

Quality & Impact inspection

The effectiveness of probation work in Gwent

An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation
April 2017

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Foreword

This is our first inspection of adult probation work undertaken by a CRC owned by Working Links, and our first in Wales after the implementation of the UK government's *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme. We inspected work done in Gwent by the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and the Wales division of the National Probation Service (NPS).

The published performance figures for probation services have their limitations. Latest figures suggest that the NPS Wales is performing below average, but in fact we found strong leadership, motivated staff, readily manageable workloads and some excellent NPS work in Gwent. The big issue for NPS Wales is that the quality of work varies, place by place, yet if all offices could deliver the high quality of work done by the NPS in Newport, then more individuals would be helped more effectively, to change their lives for the better.

We found a more troubling picture at the CRC. More than two years after *Transforming Rehabilitation*, the operating model is still changing, and staff are anxious and no doubt long for stability.

Seasoned *Transforming Rehabilitation* observers have long feared that CRCs would cherry pick, investing little in those most likely to reoffend, but instead the Working Links approach is to scale supervision, with the most intensive supervision for the most challenging individuals, and to work in local community hubs that also provide a range of services to the community at large. We were impressed with the community hub, in practice. For the one in four people assessed as low risk, however, their supervision while in the community is scaled back to a telephone call every six weeks, albeit one in three of these should also have contact with unpaid work supervisors or other interventions staff, assuming those arrangements work as intended.

In our view, this means too many people get too little attention. Without meaningful contact, individuals are most unlikely to develop a will to change. What is more, as individuals' circumstances change, so can the risk of harm they present to the public. Staff are unsure about the model, with their views no doubt influenced to an extent by the downsizing exercise underway. Implementation is taking a long time, and some aspects of the model are not working as they should. Staff morale is low, and sickness absence alarmingly high, yet (as I have come to expect) we found committed responsible officers working hard to support service users.

The CRC's published performance figures show it performing relatively well. What gets measured gets done, of course, but sometimes at a cost to other work that should be done, as we found here. With not enough service user plans actually followed through, and with staff numbers reducing substantially, it is hard to avoid concluding that despite good intentions, simple affordability considerations and an overpowering need to balance the books is driving priorities in this CRC.



Dame Glenys Stacey
HM Chief Inspector of Probation
April 2017

Key facts

- 262,388** The total number of offenders subject to probation supervision across England and Wales¹
- 10,319** The number of offenders supervised by the Wales CRC¹
- 6,544** The number of offenders supervised by the Wales division of the NPS¹
- 39%** The proportion of Wales CRC cases which relate to a custodial sentence (pre or post-release supervision)¹. The proportion for all England and Wales CRCs was 40%
- 68%** The proportion of offenders who were recorded as having successfully completed their period of licence or post-sentence supervision with the CRC following a release from custody². The performance figure for all England and Wales was 75%, against a target of 65%
- 1,032** The number of MAPPA eligible offenders managed by the NPS in Gwent³
- 3 (of 21)** The number of CRCs owned by Working Links

1 Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 September 2016, Ministry of Justice.

2 CRC Service Level 9a, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics April - September 2016, Ministry of Justice.

3 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report as at March 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 Wales in 2014, when such services were provided throughout Wales by the Wales Probation Trust. We have since developed our inspection methodology, and as probation workloads and work types have changed as well, direct comparisons between then and now cannot be made. We summarised the outcomes from our 2014 inspection in Table 1.

Table 1: Wales Probation Trust 2014 inspection outcomes

Outcomes	The proportion of work judged to have been done well enough
Assisting sentencing	77%
Delivering the sentence of the court	73%
Reducing the likelihood of reoffending	62%
Protecting the public	62%
Delivering effective work for victims	73%

The findings from this 2016 inspection are set out in the following chapters and summarised here.

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

Work to protect the public was not of sufficient quality.

Assessments and planning were good, but the quality of subsequent work was not good enough. In almost half of the cases we inspected, responsible officers had not taken all reasonable action to keep to a minimum the service user's risk of harm to others.

Managers and responsible officers were driven to meet contractual requirements at a cost to the quality of work. The CRC is facing financial pressures, and contractual reporting requirements and performance targets with associated financial implications or penalties had taken precedence.

More effective management oversight was required.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of work to protect the public was acceptable overall.

Assessments and planning were good, but the quality of subsequent work varied by area, with some work of a high standard. In a small number of cases the work delivered was poor.

The CRC and NPS working together

Relationships and communications between the two organisations were strong.

Risk escalation processes worked well, and relevant performance measures were met. Pre-submission discussions between the CRC and the NPS in each case led to every submitted risk escalation being accepted.

With effective lines of communication established, matters of concern arising between the two organisations were easily discussed and addressed.

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

The CRC was not sufficiently effective in delivering interventions to reduce reoffending.

Assessments and planning to reduce reoffending were acceptable. Not enough was then done, however, and what was done was sometimes without clear purpose.

Specific services were not available when needed, or at all in some cases. In addition, responsible officers were confused about the purpose and requirements of rehabilitation activity requirements.

The needs of female service users were given specific consideration, with women-specific interventions available. There was also a well-established and effective multi-agency approach to Integrated Offender Management.

In the cases we inspected, sufficient progress was made in addressing service users' relationship difficulties and in supporting their emotional health and well-being. Not enough progress was made to address service users' other needs and requirements.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of work delivered by the NPS was generally acceptable, but it varied across the area, with some areas doing far less well than others.

Quality assurance arrangements made sure there were good quality court reports and accurate allocation decisions. Magistrates were very positive about probation staff court work.

Assessments and planning were good.

Positive progress had been made towards reoffending outcomes, and the large majority of service users had not reoffended. We saw a number of examples where interventions had made a tangible difference in achieving positive outcomes for service users.

The CRC and NPS working together

Both organisations demonstrated a commitment to partnership working and to Integrated Offender Management. Their work with women offenders was good. Joint training events provided opportunity for staff from both organisations to learn together.

It was not always clear from the 'rate card' which services and interventions were available. Consequently, the rate card was seen by the NPS as a barrier to accessing services, and there were delays in some service users accessing required interventions.

Abiding by the sentence

CRC effectiveness

The quality of work was acceptable.

We judged that sufficient progress had been made in delivering the requirements of the sentence or licence in three-quarters of inspected cases, and that the number of appointments offered was appropriate in the large majority of cases. Responsible officers generally demonstrated a good understanding of the diverse needs of service users.

Inappropriate behaviour, absences judged as not acceptable, and non-compliance were responded to appropriately in nearly three-quarters of cases. There were too many cases, however, where the CRC judged the service user's non-attendance as acceptable.

The extent of organisational change had disrupted some aspects of service delivery, and staff departures and sickness absence had led to poor reporting arrangements for some service users.

NPS effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was good.

We found that individuals' diverse needs had been identified in assessments and taken into account in planning, interventions and reviews in almost all of the cases we inspected.

We judged that sufficient progress had been made in delivering the requirements of the sentence in four out of every five cases. Service users were seen frequently enough in all the inspected cases.

The large majority of service users had abided by the sentence of the court. We found that appropriate breach action or recall to prison had been taken in every case where it was necessary to do so.

The CRC and NPS working together

There were effective channels of communication between CRC and NPS staff, and both organisations spoke regularly with sentencers.

From our direct observations, the submission of breach reports was well-managed.

Working arrangements were generally positive, with most issues resolved professionally and appropriately.

Recommendations

The Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service should:

1. identify and resolve jointly the barriers to service users accessing accredited programmes
2. improve access to the different rehabilitation activity requirement provision available to service users, and make sure it is delivered on the basis of need.

The Community Rehabilitation Company should:

3. take all steps to engage staff with the vision for the organisation
4. introduce measures immediately to monitor how its operating model is working in practice. The CRC should keep its workload and staffing assumptions under review, and collect and evaluate management information on the frequency and nature of contact with service users, changes of responsible officers and frequency of effective case review
5. make sure that individual planned work (set out in service user plans) to reduce reoffending and manage risk of harm is then delivered, as planned, and that plans are reviewed effectively in response to service users' changing circumstances.

The National Probation Service should:

6. identify the causes of geographic variation in the quality of delivery and take all necessary steps to address poor performance in specific areas
7. address the lack of capacity in the delivery of the Sex Offender Treatment Programme so that service users can access the programme in a timely manner
8. access the range of available rehabilitative services (including CRC interventions) to meet service user needs and requirements.

2. The arrangements for delivering probation services in Gwent

- the national context
- the local context
- organisational arrangements

National context

Responsibilities for policing and criminal justice are devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the UK government retains responsibility for them in Wales. The Welsh Government is responsible for health, education, housing and social care however, and the four police and crime commissioners in Wales are directly elected and have their own priorities.

In 2014, the UK government extended probation supervision across Wales and England for the first time to offenders released from prison sentences of under 12 months (over 40,000 people each year⁴). Now, about 260,000 adults are supervised by probation services at any one time, with about 17,000 of these in Wales⁵. In addition, since May 2015, in an initiative known as 'Through the Gate', probation services must provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison, in anticipation of their release.

Probation services were formerly provided by one Probation Trust in Wales, alongside 34 in England. The trusts were self-governing and worked under the direction of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). Probation services are now provided in a mixed economy model. The Westminster government wished to promote innovation in probation services, and in June 2014, under the *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme, probation services in Wales and England were divided into a new public sector National Probation Service and 21 new privately-owned Community Rehabilitation Companies providing services under seven-year contracts with a lifetime value of approximately £3.7 billion. One NPS division and one CRC serve Wales, and Wales only.

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

In order to protect the public, probation staff assess and manage the risks offenders pose to the community. They help 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 they are complying with court requirements, so as to make sure individuals abide by their sentence, and report them to court or request recall to prison if they fail to comply.

Most CRC income is from a fee relating to the number of offenders under various forms of supervision, and the requirements to which they are subject. These payments may be reduced if the CRC fails to meet certain service levels. In addition, there is the possibility of additional income - payment by results - triggered by reductions in proven reoffending, once relevant reoffending data is available. The government is currently reviewing CRC performance measures and detailed funding arrangements in a probation services review.

The transition to the mixed economy model has been challenging, and the new expectations of probation providers demanding. Those serving short sentences are more often prolific offenders, less receptive to rehabilitation. Through the Gate services require persistence and good joint working, and those arrangements are still under-developed across Wales and England.

4 Figures relate to releases from determinate sentences of less than 12 months during 2015 (excluding 15-17 year olds).

5 Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 September 2016, Ministry of Justice.

