



HMI Probation Stakeholder Survey 2016

Summary report

February 2017

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1. Introduction

This report sets out the main findings from the second annual survey of HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) stakeholders. The survey was designed to seek stakeholders' views on various aspects of our work, including our communications and reports as well as adherence to our core values and other positive characteristics. The views expressed within the survey and future annual surveys, will assist our continual evaluation of our strengths and weaknesses and in identifying potential areas for development and improvement, thus maximising the quality, effectiveness and impact of our work.

2. Methodology

The survey was available online from 10 October to 04 November 2016. It was thus conducted six months following the launch of our Quality and Impact (Q&I) adult inspection programme and two months following the publication of our Corporate Plan for 2016-19. The wider context was increasing attention to the quality of adult probation services following the *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme, whilst youth justice services were awaiting the final report on the review of the system by Charlie Taylor (which was then published in December 2016).

The survey included a range of fixed response questions and some supplementary open-ended questions about HMI Probation's values, characteristics, reports and communications. A link to the survey was emailed directly to registered stakeholders, as well as advertised on Twitter, LinkedIn and through the HMI Probation alerts service and communications. It was also promoted by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

2.1 The sample

By the time the survey had closed, 150 usable returns had been received.¹ Nearly half (47%) of the respondents received an email directly from HMI Probation, whilst 17% had received the link in an email from a friend or colleague and a further 17% had found out about the survey via social networking platforms (Twitter and LinkedIn).

As shown by Table 1, those working with adult offenders directly (manager, practitioner or partner) accounted for 44% of respondents, with an equivalent figure for those working with children of 34%. The main decrease from the 2015 stakeholder survey was for magistrates/judges – down from 19% of the sample to 1%. The value of many of the 2015 sentencer responses was restricted due to a lack of understanding of the role of HMI Probation, as distinct from probation providers.

¹ Throughout the paper, percentages may not always add up to 100 due to rounding. The number of missing responses for each question is indicated below the tables/figures.

Table 1: Stakeholders' declared roles

	n	%
Management of youth justice services	44	29%
Work with adult offenders	40	27%
Management of probation services	18	12%
Work for partner agency to probation	8	5%
Work for another inspectorate or similar	8	5%
Work with children who have offended	7	5%
Work on criminal justice policy	4	3%
Member of the public	4	3%
Academic, researcher or student	3	2%
Offender	2	2%
Magistrate or member of the judiciary	2	1%
Other	10	7%
Total	150	100%

Base: All (150; No missing)

Table 2 sets out the stakeholders' identified employers. The highest proportion of respondents (31%) identified themselves as being employed by a Youth Offending Team/Service. One in five (20%) worked for the National Probation Service (NPS), and approximately one in ten (11%) worked for a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). We were seeking an improved provider response and this does represent a notable increase from our 2015 survey returns.

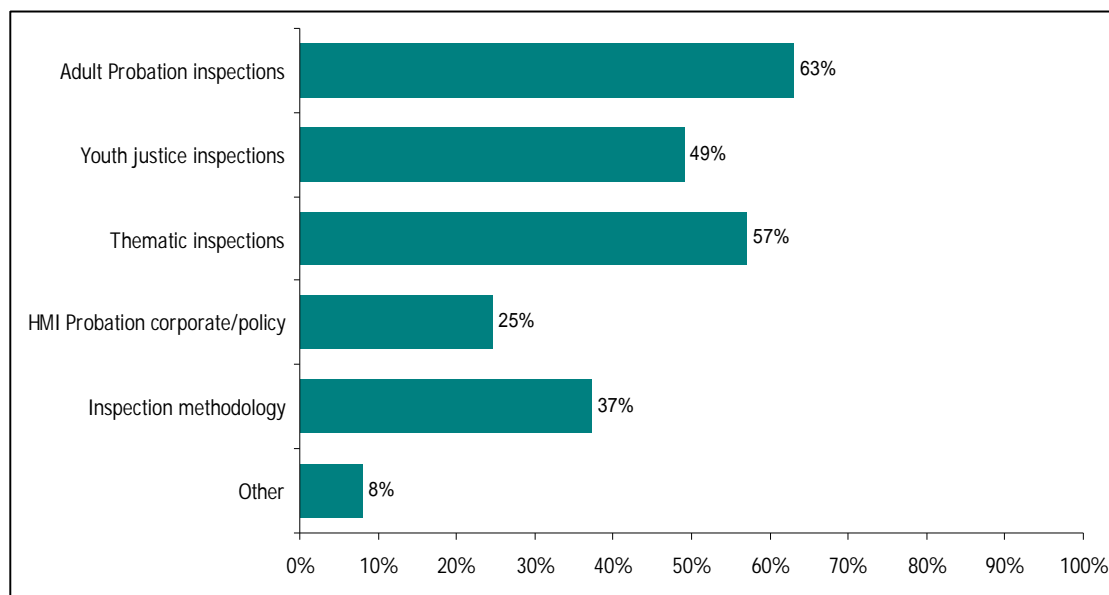
Table 2: Stakeholders' identified employers

