
- HADP Strategy Group Development Plan was delivered, and a Risk Register developed.
- Alcohol Brief Intervention target was exceeded.
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards were assessed as green, or provisional green.

## **Impact**

- HNA provides understanding of key issues and priorities from numerical data and lived and living experience. Responding to challenges informed by the HNA can improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce health inequalities for people who are affected by alcohol and other drugs.
- Local understanding of risks associated with problematic alcohol and drug use are further understood as are effective ways in which to respond in partnership.
- Process, oversight and governance have improved, providing greater rigour.
- Harms from alcohol and other drugs are reduced. 53 deaths were directly attributed to alcohol in Highland in 2023, a decrease of 13 deaths on the 2022 figure of 66 deaths.

26 drug related deaths were registered in Highland in 2023, a decrease of 14 deaths on the 2022 figure of 40 deaths.

## **Next Steps**

1. HADP Strategy 2025/2026-2029/2030 is to be agreed
2. Progress the actions within, that are mapped across six strategic priorities
3. Prevent, delay onset, and reduce problem alcohol and drug use
4. Improve access to and benefits from effective, integrated, person-centred, quality, and recovery-orientated systems of care
5. Reduce harm and risk experienced by people using alcohol and drugs by increasing availability and access to harm reduction approaches
6. Make better use of the whole system to meet the needs of people with problem alcohol and drug use
7. Develop a resilient, skilled, trauma-informed workforce that work in trauma-informed places
8. Ensure effective engagement, governance and reporting arrangements.

## **Emerging Risks**

- There are 11 risks on the HADP Risk Register
- In-year financial challenges
- Med-to longer term financial planning environment
- Strategic alignment and direction
- Effective partnership working, including for support to recover
- Underlying causes of dependence
- Harm prevention and early intervention
- Resourcing, delivery and workforce planning
- Data provision and analysis
- Identifying and taking action in regard to emerging trends
- Governance
- Information, data governance and cyber security

- Controls are in place, and actions planned, to reduce the risk rating for all risks. Improvements were achieved during 2024/2025.

### **CPP Considerations**

1. To note progress and achievements
2. To support the upcoming HADP Strategy and priorities
3. To note implications of emerging risks



## **Highland Adult Protection Committee**

### **Highland Adult Protection Committee 2024 - 2025**

#### **Progress and Achievements**

- A comprehensive review and refresh of the Adult Protection Committee's (APC) action plan and improvement framework has been completed, integrating recommendations from learning reviews and improvement actions from the inspection.
- Quality assurance work has progressed with a rolling programme of individual agency self-audits, including thematic audits on participation in case conferences, use of chronologies, quality of risk assessments and protection plans in Adult Support and Protection (ASP) work.
- Completion of the Highland Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) which has been signed off by APC and therefore progression with multi-agency audit work can commence.
- A new performance report for the APC has been developed using the national minimum dataset (with which Highland is compliant), enhancing data analysis and benchmarking.
- The Learning and Development (L&D) sub-group has progressed significantly with a refreshed interagency training programme. There is a well-established suite of available and accessible ASP training including Level 1 Awareness, Level 2 Advanced and Level 3 Specialist Courses (Council Officer and Nominated Officer, Crossing the Acts).
- Awareness-raising activities have been expanded, including a successful event held for ASP Day 2025 and regular updates to the website and between agencies to share campaigns and public messages.
- The LSI (Large Scale Investigation) procedure has been updated in line with national guidance and IRISS resources.
- A new learning review governance group has been established, with a greater link to clinical governance, increased frequency of meeting and clear procedures to ensure that national guidance is being implemented locally.
- Completion of two Highland learning reviews and consequential dissemination of learning nationally. Meetings with the Care Inspectorate have taken place with excellent feedback from the Care Inspectorate. Both our local ASP Day and national learning conference have been utilised to present the McCulloch brothers learning review.

- Successful recruitment to the ASP Project Officer Post which includes a portfolio of Co-ordination of the Appropriate Adult (AA) Service. A full review and improvement actions relating to AA have been undertaken.
- The APC continues to support national reporting requirements and inspection readiness, including implementation of the Inspection Improvement Plan.

