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## Quality & Impact inspection

### The effectiveness of probation work in Gloucestershire

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An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation  
August 2017

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Mark Boother, supported by a team of inspectors, as well as staff from our operations and research teams. The Assistant Chief Inspector responsible for this inspection programme is Helen Rinaldi. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and those who participated in any way in our inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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## Foreword

We report here on our inspection of probation work in Gloucestershire.

According to published performance reports, the division of the National Probation Service (NPS) that includes Gloucestershire was not meeting all the targets, and on some measures results were lower than in other divisions. On the other hand, the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) was performing well compared with other CRCs. However, we found a more nuanced picture on the ground.

When we looked at the quality of work undertaken, we found that the NPS in Gloucestershire was performing reasonably well in many respects. The court team was providing a good service, and cases were then allocated correctly. NPS case assessments were thorough, and plans realistic. The public were protected from harm. Those under supervision were seen often enough, with any failure to attend dealt with appropriately. But in the majority of the cases we reviewed, NPS efforts to rehabilitate offenders often came to little or nothing, either because the offender disengaged or because, in those cases where specific interventions were planned to help the offender turn away from crime, the interventions were not actually delivered.

We did not find such a coherent picture at the CRC. At the time of the inspection, Working Links had not been able to implement its plan (as set out in the contract bid) that a single responsible officer would support the offender throughout. Instead, offenders were being transferred between workers for operational reasons, and also as a result of painful staff reductions. Yet desistance literature emphasises the value of strong, meaningful relationships; our 2016 desistance thematic inspection (for youth) found the same, and practitioners know this from experience and professional studies.

What is more, the operating model was not even working as it should. The proposed Community Hubs are so promising, but at the time of the inspection they had not been established. The interventions team that was to deliver rehabilitation activity requirement days was not fully functioning either. The Operational Hub was not managing the proportion of cases expected. Unpaid work was not being provided as it should.

Caseloads were plainly unreasonable. As we have come to expect in such situations, managers and staff were making heroic efforts, sickness absence levels were high, and the quality of work was poor overall because staff were over-burdened and not given the professional support expected. The quality of assessment and planning was mixed, but in any event, plans were not being followed through anywhere near well enough and some offenders were not being seen often enough. As a result, the public were more at risk than necessary, and offenders who could turn their lives around were being denied the chance to do so.

This is not as government intended, and I hope that remedial action is taken by Working Links and by government.



**Dame Glenys Stacey**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation  
August 2017

## Key facts

<b>267,146</b>	The total number of offenders subject to probation supervision across England and Wales <sup>1</sup>
<b>6,701</b>	The number of offenders supervised by the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire CRC <sup>1</sup>
<b>28%</b>	The percentage of Gloucestershire cases which Working Links plans to manage via the 'Operational Hub' <sup>2</sup>
<b>34%</b>	The proportion of the CRC cases that relate to a custodial sentence (pre- or post-release supervision) <sup>1</sup> . The proportion for all England and Wales CRCs was 40%
<b>81%</b>	The proportion of offenders who were recorded as having successfully completed their period of licence or post-sentence supervision with the CRC following release from custody <sup>3</sup> . The performance figure for all England and Wales was 77%, against a target of 65%
<b>12,217</b>	The number of offenders supervised by the South West & South Central division of the NPS <sup>3</sup>
<b>663</b>	The number of MAPPA-eligible offenders managed by the NPS in Gloucestershire <sup>4</sup>
<b>3 (of 21)</b>	The number of CRCs owned by Working Links

<sup>1</sup> Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 December 2016, Ministry of Justice.

<sup>2</sup> Information provided by Working Links.

<sup>3</sup> CRC Service Level 9a, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics October-December 2016 (Q3), Ministry of Justice.

<sup>4</sup> Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report 2015/2016, October 2016, Ministry of Justice.

# **1. Overall judgements and recommendations**

- Protecting the public
- Reducing reoffending
- Abiding by the sentence
- Recommendations

We last conducted a performance inspection of probation services in Gloucestershire in November 2010, when services were provided by one organisation, the Gloucestershire Probation Trust. Direct comparisons over time cannot be made, as we have since developed our inspection methodology, and in any event probation workloads and work types differed significantly in 2010 (see Chapter 2). The outcomes from our 2010 inspection are summarised in Appendix 3.

The findings of this 2017 inspection are set out in the following chapters and summarised here.

## Protecting the public

### **CRC effectiveness**

The CRC's public protection work was poor. Although the quality of assessments of risk of harm was sufficient in three-quarters of cases, the work done with offenders to review and manage risk of harm was weak.

### **NPS effectiveness**

Overall, NPS performance was good compared with other areas inspected under our current programme. Assessments were thorough and led to effective planning. However, plans were not always adjusted to reflect changes in an offender's circumstances. Managers were aware of these shortcomings and had put in place a plan to rectify them.

### **The CRC and NPS working together**

Most CRC and NPS staff in Gloucestershire remained co-located at the time of the inspection. We were impressed by the quality of relationships between staff at all levels.

## Reducing reoffending

### **CRC effectiveness**

The quality of work to tackle the most common problem areas influencing criminal behaviour was poor. While assessments and plans were generally sound, these were not followed through to effective delivery of interventions. As a result, in too many cases, the likelihood of reoffending had not been sufficiently reduced.

### **NPS effectiveness**

The court team was performing well. Assessments of offending-related needs were usually accurate, and good-quality plans were put in place.

However, the delivery of interventions was less effective than we expect, and reviews were not carried out in a sufficient proportion of cases.

### **The CRC and NPS working together**

The CRC was generally satisfied with the information it received from the NPS court team. The NPS was broadly satisfied with the CRC's delivery of accredited programmes and education, training and employment services. However, they had justifiable concerns about the delivery of unpaid work.

## **Abiding by the sentence**

### **CRC effectiveness**

The CRC was not sufficiently effective in helping offenders to abide by their sentence.

The CRC took specific needs into account in around two-thirds of cases. We judged the number of appointments offered to be sufficient in a similar proportion of cases. Unpaid work was not managed or delivered well enough. Too many offenders were 'stood down' due to poor arrangements for transporting them to unpaid work sites and lack of placements.

### **NPS effectiveness**

The quality of NPS work was good. Offenders' diverse needs were taken into account, and so they engaged well with supervision and abided by their sentence. Where non-compliance occurred, it was challenged appropriately.

### **The CRC and NPS working together**

The CRC and NPS were working together effectively where necessary to enforce the order of the court.



# Recommendations

## **The Community Rehabilitation Company should:**

1. reduce individual caseloads to manageable levels
2. make sure that managers are allocated responsibilities which are realistic and achievable, so that they can provide more support for front-line staff and greater assurance of their work
3. make sure that people are seen often enough to ensure that the level of contact meets or exceeds the minimum requirement for delivering the sentence of the court
4. assess and review all cases according to current CRC policies
5. review the new unpaid work arrangements to ensure they can deliver the necessary improvements
6. enable all staff to fully understand their responsibilities within the target operating model.

## **The National Probation Service should:**

7. improve the recording of advice to courts in order to provide the right information to responsible officers
8. develop and implement a clear strategy to deliver rehabilitation activity requirements effectively
9. make sure that work to protect the public and manage risk of harm is reviewed appropriately in all cases and that suitable adjustments are made to sentence plans, where required.

## **The Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service should:**

10. work together to improve access to information held by partners concerning child safeguarding and domestic abuse.

## **The Ministry of Justice should:**

11. make all efforts to stabilise CRC delivery in Gloucestershire.

## **2. The arrangements for delivering probation services in Gloucestershire**

- the national context
- the local context
- organisational arrangements

## National context

Some 260,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually<sup>5</sup>. Probation services supervise individuals serving community orders, provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison (in anticipation of their release) and supervise for a minimum of 12 months all individuals released from prison<sup>6</sup>.

In order to protect the public, probation staff assess and manage the risks that offenders pose to the community. They help to rehabilitate offenders by dealing with problems such as drug and alcohol misuse, and lack of employment or housing, so as to reduce the prospect of reoffending. They monitor whether individuals are complying with court requirements, to make sure they abide by their sentence. If offenders fail to comply, probation staff report them to court or request recall to prison.

These services are provided by a publicly owned National Probation Service and 21 privately owned Community Rehabilitation Companies that provide services under contract.

The NPS advises courts on sentencing all offenders, and manages those who present a high or very high risk of serious harm, or who are managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). CRCs supervise most other offenders who present a low or medium risk of harm.

## Local context

Here we report on probation services delivered in the Gloucestershire area by both the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire (BGSW) CRC and the NPS South West & South Central division. The population of Gloucestershire is 617,000<sup>7</sup>. The main population centres are the cities of Gloucester and Cheltenham. We provide demographic data and information about the area in Appendix 2.

Gloucestershire consists of six districts: Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury. These are largely made up of white British groups, with a small population of white European residents, particularly in Cheltenham. All areas have fewer black and minority ethnic residents than the national average for England and Wales<sup>8</sup>. Unemployment in all areas of Gloucestershire is below the national average<sup>9</sup>. The area has a mixture of rural and urban populations, and has both wealthy and socially deprived communities.

The proven reoffending rates for all adult offenders in Gloucestershire (23.7%) are slightly lower than the average for England and Wales (24.0%)<sup>10</sup>. However, the average number of previous offences per offender in Gloucestershire is 16.8, which is

5 Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 27 April 2017, Ministry of Justice.

6 All those sentenced, for offences committed after the implementation of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, to more than one day and fewer than 24 months in custody are supervised in the community for 12 months after release. Others serving longer custodial sentences may have longer total periods of supervision on licence.

7 United Kingdom population estimates mid-2015, Office for National Statistics, June 2016.

8 2011 Census, Office for National Statistics, December 2012.

9 Regional labour market statistics, Office for National Statistics, April 2017.

10 Source: Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly: July 2014 to June 2015: England & Wales, Ministry of Justice.

higher than the England and Wales average of 14.3.

The CRC contract is of average value when compared with other CRC contracts<sup>11</sup>. It is owned by Working Links, which was itself acquired by the investment company Aurelius, in June 2016. Working Links owns three CRCs, all covering large rural areas: BGSW; Dorset, Devon & Cornwall (DDC); and Wales. It manages around 13% of the overall CRC caseload in England and Wales<sup>12</sup>, but covers a much greater proportion of the physical area.

The workload in the NPS is higher than anticipated. In common with other CRCs nationally, the CRC's caseload is lower than anticipated and has a different profile of requirements, which has an impact on weighted annual volume<sup>13</sup> and therefore payments. CRC contracts have recently been reviewed and some adjustments made so as to better reflect ongoing costs.

The most recent published performance reports show that BGSW CRC has met three of seven performance targets, with performance above the national average on five of these measures. The latest monitoring reports<sup>14</sup> for all contract performance measures show that it is performing well overall when compared with other CRCs.

The NPS South West & South Central division is performing above the national target on 5 out of the 11 published measures for which data was available and at or above the national average on 5 of the measures. Where the division failed to meet the target, the performance was below the national average on six of the measures.

## Organisational arrangements in the CRC

### Governance, leadership and management

A Working Links operational senior leadership team provides governance and oversight of the three CRCs. A second strategic group (Steerco) that oversaw the implementation of the CRCs' operating model is now dissolved, although some work streams are still ongoing. A new management structure was implemented in BGSW in April 2017.