	n	Percent
Youth Offending Team/Service	46	31%
National Probation Service	30	20%
Community Rehabilitation Company	16	11%
Other government department, agency or arms-length body	10	7%
Voluntary sector organisation	9	6%
NOMS	8	5%
Other Private sector organisation	5	3%
Ministry of Justice	4	3%
YJB	3	2%
Other	17	12%
Total	148	100%

Base: All (148; 2 missing)

The respondents' declared areas of interest reflected their backgrounds. Almost two-thirds (63%) were interested in adult probation inspections, whilst approximately half (49%) were interested in youth justice inspections (see Figure 1).² There was an increase from 2015 in the proportion of stakeholders interested in thematic inspections – up from 41% to 57%.

Figure 1: Particular areas of interest for stakeholders



Base: All (146; 4 missing)

As the sample is self-selecting, the survey findings presented in the rest of this report should not be viewed as being necessarily representative of all stakeholders. The findings between years may also not be fully comparable – some differences from the 2015 sample are noted above. Approximately one-third (31%) of respondents indicated that they had responded to our 2015 survey.

3. Findings

3.1 Communications

Just over three quarters (77%) of the stakeholders had visited the HMI Probation website in the year before the survey. Of these respondents, the section that most recalled viewing was 'Inspection reports', which almost all stakeholders (96%) had visited (see Table 3). More than two in five (44%) had visited the section that described our work, while over half (55%) had visited the corporate pages listing information about the Inspectorate. More than two in five (43%) said that they had read our Corporate Plan for 2016-19 (published in August 2016).

² Respondents could choose multiple areas of interest.

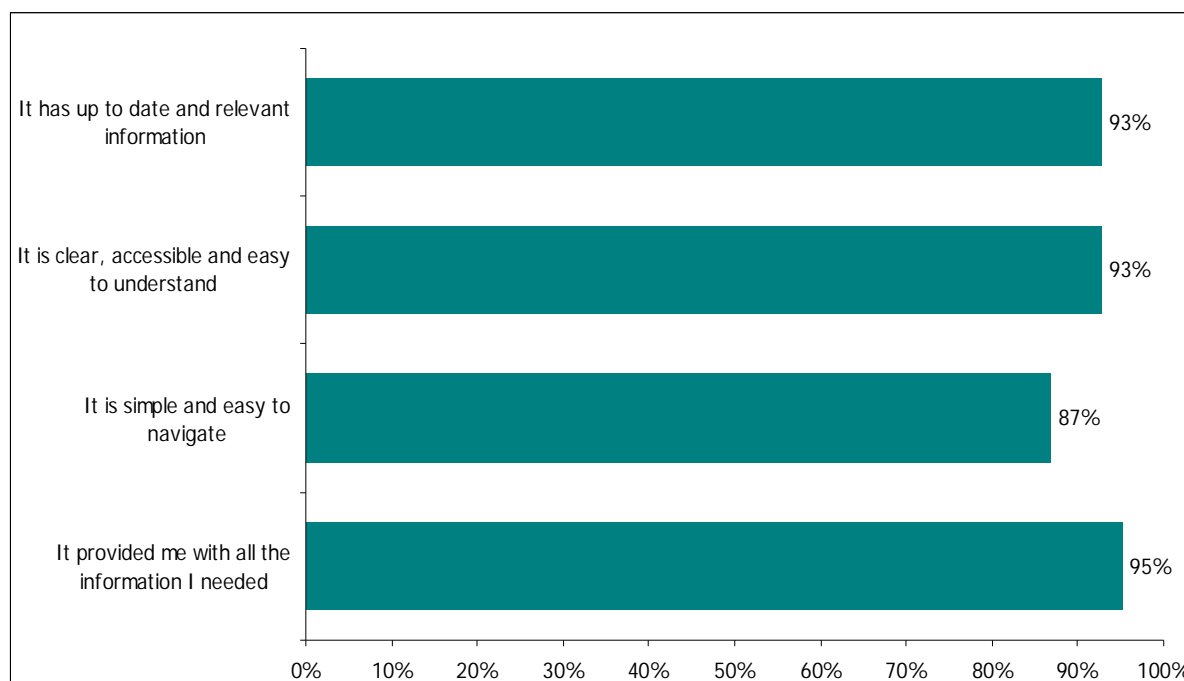
Table 3: Sections of the HMI Probation website viewed by stakeholders