### **Impact**

- Improved understanding of practice quality through regular audit and evaluation, particularly in relation to risk assessment, protection planning, and application of the three-point test.
- Increased practitioner confidence and competence through targeted training and development sessions.
- Enhanced multi-agency collaboration and shared learning through sub-groups and forums.
- Participation from individuals with lived experience is increasingly informing practice improvements (though further development is required).
- Stronger national and local networks are supporting delivery of adult protection work.
- Learning from reviews is being embedded into policy and practice, improving outcomes for individuals at risk of harm.

### **Next Steps**

1. Continue the rolling programme of audit, evaluation and analysis of data, including thematic audits, multi-agency audits and performance data.
2. Finalise and implement the revised L&D programme, including practitioner development sessions, updated training materials and roll out of 'Investigative Interviewing Skills' and 'Second Interviewer' training.
3. Strengthen participation work through the development of a good practice guide, feedback-informed improvement planning and a lived experience group.
4. Complete a review of ASP procedures in Highland.
5. Maintain inspection readiness through ongoing improvement updates and monitoring of the HAPC Action Plan.

### **Emerging Risks**

- Increased demand for learning reviews, placing pressure on resources and limited availability of trained professionals internally to undertake reviews.
- Challenges in engaging individuals with lived experience in a meaningful and trauma-informed way.
- Capacity constraints across social work and partner agencies impacting delivery of audit, training, and improvement work.

### **CPP Considerations**

1. Note the progress and achievements of the HAPC in strengthening adult protection practice across Highland.

2. Support the implementation of improvements (as monitored by the HAPC Action Plan) and associated audit, quality assurance and evaluation work.
3. Acknowledge the resource, capacity and financial implications of increased demand for ASP work, particularly within Social Work teams as the lead agency, and learning reviews.
4. Endorse the development of participation and community awareness strategies to ensure adult protection is inclusive and responsive.



## **MAPP Strategic Oversight Group 2024 – 2025**

The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPP) are a set of statutory partnership working arrangements introduced in 2007 by virtue of Sections 10 and 11 of The Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/14/section/10>.

The fundamental purpose of MAPP is public protection and managing the risk of serious harm. National guidance is issued by Scottish Government under section 10(6) of the 2005 Act and provides the Responsible Authorities with Ministerial guidance on the discharge of their functions [Scottish Government Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPP\): National Guidance](#).

Section 11 of the 2005 Act <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/14/section/11> requires the Responsible Authorities to monitor the operation of MAPP, making changes to improve effectiveness where required. As well as providing local leadership, the Strategic Oversight Group is responsible for performance monitoring and quality assurance of MAPP, and for the co-ordination and submission of the annual report for their respective area.

### **Progress and Achievements**

- For the first time, an experienced Independent Chair was appointed by the Highland & Islands Strategic Oversight Group (HIMSOG) in February 2024.
- A Highland & Islands Operational Group (HIMOG) was established in May 2024.
- Terms of Reference were agreed for both the strategic (revised) and operational groups.
- A MAPP Risk Register was agreed by HIMSOG in late 2023 and revised in June 2025.
- A HIMSOG development day was hosted by Emeritus Professor Hazel Kemshall in September 2024.
- An Annual Report 2023 – 2024 was completed and submitted to Scottish Government in October 2024 as required under the 2005 Act [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/29593/mappa\\_annual\\_report\\_2023\\_to\\_2024](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/29593/mappa_annual_report_2023_to_2024).

- A self-assessment exercise was completed by HIMSOG in January 2025 using an adapted Quality Indicator Framework model from the joint HMIPS/Care Inspectorate 2015 joint inspection of MAPPA.
- An Improvement Strategy 2025 – 2027 was agreed by the HIMSOG in June 2025.
- Training for police officers and justice social work managers chairing MAPPA meetings was delivered by Professor Kemshall in November 2024 and by the Risk Management Authority in February 2025.
- Training on Understanding Online Child Sexual Abuse & Child Sexual Abuse Material was delivered by Professor Kieran McCartan was delivered in February 2025.
- Two new orders, the Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO) and Sexual Risk Order (SRO) have been introduced.
- The revised nationally accredited Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) sex offender programme has been implemented.
- On 31 March 2025 there were 288 offenders in the community being managed under MAPPA (Level 1 – 274, Level 2 – 8, Level 3 – 0, restricted patients – 6).
- In the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025, all MAPPA key performance indicators were met 100%. Case file audits confirm the effective operation of MAPPA.
- In the same period, the number of registered sex offenders returned to custody for breaching their statutory conditions remains very low at 1.46%.
- No Significant Case Reviews were identified; 1 Initial Case Review was completed in March 2024 – key learning was identified and an action plan implemented and completed.
- The MAPPA office has relocated from Police Scotland’s regional headquarters to local authority accommodation. This establishes independence and establishes a localised hub for representatives of the Responsible Authorities to connect, share information and address any ongoing concerns.