In Wales as elsewhere, the overall volume of NPS work has risen noticeably in the last year⁶. NPS staffing levels have risen marginally in England, and have increased in Wales as the NPS are working towards establishing levels in line with the NPS as a whole. The Wales CRC caseload has risen noticeably since 2014⁷ but is still less than envisaged by the CRC contract. Shortfalls vary across the CRCs. The new arrangements provide opportunities to innovate and develop new systems, but caseload shortfalls have led to financial constraints and uncertainty for CRCs, and a reluctance to commit to longer-term investment or settled supply chains.

Anticipated work volumes have not materialised in part because of falling conviction rates⁸ and changes to sentencing. The use of suspended sentences has increased, while community sentences have generally declined⁹. The most recent published proven reoffending statistics indicate that the one year reoffending rate varied, from 30.2% to 36.4% between regions for those offenders starting a court order and managed by probation providers in the period from June 2014 to March 2015¹⁰. For Wales, the reoffending rate, at 34.9%, was the second highest of all the regions.

Local context

Here we report on probation services delivered in the Gwent area by both the Wales CRC and the NPS Wales division. Gwent is comprised of five unitary authorities: the four boroughs of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire and Torfaen, and the city of Newport. The inspected area is coterminous with the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner Area.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Gwent unitary authority boundaries



Image source: Gwent Police

6 NPS Wales Caseload Comparison 2014 and 2016 – data provided by NPS Wales.

7 Data provided by Wales CRC.

8 The total number of individuals sentenced by the courts in England and Wales has fallen from 1.46m in 2006 to 1.25m in 2016 Source: Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly Update to June 2016: England and Wales, Ministry of Justice.

9 Source: Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly Update to June 2016: England and Wales, Ministry of Justice.

10 Source: Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly: April 2014 to March 2015: England and Wales, Ministry of Justice.

We provide demographic data and information about the area in Appendix 2. Nearly 600,000 people live in the preserved county of Gwent¹¹, with Caerphilly and Newport the most densely populated areas.

The four boroughs of Gwent are largely made up of white British groups. The city of Newport has the more diverse communities, although all areas have fewer black and minority ethnic residents compared to the national average for England and Wales¹². Unemployment in Gwent is higher than the Welsh average but the picture varies greatly by locality, with Blaenau Gwent having the highest rates, and Monmouthshire the lowest¹³. There is a high student population: Coleg Gwent in Newport is Wales' largest further education college. The area has a mixture of rural and urban populations, and has both wealthy and socially deprived communities. In the most recent (2014) Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, an area of Caerphilly was ranked as the most deprived area in Wales. Blaenau Gwent had the highest proportion of communities in the most deprived 10% in Wales, while Monmouthshire had no specific areas of deprivation.

Reoffending rates across the five areas of Gwent vary, with Newport having the highest rates. Overall, the proven reoffending rates for all adult offenders in Gwent (26.0%) are slightly higher than the average for England and Wales (24.3%), but slightly lower than the average for Wales (26.9%)¹⁴. The number of offences committed by each offender again varies by area, with Newport having the highest number. The average number of previous offences per offender in Gwent is higher than the England and Wales average, but is slightly lower than the Wales average.

Between June 2014 and November 2016 (the time of our inspection), staff numbers across the Wales CRC had decreased, while caseloads had increased¹⁵. This position was reflected in Gwent. In contrast, Gwent NPS staff numbers had risen. Consequently, although overall work for the NPS had increased, individual average caseloads had fallen¹⁶.

Three contract performance targets have financial penalties for non-compliance, and the CRC is meeting two of them. The latest monitoring reports¹⁷ for all performance measures show it performing relatively well overall when compared to other CRCs. In contrast, the NPS Wales division is performing poorly against national targets and when compared to other divisions. It is performing above the national target on four of the ten published measures for which data was available and at or above the national average on just one of those measures.

11 Population estimated at 581,789 in 2015. Source: Office for National Statistics, June 2016.

12 Office for National Statistics, December 2012.

13 Office for National Statistics, January 2017.

14 Ministry of Justice, January 2017. These figures are lower than those in the national context section as they include those offenders who received fines, cautions, absolute discharges and other court orders.

15 Data provided by Wales CRC.

16 Data provided by NPS Wales.

17 Community Performance Quarterly Management Information release, Ministry of Justice July–September 2016.

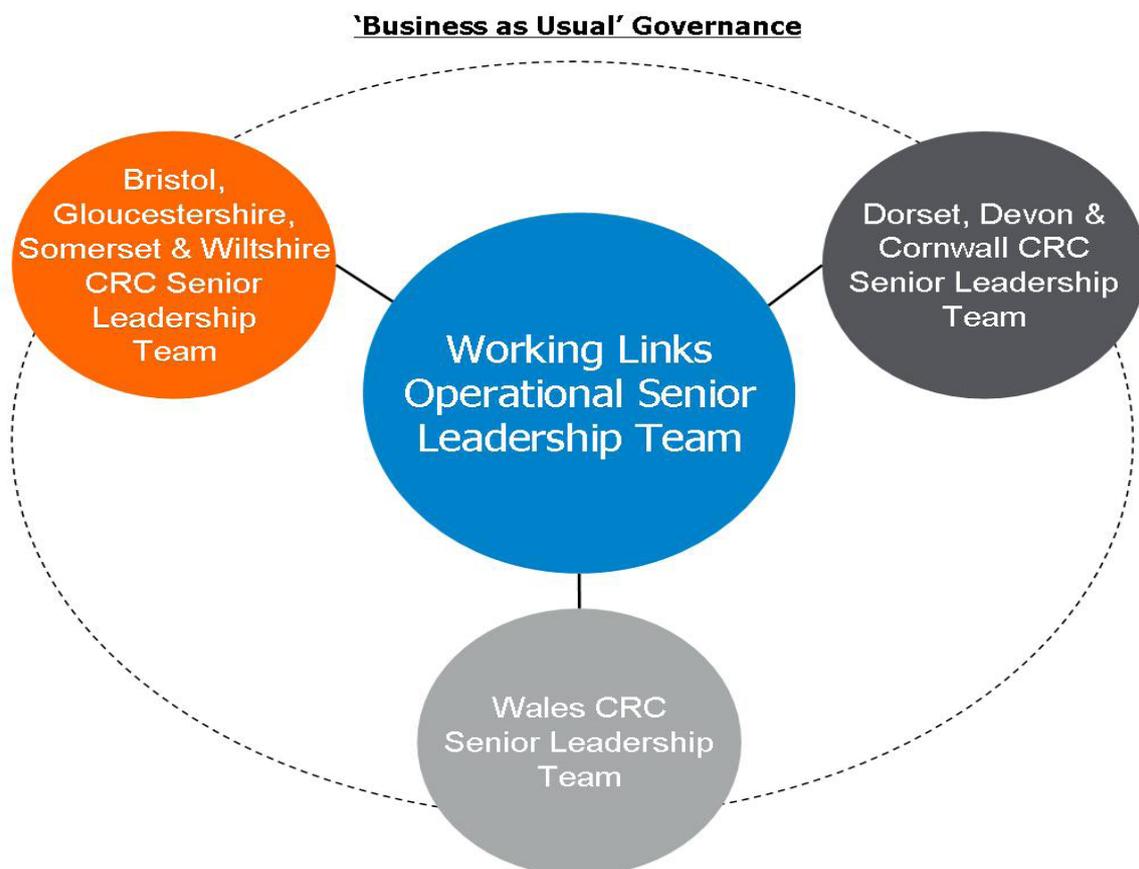
Organisational arrangements in the CRC

Governance

Wales CRC is the fourth largest in the country by contract value¹⁸. It is owned by Working Links, in turn acquired by the investment company Aurelius in June 2016. Working Links owns three CRCs, all covering rural areas: Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire; Dorset, Devon & Cornwall; and Wales. It manages 13% of the overall CRC caseload in England and Wales¹⁹ but covers much more of the ground.

A Working Links operational senior leadership team provides governance and oversight for all three CRCs. In addition, a second group known as Steerco, oversees transformation (at Working Links executive level), underpinned by an Operations Board which tracks implementation of the Working Links operating model, including staffing levels, estates and IT provision. Each CRC is led by a Probation Director who sits on Steerco but also has its own senior leadership team, responsible for operational and strategic leadership, and implementation of the operating model locally. The three CRCs work collaboratively together, sharing learning and resources.

Figure 1.2: Diagram representing the standard governance arrangements for CRCs owned by Working Links



Data source: Wales CRC

¹⁸ Target Operating Model. Rehabilitation Programme. September 2013.

¹⁹ Offender management statistics quarterly, July to September 2016 Table 4.10: Offenders supervised in the community at period end, by National Probation Service Region, Division and CRC, England and Wales.

Figure 1.3: Diagram representing the transformation governance arrangements for the Wales CRC

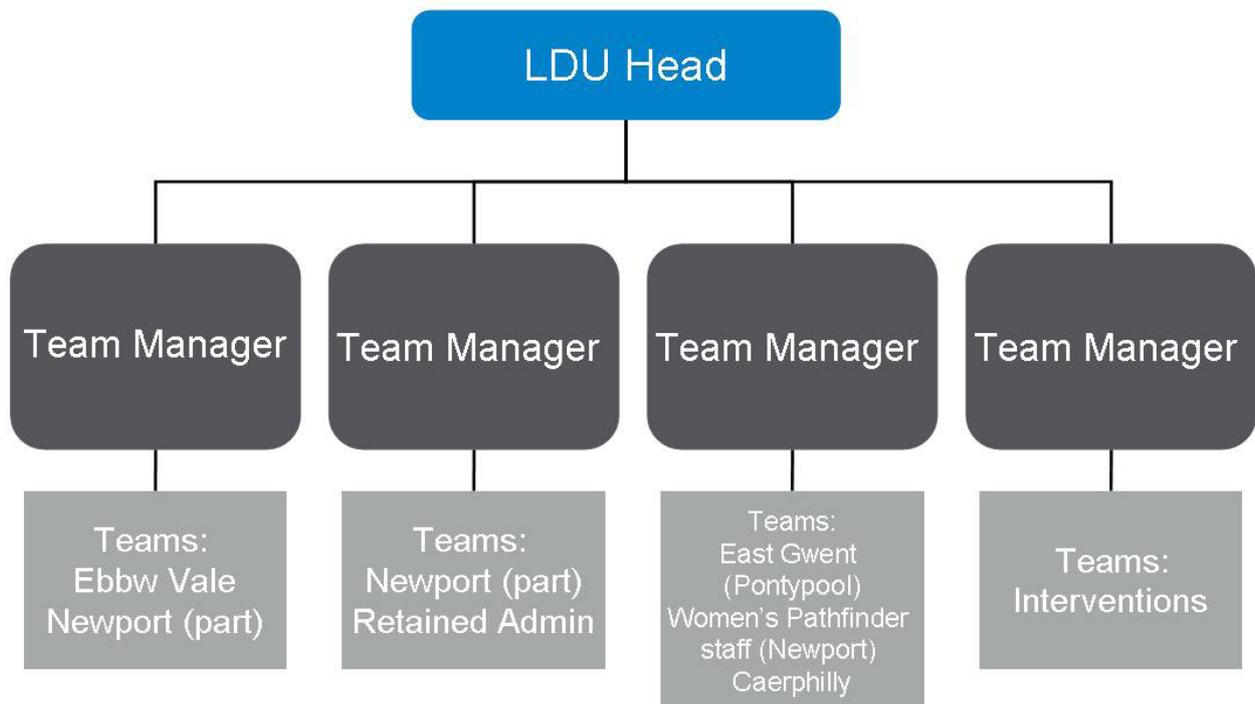


Data Source: Wales CRC

Wales CRC comprises five Local Delivery Unit (LDU) clusters: Dyfed Powys; Gwent; North Wales; South Wales 1; South Wales 2 and two 'In-Touch Hubs'. Clusters are made up of a grouping of offices. For Gwent these comprise Caerphilly, East Gwent, Ebbw Vale and Newport.