	n	Percent
About HMI Probation section	45	55%
Inspection reports	79	96%
About our work	36	44%
Media section	9	11%
Cymraeg	2	2%
Jobs	20	24%

Base: All who viewed website in the past year (82; No missing)

As shown by Figure 2, more than nine out of ten stakeholders responded that the website (i) provided them with all the information that they needed, and that it was (ii) up to date and relevant and (iii) clear, accessible and easy to understand. There was slightly less consensus regarding the website's simplicity and ease of navigation, but the overall response was still positive at 87%.

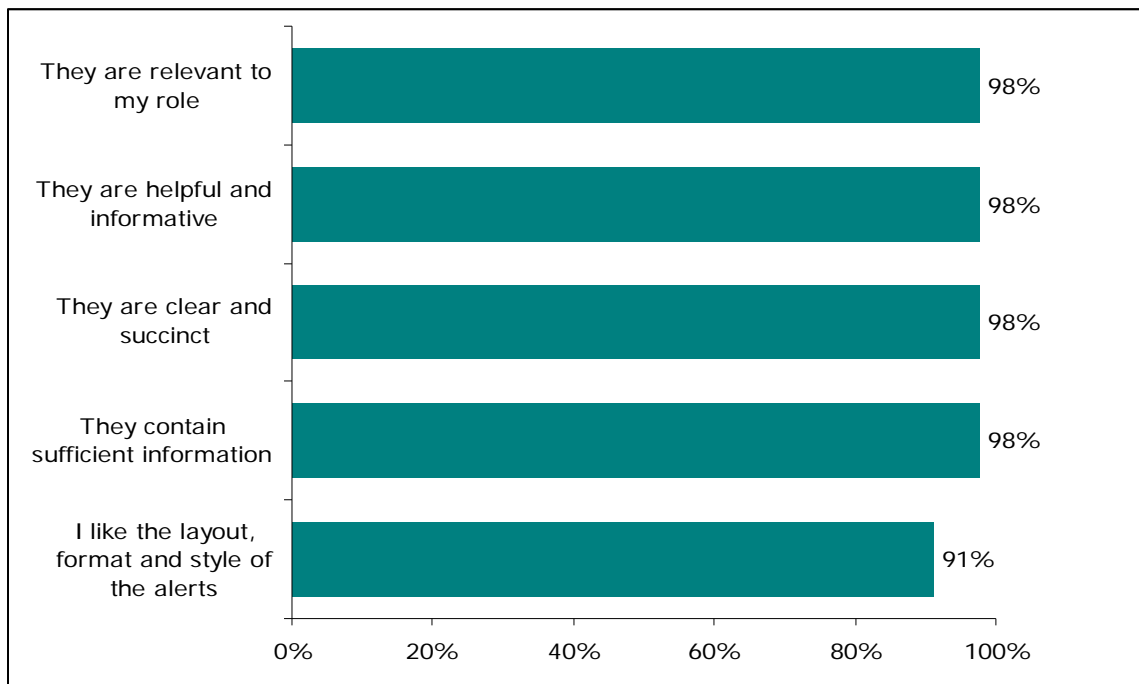
Figure 2: Proportion of stakeholders agreeing with statements about the website