## **Impact**

- The appointment of an independent chair recognised the significant competing demands on the Responsible Authorities. Strategic direction and improvement have been agreed and key strategic and operational risks identified.
- The separation of strategic and operational business has strengthened the oversight and delivery of MAPPA.
- The performance and quality assurance of MAPPA provides confidence that offenders are being effectively managed and held to account for their actions and that communities are being kept safe.
- The new SHPO and SRO strengthens the management of risk as they have a lower risk threshold than the previous orders, allowing both orders to be used to manage risk against adults and vulnerable adults abroad, as well as children.

- Training has improved the confidence of MAPPA chairs and provided insight into assessing the risk of contact and non-contact offenders – in very broad terms, approximately 10% – 13% of non-contact offenders will either be both or will move from non-contact to contact offending. This has implications for risk management and deploying scarce resources.

## Next Steps

1. The focus in 2025/26 will be the implementation of the new Improvement Strategy. This will, for example, focus on the provision of forensic psychology, raising awareness of MAPPA and developing a more advanced Performance and Quality Assurance Framework to evidence the fundamental purpose of MAPPA in contributing to public protection and managing the risk of serious harm.
2. Reviewing the HIMOG – it was agreed to undertake a thorough review 12 months' after it was established.
3. Considering the implications and planning for the likely inclusion of Registered Terrorism Offenders (RTOs) into MAPPA.
4. The introduction of the UK Crime and Policing Bill was introduced to the UK Parliament, although the coming into force date is not expected until towards the end of 2025 (date to be confirmed). The main provisions are:
  - Lowering rank of authorisation for warrants – allows for an application for a warrant to search a Registered Sex Offender's (RSO's) home to be made by any Constable, once they have been authorised by an officer of Inspector rank or above.
  - Virtual notification – allows sex offenders to provide virtual notification to the police (other than initial notifications). Virtual notification can only take place once an invitation has been issued by police.
  - Staying away from residence for a period of 5 days or more – this requires RSOs to notify the police in advance if they intend to be absent from their home address for 5 days or more. The notification must be given no later than 12 hours in advance.
  - Advance notification of name change – this amendment provides that all RSOs must notify any new name to the police 7 days before using it or as far in advance as is reasonably practicable. If advance notification is not practicable, notification is required within 3 days of using the new name.
  - Restriction on applying for replacement identity documents in new name – certain sex offenders will be subject to a police notice which means that they cannot apply for official documents such as a passport or driving licence in a new name without first seeking authorisation from the police.
  - Notice required if entering premises where children reside – RSOs convicted of child sex offences (to be defined) or those who in the police's view pose a risk of serious sexual harm to a particular child or

children must give notice to the police if they are entering a premises where children reside.

- Police stations at which notifications may be given – this provision will enable the Chief Constable to update the list of police stations where RSOs can notify (currently secondary legislation is required each time this list needs updated, for instance following the closure of a police station).
5. Continuing to monitor the development and implications for the Responsible Authorities of the Multi-Agency Public Protection System (MAPPS) which will replace ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offender Register) c. 2027.
  6. A review of the Level 1 process for managing offenders subject to MAPPA – a revised, more streamlined process is being trialled in 2025 which it is hoped will lead to a more efficient process.
  7. Completion and submission of the Annual Report 2024/25 to Scottish Government in Autumn 2025.
  8. The MAPPA National Strategic Group will further consider the short-life working group's findings suggesting improvement in the way Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) are conducted. The findings cover: identification and selection of lead reviewers, minimum baseline standards for what is included in a SCR, self-evaluation and implementation of recommendations and revision of the MAPPA National Guidance 2022 SCR Chapter.
  9. Following the implementation of the Public Protection Accountability Assurance Framework (PPAAF) within NHS Highland in May 2024, a range of key areas of work were identified. Specific to MAPPA was the decision to further enhance the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) capability and replace the interim MAPPA Health Lead with 3 substantive appointments all with MAPPA as part of their remit. The appointment of the lead role should be complete by end August 2025. Concurrently with this activity the public protection governance structure is under review including the internal reporting processes for MAPPA.
  10. Other developments include the roll out of MAPPA notifications and safety alerts via the Medical Records Dept which has improved access for all staff. The notifications and alerts are also shared via Community Managers and Scottish Ambulance Service where required.
  11. The Medical Records Dept have also improved their targeted intelligence gathering of MAPPA nominals in support of the MAPPA reviews. The information is requested formally by the interim MAPPA Health Lead from a dedicated team within Medical Records and shared as appropriate with the MAPPA review. The use of a dedicated team has greatly enhanced the turnaround and assures the security of information exchange and governance.
  12. The Scottish Government's Electronic Monitoring (EM) Working Group (EMWG) published its recommendations in 2016. To date, only some of the recommendations have been implemented (e.g. EM bail). Currently, only radio frequency EM is available (typically, this means an offender is 'tagged')