LDU heads oversee the management of work in their allocated clusters and hold portfolios for particular specialisms across Wales.

Figure 1.4: Organogram of the Gwent LDU Structure



Data source: Wales CRC

The Working Links Way

Working Links has implemented a specific operating model in its other two CRCs and is now implementing it here, in line with the overall Working Links transformation business plan known as the 'Working Links Way'. Its stated aim is to enable the business to flex and scale in line with changing business needs and wider market requirements²⁰ - in short, to enable the business to best manage and deliver within means. Implementation in Wales began in April 2016. The stated priorities in Wales are to establish operational (In-Touch) hubs for routine case administration; to deliver probation services to service users in localised community hubs that also provide other services to the community; and to introduce a new, risk based approach to case management and apply evidence based interventions.

At the heart of the model is a risk matrix, with the intensity of supervision matched to the complexity of the case and the service user's assessed risk of reoffending or harm to the public. The model relies on regular reviews of risk of harm, likelihood of reoffending and levels of engagement, taking into account static risk factors and current indicators (for example, domestic abuse call-outs).

Table 2: Working Links risk based approach

BRAG	% Caseload Wales CRC	Approach	Average Frequency (excluding intervention delivery)
Red	18	Probation Officer (PO): mainly one-to-one	Every 5 business days
Red/ Amber	9	PO - Probation Service Officer (PSO) with oversight from PO Mainly one-to-one; some input via Community Hub	Every 8 business days
Amber	34	PSO - Mixture of one-to-one; some input via Community Hub	Every 15-20 business days
Green	6	PSO - Mostly mixture of one-to-one; input via Community Hub; 'In-Touch' case manager contact	Every 30 business days
In Touch	19	PSO - All green cases assessed as low risk of harm	Every 30 business days
Blue (in custody)	14	All cases other than those allocated to POs and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) will be held by 'In-Touch' case managers until 12 weeks prior to release when the BRAG assessment will determine whether they stay 'In-Touch' or move to front office case manager ²¹	Assumed activity every 30 business days and monthly for last 12 weeks before release

Data source: Working Links

²⁰ Wales CRC Annual Service Plan 2016-17 Strategic Overview.

²¹ Front office case manager is the local term used for front-line practitioners (responsible officers) delivering offender management in the Wales CRC.

Those service users assessed as low risk of harm are to be managed by In-Touch hubs, by six-weekly telephone contact, albeit cases can transfer back for face-to-face contact with nominated responsible officers if the assessment changes. Other offenders receive one-to-one case management and can access services through the community hubs.

At the time of inspection in November/December 2016, the model was not fully implemented and those features that were implemented were still in their infancy.

In-Touch Hubs

In-Touch hubs had been established in Cardiff, Swansea and North Wales. Relevant cases (including many unpaid work cases) were being transferred to them. Average hub caseloads were 162 cases per In-Touch PSO²².

Some service users welcomed reporting by telephone rather than having to attend a probation office. Others told us they were worried, as they valued the relationship with their responsible officer and wanted face-to-face contact. Practitioners were anxious about the new model.

As a minimum, six-weekly telephone calls with each service user were required, to re-evaluate risk. Guidance issued to staff emphasised the use of professional judgement by responsible officers in determining the risk rating. In cases we saw, it was reassuring to see that risk review decisions were overseen by managers.

Community Hubs

Not all community hubs were in place. There was no remote IT provision within those established. We visited one of the two community hubs in Gwent, in Pontypool, the other being in Abergavenny. The CRC plans to develop community hubs elsewhere but meanwhile, most service users (other than those allocated to the In-Touch hub) were still seen at probation offices.

The Pontypool hub is based within an already well-established community-based service known as The Lighthouse. It houses various services to the wider local community including substance misuse and health services, advice on education, training and employment (ETE) and benefits, and links to accommodation advisers and providers. CRC service users could get prompt access to these services, and access could continue beyond the supervision period.

The CRC's stated intention is that these hubs 'will contribute greatly to opportunities to promote a broader social justice agenda'²³. Certainly easy access, the lack of stigma and the sense of community inherent in community hubs are attractive features for service users, and may well contribute themselves to effective outcomes.

Staff and managers found the hubs a positive way of engaging with service users and partner agencies. We found information exchanges between staff at the hub helped to make sure that individual service user needs were being met and motivation maintained. Any changes in the service user could be recognised and responded to quickly. Rehabilitation activity requirements (RAR) packages could be delivered via the hub, and at the time of our inspection, a new Healthy Thinking RAR was about to commence.

²² Information provided by Wales CRC.

²³ Wales CRC Annual Service Plan 2016-17 Strategic Overview.

CRC involvement in The Lighthouse was at an early stage. Three PSOs from different teams were there on different days. Staff were unable to access case records, and so were constrained, for example, where service users called in unexpectedly.

Leadership and management

We were impressed that the CRC had surveyed service users some 12 months ago, to see their preferences for service delivery. Respondents liked the idea of community hubs, and wanted them placed in local communities.

CRC leaders and managers were committed to bringing about change that would lead to better outcomes for service users. They were aware, however, of logistical and operational challenges in the new operating model, and that the changes were having a substantial impact on staff morale and levels of sickness absence. At the time of our inspection, a restructure and redundancy scheme were underway to implement the model and also to manage budget pressures – to flex and scale in line with market requirements. Staff were anxious about the numbers leaving and the likely workload for those remaining.

On the ground, staff found Working Links' aims and the rationale for the changes confusing. In reality, change appeared driven primarily by financial pressures. The presented aims and rationale were seen by staff as corporate and abstract, rather than rooted in the needs of service users. Staff told us they had lost confidence in the operating model, the leadership and the process of implementing the changes. They reported feeling overwhelmed.

CRC leaders and managers recognised the central importance of continuity of relationships with service users, yet we found frequent changes of responsible officer. Service users expressed the importance of trusting, enduring relationships with responsible officers, but some we met had already had three or four responsible officers.

Despite these difficulties, good working relationships had been maintained with NPS senior leaders, and regular interface meetings were held. There was a strong commitment to working with local partnerships. For example, the head of the LDU represented the CRC on the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board and the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board.

Staffing and caseloads

On the face of it, average individual caseloads were manageable, at about 60 cases per responsible officer²⁴. The average belied, however, noteworthy variations. Staff within the IOM team had a reasonable caseload of about 30 cases, although this was set to increase in January 2017 to 45. Others tended to have 60-70 cases, with all cases assessed as low risk managed by other staff in the In-Touch hub. We were informed by concerned practitioners within a focus group that PSOs were now being allocated higher risk and more complex cases, and in greater numbers than previously.

The operating model assumes a caseload of 45 for POs and 70 for PSOs, giving a total capacity of 2,011 cases. This calculation assumes a sickness absence rate of

²⁴ Staffing and caseload data provided by Wales CRC.

ten days per person per year. In 2015 the average number of days lost to sickness per year per full-time equivalent member of staff was low, at six days. In 2016, the figure rose more than threefold, to 19 days, and it remains alarmingly high, thereby stretching resources. What is more, responsible officers are having to familiarise themselves regularly with cases reallocated to them, as service user risks change, staff leave, and the model becomes embedded.

Table 3: Wales CRC Gwent LDU staffing and caseload figures for the period 2014-2016

	June 2014	November 2016	Increase/ decrease	% change
Overall caseload	1,439	1,565	+126	+9%
Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (PO/PSO)	36.27	35.21	-1.06	-3%
Cases per FTE	39.67	44.45	+4.78	+12%

Managers reported that workload issues and sickness absence were a key restraint on the quality of service delivery, with staff resilience a concerning issue.

Two-thirds of staff reported that training had met their needs, but they also informed us they were anxious about taking the time out for training, because of workload pressures.

Available services and involvement of the third sector

Most services were provided by the CRC in-house. A range of accredited and non-accredited interventions was provided to their own and NPS service users. The CRC had published a service directory describing available services, including those available as RARs.

CRC service users could access the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) via referral to the Integrated Recovery Interventions Service. At the time of the inspection, the dedicated ETE worker in Gwent was absent, so service users were signposted for support to Careers Wales or other organisations such as Communities First. We found responsible officers uncertain what ETE provision was available, and who the providers were.

Access to suitable accommodation was recognised as a considerable gap by managers and staff. This had been exacerbated by recent legislation²⁵ removing offenders from the priority need group for local authority housing provision, and also registered social landlords need no longer prioritise offenders.

An accommodation support worker acted as an advocate between service users and each Gwent local authority, to try and get individuals identified as a priority need under one of the remaining *Housing (Wales) Act* priority factors. We thought this good practice, although a big task for one worker. The worker is employed by Justice Cymru (a charity working closely with the Church in Wales) and the service delivered via the rate card. Suitable accommodation was scarce, however, and rents unaffordable for most service users.

²⁵ The *Housing (Wales) Act* came into effect in 2014.

Staff reported that access to mental health services was good. In our experience, good access is rare, and of enormous potential value. There were four mental health nurses working across criminal justice services in Gwent. They acted as a link between probation and mental health services, and worked with both the CRC and NPS.

CRC managers informed us that they were aware of 360 voluntary groups in Gwent, and that they had links with most of them. We did not see much evidence of this, however, within the cases sampled or the work we saw.

Services for women

Services for women were well-developed, and were being delivered well.