Base: All who viewed website in the past year (82; No missing)

More than two in five (43%) of the stakeholders reported that they received alerts from HMI Probation. As shown by Figure 3, the alerts were well received by these respondents – almost all considered them to be relevant to their role (98%), helpful and informative (98%), clear and succinct (98%), and containing sufficient information (98%). Approximately nine in ten (91%) liked the format of the alerts. It is perhaps unsurprising then that almost all (98%; n=45) of those stakeholders who received the alerts would recommend the service to other colleagues.

Figure 3: Proportion of stakeholders agreeing with statements about alerts



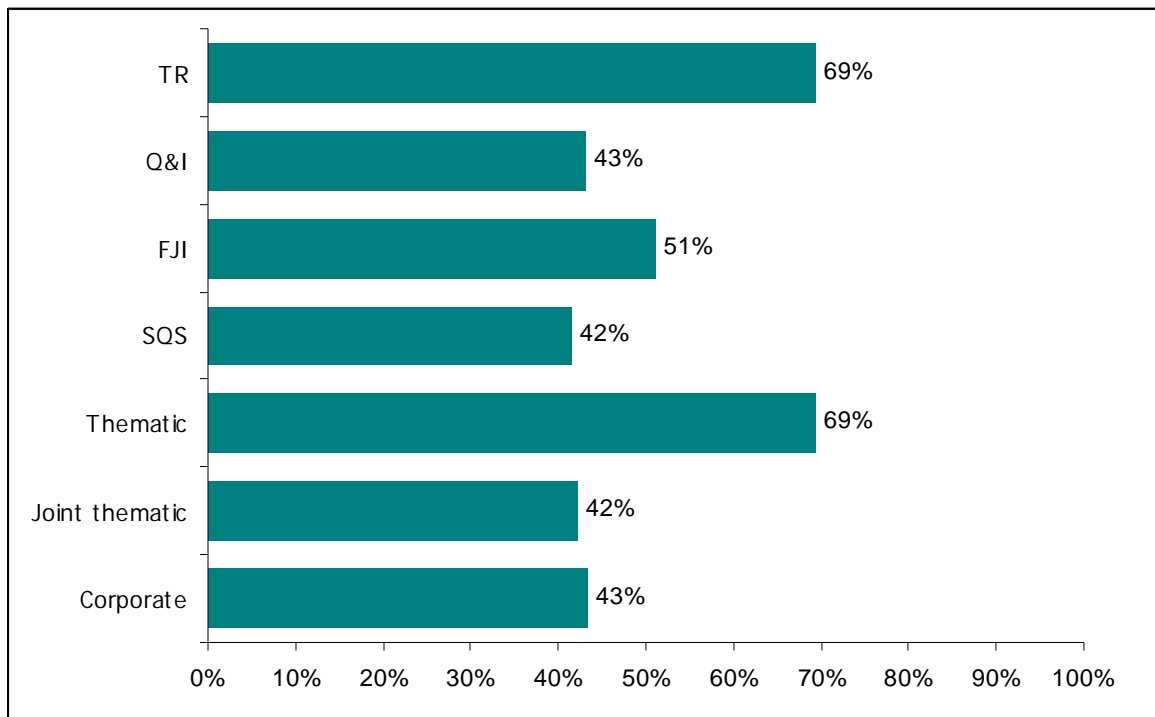
Base: All receiving alerts (46; No missing)

Around three in ten (29%) respondents stated that they followed HMI Probation on Twitter. This was an increase from the one in ten respondents in our 2015 survey, although some stakeholders were still unaware that HMI Probation had a Twitter account.