within their home for up to 12 hours/day). GPS tracking will shortly (likely early 2026) be trialled by Scottish Prison Service (SPS) for prisoners released subject to a Home Detention Curfew (HDC). This will enable SPS staff to include specific location monitoring as part of licence conditions. This trial will be evaluated by Scottish Government and inform the wider roll-out of GPS tracking which has significant potential to improve risk management of high-risk offenders. In addition, the EMWG recommended alcohol (sobriety) bracelets that detect alcohol use will also be a useful tool in managing risk once available (no timescale).

13. HMP Highland remains on track for opening in 2026. This is a replacement for the existing HMP Inverness and is designed to accommodate 200 prisoners.

## Emerging Risks

- Since 1 April 2025 there has been no provision of forensic psychology in Highland & Islands for MAPPA offenders as there is no longer funding available in the MAPPA budget (see below). Discussions are ongoing with MAPPA partners to find a solution – forensic psychology provides crucial additional risk assessments to inform risk management plans and intervention.
- The continued unplanned movement of RSOs, both subject to statutory supervision and post-completion, into Highland & Islands from England & Wales. This impacts on resources and creates risk management concerns and a reactive response.
- The ongoing housing crisis – the limited available manageable housing stock for RSOs leads to challenges in the provision of appropriate accommodation, particularly on release from prison, and the clustering of offenders in particular areas. Realtime oversight of accommodation options and locations will become a focus for the strategic group moving forward.
- The increasing prison population – 8,228 (18/7/25) – is having an impact on the preparedness of prisoners for release. Given the significant pressures related to this, amongst other factors, SPS has taken the decision to suspend some programmes of intervention, and some long-term prisoners are being released without completing sex or violence related programmes such as MF2C and the Self Change Programme (SCP), both of which continue to run. This has an obvious implication for risk management in the community. Considerable efforts are and have been made to address this issue nationally; for example, the emergency release of prisoners and the independent Commission on Sentencing and Penal Policy, established by Scottish Government in February 2025 to review Scotland's current approach to sentencing and penal policy. The Commission will make recommendations by the end of 2025 for improvements to achieve an effective, rehabilitative justice system, meaning less crime and fewer victims. One of the key drivers is the escalating prison population, one of the highest in Western Europe.
- The increasing number of offenders subject to MAPPA – this is a local and national issue. As of 1 June 2025, there were just under 8,000 RSOs being managed in Scotland, a 27% increase over the last 5 years. This has led to enforced changes in the management of RSOs. For example, Police Scotland

are now prioritising resources based on risk, streamlining processes and procedures, while continuing to protect the public, and the pilot of a revised Level 1 process. The indications are that numbers will continue to increase given court backlogs, improved reporting, increased willingness and support for victims coming forward and enhanced media attention to name a few. In addition, the aging demographic and complexity of the prison population is having a concomitant impact on community-based resources. This is particularly acute in terms of the significant care needs of offenders and the extreme difficulty in housing high-risk offenders requiring care home provision.

- In the context of increasing numbers, there has only been one small increase in the MAPPA budget (allocated to local authority justice social work through Scottish Government's annual grant) since 2007 when MAPPA was introduced in Scotland. This issue has been raised at the MAPPA NSG and is acknowledged by all 10 MAPPA areas in Scotland. The wider impact affects both statutory and third sector service providers whose budgets are under increasing pressure. However diplomatically this is put, what this means is that all agencies are 'doing more with less' with a potential risk to keeping victims and communities safe. A SLWG chaired by the chief social work officer in Highland is considering this issue.

### **CPP Considerations**

1. Note progress and achievements
2. Note emerging risks