We were pleased to see that the CRC, together with the NPS, had developed practice guidance for working with women offenders²⁶. This included descriptions for lead roles, together with assessment and safety planning guidance, and advice on referrals. Services for women were well-rooted in research, and in line with the recommendations in our 2016 thematic report on women who offend²⁷.

Wales had a Women's Pathfinder project, commissioned in 2013 to 'design and deliver an integrated, women-centred, multi-agency approach to working with women who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System in Wales – a Whole System Approach'²⁸.

We observed a local Women's Pathfinder case conference meeting. These meetings were held fortnightly in Newport, and were designed to identify women who were entering the criminal justice system. There was multi-agency attendance, including representatives from probation, police, social care, housing and substance misuse services and Women's Aid. A responsible officer presented comprehensive information relating to the cases being discussed. This opportunity to share information and jointly consider the needs of women offenders was encouraging practice.

While our requested visit to the Women's Aid centre in Newport could not be facilitated, a women's focus group was arranged at the Newport office. Practitioners were positive about the support the centre provided, and welcomed the new addition of a worker to focus on female perpetrators of domestic abuse. There was also specialist provision for women in Pontypool.

The two women who attended our service user focus group told us they had strong relationships with their responsible officers, with no unexpected change of officer, and they felt well supported.

Resettlement services

We were informed by managers that Through the Gate services were improving but could still be poor on occasions, with service users coming to probation without any pre-release work having been done by prison staff.

26 NOMS in Wales Effective Practice Guidance: Working with Women Offenders, July 2016.

27 HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016) A thematic inspection of the provision and quality of services in the community for women who offend.

28 Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru Women's Pathfinder, November 2016.

Through the Gate services in Wales are provided by CRC contracts with two charities: St Giles Trust, and Safer Wales (a charity running projects to tackle various forms of abuse). Our case sample did not pick up evidence of these contracted Through the Gate services. Where we found examples of resettlement support during the inspection, it was mostly the work of responsible officers in their support of service users, rather than through the formal Through the Gate arrangements. We were told by managers, however, that Through the Gate checks were not made about the suitability of proposed release addresses, leading to risk of harm concerns, and echoing findings in our thematic inspection of Through the Gate work²⁹ that not enough is done to manage risks. In that inspection we recommended that probation providers should utilise other available services within resettlement prisons when undertaking pre-release activities, and we were pleased to see that in practice here.

Working out of HM Prison Parc and across surrounding communities, Invisible Walls Wales offers a family integration package of measures designed to reduce reoffending and intergenerational offending, and encourage community inclusion. At the start of year four of the project, there were some impressive initial outcomes achieved by those participating in the programme and for their children. These included lower reoffending rates following release from prison, and improved school attendance.

Pact Cymru, a national charity supporting prisoners, also has several projects which cover public sector prisons in Wales, funded by the Big Lottery Wales in conjunction with NOMS. G4S (who run HM Prison Parc) is the lead agency working in partnership with Barnardo's, Bridgend County Council, Gwalia (a housing provider), and the Welsh Centre for Social Justice. Provision from Pact includes a volunteer mentor service to support those coming out of custody for up to 12 weeks after their release. This service was commissioned by the CRC for both CRC and NPS service users. We saw the benefit of this in practice in our inspection of licence cases.

Working environment

Alongside its hubs, the CRC had five office bases within Gwent: Caerphilly, Ebbw Vale, Newport, Pontypool and Blackwood (where the IOM team are co-located with the police). At the time of our inspection, the CRC occupied the same buildings as the NPS in all five locations. We found a professional working environment in all the offices we visited.

We observed excellent reception arrangements at the Newport office, a large, light and airy modern building. There were plenty of information leaflets in both Welsh and English, and reception staff treated service users with respect. There was a women-only reporting time every Monday morning.

At the time of our inspection, the CRC was considering its estate, with the intention of introducing more community hubs and moving out of the shared offices in Caerphilly, Ebbw Vale and Pontypool.

The CRC informed us they were in the process of an information technology (IT) roll-out, with new laptops intended for staff and a new Working Links case management system under development. At the time of our inspection these were not yet in place.

²⁹ HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016) An inspection of Through the Gate resettlement services for Short-Term Prisoners.

Quality assurance

The available performance information relates predominantly to contract compliance rather than any other dimensions of the quality of work. It was accepted by managers that the extent and pace of change, together with an emphasis on meeting performance targets, had resulted in less focus on quality of practice.

Managers were provided with performance information twice weekly on all of their staff and could also access daily performance information. Managers said, however, that it was difficult to pin down how this evidenced outcomes and experiences for service users, the focus being on meeting performance targets, so for example, the frequency of supervision meetings is not reported.

The CRC has a strategic lead for performance across Wales, keen to share good practice and learning across all three Working Links CRCs. Within Wales, joint CRC/NPS learning events are held, and are known as Dysgu Cymru. They involve peer reviews of cases and the sharing of good practice and are welcomed by staff and managers.

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 predominantly from the former Probation Trusts. The NPS is part-way through an ambitious programme, known as E3³⁰, to standardise processes nationally.

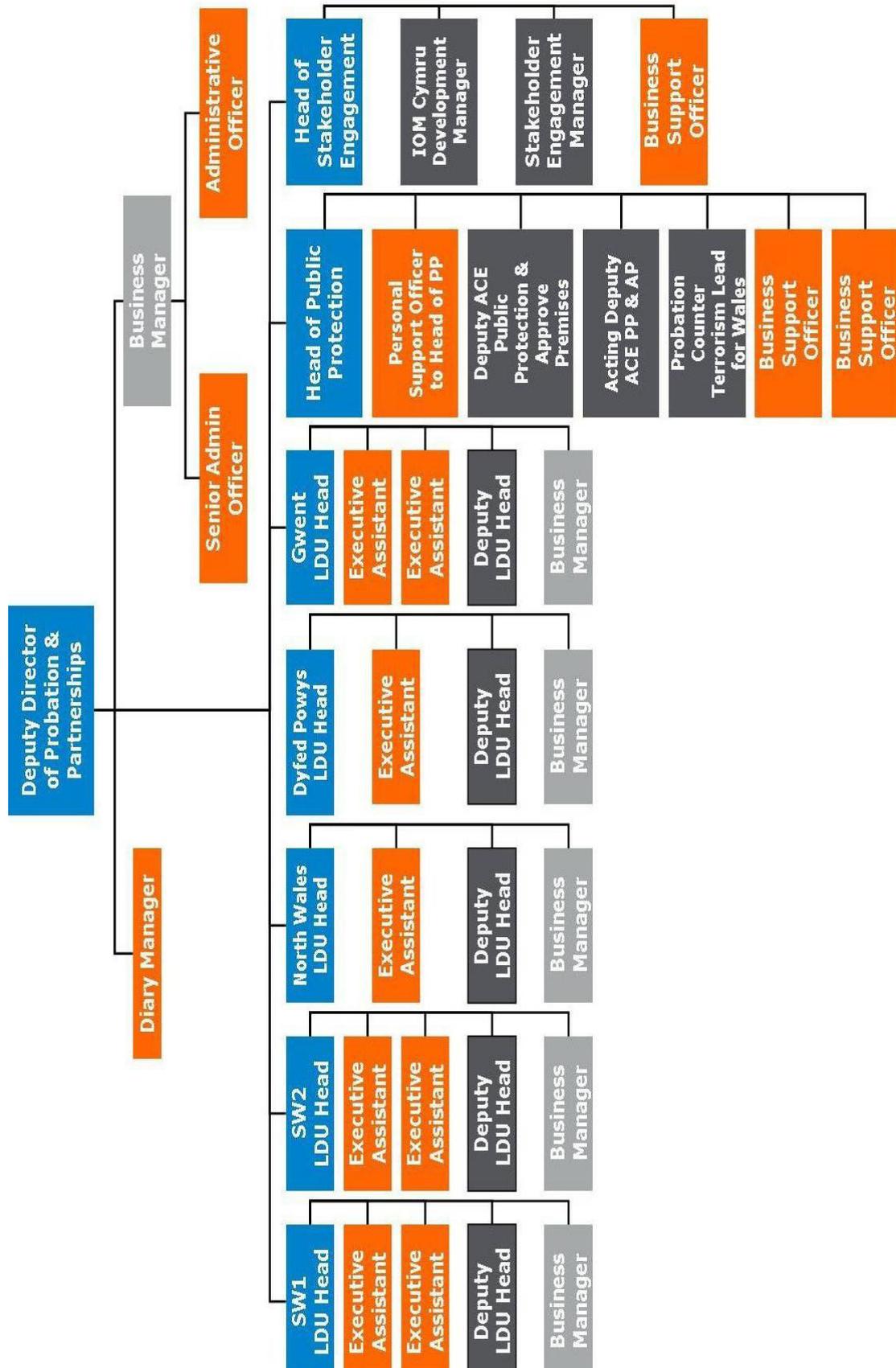
The stated local delivery priorities within the NPS Wales Business Plan for 2016-17 are:

- to make sure there is proactive engagement with Welsh Government in relation to criminal justice issues and new social justice legislation and initiatives
- uphold the NOMS in Wales integration agenda with public sector prisons
- development and delivery of the IOM Cymru work plan including women's services, Youth to Adult (Y2A), Wales Integrated Serious and Dangerous Offender Management and ex-armed services personnel
- continue to lead and support the Wales Reducing Reoffending Strategy as commissioned by the All Wales Criminal Justice Board
- implement and embed a joint interventions service run between PCCs, NPS and public sector prisons.

There had been recent implementation of a structure which split the work of the NPS in Gwent between custody and community cases. This approach was valued by managers and staff, and was potentially being considered by other areas as a model of good practice.

³⁰ NPS E3 Operating Model (2016) (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Excellence). Further information can be found in Appendix 5.

Figure 1.5: Organogram of the Wales NPS division structure



Data Source Wales NPS division

Leadership and management

The Wales division of the NPS had a strong leadership team with a good understanding of the strategic issues facing the organisation. We found the division stable and well run, with a focus on quality. Managers were present and visible to staff.

The Deputy Director for NPS in Wales heads the division. He manages the heads of the five LDUs and the head of public protection, and is the national E3 lead for community supervision.

The head of the NPS Gwent LDU works collaboratively with senior managers in the CRC, there being regular interface meetings to discuss strategic and operational matters. The LDU head is also closely linked into partnerships across Gwent, including chairing the MAPPAs Strategic Management Board and the Integrated Offender Management Board, as well as being the children's safeguarding lead for Wales.

We found that middle managers were clear and confident in their roles, and worked well together as a team. They had a good focus on quality of delivery, supported their staff well, and in turn felt well-supported by senior managers. One middle manager said:

“I feel safe working as part of the division. We support each other and there is a plan for where we want to get to. I find this useful”.