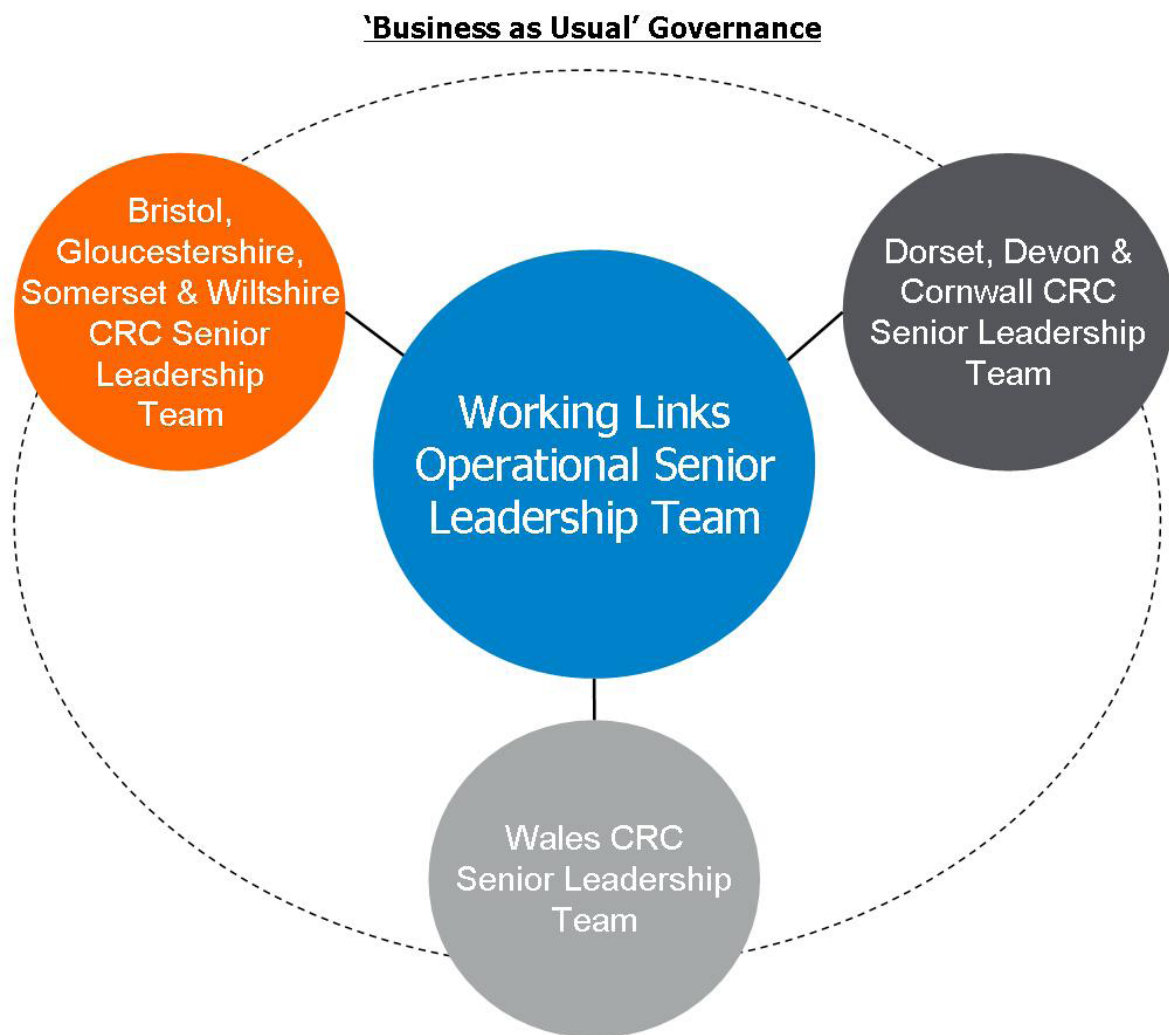
11 Source: Target Operating Model, Rehabilitation Programme, September 2013.

12 Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, October to December 2016, Ministry of Justice, Table 4.10: Offenders supervised in the community at period end, by National Probation Service Region, Division and CRC, England and Wales.

13 The weighted annual volume provides an estimate of the workload required to deliver services to offenders, and determines the fee for service that a CRC receives.

14 Source: Community Performance Quarterly Management Information release, Ministry of Justice October–December 2016.

**Figure 1.1: Diagram showing the governance arrangements for CRCs owned by Working Links**

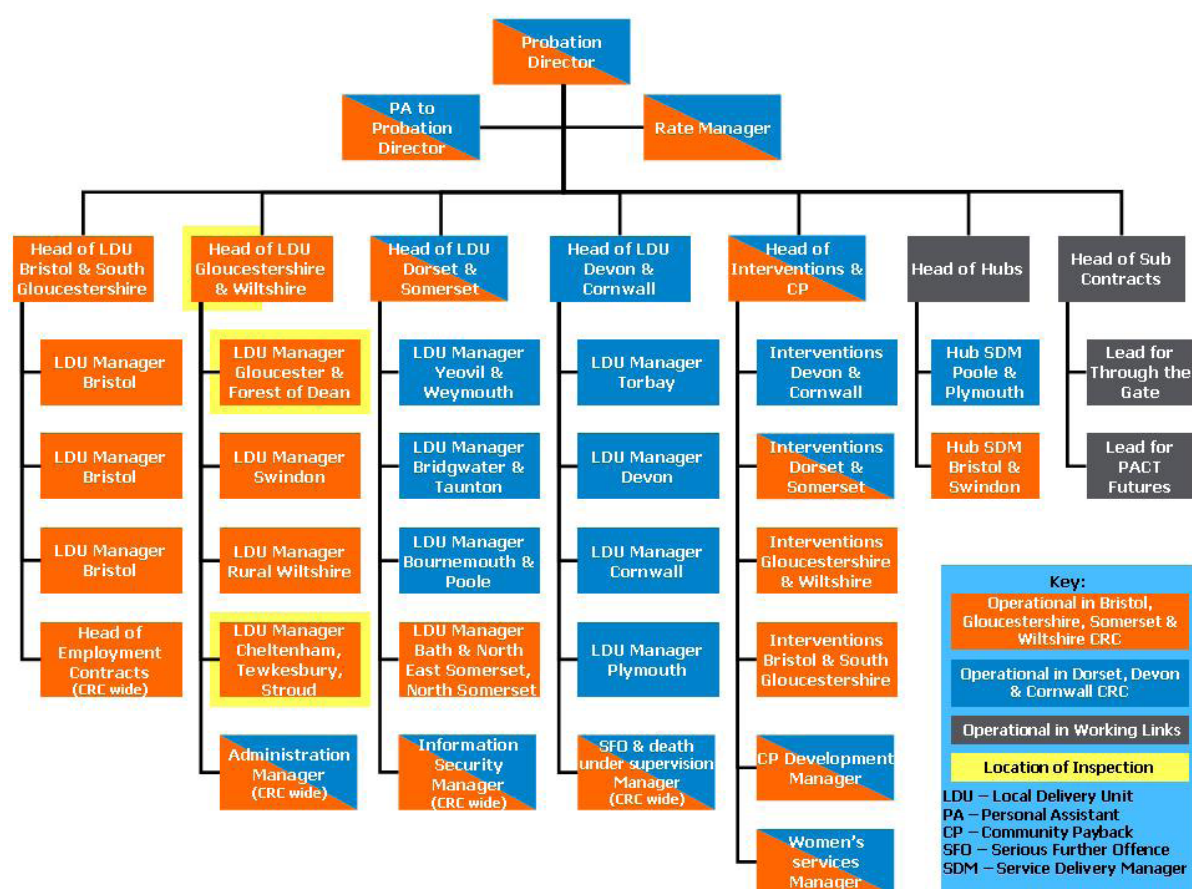


*Data supplied by Working Links*

BGSW CRC is led by a probation director who is responsible for operational and strategic leadership and implementing the operating model. He also holds this responsibility for DDC, but not Wales. The three CRCs work collaboratively, sharing learning and resources.

Local managers in Gloucestershire were working hard to articulate and deliver the new target operating model. The local management team consisted of a head of local delivery unit (LDU) (Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) grade) who also covered Wiltshire and 1.5 operations managers (senior probation officer (SPO) grade). This meant that there was little time for the day-to-day management of the service or for building the necessary relationships with partners.

**Figure 1.2: Organogram indicating the Gloucestershire operational structure<sup>15</sup>**



Data source: BGSW CRC

## The Working Links target operating model

The operating model differs from that envisaged at the time the contracts were awarded. The target model was based on 'community based case managers, following the principle of consistent case management, employing a single case manager to support the end to end offender journey from allocation to the contractor to completion of sentence requirements'<sup>16</sup>. At the time of the inspection, however, we found cases being transferred between case managers due to staff leaving the CRC and the establishment of the Operational Hub. The CRC still aspires to consistent case management, with a single case manager supporting the service user throughout, unless this is not in the interests of good risk management. Once the operating model stabilises, the situation may improve, but meanwhile staff shortages and absences continue to compromise the ambition set out in the target model.

At the heart of case allocation decisions is a tool known as the BRAG (blue, red, amber and green) model, which is used to categorise offenders by their assessed level of risk and needs and indicate the level of supervision, grade of

<sup>15</sup> Not all services to Gloucestershire offenders are delivered by staff directly managed in the Gloucestershire LDU, since this is part of a larger organisation. These services are, however, in the scope of the inspection and relevant staff were interviewed, including those delivering employment contracts, unpaid work, interventions, hub services and Through the Gate.

<sup>16</sup> BGSW Service Delivery Proposal Schedule 8, paragraph 1.4, Working Links.

staff responsible and mode of service delivery. Offenders are to be assessed and regularly reviewed to identify dynamic risk factors that may require changes to the supervision, such as increased contacts, targeted use of rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) days or attendance at the Community Hub.

Although the concept seems straightforward, it is more complex than it first appears. The BRAG assessment looks at four key elements: the risk of serious harm; the likelihood of reoffending (which will include the type and potential impact of such offending on victims); the likelihood of engagement or disengagement with the sentence; and, finally, complex factors and vulnerability. In order to be classified as green, the offender would need to show evidence of stability, the capacity to change and behaviour supportive of desistance.

To be suitable for the Operational Hub, a case has to be assessed as low risk of serious harm. Some green, medium risk of serious harm, cases are managed in the front office through face-to-face contact, which may take place in the Community Hub. Similarly, some custody cases – such as those held by probation officers (POs) or managed under the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme – remain with the front office, while others are managed in the Operational Hub.

Most CRC staff did not fully understand the model, partly because it was complex, changing, and not fully implemented. We judged that they had not received enough training, and were particularly concerned that staff may not always have understood the distinction between low risk of harm and risk of serious harm when transferring cases to the Operational Hub. Moreover, at the time of the inspection, 13% of cases did not have a BRAG status at all.

The proportion of cases in each category necessarily changes over time, and may differ from the initial assumptions underpinning resource distribution. So, for example, a smaller percentage of the caseload was held by the Operational Hub than was assumed by the target operating model. Plans to migrate all suitable cases to the Operational Hub by the end of April 2017 have not yet been fully implemented.

**Table 1: Working Links risk-based case management model<sup>17</sup>**

BRAG	% of caseload at each BRAG status according to the resource allocation model	% of caseload at each BRAG status in Glos	Approach	Average frequency (excluding intervention delivery)
Red	18	6	PO: mainly one-to-one	Every 5 business days
Red/Amber	9	6	PO Probation services officer (PSO) with oversight from PO Mainly one-to-one; some input via Community Hub	Every 8 business days

<sup>17</sup> This table shows the original resource assumptions based on findings from initial pilots.



Amber	34	32	PSO Mixture of one-to-one; some input via Community Hub	Every 15-20 business days
Green	6	15	PSO Mostly mixture of one-to-one; input via Community Hub; Operational Hub case manager contact	Every 30 business days
Operational Hub	19	11	PSO All green cases assessed as low risk of harm	Every 30 business days
Blue (in custody) suitable for Operational Hub	9	7	All cases other than those allocated to POs and IOM will be held by 'In-Touch' case managers until 12 weeks before release, when the BRAG assessment will determine whether they stay with an 'In-Touch' case manager, or move to a front office case manager <sup>5</sup>	Assumed activity every 30 business days and monthly for last 12 weeks before release
Blue (in custody) unsuitable for Operational Hub	6	10	Cases allocated to POs and IOM	
Status missing	0	13	Cases pending a BRAG assessment, currently held by Gloucestershire local delivery unit	

Source: Amended from Working Links service delivery model and operational guidance, October 2016.  
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## The Operational Hub

An Operational Hub has been established in Swindon and covers cases from Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. All the team members hold cases from both areas, although notionally, 2.3 PSO posts are attributed to Gloucestershire. For reasons of efficiency, most administrative staff and functions serving Gloucestershire were relocated from the existing probation offices to the Operational Hub in Swindon. Staff there were responsible for accepting the allocations from the NPS, commencing cases on nDelius and various other administrative tasks such as issuing appointment and warning letters.

<sup>18</sup> 'Front office case manager' is the term used for responsible officers who provide offender management.



To be managed via the Operational Hub, offenders must be assessed as presenting a low risk of serious harm, alongside other criteria. The caseload of the hub includes offenders in custody, on post-release supervision, and on community orders with single unpaid work requirements and community orders with a range of other requirements.

Managers and staff confirmed there were safeguards in place to prevent inappropriate cases being allocated to the Operational Hub. Despite this, we found several cases where we judged that appropriate assessments had not been carried out before they were transferred.

Normal caseloads for staff in the Operational Hub were expected to be in the region of 160 per person, although in the period leading up to the inspection, staff were carrying 190-200 cases each, due to temporary staffing problems. Offenders are managed by telephone contact, with calls every six weeks. We have expressed significant reservations elsewhere about the paucity of contact inherent in this operating model, and the ensuing risks. With more frequent changes of responsible officer due to the staffing difficulties, there was a greater than usual amount of administrative work. We found several cases where contact had been lost for significant periods.