3.2 Reports

Approximately nine in ten (91%) of the stakeholders stated that they had read an HMI Probation report in the past year. This was a notable increase from 2015 (57%), likely reflecting the change in the profile of the respondents. As shown by Figure 4, the reports most commonly accessed were our *Transforming Rehabilitation* (TR) and thematic reports (both 69%). Approximately half (51%) had read one of our youth Full Joint Inspection (FJI) reports, with more than two in five (42% to 43%) having read our other types of report.

Figure 4: Reports read by stakeholders in the past year



Base: Those that looked at an inspection report in the last 12 months (135; 2 missing)

For 2016, we amended the survey to obtain feedback specific to our different types of report and we added some further statements for consideration. For those sub-samples who had read each type of report, their agreement with a number of statements is set out in Table 4 below. As can be seen, our reports were viewed generally favourably, particularly thematic and youth FJI reports – although approximately one-quarter (26%) did not agree that publication of thematic reports was sufficiently timely. A large majority of respondents felt that the reports were sufficiently clear and accessible (85% to 96%), and similarly high proportions found them useful (83% to 94%) and informative (88% to 96%).

I find the thematic inspection reports to be very focused and put a spotlight on particular issues; whilst delivery structures vary across the board, the thematics always contain relevant recommendations/findings.

Youth Justice Manager

I think the thematics are the most useful reports that you undertake from a readers' perspective – for example the one on Desistance was useful and the one on Troubled Families was also helpful for current practice and learning from what different areas are doing on a particular theme.

Youth Justice Manager

There were some differences in the feedback between our youth reports (FJI and Short Quality Screening (SQS)) and our adult reports (TR and Q&I), most noticeably in terms of the reports being seen to influence the respondents' work – 64% and 69% agreement for TR and Q&I compared to 81% and 88% for SQS and FJI. Less positively for SQS, approximately three in ten (29%) did not agree that these reports were sufficiently evidence-based, and approximately one-quarter (26%) did not agree that the reports presented findings fairly and objectively.

I think the SQS inspections are so focused on the initial assessment and planning and do not take into account enough about the actual work or outcomes. They do not focus enough on the bigger picture and instead look at minute details in plans on one specific order, rather than seeing the overall effort with a young person / their family over a period of say a couple of years.

Youth Justice Manager

Table 4: Stakeholders' views of our inspection reports

	% agree/strongly agree				
	TR	Q&I	FJI	SQS	Thematic
Publication of reports is sufficiently timely	78%	89%	86%	97%	74%
The reports are informative	89%	91%	96%	88%	96%
The reports are sufficiently clear and accessible	85%	89%	96%	90%	95%
The reports are direct and incisive	78%	78%	86%	88%	84%
The reports are useful	87%	87%	94%	83%	89%
The reports are sufficiently evidence-based	79%	75%	87%	71%	81%
The reports present findings fairly and objectively	80%	84%	78%	74%	84%
The reports address equality and diversity issues adequately	70%	84%	80%	74%	84%
The reports have influenced my work	64%	69%	88%	81%	85%

Base: Those that looked at an inspection report in the last 12 months (123; 14 missing)

Specific suggestions for improvements to our reports included the need to (i) ensure consistency of language and terminology across all reports and (ii) pay greater attention to the wider context in which practitioners are operating.

They should comment more on any business systems issues that they come across and which could be affecting practice. They should be whole system inspections – i.e. it is no use being a great practitioner if the tools for the job are inadequate.

NPS respondent

The reports do not take sufficient account of the wider context in which services that are being inspected operate. As such it is difficult to draw comparison or replicate activity between one are to another.

Youth Justice Manager

3.2 Values

Stakeholders were asked to rate HMI Probation against its stated values. As shown by Figure 5, views were generally positive about the extent to which we adhered to our values, with approximately four out of five agreeing with the majority of the statements. Most positively, 87% considered that the Inspectorate works in an independent, honest, open, fair and polite way, with three in ten (30%) 'strongly' agreeing with this statement.

A very valuable source of independent scrutiny of services. Always professional and the findings are respected and valued.