We found that managers and staff were very positive about working in the NPS, with managers appreciative of the divisional approach to managing change. Managers and staff alike told us they were proud to work within the organisation. Staff felt they had the support of the team, good camaraderie and that they worked together very well. They were proud that NPS Wales had a good reputation and was often the forerunner for pilots, seen as achieving a high standard to which others should aspire. They had retained a strong service user focus: we saw positive and inclusive engagement.

Staffing and caseloads

Managers told us that workloads for responsible officers and for court staff were manageable. The situation had improved over time. Workload issues had been actively managed at the divisional level and this had boosted confidence in the organisation overall.

A specialist structure had been introduced in April 2015 to separate out the management of custody and community cases. A group of staff held custody cases only, with their community peers managing the transition back into the community from a point about nine months prior to release. This allowed community-based officers to hold fewer cases overall, which enabled them to focus more on the quality of their work. Managers felt this had improved efficiency and the quality of services offered. Staff also felt the case split was beneficial. Morale was said to have improved

as a result. The Civil Service People Survey 2016³¹ supports this finding, with NPS responses for Gwent reflecting positively in terms of resources, workload, and staff engagement.

There was a stable organisational structure.

There had also been recent and substantial recruitment. Over the last 18 months, the average caseload per officer has fallen by 20% despite a 26% rise in the number of offenders³². Staff said their intended caseload was 29-35 cases. The average actual caseload is 25 cases per officer, although senior leaders said this was closer to an average of 30 when calculated on a FTE basis. Although caseloads occasionally went above 35 cases, they remained manageable.

Table 4: Wales NPS division Gwent LDU staffing and caseload figures for the period 2014-2016

Gwent	July 2014	November 2016	Increase/decrease	% change
Total offenders	945	1196	+251	+26%
Number of POs and PSOs	31	49	+18	+58%
Cases per officer (by offender)	30.5	24.4	-6.1	-20%

Available services

A reasonable range of services appeared to be available.

Accredited programmes from the CRC included Building Better Relationships (BBR) and Thinking Skills Programmes (TSP). Interventions to support RARs were also on offer.

The NPS was, nevertheless, developing in-house resources for responsible officers to deliver to service users in supervision, and had recently commenced a group supervision pilot focused on practical issues, citizenship, fostering positive identity and the implications of being on a custodial or community sentence managed by the NPS.

The Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service is co-commissioned by NOMS in Wales, the office of the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner, the Area Planning Board and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board. The service is available to NPS and CRC service users. Good partnership working was demonstrated, with a range of provision under the GDAS umbrella to support service users including engagement, treatment, recovery and aftercare, criminal justice service, and family and carer support. It was possible to keep individuals with the same caseworker as they transitioned across services within GDAS both during any period of statutory supervision and outside of it. We saw good evidence of referrals being made to GDAS and the service was clearly held in high regard by both service users and probation staff.

31 Cabinet Office (2016) Civil Service People Survey 2016.

32 Staffing and caseload data provided by NPS Wales division.

The NPS had a programme manager for Wales, together with a treatment manager. Programme facilitators comprised dedicated staff and responsible officers with a dual role. They delivered the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) and the Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme, and were planning to introduce Horizon, a new programme for medium risk sex offenders designed in line with desistance research. We saw evidence of work undertaken by responsible officers on pre-programme work with sex offenders, including liaison and joint working with the public protection unit, joint home visits, joint Active Risk Management System assessments and comprehensive risk management plans.

We found, however, that there were delays in sex offenders starting on the SOTP, due to staffing issues creating a backlog and delays. This indicated a lack of capacity for SOTP places in an area with higher than average demand: in March 2016, Gwent had 121 sex offenders per 100,000 population, compared with 104 per 100,000 in England and Wales³³. NPS senior managers told us they were taking steps to improve the situation, and acknowledged that they do not have the right tutors in the right place.

Wales had a personality disorder pathway programme which had been running since 2013. Essentially a consultancy and advisory service to responsible officers working with service users with personality disorder traits, it provided a conduit between mental health and criminal justice services. Screening was undertaken by responsible officers to identify potential cases, which tended to be high risk of harm cases. Support was then given to the responsible officer to manage the risks associated with the case.

Working environment

The NPS and CRC continued to be co-located in offices in Blackwood, Caerphilly, Ebbw Vale, Newport and Pontypool, although the CRC intend to make changes. The police were co-located with the NPS and CRC in Blackwood and intend to co-locate with the NPS in Caerphilly within the next few months. Service users report to all locations. The offices are accessible within communities, and there is a women-only reporting slot each Monday morning, albeit numbers of women within the NPS cohort are low, comprising only 5% of the NPS caseload³⁴.

IT issues were expressed by managers as the main barrier affecting day-to-day operational work, mainly system issues with the national recording system, nDelius, being unavailable on occasions.

Quality assurance

The NPS had a performance and quality support manager and a business manager for Gwent. These two postholders had forged close links with senior leaders and team managers and made monthly calls to other performance managers across Wales to share learning and good practice.

Targets were reviewed on a monthly basis, with dip sampling undertaken to review offender assessments (OASys), court reports and other areas of work. Locally there was facility for staff to interrogate both good practice and performance issues, and analyse their own performance. National practice improvement tools focusing on risk of harm had been put in place, with a recent emphasis on assessment and planning.

33 Ministry of Justice (2016) Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report: 2015-2016.

34 NOMS in Wales Effective Practice Guidance: Working with Women Offenders, April 2016.

3. An evaluation of the quality of probation services in Gwent

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

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work to protect the public was insufficient. Assessments and planning to manage the risk of harm to others were done well, and this provided a good basis for the work. This was not followed through well enough, however, into the work undertaken with service users. Effective management oversight was required in more cases.

There was a strong commitment to safeguarding, with senior manager involvement in both the Adult Safeguarding Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and with team managers linked into sub-groups of these. Relevant practice guidance was in place in respect of safeguarding children and safeguarding adults.

Assessment and planning

We found that the risk of harm level recorded by the CRC was accurate in almost all of the cases we reviewed. In two cases, the risk of harm level was assessed as too low, and this affected the way the case was managed, for example where an assessment missed the need to explore the relationship with the ex-partner's boyfriend, in order to fully plan for potential risks. We judged that the risk of harm to members of the public, known adults, children and staff had been assessed well enough in almost all cases, and in every case relating to risks to other prisoners.

Planning for work to address and minimise the risk of harm had been done sufficiently well in the large majority of cases. It was encouraging to see that planning to manage the risks of harm to children involved good liaison with children's social care services, an aspect of practice we often find lacking. Contingency arrangements were also well-considered, and protective factors were generally taken into account.

An inspector commented:

“there was a really good quality risk assessment and risk management plan, which was concise and precise, with all available safeguards identified and clear lines of accountability outlined”.

A Dysgu Cymru learning event and peer review had recently focused on risk assessment and planning, and this had been welcomed by staff as being informative and beneficial to their work.

Delivery

The work that was delivered by CRC responsible officers was focused sufficiently on protecting those at risk of harm from service users in two-thirds of the cases sampled. We found, however, insufficient contact with service users, an absence of home visits, and interventions not delivered as planned in some cases. We saw a lack of access to, and delays in starting structured interventions, for example, the BBR programme.

Poor practice examples: Alan³⁵ had a history of harassment and domestic abuse against partners. He also showed negative attitudes towards authority, for example the police, and had been verbally abusive towards probation staff, as well as having altercations with neighbours. There was no access to structured interventions or programmes to address his behaviour or the way he related to others.

Sam was a chaotic drug user with a history of non-compliance and poor engagement. He was a known domestic abuse perpetrator, yet was placed at the home of a previous victim and where children were present. He had no stable accommodation. The CRC took too long to address the clear risk issues associated with him residing with his ex-partner. There was no evidence of any worthwhile interventions having taken place.

Problems with delivery were exacerbated by frequent changes of responsible officer in some cases, where inconsistency led to a lack of focus on public protection work. Where good work took place, it was mostly because of exceptional work by individual officers. The following exemplifies this:

Good practice example: Howard was a 28 year old with a history of harassment of the women with whom he had relationships. He was sentenced to an 18 month community order with a requirement to attend the Respectful Relationships RAR programme. Howard suffered from anxiety and was concerned about attending groupwork sessions. He wanted to return to college to complete his degree.

The responsible officer took the case back to court for the programme to be delivered on a one-to-one basis, and sought advice and facilitated a managed disclosure of Howard's convictions to the college. The responsible officer clearly challenged the mind-set of Howard based on the programme of work being delivered. She maintained a detailed record of the work she did and the responses from Howard during his supervision (RAR) sessions.

Howard was responding well to the work.

35 Please note: all names in the practice examples have been altered to protect the individual's identity.

Reviewing progress

Progress was either not reviewed or not reviewed well. More than half of the cases sampled lacked a sufficient review of progress against the public protection priorities, despite the organisation's intended reliance on regular risk evaluation within the overall operating model.

The lack of response to changing circumstances in service users' lives was of concern, with only just over one-third of cases responded to sufficiently well. Opportunities to address risk of harm could be missed.

There was a lack of management oversight and progress monitoring of cases, with staff reporting that this had had a positive effect in only half of the cases sampled. Staff had previously been reliant upon advice from senior colleagues, many of whom had recently left, or were about to leave, through the current restructure process. This was concerning to practitioners and to us.

***Poor practice examples:** Mary's circumstances changed while she was on licence in that she started a new relationship with a known domestic abuse perpetrator. A similar previous relationship was known to have contributed to her offending. No review of the case took place in response to the new relationship.*

Colin had a chaotic lifestyle, with a history of non-compliance. Circumstance changed for the worse, in that he was again living with the victim of his offence (a previous partner), thereby breaching his restraining order. This was during a period when the responsible officer was off work for an extended period of time. Temporary oversight meant a lack of focus on potential public protection issues. Concerns over access to his children and the potential harm he might cause them were not addressed quickly enough.

Impact and potential impact

We found responsible officers had taken reasonable action to keep to a minimum the service user's risk of harm to others in only just over half of the cases. Table 5 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC contributing to public protection.

Table 5: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Assessment and planning to manage the risk of harm posed by service users to others was done well in the large majority of cases.	1.	The work delivered by responsible officers to address and manage the risk of harm to others was inconsistent, and reviews of progress were inadequate.
		2.	Effective management oversight was lacking.
		3.	Workload demands, a focus on organisational change and meeting performance targets had adversely affected the quality of public protection work.