Staff told us that until recently they had received little management support or guidance, with a manager often only present one day per week. They were not confident that they understood which policies and procedures applied to them. None had a detailed knowledge of services that were available to offenders living in Gloucestershire (as all had been assigned their roles from Wiltshire offices). A directory of services had not yet been produced, although one was planned.

## Community Hubs

The new target operating model assumes that most supervision of offenders classified as amber or green will be delivered from Community Hubs where those under supervision can access both specific probation services and an array of other community services. Efforts have been made to source suitable premises and partners in the two main population centres of Gloucester and Cheltenham, but with little success. However, this was set to change, with a Community Hub being established in Cheltenham and staff due to move there in June 2017.

Most services were still delivered from the traditional probation offices. Pre-existing arrangements in satellite offices in Stroud and Coleford had been maintained, although at a reduced level.

## Interventions team

The CRC delivered accredited programmes through an interventions team. It was also planned that a range of RAR interventions would be delivered by the team. At the time of the inspection, staff responsible for delivering RARs had yet to be recruited, and so hard-pressed responsible officers retained responsibility for delivering RARs.

## Services for women

An impressive range of services for women was delivered via the Nelson Trust Women's Centre, a well-established charitable organisation in Gloucester, funded by Working Links to deliver a comprehensive range of services to women managed by the CRC and NPS in Gloucestershire. Available services included health and well-being, finance, family relationships, education and training and women's safety. These could be delivered individually or in groups, including via outreach facilities for rural clients. Services were targeted at women suffering from addiction, trauma, abuse and mental health problems. Interventions were aimed at addressing the women's needs as a whole, rather than offending behaviour in isolation.

All women were supervised by female responsible officers. The CRC also had a specialist responsible officer, working from the women's centre one day per week in close collaboration with keyworkers from the Nelson Trust. Keyworkers assisted by assessing needs, exploring how RAR days could be used and developing support plans to assist in rehabilitation. Feedback about attendance flowed into the CRC Operational Hub on a daily basis, often supplemented by a telephone call with the relevant responsible officer.

The specialist responsible officer was stretched, however, with a caseload of over 90. We found that in some cases, a referral to the women's centre was included in the sentence plan but the referral was not made. There were no arrangements for cover when the specialist responsible officer was absent.

## Resettlement services

Half of the offenders in our case sample recently released from prison did not have a resettlement plan prepared before release, with the picture varying between prisons.

Of the male offenders, three had been released from HMP/YOI Portland, three from HMP Bristol and two from HMP Guys Marsh. Two women had been released from HMP Eastwood Park. None of the offenders released from HMP Bristol or HMP Guys Marsh had a resettlement plan prepared before their release.

The picture was more promising for prisoners leaving HMP/YOI Portland, where Catch22 (a not for profit business) delivered resettlement services on behalf of the CRC. In the three cases we inspected, we found exceptional levels of service. In each case, services were tailored to the offender's individual needs and circumstances, and the Catch22 worker was tenacious, doing whatever was necessary in the offender's interest.

The two women released from HMP Eastwood Park had initial resettlement plans prepared on arrival in prison. However, these plans had wrongly identified that there were 'no outstanding actions'. The plans had not been reviewed before release, even though it was clear that both women had issues with employment and debt that required addressing.

## Staffing and caseloads

Staffing levels have reduced significantly over the last three years, and caseloads are now exceptionally high. Staff absence levels are noteworthy, and turnover high. Just over 14 (14.3) full-time equivalent (FTE) posts deliver all offender management within the county: 7 POs and just over 7 (7.3) PSOs.

POs were carrying in the region of 75 cases and PSOs in the community were generally carrying over 90 cases. This is higher than the envisaged end-state figures. We were reminded frequently by staff that these figures did not include the traditionally 'easier to manage' cases, now managed in the Operational Hub, where caseloads were up to 200 cases each.

Although most PSOs had been in post for some time, nearly all were struggling with the increased complexity of their cases and the volume of cases. In recent months, responsibility for the induction of offenders who were subject to single requirement unpaid work orders was being undertaken on a temporary basis by community-based PSOs.

The total number of staff working within Gloucestershire LDU had fallen over a three-year period, from 56 to 29. The total caseload had changed from a low point of 1,036 in January 2015 to a high point of 1,246 in September 2016. At the time of the inspection, it was 1,233<sup>19</sup>. Of these, 228 cases were managed outside the county in the Operational Hub.

Staff reductions had been made across the board. With case administration centralised, local case administration posts had been reduced from 14.5 to 5. Operational manager posts had been reduced from four to two. There had also been a reduction in operational PSOs, from 11 to 7.3, although there were an additional 2.3 PSOs in the Operational Hub.

Only 28% of offenders in our sample had the same responsible officer throughout their current order. In 13% of cases, there had been four or more. As there had been considerable staff losses over the past 12 months, officers often had to take over responsibility for large numbers of offenders where there had been gaps in supervision and/or where insufficient work had been done in the initial stages.

The CRC had not undertaken a staff survey recently. We spoke to 17 responsible officers during the inspection. Considering the work pressures that staff were under, we found morale to be better than we anticipated. Most staff thought that the model the CRC was developing could deliver effective probation services, although in reality there had been little progress in implementing the model.

There were consistent themes reported by most staff, notably that they had received insufficient supervision and support, and that they had struggled to pick up large numbers of cases as their colleagues left the service. Several staff told us that they had recently resigned or were about to do so. The following are typical of the views expressed by staff:

*“We have many fewer staff and big caseloads. Working Links has some good ideas in theory but the people who make the ideas are not trying to do the work in the real world. If we could really do what they say we can it would be good. As it is, there are still plenty of challenges”.*

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<sup>19</sup> Data provided by BGSW CRC.

*“Management supervision only ever scratches the surface. I can take any cases that I am worried about to the manager, but we never get time to dive right into a case and look at the detail. I came into this job as I wanted to make a difference, and with my caseload that is really difficult to do”.*

*“I do not feel supported and I feel that management and Working Links prioritise meeting targets over risk management. Management are not responding to my concerns and I feel deflated as my workload is not manageable. I’m doing the best I can but I don’t have time to do my job properly”.*

Almost four out of five responsible officers said that, in the particular case we inspected, training had not met their needs. Furthermore, more than two in three thought they had not received sufficient management oversight. Responsible officers interviewed commented that workload impacted negatively on their ability to help offenders to achieve positive outcomes in nine out of ten cases.

We noted that a smaller proportion of cases were being supervised in the Operational Hub than anticipated, yet the volume of work being undertaken by case managers in the community meant that BRAG reviews (which could lead to cases being allocated to the hub) were not being carried out in the numbers expected. In some cases reviewed, staff said they did not then have enough time to do the work required for the case to be reassigned.

### Working environment

Services were still delivered mainly from legacy buildings. Overall, they were of good quality with sufficient facilities, including groupwork rooms and private interview rooms with adequate safety precautions.

Because Gloucestershire is a rural county, there were difficulties in delivering services in some locations. In Stroud, a small Community Hub had been identified in a housing project where probation staff attended one day per week. Appropriate services were delivered from the building, although it did lack some facilities, most notably a reception function and confidential interview space. There was no separate secure office space, which meant that staff who were not engaged in face-to-face contact were left to work in a space shared with another business. This was not satisfactory.

A further venue in Coleford was open one day per week. Staff tried to time appointments for offenders to fit with the local bus service, but this was sometimes difficult to achieve. Home visits had always been a feature of working within the local community, which was not well served by public transport. Staff told us that the possibility of home visits was reduced due to workload.

At the time of the inspection, the new case management system had not been

implemented, although new hardware had enabled staff to work remotely through Wi-Fi connectivity. This was operating well in the satellite offices but less so in the main offices, where staff occasionally had to cluster in small areas where the signal was strongest.

## Integrated Offender Management

There was a well-established police-led IOM team in Gloucestershire. The head of LDU played an active role in governing the scheme. Overall resources had been scaled back, but staff continuity and CRC commitment to the scheme remained. At the time of the inspection, the CRC had two dedicated IOM staff responsible for all CRC IOM cases alongside other cases. They played an active role in the monthly meetings to select or de-select individuals for the scheme.

The Atlas Project, which is part of the charity Stonham, provided additional support for cases that were managed by the IOM team (including NPS cases). This was not a contracted service, but rather a legacy from the Supporting People initiative. The service provided help with finding accommodation for those in need, for example, through rent deposit schemes. The service was also able to assist with a wide range of practical support in areas such as health, nutrition, finance, debt and benefits.

## Unpaid work

In our view, the practical arrangements for the delivery of unpaid work were not sufficiently robust. Organising unpaid work in rural areas is a demanding task, and we were not confident that there were sufficient management resources to ensure effective delivery.

New management arrangements for unpaid work were introduced in April 2017, with the service being delivered through the head of interventions (ACO grade). The new structure included a community payback development manager (across BGSW and DDC) and a half-time operations manager (SPO grade) for Gloucestershire.

At the time of the inspection, the role of the unpaid work supervisors was due to change to include more development work to increase the use of individual placements. There was a target to deliver 60% of the total hours through this type of placement, described as 'cost reduced', but no staff had started working in these roles. Case management functions to support unpaid work were held by the front office, or by the Operational Hub if the cases were classified as 'green'.

There were three FTE unpaid work supervisors, but two were absent due to long-term sickness. Much of the actual supervision of group placements was undertaken by sessional workers with other commitments, making it difficult to staff projects. Normal arrangements were that three work groups were deployed six times per week.

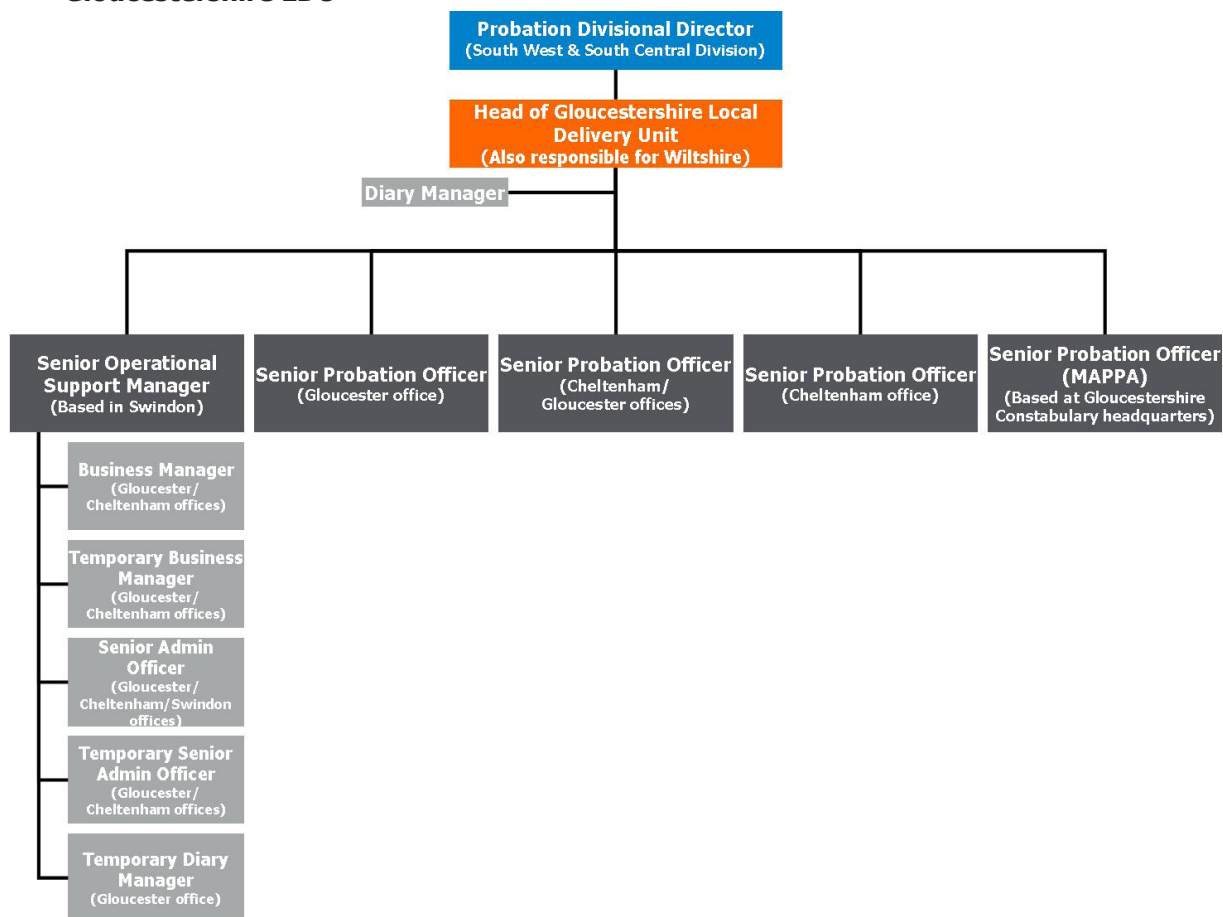
## Organisational arrangements in the NPS

The NPS is a relatively new national regionalised organisation. Operational services are delivered in-house, save for those commissioned from the CRC. Staff are drawn mainly from the former Probation Trusts. The NPS is part-way through an ambitious programme, known as E3<sup>20</sup>, to standardise processes nationally and ensure that resources are distributed equitably.