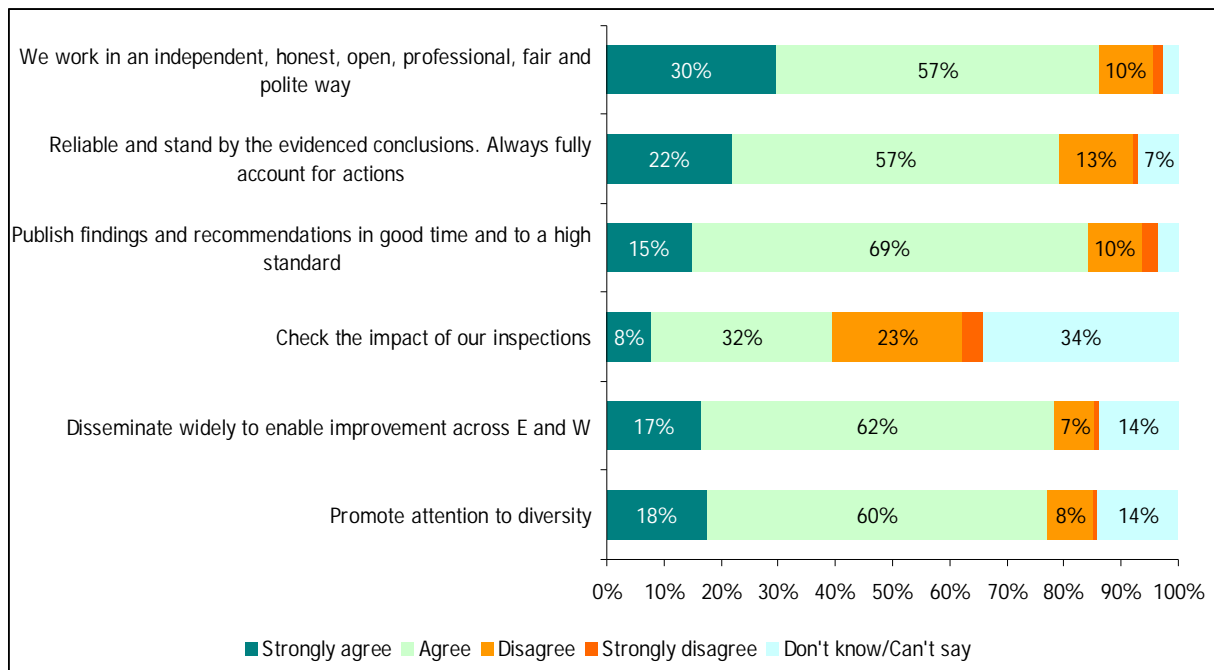
NPS respondent

Good solid evidence backed with sound argument.

Probation partner agency respondent

The greatest uncertainty related to whether we check the impact of our inspections. Approximately one quarter (26%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and a further one in three (34%) did not know. More than one in ten (14%) did not know whether we promoted attention to diversity or disseminated widely to enable improvement across England and Wales.

Figure 5: Stakeholders views on our adherence to stated values



Base: All (114-115; 35-36 missing)