NPS effectiveness

Overall, the quality of NPS work to protect the public was sufficient. Practice varied, however, between places, with Newport practice exceptionally good. Managers were aware of this variation of performance, and had introduced procedures to make sure there is improvement.

Robust policies and procedures were in place for the NPS, and were mostly followed.

The active contribution of the NPS to Gwent-wide safeguarding arrangements, coupled with a well-developed system of case reviews, quality assurance measures and training for staff were likely to make sure that children and vulnerable adults were protected. Local authorities in Gwent were in the process of setting up a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); the NPS was committed to placing probation staff within the MASH to contribute to safeguarding arrangements.

Allocating cases

We found the allocation of cases was done well. Safeguarding concerns had been correctly identified within reports prepared by the NPS at court in all relevant cases.

The service user's risk of harm level had been correctly identified by the NPS throughout the period of supervision in the large majority of cases. In two cases we felt the risk of harm level was too low which could have had an effect on the way the case was managed. An example was where the service user was assessed as high risk of serious harm at allocation, but the responsible officer during the initial assessment identified him as medium risk of harm to known adults. We felt he should have been retained as high risk of harm, at least in the first instance, due to a repeated history of breaching his restraining order, and an offending history that included arson.

Assessment and planning

Assessment of the risk of harm posed by service users to others was done well in the vast majority of cases. Responsible officers took care to outline the risks using current and historical information to inform their assessments. Joint assessments, including those using the Active Risk Management System were appropriately integrated into the case.

Planning to manage the risk of harm had also been done well in most cases. We saw some comprehensive examples of risk management plans, which detailed the involvement of other agencies, and respective responsibilities.

We noted, however, some variation in the quality of practice, with some parts of the area performing consistently better than others, for example in relation to assessment and planning. Again, work was strongest in the city of Newport. The following two examples show this contrast:

Good practice example: *Tony was a 33 year old sentenced to 8 months custody for breach of a restraining order and malicious wounding. He had a long offending history starting from the age of 11. When aged 13, his violent offending commenced and had continued. Recent convictions in 2014 related to possession of methadone, cannabis, threatening behaviour and possession of a bladed article, for which he received a custodial sentence.*

The assessment included an excellent summary of the risks to each of the categories (children, public, known adult and staff); these were clearly laid out and easy to understand. The risk management plan was excellent, detailing comprehensively which agencies were involved and what actions each agency was responsible for. It was clear the responsible officer was engaging Tony in identifying his own needs and what he must do to support his own rehabilitation. These were then broken down into small, manageable steps for Tony to achieve.

While there was insufficient time on licence to complete the BBR programme, an alternative intervention, Respectful Relationships, was being delivered by the responsible officer on a one-to-one basis. The responsible officer had put post it notes on each module of Tony's workbook with relevant 'complete by' dates. This showed excellent organisation and planning of intended work. Tony was on course to complete the programme.

Poor practice example: A lack of pre-release planning in this case meant Len, a violent offender coming out of custody following a breach of his restraining order, was homeless.

The licence conditions were standard, and inadequate. The licence should have included a 'no contact' condition for the former partner, where he repeatedly breached the restraining order. Conditions requiring him to complete the BBR programme (for which his licence period provided plenty of time) and to address his substance misuse and offending behaviour should also have been included at the planning stage.

Delivery

The work delivered by responsible officers to protect those at risk of harm from service users was sufficient in almost two-thirds of cases but was inconsistent. Weaker cases were generally from the area which performed less well overall, with delays in accessing accredited programmes, insufficient account being taken of diversity needs and a lack of appropriate work being delivered. Managers were aware of these differences in performance and were confident they were making progress.

We saw cases where very good work was delivered to manage risk of harm. This included effective liaison and communication with other agencies, taking good account of diversity needs, and excellent organisation of work. The NPS was also in the process of developing its own programmes, such as the group supervision pilot mentioned previously.

Ten cases in the sample were managed at MAPPA Level 1. All were being managed at the correct level, and MAPPA was contributing to keeping people safe. There were robust referral processes in place for consideration of cases to be managed at Level 2 or Level 3, and good strategic commitment to MAPPA. The NPS uses a known risk evaluation model³⁶, leading to a greater focus on risk management plans, and active oversight of current risks.

We observed a good presentation to the quarterly probation liaison meeting on MAPPA and Management of Sexual and Violent Offenders (MOSAVO) by the MAPPA coordinator and a police sergeant from MOSAVO. This included references to local offenders who were subject to MAPPA arrangements. The meeting was well-attended, with 22 magistrates and 2 senior court staff, as well as senior managers from both the CRC and NPS.

36 Four Pillars of Risk Management: developed by Professor Hazel Kemshall, Professor of Community and Criminal Justice, De Montfort University. The Four Pillars are supervision; monitoring and control; treatment and interventions; and victim safety planning.

Good practice example: *The MAPPA accommodation sub-group included five housing managers and a number of registered social landlords. It looked carefully at ways to get relevant offenders into accommodation. The group met with 25 housing partners to set out expectations and duties of the relevant agencies. This approach had gone down well with local partners, and a new process had been identified to refer those prisoners who were in need of accommodation on release to the local authority at the six-month planning stage in line with the MAPPA planning process.*

Staff had access to the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) via their team managers, and accessed the database regularly when required. We often find ViSOR under-utilised and this was a welcome change.

The NPS had two dedicated victim liaison officers and we saw evidence that victims were well-supported. The victim liaison officers were proactive in information-sharing, and provided a thorough and quick response. The roll-out to a national victim database had been concluded in line with a recommendation from our thematic inspection of victim contact arrangements³⁷. Managers concluded the new database was very valuable.

Reviewing progress

Responsible officers reviewed progress appropriately in relation to public protection concerns in just under two-thirds of relevant cases. They responded well enough, however, to changing circumstances in relation to risk of harm in just over half of the cases sampled. Again we noted geographic variation, with some areas much stronger than others.

An example of good practice was where the responsible officer noted a change in the service user's appearance, and documented the need to update ViSOR with this information. Again, this alertness to the potential of ViSOR was unusual.

Impact and potential impact

We judged that all reasonable action had been taken by responsible officers to keep to a minimum the risk of harm service users posed to others in just under two-thirds of cases overall. Yet again, there was a distinct geographic variation in our findings, with Newport being the strongest area.

Safeguarding work was well embedded. Distinct Gwent-wide Boards were in place for women subject to domestic abuse and sexual violence and for children and vulnerable adults. These were supported by a comprehensive system of sub-committees, in turn well supported at appropriate levels by senior managers from the NPS. The NPS's commitment to placing staff within the developing the MASH in Gwent would assist in identifying risks to children from service users.

³⁷ HM Inspectorate of Probation (2013) Victim Contact: An inspection of the victim contact arrangements in Probation Trusts

Overall, we found there to be a sound basis for risk of harm work, with effective management oversight and very strong practice in some geographic areas. Table 6 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the NPS contributing to public protection:

Table 6: List of 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 by service users to others was done well in the large majority of cases.	1.	Practice varied between geographic locations in Gwent, with some areas performing consistently better than others.
2.	MAPPA arrangements and the management oversight of risk of harm practice were effective.		

The CRC and NPS working together

Relationships and communication between the two organisations at senior management level were strong; there was regular dialogue, information-sharing, and a formal process for interface meetings. Senior managers from both organisations jointly attended partnership boards in Gwent, for example the adult and children's safeguarding boards.

We were impressed to see that senior managers from both the CRC and the NPS attended the quarterly probation liaison meetings with magistrates and court staff. It is uncommon for the CRC to have a seat at the table in this way. We saw evidence that the CRC had regularly contributed to the magistrates' newsletter, including updating sentencers on their operating model, and this promoted good communication with the courts. The extent to which the CRC had explained to sentencers the levels of contact with those on supervision, however, was unclear.

A system of daily Domestic Abuse Conference Calls was in place, facilitated by the police, and involving the CRC, NPS and other agencies across the five local authority areas of Gwent. This enabled prompt and efficient sharing of up to date information about perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. These calls informed the CRC and NPS risk assessments and risk management plans, while also updating other agencies.

Risk escalation

There was a Wales-wide risk escalation and review team (Re-RAT) that engaged in discussions with responsible officers before risk escalations were submitted, and made appropriate checks of the case management system to confirm information.

We were informed by the manager of the team that on average there were 20 escalations per month across Wales, with 5 of these coming from Gwent. In the Gwent area, all escalations were discussed with the senior manager (Assistant Chief Executive), before going to the Re-RAT.

Overall, risk escalation processes worked well, and performance measures were met. Prior discussions between CRC responsible officers and quality scrutiny managers in the risk escalation team led to nearly every submitted risk escalation being accepted. Sometimes, however, not all relevant information was provided to the risk escalation team at the point of the escalation being submitted; a revised OASys and sentence plan was not always included.

Only one case in the inspected sample had been escalated from the CRC to the NPS. The escalation was entirely appropriate.

Recall

The Re-RAT also signed-off recalls for all cases, and were involved in CRC recalls where the risk of harm had escalated to high. Dialogue between the quality scrutiny manager and the responsible officer about recalls was constructive.

We observed a case in court where breach of a community order was effectively managed. The court PSO was well-informed about the case, and was able to provide the magistrates with a measured and professional account of what had happened. Magistrates commented, however, on the dwindling number of breaches, and the number of acceptable absences seen in breach reports. These expressed views are consistent with findings in our recent RAR thematic inspection³⁸.

Table 7 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together effectively to achieve positive public protection outcomes:

Table 7: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC and NPS working together, relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Strong relationships and effective communication existed between the CRC and NPS at senior level, with commitment to working together to resolve issues arising.	1.	All relevant information, specifically, a revised OASys and sentence plan, was not always provided to the Re-Rat team for the purposes of considering cases for escalation.
2.	Contribution of the CRC and NPS to the daily Domestic Abuse Conference Calls meant that information was shared in a comprehensive and timely way.		

38 HM Inspectorate of Probation (2017) The implementation and delivery of Rehabilitation Activity Requirements.

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

The CRC was not sufficiently effective in delivering interventions to reduce reoffending.

Assessment and planning

At the start of sentence, the NPS had provided sufficient assessment of the likelihood of reoffending in the large majority of cases allocated to the CRC. CRC responsible officers had built on this information and made their own enquiries to better understand the reasons behind the offending behaviour, completing a timely assessment of sufficient quality in almost all cases.

Appropriate sentence plans were in place to support desistance in almost three-quarters of cases. Planning was strongest in areas to address attitudes to offending, emotional well-being, and thinking and behaviour; it was weakest in relation to education, training and employment. Attention to protective factors was also given in three-quarters of cases, demonstrating that a strength-based approach was being considered.