### Leadership and management

Gloucestershire is part of the South West & South Central division of the NPS. It is led by a probation divisional director. One head of the LDU covers both Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. In Gloucestershire, the head of the LDU is supported by four SPOs, a business manager and a diary manager.

**Figure 1.3: Organogram indicating operational structure of the NPS Gloucestershire LDU**



Data source: NPS South West & South Central division

Although performance in the division as a whole is not exceptional, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire are performing better against the required service levels than their divisional counterparts<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> E3 Operating Model (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Excellence), National Probation Service, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Wiltshire and Gloucestershire LDU NPS South West & South Central Performance Report 2016-2017.



## Staffing and caseloads

The NPS appeared reasonably staffed overall, and individual caseloads were manageable. Most responsible officers reported that they were close to the 100% level, by reference to the NPS's national workload management tool. Staff said that workload pressures had been an issue in only 3 of the 15 cases in our sample.

The total number of NPS staff working within Gloucestershire had fallen from 48 to 42 in the preceding three years, and caseload had risen from 725 to 742. The number of middle manager posts had been reduced from 4.9 to 3.5, and PO posts had fallen marginally, from 22.8 to 21.8. PSO posts had been reduced by over 6 FTEs from 11.7 to 5.5, however. There had been a slight increase in the number of case administrators, from 9.4 to 11.

The NPS was recruiting, to bring staff numbers up to those envisaged by the E3 model. Seven additional staff were anticipated in the near future for working in court and delivering interventions.

We are not able to comment on sickness absence levels due to difficulties with the IT platform on which this is recorded.

Of the staff interviewed, all but one felt that they had had sufficient training to support the offender whose case we were examining. Former trainees reported that they had experienced protected caseloads up to the point of qualification. During training, several staff reported that there was a policy of offering them an experienced PO mentor, which was widely seen as helpful.

Management supervision was generally thought to be of a reasonable quality and provided at regular intervals. Professional issues were discussed during team meetings and most responsible officers indicated that they felt supported by their colleagues.

One responsible officer reported: *"I get good quality feedback on my high RoSH OASys, pre-sentence reports and recall reports, this has helped me to improve"*.

## Sexual offending programmes

Provision was readily available, and waiting lists short.

Gloucestershire NPS runs two sex offender treatment programmes: the Thames Valley Sex Offenders Group Programme (TVSOGP) and the internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme (i-SOTP). Groups were provided at several locations and offenders could also receive treatment in other parts of the division if this made more logistical sense.

## Working environment

Services were delivered mainly from legacy buildings in Gloucester and Cheltenham. Overall, these buildings were of good quality, with appropriate facilities, including groupwork rooms and private, safe interview rooms. There were also arrangements to share satellite offices with the CRC in Coleford.

### **3. An evaluation of the quality of probation services in Gloucestershire**

- Protecting the public
- Reducing reoffending
- Abiding by the sentence



# Protecting the public

## CRC effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was poor. Although the risk of harm was assessed to an acceptable standard in the clear majority of cases, it was not followed through often enough or well enough. The work done with offenders to manage and review risk of harm was weak.

### Assessment and planning

Almost 75% of cases supervised by the CRC presented a medium risk of serious harm, with nearly 50% having a current or previous conviction for domestic abuse. We judged that the CRC's initial assessment of risk of harm was accurate in nine out of ten cases. Where we disagreed with the assessment, there was a tendency for the CRC to have underestimated risk of harm.

There was a sufficient assessment of the risk of harm posed to the public in 75% of cases. The risk of harm posed to known adults, children and young people was sufficient in 81% of cases. This performance is slightly stronger overall than the average we have seen across all CRCs inspected so far.

Planning to manage the risk of harm posed to children and young people was sufficient in 75% of cases, and for the public in general and known adults it was 61% and 62% respectively.

### Delivery

Responsible officers had focused sufficiently on protecting those at risk from harm in only one in four cases. In the small proportion of cases where work had been delivered by external providers, performance was better but still not acceptable, as we found a sufficient focus on protecting those at risk of harm in less than half of relevant cases.

The responsible officer had taken all reasonable action to keep the risk posed by the offender to a minimum in only 9 out of 28 relevant cases. This performance is well below the average of CRCs inspected so far. The following case illustrates this lack of action:

**Poor practice example:** Simon was convicted of violence against his partner and was correctly assessed as presenting a medium risk of serious harm. There was some confusion about his address, and when his original responsible officer left the service, contact with Simon was lost for two months.

At the time of the inspection (eight months into the order), the accredited programme requirement had not been started, and no offence-focused work had been carried out. There had been no domestic abuse call-out checks and no contact with children's social care services, until a social worker contacted the CRC asking for information. There were several children in need living at the address.

## Reviewing progress

We found that the responsible officer had reviewed progress on managing risk of harm sufficiently in less than one in five cases where we judged that this was necessary. Of the 22 cases where we thought there had been a change of circumstances that warranted an adjustment to the plan to manage risk, this had been completed in only two cases. So, for example:

**Poor practice example:** *Jamie had been convicted of a simple theft, and his original responsible officer assessed him as presenting a low risk of serious harm. Significant events evident from his previous convictions (such as the confiscation of air rifles) had not been considered. He had previously been convicted of making malicious telephone calls, although there had been no investigation into the circumstances.*

*At the time of the inspection, Jamie was being supervised by his third responsible officer in nine months. During the course of his order, there had been an allegation of rape against him, which had not been proceeded with. The responsible officer was also informed by a partner agency that there had been uncorroborated allegations of animal cruelty in the recent past.*

*None of this information had led to a review of the risk of harm Jamie posed.*

**Poor practice example:** *Carl was convicted of supplying Class A drugs to fund his own cannabis use. He was given a community order with a three-month Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR) and ten RAR days.*

*He complied with the DRR, although testing showed that he continued to use cannabis every day. Records showed that he completed eight RAR days on education, training and employment (ETE). There was no evidence of work on his thinking and behaviour or his attitude to the supply of drugs.*

*He was transferred to the Operational Hub at the six-month stage without a formal review, by which time he had lost his job. His case was managed there via telephone calls every six weeks. During his time at the Hub, he was charged with an offence of wounding, which involved using a crowbar as a weapon in a dispute believed to be linked to drug debts.*

*Carl was subsequently remanded in custody and transferred to the front office team.*

## Impact and potential impact

There had been sufficient progress in minimising the risk of harm in cases where children and young people were at risk in 11 out of 21 cases. For the public in general it was 11 out of 30 cases and for known adults it was 8 out of 25. We judge this to be poor performance.

## Management oversight

In our view, management oversight of public protection issues was needed in 26 of the cases we inspected, but provided in just 4 of them. Many staff told us that because of the number of cases they held, they found themselves able to seek guidance from managers only in cases where there was an immediate concern.

Managers themselves were severely stretched and did not have time to offer guidance on cases other than those of immediate concern. Consequently, for some less experienced staff there had been little if any discussion about what changes in circumstances might lead to an escalation in levels of risk of harm.

**Table 2: Enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Many staff were skilled in accurately assessing risk of harm. Risk was assessed to an acceptable standard in the majority of cases.	1.	Reductions in staff numbers led to the bulk reassignment of cases. This did not allow time for those staff who remained to properly understand or review these cases.
		2.	Individual caseloads were too high.
		3.	Due to the reduction in the number of middle managers, there was insufficient resource to offer effective oversight.

## NPS effectiveness

Overall, NPS performance was good, and compared well with other NPS areas we have inspected. Risk of harm had been assessed consistently well in the cases we sampled. Assessments were generally followed through with sufficient planning, and plans were also generally followed through. However, not enough cases were reviewed, despite changes in circumstances.

### Assessment and planning

Of the 16 NPS cases inspected, 6 had been assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm, 9 a medium risk of serious harm and 1 a low risk of serious harm. We agreed with these classifications, other than in the case assessed as a low risk of serious harm, which we assessed as medium.

In nearly all cases, there had been a sufficient assessment of the risks posed to known adults and members of the public. We found three cases where we thought the assessment of risk to children and young people was not sufficient.

We judged that planning to manage risk of harm was sufficient in all but two cases. Although this still leaves room for improvement, it is strong performance compared with other inspected areas.

### Delivery

Work delivered by the responsible officer was sufficiently focused on protecting those at risk of harm from the offender in nearly 75% of cases. Where other partners and providers were involved in managing the case, they focused sufficiently on protecting those at risk in nearly all cases.

**Good practice example:** *Peter was convicted of a common assault on his partner, the latest in a long string of domestic abuse incidents. At the point of the offence, he was nearing the end of the Building Better Relationships programme he had started while on post-sentence supervision. This was allowed to continue as he started a new community order that included RAR days, unpaid work and an Alcohol Treatment Requirement.*

*At the point of the inspection, he had completed his unpaid work and Alcohol Treatment Requirement and remained abstinent. His RAR days were being used to consolidate his existing learning. The assessment of his level of risk had been reduced to medium, and there had been no further offences or domestic abuse incidents.*

**Good practice example:** Colin had a long history of violent offences against his partner, mother and peers. He had been living with his mother before being sentenced to custody. A restraining order had been imposed, so he was initially homeless on release. He breached the restraining order and was returned to custody.

As his next release approached, his responsible officer tried to find accommodation, including a probation hostel, but nothing was available. Colin's mother approached the responsible officer to ask if her son could be allowed to return to live with her. His mother successfully applied to court for the restraining order to be lifted. The responsible officer worked with Colin's mother to ensure that she understood the risks involved and how she could protect herself. The work was well evidenced and recorded.

Ultimately, a decision was made that allowed Colin to return to live with his mother.

## MAPPA

The NPS seconded an SPO as a MAPPA administrator. We were told that at the time of the inspection the NPS in Gloucestershire was responsible for eight MAPPA Level 2 cases and one MAPPA Level 3 case. These figures for Levels 2 and 3 appeared relatively low. We were told that this was because of a preparedness to reduce MAPPA levels when sufficient work had been completed.

There is a quality assurance process for Level 2 and 3 cases, which reviews five cases per quarter. Given the relatively small number of cases, this represents nearly all cases over a 12-month period. Evidence provided showed that the MAPPA coordinator chaired all meetings and that a relevant NPS manager also attended in each case.

Ten cases in our sample were correctly identified as eligible for MAPPA and managed at Level 1.

## Reviewing progress

We judged that there was the need for a review of progress to manage the risk of harm in 11 cases. Of these, such a review had been completed in only five. Middle managers told us that reviews had not been prioritised due to staff vacancies and new staff coming into post. They were aware of the issue and had introduced a management report to help identify cases overdue for a review and so ensure that plans reflected current circumstances.

## Impact and potential impact

Overall, we judged that in 12 out of 16 cases the responsible officer had taken all reasonable action to keep to a minimum the offender's risk of harm to others.

**Table 3: Enablers and barriers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Assessment and planning to manage the risk of harm posed to others was done well in most cases.	1.	Too few cases were reviewed appropriately in response to developing circumstances.

## The CRC and NPS working together

Most CRC and NPS staff in Gloucestershire were co-located. We were impressed by the quality of relationships between staff at all levels.

The senior managers met regularly and adopted a problem-solving approach. We found this leadership behaviour modelled throughout both organisations. We found no cases where risk escalation had been necessary. We were told by managers that there were no particular problems in this area for cases that met the threshold.

A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) was established, with a MASH operational management group, to which SPOs from the CRC and NPS were invited. However, the CRC and NPS were only informed of referrals to the MASH by other partners where it was known that the NPS or CRC had information. This left open the possibility of disconnect in cases where partners were unaware of NPS or CRC involvement. Managers were aware of the issue, although it was not clear whether resources could be made available to resolve it.

Although the NPS had swift access to domestic abuse call-out records from the MAPPA coordinator at the court stage, these were not available to the CRC after the case was allocated. We were told by managers that the police were sometimes unwilling to share information about victims with the CRC, and we saw this in our case sample. In one case, the police were unwilling to share information concerning victims with the CRC, even where a specific request had been made and the potential perpetrator was known to the CRC for domestic abuse.

**Table 4: Enablers and barriers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to protecting the public.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Relationships between CRC and NPS staff at all levels were positive. Work was done in a collaborative way to maximise the likelihood of good outcomes.	1.	Information sharing in relation to the MASH and to domestic abuse call-outs was problematic.