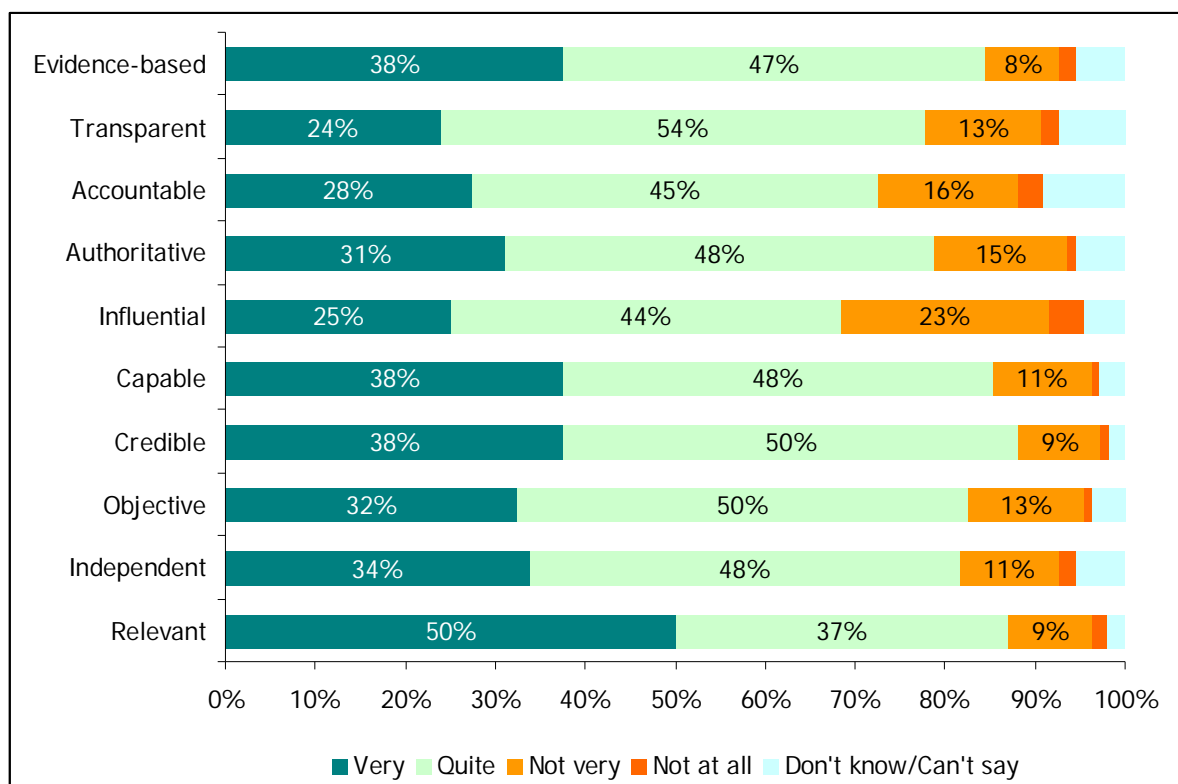
3.3 Characteristics

Stakeholders were asked the extent to which particular positive characteristics were reflected by HMI Probation. As shown by Figure 6, responses were generally positive, with agreement (very/quite) ranging from 69% for 'influential' to 88% for 'credible'. In summary, we were viewed as relevant, capable and credible, but we were viewed as less strong in terms of our influence and accountability.

I see no acknowledgement from NOMS or the MoJ about your findings. You do go back to areas etc, but your findings are not influencing policy in my opinion and they should.

CRC respondent

Figure 6: Proportion of stakeholders who agreed that HMI Probation reflects particular characteristics



Base: All (108-109; 41-42 missing)

3.4 Impact

A further set of survey questions focused specifically on the Inspectorate's impact. Overall we were seen to be having an impact in terms of practice and the evidence-base – approximately three quarters (77%) felt that we were adding to the evidence base, and more than seven in ten (72%) felt we were having an impact on practice (see Figure 7). Our impact was perceived to be less strong in terms of policy development and the overall effectiveness of services. Approximately four in ten (38%) thought that the Inspectorate was having little or no impact in terms of policy development, with approximately three in ten (31%) holding this view in terms of the effectiveness of services.

What evidence is there that the inspection programme results in improvements - where is the links between the HMIP work and national standards, YJB guidance, government policy etc?

