

Greater Manchester Readiness for Prison Releases

Key Messages

Greater Manchester is not responsible for national sentencing policy, prison capacity, eligibility criteria or individual release decisions. However, the city-region is taking an active partnership-led approach to readiness – we have a track record in this. A Greater Manchester **Public Protection Risk Cell** is being established to provide oversight, assurance, escalation and consistent communication across GMCA, Probation, GMP, local authorities, victim services, safeguarding partners, health, accommodation, substance misuse and the VCFSE sector.

Further information is still awaited from Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on victims funding and from His Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) on detailed local cohorts – but it is likely that any funding will be relatively small and not support extra support services capacity at scale. We are aware plans are being developed for a potential national helpline and we await further information.

Greater Manchester Readiness Position

GMCA is developing the Public Protection Risk Cell from this week through to implementation on 1st October. The Cell will not replace statutory responsibilities held by Probation, police, prisons, local authorities, safeguarding partnerships, MAPPA, IOM etc. Its role is to add a city-region layer of coordination and assurance, so partners share a clear view of emerging risks, release volumes, affected localities, victim and community impacts, service pressures and issues requiring senior or national escalation.

Key aspects:

- A local communications campaign for victims and survivors who are worried and for support services to raise awareness of advice and escalation
- The Deputy Mayor will convene a partnership briefing in September with cohort and planning information
- GM Probation will communicate local cohorts etc directly via Probation Delivery Units to CSPs as soon as available
- We have a website portal where people can self-refer, and we have been developing a campaign to promote awareness of support services which we will flex to respond.
- We will seek to expand target hardening resources if needed
- We are mobilising above and beyond the national programme and at pace

Public Protection Risk Cell

The Risk Cell will bring together GMCA, Greater Manchester Probation, GMP, victim services, with communications leads collaborating through a **Communications Cell**, and a wider **Stakeholder Cell** route, local authority community safety and safeguarding leads, women's services, health, accommodation, substance misuse and VCFSE partners. Cells will meet regularly during mobilisation, with frequency increasing if

release volumes, locality pressures or victim safety concerns require heightened monitoring.

Key Risks and Mitigations

- **Victim safety and confidence:** addressed through aligned victim support, self-referral routes, practical safety planning, target hardening pathways and swift escalation where notification or licence information is unclear.
- **Service pressure:** probation, police, accommodation, health, substance misuse, local authority and VCFSE pressures will be monitored, with priority localities and capacity gaps escalated.
- **Public confidence:** shared lines to take will distinguish national release decisions from local support, safeguarding and risk-management arrangements.

Victim Support Services and Communications

Victim safety, confidence and access to support are central to the response. Targeted public and partner communications will aim to avoid unnecessary alarm while acknowledging the anxiety these arrangements may create for victims, survivors, elected members and communities.

Summary

- We are determined to ensure the local response is coordinated, transparent and focused on public protection.
- Our priority is readiness: understanding the cohort, identifying local impacts, supporting victims, monitoring service pressures and escalating unresolved risks quickly.
- The Public Protection Risk Cell will provide a single Greater Manchester view of risk, assurance and communication without replacing statutory decision-making.
- Victim safety and confidence will sit at the centre of the response, with clear support routes, practical safety escalation and trauma-informed communications.
- Local authorities, community safety leads and elected members have a key role in maintaining community confidence and feeding concerns into the right routes.

Position: Greater Manchester is taking a responsible, partnership-led approach. We are clear about the limits of local control over national release decisions, but equally clear about our responsibility to coordinate public protection, support victims, monitor local impacts and escalate risks.

“The GM VCFSE Safer and Stronger Communities Leadership Group is maintaining contact with the Deputy Mayor as we navigate changes to prison releases as a whole system approach and will ensure that communication to all providers in GM is a priority. The current situation with prisons is not a new issue but we are focussed on working with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to achieve what is best for victims and wider communities.”

Duncan Craig OBE, Co-chair of GM VCFSE Safer and Stronger Communities Leadership Group