

Institution: University of Strathclyde
Unit of Assessment: 20
Title of case study: The adoption of consistent risk assessment and management techniques by multiple agencies for sexual and violent offenders in Scotland
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research commissioned by the Risk Management Authority (RMA) assessed criminal justice practice in Scotland relating to high risk offenders, and provided the rationale and founding principles for the RMA to create a Framework for Risk Assessment, Management and Evaluation (FRAME), published in July 2011. The key findings from the research were published in a report, which recommended the need for consistency in risk definitions and guidance across criminal justice agencies, for compatibility in information sharing and training, and for greater inter-agency cooperation and accountability. These recommendations have directly influenced Government policy and practice in assessing and managing offender risk, and continue to inform how sexual offenders are currently managed and how serious violent offenders might also be managed in the future.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Context:</p> <p>With the establishment of the Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005, multi-agency collaboration between Scottish criminal justice agencies has highlighted the need for the development of a shared framework for risk assessment and management practice for serious violent offenders. The Social Work Inspection Agency also reported that while the risk assessment and management of sexual offenders was well developed, the same practice with violent offenders required further attention. The Risk Management Authority (RMA) then initiated an enquiry into violence risk assessment which would result in core recommendations for the development of a violence assessment framework, to be implemented across agencies, in order to reduce reoffending among violent offenders by grounding risk practice in shared principles, values and standards.</p> <p>Underpinning research:</p> <p>In May 2007, the RMA was tasked with undertaking research to inform whether violent offenders should be brought into multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs) which then only covered sex offenders in Scotland. To do this, the RMA commissioned a team of researchers, led by Dr Monica Barry, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Strathclyde, to research and report on the development of a risk assessment framework for violent offenders by evaluating current and developing research, policy and practice within MAPPAs. The team also included Prof. Hazel Kemshall (De Montfort University) and Nancy Loucks (independent criminologist). Barry et al. were successful in securing this research funding following competitive tender, partly based on the fact that Barry's earlier international literature review for the Scottish Executive [1] had a high profile in academia and also in policy circles.</p> <p>The commissioned project included in-depth interviews with policy makers and practitioners/managers in Scotland, and an international literature review, which resulted in the co-authored final report, <i>Serious Violent Offenders: Developing a Risk Assessment Framework</i> (2008) [2]. The key findings from the research were that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of risk, violence and harm vary across agencies and professionals; • Different classifications of risk fail to offer definitive guidance to professionals in different fields and one working definition of harm across all agencies would be welcomed by most agencies; • Movement of offenders between risk levels was constrained, not least in terms of downgrading and exiting the system, and it was feared that violent offenders would 'swamp' the system; • Inter-agency cooperation was viewed as constructive and effective in current work with sex offenders, but clearer guidelines, protocols and agreements would ensure greater accountability when including violent offenders;

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- Greater compatibility was needed in IT systems, information sharing and training across the various agencies.

The final report not only underlined areas of attention and development, but also made crucial recommendations to promote multi-agency practice. Based on her fieldwork, Dr Barry established how agencies in Scotland define risk and work with violent offenders. In particular, the interview data showed concern amongst policy makers and practitioners about the feasibility and viability of the current framework for sexual offenders being a potential model for a violence assessment framework. Such a framework could only be achieved by addressing the differing definitions of risk, harm and violence used across agencies with different remits. The report's findings underlined the need to establish agreed values, develop a structured approach, and adopt shared practice standards and a common language of risk across the agencies intervening in the risk assessment and management process.

Key Researchers: Dr Monica Barry, Senior Research Fellow, School of Law, University of Strathclyde (April 2007 to present); Professor Hazel Kemshall, De Montfort University; and Nancy Loucks, Independent Criminologist. As Principal Investigator, Dr Barry undertook the bulk of the fieldwork, and also oversaw the budgetary arrangements and writing of the final report. Nancy Loucks led on the literature review while Prof. Kemshall was responsible for developing the assessment framework and training CD-ROM.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Barry, M. (August 2007) Effective Approaches to Risk Assessment in Social Work: An International Literature Review, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Education Department. <http://scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/194419/0052192.pdf>

Notes on quality: This report for the Scottish Executive has been highly regarded by both practitioners and researchers in the field of risk assessment and management, and was instrumental in the Scottish Government preferring the bid by Barry et al. for the RMA contract. This was published after Barry became a researcher at the University of Strathclyde, but the research bridges two institutions, Stirling and Strathclyde.