Youth Justice Manager

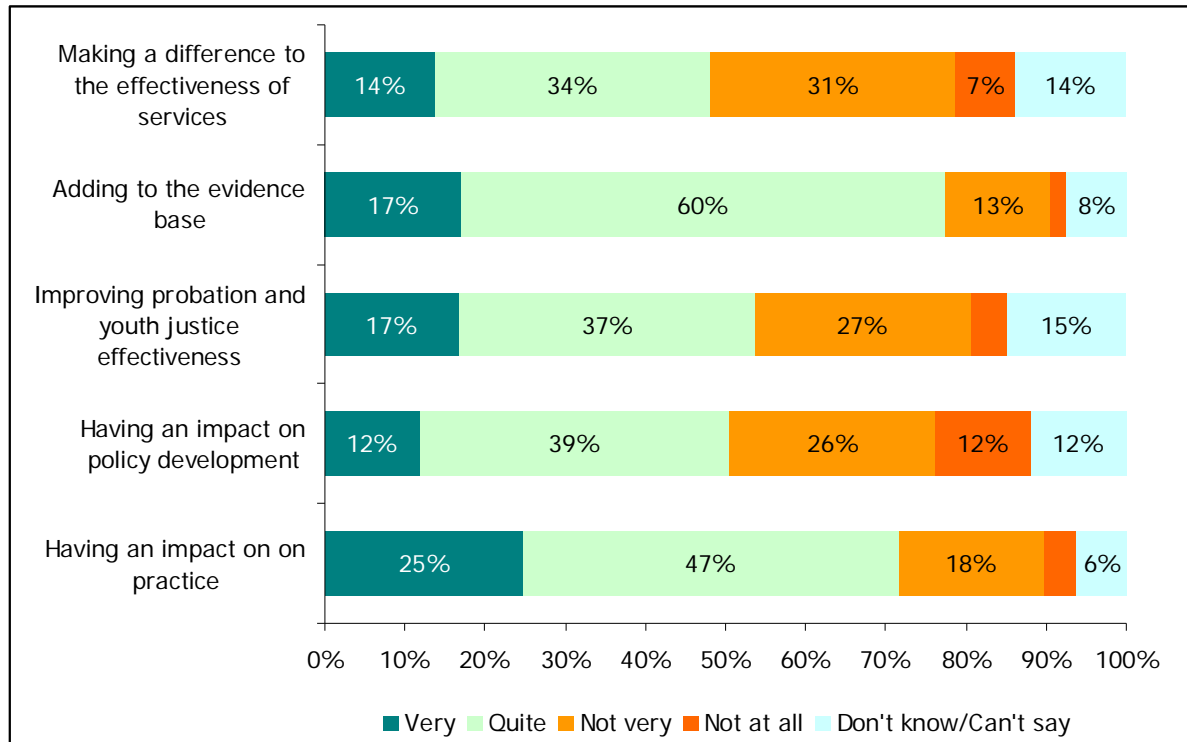
I think more needs to be done to hold both the NPS and private companies to account. The TR split happened two years ago now and practice appears be reducing in effectiveness and consistency. HMI Probation needs more power to hold all providers of probation services to account and to enforce procedures to improve service delivery.

NPS respondent

The lower scores I've given for policy and practice improvement/influence etc do not reflect HMI Probation's activities, rather the impact that cuts to funding have had on the ability of services to adapt and improve and the decreased emphasis on evidence-based policy in public discourse over recent years.

Youth Justice policy respondent

Figure 7: Stakeholders' views on our impact



Base: All (106-109; 41-44 missing)

The survey also included specific questions on the extent to which HMI Probation was enabling improvements in (i) probation practice and (ii) youth justice. Focusing upon those respondents working with (i) adult offenders and (ii) children/young people, the proportions responding positively (very/quite) were 44% (n=43) and 72% (n=43) respectively. The more positive response on the youth side aligns to the more common view (noted above) of the youth reports influencing the respondent's work.

4. Conclusions

Whilst the self-selecting nature of the survey does not support fully representative findings, the responses remain an integral part of our evaluation of our strengths and potential areas for development and improvement. The responses are generally positive, although concerns are expressed regarding our influence and impact upon policy and the performance/ effectiveness of providers, as well as the evidence base underpinning our findings/ recommendations in some of our reports. We will reflect upon these points as we develop our plans for 2017-18 and beyond.

We have already increased our resource to thematic inspections and have recently improved the timeliness of these publications. We have also paid attention to our report structures for both thematic reports and adult Q&I reports, ensuring that we reflect upon the national and local contexts and organisational arrangements. Over the next financial year (2017-18), we will develop our approach to inspecting adult probation service providers, maximising our contribution to the effective oversight of these services. As we are retaining the lead responsibility for inspecting youth offending services (following the Charlie Taylor review and the government response), we will also develop new and more effective approaches to the inspection of these services. Our focus will be upon driving improvement where needed and maximising transparency in relation to both our judgements and the quality of the services being delivered.