

# Home visits

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 18 July 2017 Updated 26 March 2026

Written by College of Policing

10 mins read

This module provides management of sexual offenders and violent offenders (MOSOVO) officers with guidance on how to prepare for visiting a registered offender at their home.

It covers the following areas:

- officer and staff safety
- frequency of visits
- training for staff that conduct the visit
- staff welfare
- what to do if access is denied
- recording the information obtained from the visit
- action to take when the offender no longer lives at the address at which they are registered

## Introduction

Police should visit all category 1 registered sexual offenders at their home address in accordance with current NPCC policing practice (or, if they have no such address, the place at which they have notified the police they can be regularly found) in order to assess their current risk.

Depending on the circumstances of the case, the purpose of a home visit may be to:

- check compliance with legislation and court orders (for example, to ensure compliance with notification requirements, bail or licence conditions)
- confirm that the offender resides at or frequents the address or place notified
- fulfil the duty of care to the public to manage risks posed by the offender
- monitor the offender's risk, identify changes in risk factors and ensure appropriate action is taken to manage and, where necessary, review the risk

- gather information to identify or review risk, assess and manage the offender and other linked offenders, and for intelligence management processes
- detect offences
- fulfil the duty of care to the offender, including referral to other agencies for welfare, mentoring and support

## Frequency

Following the changes to policing practices ratified by the NPCC in January 2017, frequency of home visits are no longer determined by the risk level but are bespoke to the individual offender and their [risk management plan](#).

## Officer and staff safety

All home visits should be risk assessed beforehand in order to protect officer and staff safety. This risk should be reviewed following each visit. As a minimum, officers and staff should check ViSOR, current intelligence records held on the offender, and their address in order to identify possible risks before attending. Any other agency staff conducting a visit (for example, probation officers, community mental health workers or social workers) should also be informed of any known or suspected safety issues.

Systems should be in place to record when staff are visiting an offender's home. Staff should inform the force control room at the beginning and end of each visit. Care must be taken when communicating information about home visits over open airwaves.

Appropriate personal protection equipment should be taken on the visit. Any officer safety issues should be recorded afterwards on ViSOR. Private vehicles should not be used because there is a risk of the vehicles being recognised, thereby identifying police officers and their families.

## Logistics of home visits

Individual officers should not conduct home visits on their own. This ensures officer and staff safety and supports the quality of home visits, either sole or joint agency. Visits should generally be unannounced. Visits should be conducted by officers in plain clothes using unmarked police vehicles (not private vehicles) to avoid accidentally revealing the offender's circumstances.

## Officers and staff conducting home visits

Home visits should be conducted by two people, one of whom must be a nationally accredited trained MOSOVO offender manager. Staff conducting a home visit must do so in plain-clothes.

Visits should, where possible, be conducted by an MOSOVO officer who previously visited the offender. The offender manager should be able to recognise any changes in the offender's physical appearance, behaviour or other circumstances which may constitute a significant change and result in a [review of ARMS](#).

Visits by an officer appointed on behalf of the offender manager should only be conducted in exceptional circumstances and should not be carried out by an officer in uniform.

Neighbourhood policing team (NPT) officers, should not conduct home visits unless accompanied by a nationally trained and accredited MOSOVO offender manager. Consideration should be given to the danger of undermining confidentiality for example, where community officers regularly visit a particular address.

## Welfare

There are also issues relating to officers' welfare and the risk of manipulation by the offender. These issues make it inappropriate for visits to be conducted by officers without specialist training and the necessary supervision structure.

## Preparation

The offender managers conducting a home visit should first ensure they have researched the case, identified their objectives and prepared a plan to maximize the effectiveness of the visit. This must include PNC & local intelligence checks.

Officers conducting home visits should always adopt an investigative approach and be aware that offenders could potentially make convincing attempts to befriend and manipulate those who are responsible for managing them. Supervisors should be informed and aware of these issues and take appropriate action which may include reassigning the offender manager.