# Reducing reoffending

## CRC effectiveness

The quality of work was poor overall. Although assessment and planning were acceptable in a clear majority of cases, they were let down by very poor delivery and little case review. Plans were generally not followed through, and in far too many cases there was not sufficient purposeful activity.

### Assessment and planning

We judged the overall assessment of the likelihood of reoffending to be sufficient in two in three cases, and sentence planning sufficient in almost two in three cases. The following example illustrates how easily a case can drift in the absence of a clear plan:

***Poor practice example:** Edward was convicted of violence against a partner. He was correctly assessed as presenting a medium risk of serious harm.*

*His original responsible officer had been absent for some time. There was no sentence plan and those who managed the case as part of a duty system in the responsible officer's absence lacked direction. There was no offence-focused work in the first six months of his order.*

*Edward's case was not reviewed, even when he committed a further offence leading to a remand in custody.*

*A new responsible officer was eventually identified and a new assessment carried out.*

In less than half of the cases inspected, factors that might support the offender in avoiding reoffending had been incorporated into sentence planning.

### Delivery

At the time of the inspection, we judged that there had been sufficient progress overall in delivering the required interventions in only 22% of cases. There had been insufficient progress in the remaining cases, although in 25% of these, the reason for the lack of progress had been a lack of engagement from the offender.

**Table 5: Sufficiency scores relating to the most prevalent assessed needs of cases in the CRC inspection sample.**

Assessed need (in order of priority)	% of cases where interventions delivered sufficiently
Thinking and behaviour	22
Drug misuse	33
Relationships	14
Education, training and employment	57
Emotional well-being	23
Lifestyle	17
Accommodation	67
Attitudes to offending	9

Senior managers in Working Links told us that the target operating model and resourcing were based on an assumption that accredited programmes and RAR activities would be delivered in groups by an interventions team line-managed outside of the Gloucestershire LDU. In reality, although accredited programmes were being delivered in this way, the interventions team had not started to deliver RARs.

The interventions team was supposed to consist of 7 FTE staff, although at the time of the inspection there were 3.7 FTE vacancies. This meant that responsible officers were struggling to deliver the RAR elements of orders in a structured way.

ETE provision in Gloucestershire was good. However, this service was less resilient than previously, since the staffing had been reduced to just 1.3 ETE officers covering Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. ETE RARs were delivered by the interventions team. The officer attended the Gloucester office one day per week. Appointments were booked by the responsible officer, and a specific employment action plan with short and long-term goals was agreed with the offender. Further appointments were agreed on an ad hoc basis.

**Good practice example:** Victor was an unemployed young man with a conviction for theft. He was referred to the internal ETE service, which encouraged and helped him to use some of his unpaid work hours to gain his Construction Skills Certification Scheme award.

When he failed the test, the ETE worker motivated him and arranged for him to have more training as part of his RAR days before resitting his test.

Other cases were managed less effectively, however, as this example illustrates:



**Poor practice example:** Ted had been convicted of drink-driving for a second time. He also had convictions for criminal damage, which may have been related to drunkenness. He was given ten RAR days and unpaid work.

Ted met with his responsible officer on two occasions. These meetings focused on completing his unpaid work, which he did successfully. There was no exploration of the potential problem with alcohol that had been identified in his pre-sentence report, and no assessment of how the RAR days could be used.

He had two further telephone contacts with the responsible officer, then his case was transferred to the Operational Hub. No further action was taken on the RAR days, which were said to be complete.

There was a three-month gap between his final call to his original responsible officer and his first call from the Operational Hub.

We were able to talk to three of the five offenders in our sample whose cases were managed by the Operational Hub. All were happy to have been transferred to telephone-only contact, although one thought that he would be unlikely to disclose any further problems to the Operational Hub PSO, because he felt that he did not have a real relationship with him. In this case, telephone-only contact would seem to be a barrier to thorough engagement and likely to impact on the offender's ability to reduce his reoffending. For others, moving to the hub was appropriate, as in the following case:

**Good practice example:** Frasier was sentenced to a community order for a first offence involving the supply of drugs. He was offered good support by his family and by his responsible officer, who put him in contact with the ETE team. Frasier had been able to move away from a drug-using culture and abstain from drug use. He had maintained his accommodation and restored a positive relationship with his family, obtained a job and successfully applied for a college course.

In his discussion with us, he said: "I am happy to have calls from the hub. I have done all the work and have no issues; I am moving on with my life".

### The delivery of unpaid work

We found evidence in our case file inspection and through offender interviews that the practice of 'standing down' an offender due to a lack of work placements was not uncommon. There was a particular problem with picking up offenders from a series of muster points. The mini-bus could be nearly full by the time it reached the second pick-up point, meaning that willing workers had to be turned away.

Some offenders were to attend for unpaid work four days a week, so as to complete unpaid work intensively, but this was not happening in practice. Managers told us these arrangements were now available and that one individual was undertaking unpaid work in this way.

We were pleased to find that inductions often offered offenders the opportunity to use some of their hours to study and take qualifications, and that some had done so successfully.

### Meeting the needs of offenders

Offenders had mixed views of their experiences in the CRC. Most thought that the relationship they had built with their responsible officers was strong. Some were very complimentary about their responsible officers, with one saying

*“He’s brilliant”.*

However, some expressed frustration at their responsible officer’s inability to access practical support, particularly in the areas of housing and employment. One said:

*“The CRC isn’t too bad; they gave me very good assistance and encouragement and my PO is very accommodating. The problem is with other agencies”.*

Another said:

*“I can’t knock my PO, but she can only do so much”.*

She added:

*“Individual relationships are positive, but their hands are tied. They try their best”.*

This individual felt that she would have preferred more support from her responsible officer, instead of being

*“pushed somewhere else for help with employment, housing and relationships”.*

In one case where an offender perceived that they had achieved real change, they were positive about the help they had received:

*“My PO is good and is helping me to get custody of my daughter*

*even though I've finished the order. I've achieved everything and my PO was a lot of help".*

Those who had been released on licence tended to be less positive:

*"They're not interested in you when you're in prison".*

Another said:

*"I had no help before I came out of prison. I was better off being in prison. At least you got fed and had a bed".*

One licensee told us:

*"It's a tick box exercise when you're on licence. You turn up for your appointments, but they don't know the major issues that are going on in the background with accommodation, unemployment or family matters".*

### Reviewing progress

There was a sufficient review of progress with regard to reducing reoffending in only 7 of the 31 cases where we judged it necessary. Plans had been adjusted appropriately in all but one of these seven cases.

### Impact and potential impact

Work to tackle accommodation and employment-related needs was being delivered effectively in a relatively high proportion of cases where these were identified as significant issues. Offenders were being helped to secure accommodation, jobs and training. However, there was not sufficient progress on all other areas of need in the large majority of cases. We were particularly concerned about lack of progress on relationships. Nearly half of the cases in our sample had a history of domestic abuse, yet only 2 of 14 cases showed any signs of improvement.

In 12 of the 32 cases (38%) we inspected, the individual had been convicted or cautioned for an offence committed since the start of their current order. This is relatively poor performance compared with the average of CRC cases inspected (22%).

**Table 6: Enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	The internal ETE service provider was viewed as a positive resource by responsible officers and offenders.	1.	The target operating model assumed that RARs would be delivered outside the LDU structure. However, this had not happened, leaving responsible officers with high caseloads and insufficient time to deliver interventions.
		2.	The operating model's assumption that services would mainly be delivered through Community Hubs with on-site support from partners had not materialised, leaving staff struggling with high caseloads and insufficient support.

## NPS effectiveness

The quality of work was mixed. The court team was performing well: assessments of offending-related needs were usually accurate and good-quality plans were put in place. However, interventions were not delivered to an acceptable level, and reviews were not completed in a sufficient proportion of cases.

### Work in court

Overall, the quality of reports to court was generally sufficient. They focused on the right issues, and identified and analysed areas linked to offending in nearly all cases. Safeguarding concerns were also addressed well.

The court team consisted of 1.5 POs and 3.6 PSOs, led by an experienced SPO. Senior managers told us that there were fewer staff than the number agreed under the new E3 plans, and that more staff would be assigned in the future.

There were efficient processes for preparing for court. Lists were usually checked several days in advance so that responsible officers could be contacted for information.

Although some offenders were sentenced without a report, we found that on occasions the court team offered advice to the court that they did not consider or record as an oral report. This was clearly better than not offering advice, but it had the potential to be developed further, thus offering a better service.

We were impressed with the work of the court team. From our observations, we judged that staff were confident and competent. They were clearly well-integrated into the court setting and well-known to clerks, magistrates, district judges and other staff. The work we observed was proactive, supported speedy progress of cases, and dealt effectively with issues of reoffending and risk of harm.

The court team also liaised effectively with Criminal Justice Liaison Services, an NHS England service. This provided a daily service to the court, offering assessment of and support for offenders with mental health or substance misuse problems. At court, this assessment and support were thought to assist in diverting offenders from custody and reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

A process had been agreed whereby court staff could contact the MAPPA administrator (an NPS employee), who had almost instant access to police domestic abuse call-out records and was authorised to share these appropriately. This information enhanced the quality of information provided to the court considerably.

The Chair of the Bench and Senior Court Clerk told us that they were happy with the service they received from probation and that reports were “*nearly always*” available on the day of request. It was their view that, where a report could not be provided, this would be because of the complexity of the case, where the reasons for adjournment were clear.

***Good practice example:*** Roger was convicted of assault by battery. He was sentenced to a 12-month community order with a 30-day accredited programme requirement and 4-week curfew. The offence involved punching a night-club bouncer following an evening of heavy drinking. Poor emotional management and lack of victim awareness and anger management were appropriately identified as key factors contributing to the offence.

*An immediate request for domestic abuse call-out information was made, as Roger lived at home with younger siblings and had an estranged son. Checks were completed and results returned within two hours. This enabled the court to verify that the proposed curfew requirement was appropriate.*

Facilities to interview defendants were sufficient. The court team took care to ensure that defendants were kept well informed of the progress of their case and that their responsibilities after sentence were clearly explained, giving the best opportunity for a successful start to the order.

Appointments were made at court for all defendants that would be supervised by the NPS in the county.

### Allocating cases

All 48 cases we inspected had been appropriately allocated by the NPS to the correct organisation at the point of sentence.

## Assessment and planning

In 14 of the 16 NPS cases we inspected, we judged that the overall assessment in relation to reducing reoffending was done promptly and to a sufficient standard. Plans were also judged to be sufficient in the same number of cases.

## Delivery

We judged that there had been sufficient progress in delivering interventions in only 5 of the 15 cases inspected. In another five cases, despite reasonable efforts by the responsible officer, the offender's lack of engagement had proved a significant barrier to delivering interventions successfully.

Progress was more evident in relation to drug and alcohol misuse, and accommodation, as opposed to other areas of need. The following case illustrates good progress in the area of substance misuse and mental health:

***Good practice example:** Fred had a long history of violent offending and substance misuse. He also had a serious mental health problem, paranoia. He lost his accommodation while in prison and had been homeless since his release. His responsible officer liaised regularly with mental health and drug treatment services that were helping to keep him stable. His chaotic lifestyle made it difficult to do a great deal of focused work, so the emphasis has been on support and monitoring, which has been very thorough.*

*Fred has not reoffended since he was released.*

Some services could be purchased from the CRC via the rate card; however, this was not so in the case of RARs. Individual NPS responsible officers delivered these. There was no intention to purchase RAR days from the CRC when these became available. Instead, it was envisaged that when new PSO staff had been recruited, they would support POs in working with cases or delivering group supervision.

## Meeting the needs of offenders

There was a comprehensive offender feedback survey in November 2016. The return rate from Gloucestershire and Wiltshire was the second highest in the division, at 19%<sup>22</sup>. The percentage of returns that were defined as 'positive' across the division was 84%. Gloucestershire and Wiltshire scored higher, at 87%. It was also noteworthy that this score was the most improved in the division since the previous survey two years earlier.

## Reviewing progress

We found that too few cases were reviewed when we would have expected them to have been. In 12 cases, there were grounds to review progress, although this had happened in only 7. The plan to manage the case was adjusted in only five cases.

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22 NPS South West & South Central Offender Feedback Survey, November 2016 results.

## Impact and potential impact

As the court team was functioning well, good-quality information was available to the court to inform sentencing and ensure that justice was dispensed quickly and efficiently. Cases were allocated correctly, underpinned by the completion of the appropriate case allocation tools. Most cases were assessed accurately, and plans were put in place to tackle offending behaviour.

However, we found that the limited progress in delivering interventions and the lack of reviews and adjustments to plans meant that offenders were less likely to make progress with their offending-related needs.