***Good practice example:** Anne was sentenced to a community order for shoplifting offences. She had a long history of drug and alcohol misuse. The initial assessment and plan demonstrated a good understanding of Anne and her history and life experiences. There was a clear link between the assessment and plan, which identified the priority issues to be addressed. The responsible officer already knew Anne and this was evidenced throughout the assessment, as it recorded relevant life experiences in detail and what work had or had not been done previously.*

Given this understanding the responsible officer had a good grasp of the complex nature of the case and likely difficulties presented in addressing relevant issues, identifying the need to maintain substance misuse interventions as well as offer specialist counselling through an outside agency.

Among cases with insufficient plans, there were examples of poor practice indicating the responsible officer's lack of knowledge of the case, as in the following example:

***Poor practice example:** Barry was convicted of a burglary, committed to fund his amphetamine use. Partly as a consequence of the offence, Barry was out of work. Despite this, the plan lacked suitable objectives, and employment and drug misuse were not appropriately addressed in the plan.*

Delivery

While assessments and planning were mostly satisfactory, not enough was done to deliver the planned work.

We assessed progress as sufficient in just over half of the cases we sampled. Where progress was insufficient, this was mostly because suitable interventions, activities or services were unavailable.

The most prevalent areas of need were thinking and behaviour; drug misuse; lifestyle and associates; relationships; alcohol misuse and accommodation. In cases where the need had been identified, the provision was seen to be sufficient to the following extent:

Table 8: Sufficiency scores from the inspection findings relating to the most prevalent assessed needs of cases in the CRC inspection sample, listed in priority order.

Area of assessed need (in order of priority)	% of cases where interventions delivered sufficiently
Thinking and behaviour	53
Drug misuse	44
Lifestyle and associates	57
Relationships	55
Alcohol misuse	63
Accommodation	29
Emotional well-being	57
Education, training and employment	0
Attitudes to offending	40

The CRC had produced an impressive service directory, detailing the provision of accredited programmes and RARs. We were informed that the CRC was phasing out Control of Violence and Anger in Impulsive Drinkers, Building Skills for Recovery and Drink Impaired Drivers because of lack of demand. Some of these areas of work were being covered by RAR activity.

We held a focus group with service users attending the BBR Programme. Some had waited for up to nine months to start the programme, while others had started straight away. The programme was delivered in Newport, with some participants having long distances to travel, albeit bus fares were paid. All of the participants commented that the programme was helping them to challenge their thinking and make changes. The consistency of the group, the quality of the facilitators, and the course content, were all commented on positively.

We saw clear evidence of delay in starting accredited programmes, or programmes not being started at all in some of the cases we reviewed, all of which had been running for approximately nine months. The following example was not untypical:

Poor practice example: *Dylan was released from prison on licence. None of the interventions identified in his sentence plan, or within his licence conditions, were delivered.*

Dylan's numeracy and literacy needs were not addressed, despite this being identified clearly as an issue by Dylan himself and by the responsible officer. The level of contact was reduced too quickly without any evidence of a change in Dylan's thinking or behaviour, and supervision sessions appear to have been a chat about what was going on. There were no home visits.

Dylan had a licence condition to attend the TSP, but there was no preparatory work done to support this, and the planned start date for the programme fell into the post-sentence supervision stage and was then forgotten about. Shortly afterwards a manager agreed to refer the case to the In-Touch hub, further reducing contact, despite not having undertaken any planned interventions or completed the TSP.

We noted a lack of offending behaviour work in some of the cases we reviewed. Often supervision sessions were a chat, rather than being structured or sequenced. A responsible officer told us:

"I have a lot of complex cases that require a high level of involvement. I find it difficult to keep up and my colleagues and I are under a lot of pressure and feel stressed. The number of forms to fill in, combined with reduced levels of admin support have increased our workload, and I expect this to get worse as more staff leave".

There was, nonetheless, some good work being delivered by individual responsible officers in support of service users.

We were made aware that a new interventions team was in process of being set up, with staff and managers specifically appointed to deliver interventions. This was due to be up and running by March, and the CRC were pinning high hopes on the interventions team making a difference to the offending behaviour work delivered in the future.

Integrated Offender Management

The Gwent IOM service fell under the auspices of IOM Cymru and was overseen by the Gwent IOM Board and steering group. It was a well-respected and well-established community-based service, supported by a range of community bodies and agencies. A co-located core team, managed by the NPS team leader and consisting of probation, police and substance misuse staff, worked closely together to manage the public protection and reoffending risks posed by service users, and to offer constructive services to help them address relevant issues.

Many of the service users supervised by this team led chaotic lifestyles and were responsible for high volumes of offending in their communities. The IOM cohort had ready access to local services to help address their needs. These included substance misuse and health services; ETE provision; advice on benefits; and accommodation services. Control mechanisms, such as licence conditions, home visiting by the police, electronic tagging and other measures were available to the team, so they could respond when the likelihood of reoffending escalated.

We found that the community location and the presence of staff from a range of organisations, helped to create a culture of engagement which was flexible and dynamic. Service users who were persistently offending and leading chaotic lives could find ways of engaging effectively with the services, as opposed to fixed appointment slots in traditional probation offices. The team had the flexibility to undertake home visits when required and these were an invaluable way of monitoring the circumstances of the service users. Information exchanges between IOM staff was prompt and based on trust, confidence and respect between the professionals involved; this helped to make sure that the priorities were addressed.

At the time of the inspection, the IOM team was supervising approximately 200 cases. These cases had been agreed by their targeting process, to make sure that the multi-agency resources were focused on the most prolific group of offenders in Gwent. The CRC had four officers within the IOM, each with a caseload of around 30 cases. This was manageable and meant good quality work was being done to reduce offending behaviour. We were informed, however, that caseloads were due to rise (to 45 cases per responsible officer) with effect from January 2017.

We saw an example of an IOM daily tasking meeting. In this, the whole IOM team met and reviewed the priority cases from across the Police and Crime Commissioner area. This efficient process enabled all staff to be quickly brought up to date with the latest developments in the cases. Actions were agreed and coordination of staff input was slick. The team gave due attention to balancing public protection and risk of reoffending issues, with concern about service user vulnerability and meeting their rehabilitation needs. Their detailed knowledge of the individuals, the localities, the presenting issues and the likely outcomes from various approaches taken with individuals, gave us confidence that all that could be done to reduce further offending and promote rehabilitation was being done.

Planning by senior leaders for the strategic development of the IOM needed to address quickly the CRC's ongoing contribution to the service. Current indications were that the CRC would reduce their investment by 50% (moving from four staff to two) in the near future. This would have consequential impact on the capacity of the service: about two-thirds of the IOM cases are managed by the CRC.

The potential of the IOM approach to working with offenders underpinned an initiative under review in the area. The Wales Integrated Serious and Dangerous Offender Management pilot, run by NOMS in Wales, was currently being considered by partner agencies. This would see a development of the IOM model to encompass work with those posing the highest risk of harm to others in their communities, including a focus on domestic abuse offenders who may be serial perpetrators, and working with repeat victims. Locally, this was an indicator of the high regard in which the IOM team is held across agencies.

Rehabilitation activity requirements

The CRC had a suite of RARs, described within their published service directory, and had recently developed two new RARs: emotional resilience and addictive behaviours. There was also a RAR suitable for women offenders, delivered as a groupwork programme. Most of the RARs were delivered in-house by the CRC.

The non-accredited Respectful Relationships groupwork RAR was used as an alternative to the BBR accredited programme, and we saw some good examples of where Respectful Relationships was working well, as in the following example:

***Good practice example:** Alec, a 30 year old, was on licence for breach of a restraining order against his former partner. A prompt and sufficient assessment and plan were in place for Alec's release on licence. He was appropriately targeted for the Respectful Relationships RAR. Although initially shy about engaging with groupwork, with encouragement from the responsible officer he complied well, and appeared to have shifted his attitudes, thinking and behaviour as a result of the work done within the group.*

While the OASys documentation had not been formally reviewed, the way in which the responsible officer had reviewed Alec's progress was impressive. She had worked with him through a 'satisfaction graph', asking him to measure the progress he had made on each of his offending-related needs and scoring these out of ten. For those elements which fell short of ten, she got him to articulate how he could make further progress to reach top marks.

In this way, he was fully involved in this means of reviewing progress. Alec had fully complied with the requirements of his sentence. He had not reoffended and had made evident progress in his thinking, attitudes and behaviour.

Overall, however, as with our findings in other PCC areas, there was a general uncertainty in Gwent about RAR days and how they should be used. In particular, we found that the delivery of RAR days was inconsistently recorded. Staff were not clear about what constituted a RAR day, despite practice guidance having been issued by

managers. It was encouraging, however, to see that the CRC was about to distribute a RAR information document to sentencers. The CRC Assistant Chief Executive attended the quarterly probation liaison meetings, and regularly contributed to newsletters for the courts, and this clearly aided communication and understanding.

Unpaid work

Unpaid work delivery was mixed. Staff focused on getting unpaid work hours completed, to the detriment of offending behaviour work in some cases.

Originally the CRC had five officers holding stand alone unpaid work cases, although some had left, and others moved into generic offender management. We spoke to a case manager who was holding between 120-150 unpaid work cases. The CRC had a list of current community projects, most of which seemed to be litter picking, graffiti removal, and painting, although there were some individual placements, for example at the Owl Sanctuary or local churches. In the following example, the individual's diversity needs had been taken into account in deciding on her unpaid work placement:

***Good practice example:** Lucy was given a number of hours of unpaid work as part of her suspended sentence order. The normal expectation was that, as a woman, she would complete these hours in a charity shop. She was a primary carer, however. It was recognised that it would be difficult for Lucy to attend for work at the charity shop, so alternative arrangements were made for her to do some cleaning work at a local church. She needed to do just two hours at a time, any time between 09:00 and 16:00, which fitted in well with her caring commitments.*

Lucy told us that she loved the work and the environment so had continued to work voluntarily at the church after her unpaid work hours were completed. She also now attended the church on Sundays, welcoming this integration into her local community.

We saw evidence within the cases we inspected of regular stand-downs when service users had turned up for unpaid work, or had appointments cancelled due to staffing shortages. While observing arrangements in reception at Newport, an inspector noted that service users had been advised to turn up at 08:45 to report for their unpaid work. The van to collect them had still not arrived at 09:55 when the inspector had to leave. Such delays do not promote positive engagement with service users.

Meeting the needs of service users

Service users we spoke with were positive about probation services, but we found high levels of change of responsible officer.