Information about the individual's offending history or circumstances should not be shared with any member of an offender's household, or any other person, unless the officer is certain that the

offender has already disclosed the information themselves.

In general, those making visits should avoid confirming or denying any suggestions made about the purpose of the visit or the offender's circumstances to anyone. If officers or staff suspect that information about the offender has become known, this should form part of any risk assessment and risk management plan.

## Warrant to enter and search

**Section 96B** of the SOA 2003 allows police to make an application to a magistrate for a warrant to enter and search, by force if necessary, the premises of an RSO, where entry has been denied. This can be the last home address the RSO gave to the police in accordance with notification requirements, or other premises where there are reasonable grounds to believe the RSO resides or can be regularly found.

In accordance with section 96B(2)(d) an application may be made if, 'on at least two occasions a constable has sought entry to the premises in order to search them for that purpose and has been unable to obtain entry for that purpose'.

This allows the:

- power to be used only in appropriate cases against offenders who have displayed an unwillingness to cooperate with the authorities
- police to discover the information they require to assess the risk posed by the offender
- police to develop plans to manage the risk

Any application for a warrant must be made by a senior police officer, not below the rank of superintendent. A warrant issued under this section must specify the one or more sets of premises to which it relates.

Where access has been denied, officers and staff may consider using other police powers.

## Inform the offender

Staff should inform the offender of the reason for the visit and that it is part of the ongoing risk management process. An offender manager can ask questions about the offender's lifestyle and circumstances, but the offender does not have to answer.

## Be informed

Officers making home visits should be fully aware of the details of the RSO's previous offences. They should not, however, base their investigations on the assumption that the offender will restrict any further offending to a particular type of offence, and their observations should be focused accordingly.

For example, a person who has offended against a family member may also be a risk to strangers, and someone who has offended against adults may also be a risk to children.

## Evidence that the offender is no longer at address

When there is evidence that a registered offender is no longer staying at a home address, staff should record details of this (for example, the date the offender left or any details of a forwarding address). Chief officers should have a process in place to ensure information is acted on immediately.

## Outcome of home visit

After each home visit, staff should update ViSOR with all necessary information, including any officer safety issues.

Staff should record details of the visit containing any new information and consider whether these require any further police action. This may include the assessment of any significant change which would require a review of ARMS factors and risk management plan. Depending on the circumstances, staff may also need to submit intelligence using the [intelligence report](#).

The visit may also necessitate sharing information with another agency. The lead agency must be informed of the outcome of the home visit.

All unsuccessful home visits should be recorded for the purposes of auditable decision making and performance management. Such records are also relevant in exercising powers under the [SOA 2003, section 96B](#).

## Offenders moving to another force area

The responsible authority which placed an offender in one of the four multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) categories is responsible for using the MAPPA framework to formally transfer cases to other areas. The MOSOVO unit of the force from which the offender is transferring should conduct a review of that offender prior to transfer. This may include a home visit or requesting the offender to visit their police station. The outcome of this review should then be discussed with the receiving force. For detailed guidance about the transfer of cases, go to the [MAPPA guidance](#).

## Force responsibility and ownership of offender records

Chief officers should ensure that appropriate systems are in place to ensure that record and notifications are available to the receiving force, including a mechanism to acknowledge receipt of transfer and that [ViSOR standards](#) are met.

## Actions on notification

The owning force is still responsible for the offender's ViSOR record until the receiving force accepts responsibility. This should occur when the offender registers their new address with that force. The receiving force should be notified of offenders managed both under MAPPA and as PDPs.

It should always be clear which force is the owning force. Transfer of responsibility from one force to another should be clearly recorded. This includes cases where an offender moves temporarily from one area to another.

When notified of an imminent transfer, the receiving force should start consultation with regard to risk, response plans and threats to life between all parties affected by, or involved with, the transfer of the offender. For example, forces have specialist units for managing matters such as witness protection or intimidated or at risk people. Transferring a MAPPA subject may have implications for these.

For further information go to [Home Office ViSOR standards](#).

## Tags

Sexual and violent offenders