**Table 7: Enablers and barriers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	The court team was operating well and providing good-quality information.	1.	There was insufficient progress in delivering interventions.
2.	There were high-quality assessments and plans in most cases.	2.	Too many cases were not reviewed appropriately.

## The CRC and NPS working together

NPS managers told us that there were no particular restrictions on the use of CRC services through the rate card system. They were generally satisfied with the availability of Building Better Relationships and the Thinking Skills Programme for their own cases. There was also some use of ETE interventions provided by the CRC.

NPS managers were aware that there were problems with the delivery of unpaid work, particularly for those not living in Gloucester or Cheltenham. They told us that this had been raised with the CRC.

The CRC would have welcomed more orders with accredited programmes. In court, we observed that NPS staff were making appropriate sentencing proposals, including for programmes.

NPS staff reported that due to changes in CRC responsible officers in cases, it had become increasingly difficult to obtain up to date information in individual CRC cases. Nevertheless, we observed court duty officers asking for, and receiving, up to date information.

Where unpaid work was ordered, court staff could give offenders an appointment to attend the CRC for induction, as this always happened on the same day. NPS court staff told us that there was not a similar process in place to offer first appointments for other CRC cases, and that offenders were told to wait for a letter.



**Table 8: Enablers and barriers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.**

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Relationships between staff at all levels were positive.	1.	The lack of a clear process to inform sentenced offenders of their first appointment with the CRC risked delaying the start of interventions.

## Abiding by the sentence

### CRC effectiveness

The quality of work was poor. We judged the number of appointments offered to be insufficient in some cases, and sometimes contact with the offender was lost inadvertently. Some individuals sentenced to unpaid work were unable to complete their sentence effectively because of shortcomings in unpaid work delivery. Dealing with service-users' non-compliance when it arose was noticeably poor.

### Delivery

Offenders' individual diversity needs were taken into account in assessment, planning and delivery of interventions in around two in three cases. The CRC made sufficient effort to overcome barriers to effective engagement in just over half of cases. These are similar levels of performance to those we have seen in other CRCs, although they are still below our expectations. We assessed that the offender was fully engaged in the planning in slightly less than half of all cases inspected.

Sufficient progress had been made in delivering the legal requirements of the order in 59% of cases. This is below average compared with other CRCs that we have inspected, and is unacceptable.

In several cases, the CRC had lost contact with the offender for significant periods. This usually happened when orders were transferred as responsible officers left the organisation, and when new responsible officers struggled with increasing caseloads.

**Poor practice example:** Kevin had a conviction for assault and was given a community order with three requirements. He told us: "there was a complete lapse of communication between probation and myself. There were lots of holes. I had no contact for two months when my first officer left. They said they had sent letters but I never got them. I had to keep chasing them. There was no plan for what I needed to do".

*A check of probation records confirmed Kevin's account of events.*



**Poor practice example:** Evan was a domestic burglar released on licence. He had accommodation problems and moved to another area. This accommodation then broke down. The case had not been transferred, so it remained the responsibility of Gloucestershire. The original responsible officer left and the case was not reallocated. Evan was not seen after 01 December. Contact was re-established in May.

In cases where there was an unpaid work requirement, too many offenders were unable to complete their hours because there were not enough work places or insufficient transport to take them to the unpaid work site.

**Poor practice example:** Peter had a requirement for unpaid work and lived near Stroud. He told us: “We are told to meet outside the probation office. There might be five, six or seven of us. The bus has to come from Gloucester. When they turn up there is sometimes only one seat left, sometimes none at all. You get [credited with] an hour for being stood down”.

*A check of probation records confirmed his account.*

**Poor practice example:** Alan was given a community order with a DRR and unpaid work. At a DRR review, it was clear that he was complying with the order, but had failed to be picked up from the muster point on at least five occasions.

*The responsible officer proposed that the unpaid work requirement be revoked, even though only 30 of the 100 hours originally ordered had been completed. The proposal was followed.*

Where there were instances of non-compliance, we judged that actions by the responsible officer were not sufficient in four in ten cases.

**Poor practice example:** Neil was convicted of theft and sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. He had an ongoing substance misuse issue, and was managed as part of the IOM cohort.

*The responsible officer recorded that there had been 11 acceptable absences and 12 unacceptable absences. Although Neil had been given some warnings, none of these had been followed through. No attempt had been made to gain any management endorsement of the decision not to take enforcement action.*

## Impact and potential impact

In too many cases, insufficient efforts had been made to understand the individual needs of offenders so that effective interventions could be tailored to them. Once orders had started, contact was often interrupted by poor transfer arrangements following staffing changes. Where offenders were subject to unpaid work, they were too frequently stood down as insufficient transport and work was available.

**Table 9: Barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.**

Barriers	
1.	Too many cases had periods where there was an insufficient level of supervision either because the case was transferred between responsible officers or because the responsible officer's workload meant that they did not have time to offer enough appointments.
2.	Unpaid work was not sufficiently resourced or well organised to deliver the number of hours required by the courts.
3.	Responsible officers were not recording adequate reasons for their decisions not to pursue enforcement action and were not seeking management endorsement for those decisions.

*Note: For the domain of abiding by the sentence, there were no identified enablers found for the CRC.*

## NPS effectiveness

The quality of work was good.

## Delivery

The offender's individual diversity needs were taken into account in the assessment in 15 out of 16 cases and in planning in 13 out of 16. Sufficient effort was made to overcome barriers to effective engagement in all but two cases.

The responsible officer had successfully engaged the offender in planning in 11 of 16 cases and made sufficient, although unsuccessful, efforts to engage the offender in a further 2 cases. In the remaining three cases, the offender was not sufficiently engaged in planning.

At the time of the inspection, sufficient progress had been made in delivering the legal requirements of the sentence in all cases. In 15 out of 16 cases, we judged that the number of appointments was sufficient.

Ten of the offenders had failed to comply with instructions or had behaved inappropriately at some point during their current order. In each case, the responsible officer took appropriate action.

## Impact and potential impact

By taking into account the offender's diverse needs and engaging a high proportion of them in developing plans, responsible officers had maximised the potential to deliver the sentence of the court effectively. Performance in this area of work is stronger than we have seen elsewhere.

**Table 10: Enablers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.**

Enablers	
1.	Staff took offenders' individual needs into account when undertaking assessments and developing plans. This led to good levels of engagement.
2.	Staff were clear with offenders about the consequences of failing to comply with their sentence and took appropriate action when needed.

*Note: For the domain of abiding by the sentence, there were no identified barriers found for the NPS.*

## The CRC and NPS working together

### Enforcement

We found that the information supplied by the CRC to the NPS in breach cases was generally sufficient to allow for prosecution. The court team adopted a problem-solving approach to ensuring that any deficiencies could be put right quickly by liaising with CRC staff and making necessary amendments. These arrangements were more effective than in other areas inspected recently.

**Good practice example:** We observed a court duty officer presenting a breach case where a woman had been picked up on a warrant and appeared at court with no advance notice. The officer had been able to access the breach paperwork and present the case.

The breach report had been written some time ago, and the proposal to extend the curfew was no longer valid. The officer considered the options and made a proposal for additional RAR days, which was accepted by the court.

**Table 11: Enablers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.**

Enablers	
1.	The CRC generally provided the correct information within breach packs. Where there were difficulties, both parties adopted a problem-solving approach to resolve matters quickly.

*Note: For the domain of abiding by the sentence, there were no identified barriers found for the CRC and NPS working together.*

# Appendices

- 1: Inspection methodology
- 2: Background data
- 3: Contextual information, including Gloucestershire Probation Trust 2010 inspection outcomes
- 4: Data analysis from inspected cases
- 5: Glossary

## Appendix 1: Inspection methodology

HMI Probation's Quality & Impact programme began in April 2016. It has been designed to examine probation work in discrete geographical areas, equivalent to a police/Police and Crime Commissioner area, regardless of who delivers the work. We inspect the work of both the CRC and the NPS, together with the contribution of any partners working with these organisations.

An inspection team visited the area for two full weeks in May 2017. Before starting fieldwork, we held fact-finding meetings with the CRC and NPS in Gloucestershire and gathered a range of evidence in advance. In the first week of fieldwork, we inspected a pre-determined number of cases (community orders, suspended sentence orders and licences) of individuals sentenced or released from prison about nine months previously. These cases may not have been fully representative of all the eligible cases, but so far as possible we made sure that the proportions matched in terms of (i) gender, (ii) ethnicity, (iii) sentence type and (iv) office location – with minimum numbers set for (i) and (ii). Cases were also selected from the full range of risk of serious harm and likelihood of reoffending levels, and from as many responsible officers as possible. In Gloucestershire, the sample consisted of 48 cases, 32 of which were CRC cases and 16 of which were NPS cases. We were also able to speak to the responsible officer in most cases.

The team then returned one week later to pursue lines of enquiry emerging from the first week. We observed specific activities and interventions and spoke with key staff, managers and partners, in focus groups, meetings, or on a one-to-one basis. In this inspection, we conducted 4 staff focus groups involving 18 staff, and spoke to managers responsible for courts, Through the Gate, human resources, unpaid work, interventions, ETE and other services. We were also able to meet with the Bench Chair, the Senior Clerk and staff from five different partnerships or providers.

We spent time at both probation offices and visited one satellite office. We attempted to speak with those offenders who had consented to being contacted. In this inspection, we spoke with five offenders – three from the CRC and two from the NPS – whose cases we inspected. We also spoke to eight offenders in two groups who were attending specific interventions. We received written evidence from a further two.

The inspection focused on assessing how the quality of practice contributed to achieving positive outcomes for offenders, and on evaluating what encouraging impact had been achieved. We were mindful that current impact could provide evidence of progress towards long-term desistance. In particular, we were seeking to report on whether the work undertaken was likely to lead to reduced reoffending, the public were protected from harm and individuals had abided by their sentence.

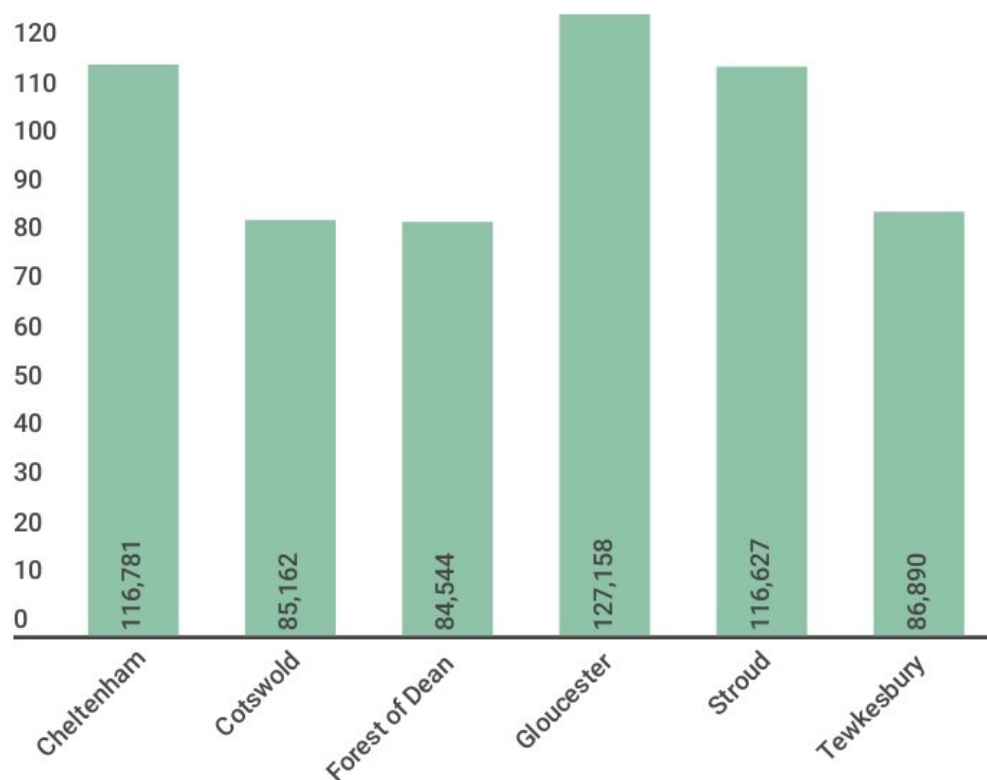
## Appendix 2: Background data

This inspection covers Gloucestershire, which is overseen by a county council and comprises the six lower-tier authorities of Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury.

### Population demographics

The population of Gloucestershire was estimated at 617,162 in 2015 (Figure 2.1).