2. Barry, M., Loucks, N. and Kemshall, H. (November 2007) Serious Violent Offenders: Developing a Risk Assessment Framework, Paisley: Risk Management Authority. Available on institutional repository <http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/18648/1/strathprints018648.pdf> and on RMA website <http://www.rmascotland.gov.uk/files/5512/7263/5813/Serious%20Violent%20Offenders%20-%20Developing%20a%20Risk%20Assessment%20Framework.pdf>

Notes on quality: In the 2 years that this document has been on the Strathclyde Institutional Repository, the full text has been downloaded 226 times (up to July 3013). This publication has been widely circulated and cited by not only policy makers and practitioners, but also academics in the field of risk assessment and management and multi-agency working. It is also relevant internationally. Indeed, Barry was invited to present the findings from the report to policy makers and practitioners in the risk management field in Japan in 2011.

Other evidence for quality of research (grants, patents etc.).

A grant has been secured from London Probation Trust to explore MAPPA developments in that area (£20,000) and a proposal is being developed to extend this work across several Probation Trusts in England and equivalent areas in Scotland (approximately £200,000).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)**Process from Research to Impact**

The impact arises from the research commissioned in May 2007 by the Risk Management Authority (RMA). Following its publication on the RMA website in 2008, the report 'Serious Violent Offenders: Developing a Risk Assessment Framework' was widely circulated among policy makers and practitioners working with the agencies involved in the risk assessment and management of

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violent offenders. The report included 18 recommendations and the Risk Management Authority responded in writing to fully endorse these, and address a number of issues highlighted by Dr Barry's interview data.

The research enabled the RMA to move to an improved model of risk assessment, which ensured greater consistency of risk assessment across Scotland and across criminal justice agencies. The Chief Executive of the Risk Management Authority Scotland has noted that the Government's, 2011, Framework for Risk Assessment Management and Evaluation (FRAME) policy paper (Source 1) was directly influenced by Barry et al.'s report, the recommendations from which "were *opportune and influential*" in creating the 2011 guidance, and notes that FRAME '*applies across all offender groups and agencies [and] to this extent the impact and reach of [Barry et al.'s] report can be viewed as being significant*' (Source 2).

In one RMA document entitled 'Violence Risk Assessment: Towards a structured decision making framework: Phase 1' the RMA suggested that the Barry et al. report was '*[a] first step in a long-term project... the journey towards a universal framework for violence [which] will not be quick or straightforward*'.

Chapter 1 page 6 of the FRAME guidance states "*This project is focused on the development of a consistent, evidence-based framework for risk assessment and management that is grounded in first principles and is applicable across agencies and offender groups. . . The origins of this project lie in the findings of earlier Scottish research [Barry et al.2008] that sought to explore and advise on violence risk assessment. The research identified confusion within and between agencies on fundamental issues of understanding, assessing and communicating risk*" (Source 1).

Impact on policy makers and policy

The RMA welcomed the recommendation that agencies collaborate to achieve common definitions of risk and accepted that it should lead this process through a national debate with stakeholders. The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Guidance for Scottish professionals was revised in early 2012 to incorporate Barry et al.'s recommendation that the Violent and Sex Offender Register, which shares information between police and social work, be rolled out nationally and include health boards and prisons, and this has now been implemented.

Within the Scottish Government, the Community Justice division is now looking at including violent offenders within MAPPA in view of developing policies in this area (2013), and Scottish Government policy makers are currently meeting with their counterparts in England and Wales regarding lessons to be learnt from south of the border. The Scottish Government also recently employed a researcher for two years to look at the feasibility of violent offenders being incorporated into MAPPA. The Barry et al. report was deemed crucial background reading for this new staff member, since the report gives a clear structure to bringing violent offenders into MAPPA (Source 3).