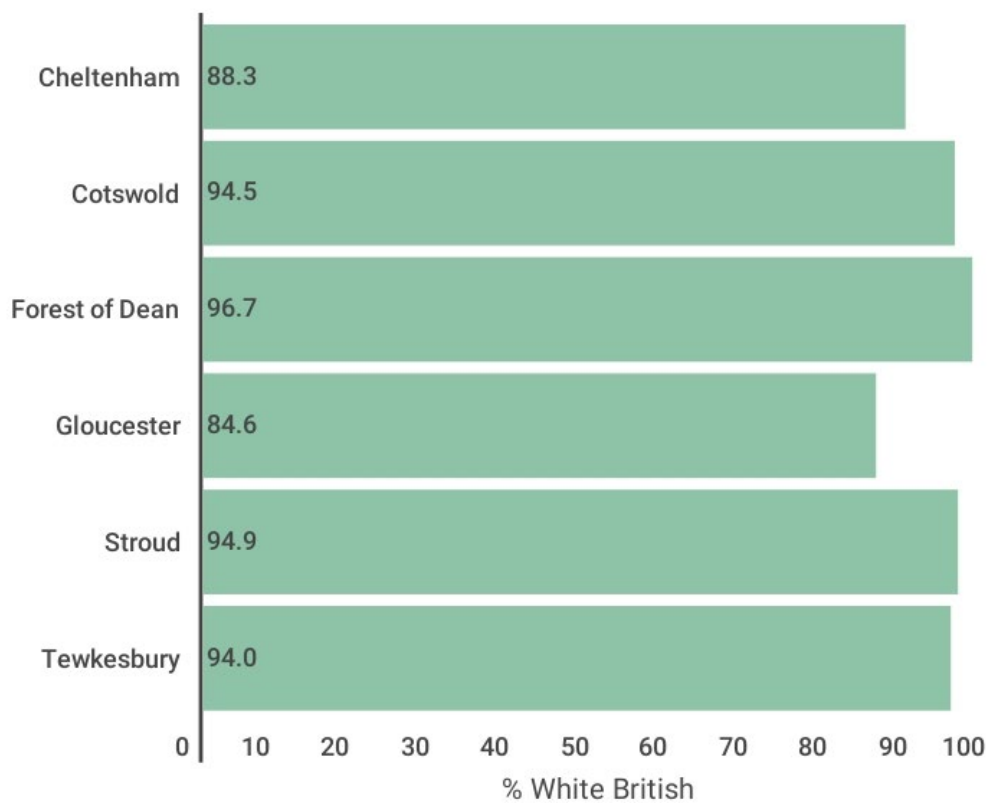
**Figure 2.1: Population estimate, mid-2015**



Source: Office for National Statistics, June 2016

Gloucestershire has a higher proportion of white British residents (91.6%) than the England and Wales average (80.5%). However, there is great local variation, with the Forest of Dean having the highest percentage (96.7%).

**Figure 2.2: Ethnicity in Gloucestershire, 2011 census**

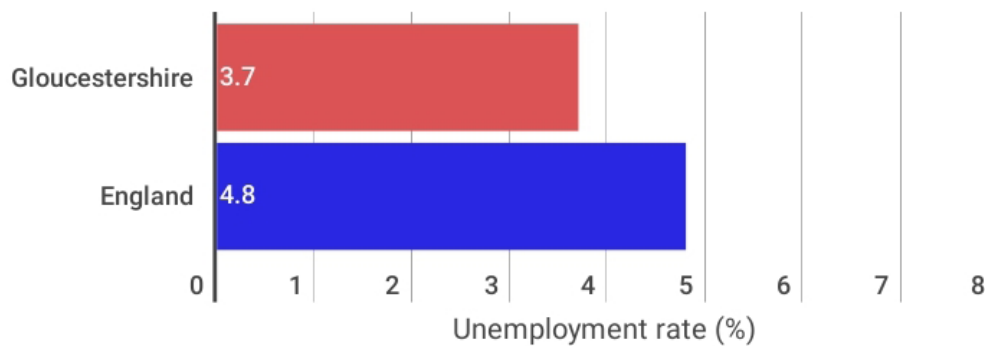


*Source: Office for National Statistics, December 2012*

## Levels of deprivation and crime

Figure 2.3 shows that unemployment in Gloucestershire is lower than the England average.

**Figure 2.3: Unemployment in Gloucestershire, January 2016 – December 2016**

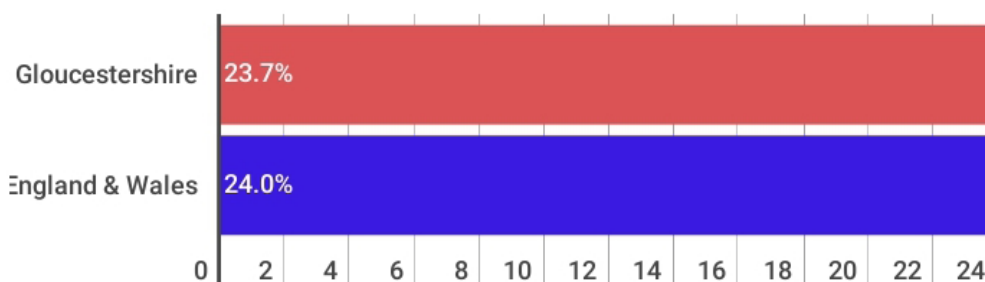


Source: Office for National Statistics, April 2017

## Levels of reoffending

The proven reoffending rates for Gloucestershire are set out in Figure 2.4. They are based on adult offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a caution in the period July 2014 to June 2015. This is slightly lower than the England and Wales average.

**Figure 2.4: Proven reoffending rate, July 2014 to June 2015**

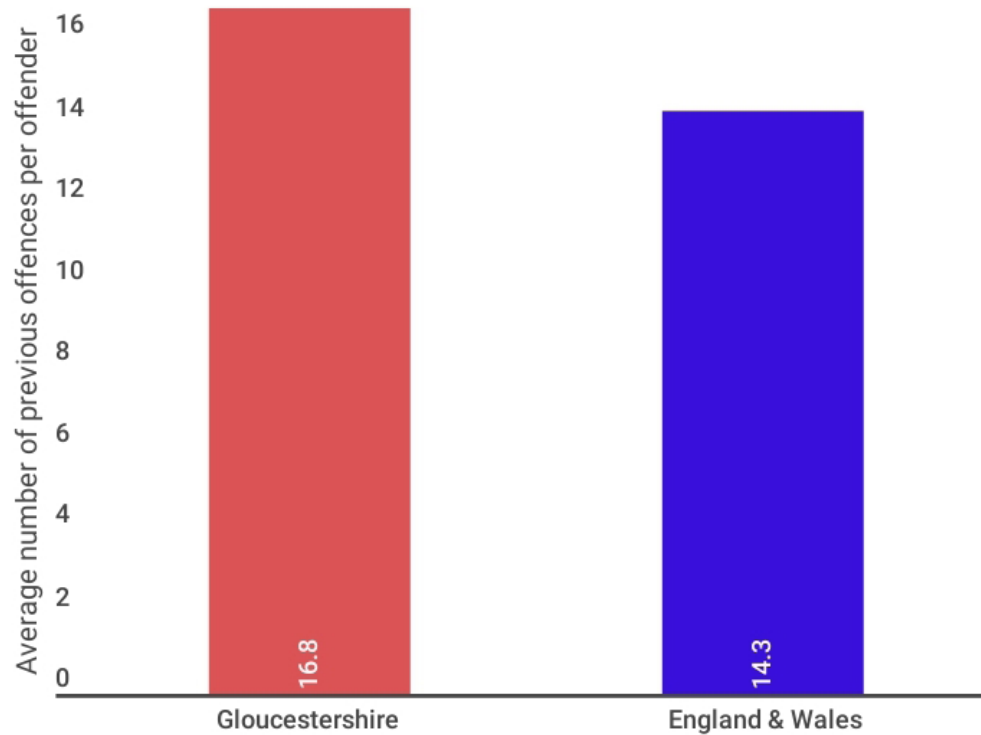


Source: Ministry of Justice, April 2017



The Gloucestershire offender cohort has 16.8 previous offences on average, which is higher than the England and Wales average (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5: Offending histories, July 2014 to June 2015**



*Source: Ministry of Justice, April 2017*

## Appendix 3: Gloucestershire Probation Trust 2010 inspection outcomes

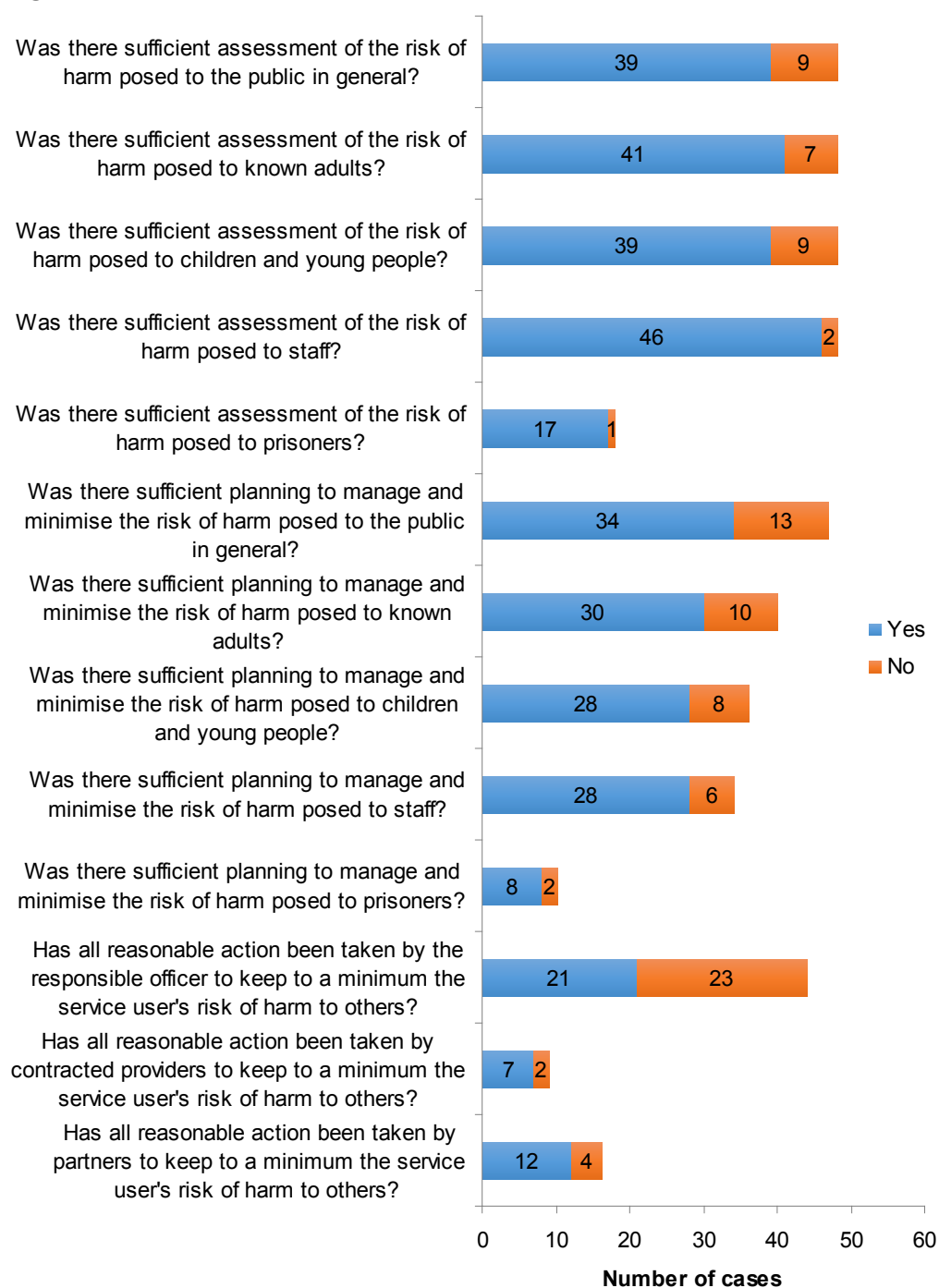
**Table 12: Findings scores for the Gloucestershire Probation Trust during the November 2010 inspection.**

	Scores from the English regions that had been inspected to date			Scores for Gloucestershire
	Lowest	Highest	Average	
'Control' - 'Risk of Harm to others' work <i>(action to protect the public)</i>	64%	81%	72%	<b>75%</b>
'Help' and 'Change' - Likelihood of Reoffending work <i>(individual less likely to reoffend)</i>	62%	78%	71%	<b>71%</b>
'Punish' - Compliance and Enforcement work <i>(individual serves his/her sentence)</i>	69%	85%	79%	<b>74%</b>

## Appendix 4: Data analysis from inspected cases

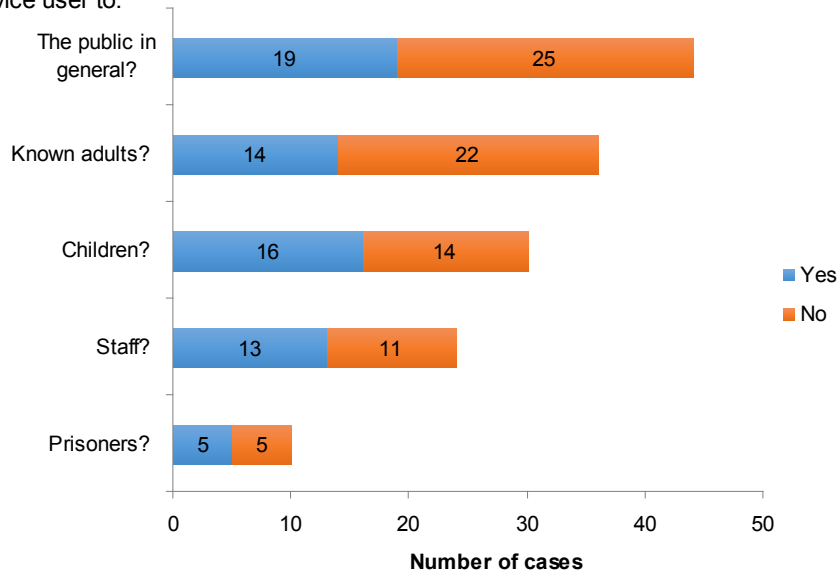
These charts illustrate key findings from relevant practice inspection cases. These are combined figures for the area as a whole (not separate CRC and NPS figures) due to the small numbers involved. These charts show absolute numbers rather than percentages. The size of the bar chart segments provides an idea of proportion, while the number gives an idea of how large the sample was.

**Figure 4.1 Public Protection**

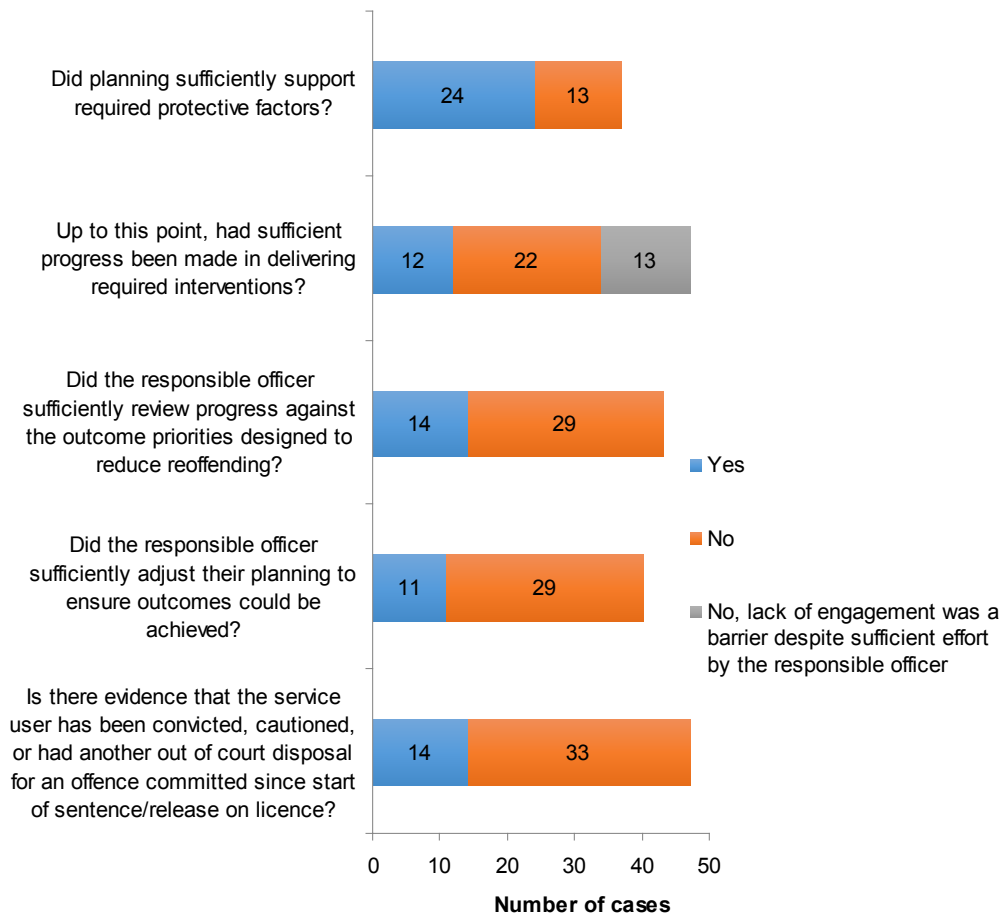


**Figure 4.2 Public Protection**

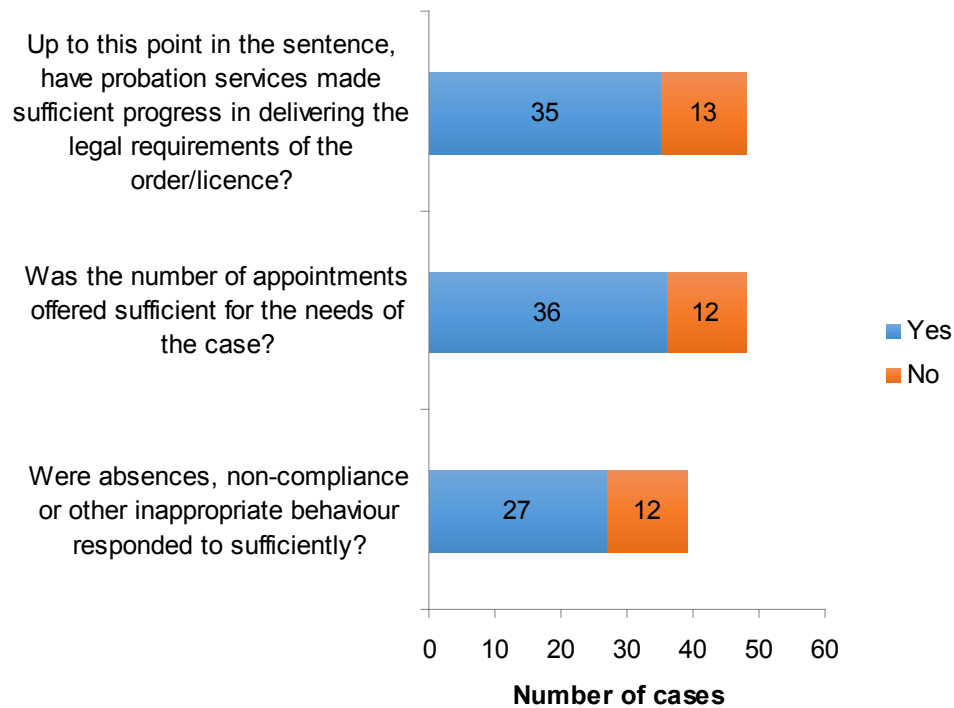
Up to this point in the order/licence, has the responsible officer made sufficient progress in influencing the risk of harm posed by this service user to:



**Figure 4.3 Reducing Reoffending**



**Figure 4.4 Abiding by the sentence**



## Appendix 5: Glossary

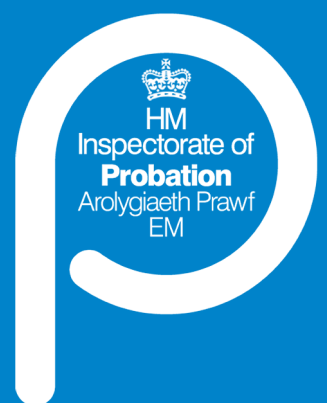
Alcohol Treatment Requirement	A requirement that a court may attach to a community or suspended sentence order aimed at tackling alcohol abuse
Allocation	The process by which a decision is made about whether an offender will be supervised by a CRC or the NPS
BBR	Building Better Relationships: a nationally accredited group-work programme designed to reduce reoffending by adult male perpetrators of intimate partner violence
Catch22	A not for profit business with a social mission. For over 20 years, Catch22 has designed and delivered services to build resilience and aspiration in people and communities
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company: 21 CRCs were set up in June 2014, to manage most offenders who present low or medium risk of serious harm
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement: a requirement that a court may attach to a community order or a suspended sentence order aimed at tackling drugs misuse
E3	E3 stands for 'Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Excellence'. The E3 programme was created following the Transforming Rehabilitation programme in June 2014. The basic principle is to standardise NPS delivery, redesigning the NPS structure with six key areas of focus, including: community supervision; court services; custody; youth offending services; victims' services and approved premises
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
Escalation	The term used to describe the process where a case allocated to a CRC is referred to the NPS for reallocation on the grounds that an increase in the risk of harm posed by the offender now places that person within the category of those that should be supervised by the NPS
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMP/YOI	Her Majesty's Prison/Young Offender Institution

HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service: from 01 April 2017, HMPPS became the single agency responsible for delivering prison and probation services across England and Wales. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice took on responsibility for overall policy direction, setting standards, scrutinising prison performance and commissioning services. These used to fall under the remit of the National Offender Management Service (the agency that has been replaced by HMPPS)
i-SOTP	Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme: for those who have committed an internet sex offence. Designed to explore and address the thoughts, feelings and beliefs underpinning internet sex offending with the aim of reducing the risk of similar offending
IOM	Integrated Offender Management: a cross-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together
LDU	Local delivery unit: an operational unit comprising an office or offices, generally coterminous with police basic command units and local authority structures
MAPPAs	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose a higher risk of harm to others. Level 1 is ordinary agency management, where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency responsible for the supervision or case management of the offender. This compares with Levels 2 and 3, which require active multi-agency management
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: the first point of contact for new safeguarding concerns or enquiries. They usually include representatives from the local authority (children and adult social care services), the police, health bodies, probation and other agencies
MoJ	Ministry of Justice: the government department with responsibility for the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the CRCs and the NPS in England and Wales
NOMS	National Offender Management Service: the single agency responsible for both prisons and probation services in England and Wales until 31 March 2017. Since 01 April 2017, this service has been superseded by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service that came into being in June 2014. Its role is to deliver services to courts and to manage specific groups of offenders, including those presenting a high or very high risk of serious harm and those subject to MAPPA in England and Wales
OASys	Offender Assessment System: currently used in England and Wales by the CRCs and the NPS to measure the risks and needs of offenders under supervision
Partners	Partners include statutory and non-statutory organisations, working with the participant/offender through a partnership agreement with a CRC or the NPS
Pre-sentence report	This refers to any report prepared for a court, whether delivered orally or in a written format
PO	Probation officer: this is the term for a 'qualified' responsible officer who has undertaken a higher education-based course for two years. The name of the qualification and content of the training varies depending on when it was undertaken. They manage more complex cases
PSO	Probation services officer: this is the term for a responsible officer who was originally recruited with no qualification. They may access locally determined training to 'qualify' as a probation services officer or to build on this to qualify as a probation officer. They may manage all but the most complex cases depending on their level of training and experience. Some PSOs work within the court setting, where their duties include the writing of pre-sentence reports
Rate card	A directory of services offered by the CRC for use with the NPS with their offenders, detailing the price
RAR	Rehabilitation activity requirement: from February 2015, when the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 was implemented, courts can specify a number of RAR days within an order; it is for probation services to decide on the precise work to be done during the RAR days awarded
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case



RoSH	Risk of Serious Harm: a term used in OASys. All cases are classified as presenting a low/ medium/ high/ very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term risk of harm when referring to the analysis which has to take place in order to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. The term Risk of Serious Harm only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those offenders for whom lower impact/severity harmful behaviour is probable
Stonham	Part of Home Group, an umbrella social enterprise and charity organisation providing integrated housing, health and social care
Supply chain	Providers of services commissioned by the CRC
TVSOGP	Thames Valley Sex Offenders Group Programme: an accredited offending behaviour programme for adult male sex offenders to help develop an understanding of how and why they have committed sexual offences. The programme also increases awareness of victim harm
Thinking Skills Programme	An accredited group programme designed to develop an offender's thinking skills to help them stay out of trouble
Through the Gate	Through the Gate services are designed to help those sentenced to more than one day in prison to settle back into the community upon release and receive rehabilitation support so they can turn their lives around
Weighted annual volume	An estimate of the workload required to deliver services to offenders. This measure is used to determine the fee for service that a CRC receives. During the process of commissioning CRC contracts, the first and second year volumes were estimated by the Ministry of Justice using historical data for each contract area
Workload management tool	A tool to calculate the overall workload of an individual responsible officer. It takes into account numbers and types of cases as well as particular work such as parole reports



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