Impact on training of professionals

The RMA agreed with the recommendation that staff training on risk assessment and management needed to be addressed. It also acknowledged Barry et al.'s advice that training should not only focus on assessment tools, but also on wider concepts of risk, risk formulation and theories of risk and violence. The Chief Executive of the Risk Management Authority Scotland noted that by May 2012 around one thousand social work staff had undertaken this training, and the number has increased steadily since then (Source 2).

The risk and needs assessment tool recommended by the Barry et al. research was the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) which supports criminal justice social workers to assess offender needs and risk and to identify the most appropriate intervention. This tool has now been wholly adopted by social work departments in Scotland and training in its use is now complete. The recommendation that the tool's use and effectiveness should be evaluated has been implemented, and in 2013 evaluation is ongoing (Source 3).

Impact case study (REF3b)**Influence on planning and strategy**

In turn, this training and Barry et al.'s report are contributing to further reflection within the RMA and among its key stakeholders on the best way forward in the development of a consistent risk assessment and management tool for violent offenders. The RMA consultation document 'Standards and Guidelines' (Dec 2012) acknowledged that "a consensus has developed in Scotland about the need to establish a meaningful way of expressing risk that is shared between agencies and across geographical boundaries". This document was updated in March 2013 and now additionally states that "the publication of FRAME has laid the foundation for a shared language of risk assessment and management" (Source 4 p.103).

Management of risk

MAPPA operates 3 levels of risk to determine the intensity of agency input into sexual and violent offenders: level 1 is low risk of harm and managed by single agencies; level 2 is medium risk of harm and is managed by practitioners in several relevant agencies; and level 3 is high risk of harm and is managed by senior managers in several relevant agencies. The aim is to downgrade the risk level according to the effectiveness of interventions, not least because level 2 and especially level 3 input is intense and therefore costly. Since 2008, the number of sex offenders managed at level 1 and down-graded from levels 2 and 3 has been 'significant' (Source 3). Level 1 offenders have increased to 88% of all high risk offenders managed under MAPPA in 2012 compared to 76% in 2010, and 66% in 2009, following on from Barry et al.'s recommendation that categories of offender risk should be monitored and downgraded based on sound risk assessment, management and regular review.

Wider influences

Since 2008, Barry's research has reached a wider audience of professionals including a Think Tank organised by the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (2008) and senior policy makers and practitioners in risk assessment and management of high risk offenders at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, Japan (2011). The Scottish Government's Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate consulted with Barry on the future implementation of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007. Her research is referred to in Chapter 7 of Scottish Youth Justice Practice Guidance, Feb 2013, (Source 4) noting that the comprehensive assessment of an offender must include an assessment of the likelihood of the individual committing further offences. In 2012, Barry was funded by the London Probation Trust to undertake a study of MAPPA processes and outcomes across London. This informed a large-scale research proposal to ESRC in mid-2013 to compare the Scottish risk assessment and management framework with similar developments in England.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 1) http://www.rmascotland.gov.uk/files/5713/0943/0052/FRAME_Policy_Paper_-_July_2011.pdf
Risk Management Authority (2011) Framework for Risk Assessment, Management and Evaluation: Frame, Paisley, Risk Management Authority cites the research of Barry, Loucks and Kemshall in respect of the need for consensus in defining, assessing and managing risk within and between criminal justice agencies.
- 2) Statement from Chief Executive, Risk Management Authority
- 3) Policy Officer, Public Protection Unit, Safer Communities Division, Scottish Government can be contacted to support influence on policy and training
- 4) http://www.rmascotland.gov.uk/files/5313/7898/5312/Standards_and_Guidelines_for_Risk_Management_web.pdf
- 5) Barry et al.'s (2007) paper was also referred to in the Youth Justice Practice Guidance February 2013 <http://www.cjsw.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Guidance-Chapter-7-Managing-High-Risk-v2-2013.pdf>