Some service users had experienced several changes of responsible officer, and this affected the consistency of the relationship. Of the cases we reviewed, over half had had two or more officers responsible for their case since allocation. Senior managers told us that this high level of churn was primarily due to sickness and maternity leave.

We spoke with three service users whose cases we had reviewed, and six other service users within focus groups, including two female service users. They generally had a positive view of their work with probation, saying their responsible officers had listened to them and taken their needs into account.

A service user said:

“My offender manager has been really helpful and was a good listener. She taught me how to think and react and that has helped me a lot. She was friendly and good to talk to. She taught me how to manage my thoughts better and to deal with the stress I was having. It was good”.

Another service user said:

“My offender manager has helped me with housing and drugs and I am grateful for that. She doesn’t speak down to me and is genuine in trying to help me”.

All of the women whose cases we reviewed had female responsible officers. There was opportunity for women to report at the Women’s Aid premises in Newport, or at probation offices during a women-only reporting slot on Monday mornings. We saw no examples of women being placed as lone females within groups for unpaid work. This was good practice, and reflected specific contractual requirements for working with female offenders.

We saw evidence of service users’ diversity being taken into account appropriately, for example their mental health needs. While observing reception arrangements, an inspector noted that two interpreters had been provided to help support two Slovakian men with their group induction session. There was no evidence of translation into Welsh being required within the cases we inspected, although we noted literature and information for service users was available in Welsh if needed or requested.

Reviewing progress

Responsible officers had reviewed progress well enough in fewer than half the cases in the sample, and plans had been adjusted to reflect changing circumstances in only one-third of cases. In our view this was insufficient and was likely to lead to opportunities to promote desistance being missed.

Impact and potential impact

We considered that not enough progress had been made towards reoffending outcomes. The exceptions to this were in addressing relationship and emotional health and well-being problems. It was particularly pleasing to see that in over two-thirds of relevant cases, progress had been made in respect of emotional health and well-being. Least progress was made with regard to ETE, where no progress had been made in any of the cases, and in 20% of cases there was deterioration.

That said, almost three-quarters of the service users whose cases we reviewed had not reoffended at the time of our inspection. For those who had, the frequency and seriousness of their reoffending had mostly stayed the same.

Table 9 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC to reduce reoffending:

Table 9: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Assessments and planning to reduce reoffending provided a good basis on which to take forward the work.	1.	The work delivered by the CRC to address and manage the likelihood of reoffending was lacking in both availability and clarity of purpose.
2.	There was a well-established and effectively functioning multi-agency approach to IOM, into which the CRC was well-integrated.	2.	There were delays in service users accessing accredited programmes.
3.	The needs of female service users were given specific consideration, and women-specific interventions were available.	3.	Staff were confused about the purpose of RARs and what these entailed.
4.	There were opportunities for the CRC to inform sentencers concerning the work it delivers.	4.	Reviews of progress were insufficient.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of work delivered by the NPS was generally acceptable and the impact of this work was that most offenders were less likely to reoffend as a result. Here as in other domains, the NPS was let down by geographic variations in performance, with some areas doing far less well than others.

Court reporting

Most of the reports we saw identified and analysed areas linked to offending well, and it was pleasing to see that in all cases, information about safeguarding concerns was provided adequately. In every case, the proposal made to the court for sentencing options focused clearly on the right issues.

There are two magistrates' courts in Gwent: Cwmbran and Newport, and a Crown Court at Newport. The NPS had a dedicated court team comprising ten staff: a senior probation officer (SPO), three probation officers (POs) and six probation service officers (PSOs). Two of the PSOs also acted as enforcement officers, checking and quality assuring breaches before they went before the court.

The magistrates we spoke with were overwhelmingly positive about NPS court work, and gave illustrations of magistrates commending individual probation staff in court. They said reports were good and that quality had improved recently.

Inspectors spent time at Newport Magistrates' Court. We found good accommodation and equipment for NPS court staff, including access to the case management system, nDelius. The court staff we observed represented the service well to magistrates, court clerks and other court officials. There were good interface arrangements between the court staff and the NPS and CRC at the point of allocation, meaning that initial appointment arrangements for service users were clear and made a prompt and effective start to the order more likely. NPS staff working in the court were well-trained and supported. Quality assurance arrangements meant reports were of a good quality and that allocation decisions were accurate. Of particular interest was a practice improvement tool provided by the courts manager for court reports.

Allocating cases

There were no evident problems with allocation either within the NPS, or from the NPS to the CRC. In the sample inspected, allocations were accurate in all but one case.

The assessment at the point of allocation of cases to the NPS was deemed sufficient in more than two-thirds of cases overall. This was a mixed picture across geographic localities, with Newport being the strongest area where the vast majority of assessments were done well.

Assessment and planning

Within an appropriate time following allocation, we found the assessment in relation to reducing reoffending was sufficient in three-quarters of NPS cases overall. Again, we noted a strikingly mixed picture, where all assessments were done well in Newport, with much poorer performance in another locality. Although managers were sighted on this, we would urge them to take all necessary steps to address the reasons for these geographic variations in performance.

Sufficient sentence plans were in place in just under three-quarters of cases. Among these, we saw some excellent examples of planning. An inspector said:

“This was a master-class in how to put together a sentence plan. Anyone who wants to know what a good sentence plan looks like should come here!”

Good practice example: *Simon was convicted of breaching his restraining order and malicious wounding. His sentence plan contained relevant objectives including one linked to supporting protective factors. Detailed plans were in place with a clear outline of who would do what in relation to each objective. This was an excellent example of how to use the OASys plan effectively and appropriately.*

We did, however, see some plans which were less good among the sample, as in the following case:

Poor practice example: *Michael came out of prison following recall for threatening the new partner of Michael’s victim of his historic offending. His licence conditions prohibited contact with that individual.*

The sentence plan did not include an objective about victim awareness or consequential thinking, or a programme such as BBR.

Delivery

We found that satisfactory progress had been made in delivering the required interventions in half of the cases we reviewed.

Of the identified priorities, we considered thinking and behaviour was by far the most prevalent need, being relevant in almost all of the NPS cases. Alcohol misuse was also a prevalent factor in half of all cases in the sample.

Table 10 Sufficiency scores from the inspection findings relating to the most prevalent assessed needs of cases in the NPS inspection sample, listed in priority order.

Area of assessed need (in order of priority)	% of cases where interventions delivered sufficiently
Thinking and behaviour	60
Alcohol misuse	63
Emotional well-being	43
Lifestyle and associates	43
Relationships	50
Attitudes to offending	80
Accommodation	75

We were pleased to see that sufficient interventions were being delivered in relation to accommodation in three-quarters of relevant cases.

Much of the work carried out by responsible officers was on a one-to-one basis. We saw a number of examples where interventions had made a tangible difference in achieving positive outcomes for service users, as in the following case:

Good practice example: *Chris was a 24 year old man with a very high risk of reoffending score, reflecting his prolific violent offending. He received a custodial sentence for an offence involving domestic abuse, and his consequential thinking and violent response to situations was worrying. Chris had completed BBR in the relatively short time he spent in prison and had complied with the programme because he desperately wished to retain contact with his young daughter, who was subject to a Child In Need plan. He realised if he did not change his ways, children's social care services would bar him from having any contact with his daughter.*

On his release, the responsible officer focused on reinforcing and reviewing relevant parts of the BBR programme. Excellent work was delivered; this included use of workbooks, for example, from the 'Working Dads' programme, around issues such as 'what makes a good dad?'

Chris succeeded really well. He gained employment within two months of release, engaged with the offence-focused work, abided by the Child In Need plan and, because of his compliance, was gradually allowed to spend more and more time with his partner and daughter. There was no evidence of drinking and drugs, which had been characteristics of his life and offending previously. At the time of our inspection, he had not reoffended and the frequency of appointments had been appropriately reduced.

We saw evidence of good work being delivered by the local drug and alcohol service, GDAS, with some very complex and chaotic substance misusers, as in this case:

Good practice example: *Thomas was a 30 year old with a history of alcohol and drug-related offending. He was convicted of an offence of violence, which involved him driving a car at three victims, causing serious injury to one of them. He had been drinking heavily at the time.*

There was prompt referral to GDAS. Excellent work was undertaken including a high level of intervention delivered by the drugs and alcohol service, and homework for Thomas, coupled with very good communication. The responsible officer then reinforced the work through one-to-one sessions with Thomas and recorded detailed discussions about his drinking.

Thomas made progress in relation to reduced alcohol intake. His compliance was excellent and there was no reoffending.

In contrast, we also saw examples of cases where insufficient offending behaviour work was undertaken. In one case an inspector noted:

“There was insufficient evidence of what work is being done with the service user to address some of the areas linked to the likelihood of reoffending. Discussions took place in supervision, however, it was not clear what specific intervention or work was being done. A referral had been made for counselling, but is still awaited”.

We were informed by CRC managers that the number of NPS service users accessing accredited programmes had reduced. There appeared to be differing opinions from the NPS and CRC as to why this was the case. The NPS claimed that their referrals to programmes had been maintained at the same level, and that the reason was lack of programme availability. The CRC had a different view, which was that the number of referrals had dropped. The two organisations needed to jointly address this situation.

The NPS in Gwent held a tasking meeting each Monday morning, which we were able to observe. The meeting was focused and covered all key areas of work from reports through to parole submissions. It was well attended and showed that managers were clearly involved in day-to-day operations, knowing what work was due or outstanding. Staff worked well together to cover areas of work, and it gave opportunities for PSOs to develop their own skills and knowledge in relation to working with service users.

Rehabilitation activity requirements

Reassuringly, the magistrates we spoke with were well-informed about developments in, and the work of, probation services, both the CRC and NPS, in Gwent, through presentations and other forms of information provision.

We found, however, some confusion among NPS staff about the rate card, and access to elective services. Locally there have been five iterations of the rate card and NPS experience has been mixed. The NPS was able to purchase services more cheaply elsewhere, so was not always accessing services from the CRC. To some extent the NPS had been able to influence delivery; for example, early versions of the rate card dictated that accommodation services purchased should include nine sessions; the NPS had now negotiated to change to payment by session. A rate card working group had been set up, and it was encouraging to see efforts to try to resolve issues.

Meeting the needs of service users

We spoke with seven service users as a part of a focus group, and three service users whose cases we had reviewed. They were generally positive about their work with the NPS. Comments included:

“All been quite positive, anything I ask, they have answers for”

“Can’t fault her, she is really supportive”

“Talking to the probation officer helped me”

“He was never judgemental, he was understanding”

“He got me to open up even though he knew he had a job to do”

“Helping me understand where I was at the time”

“She won’t just give me the straight answer, and says ‘What do you think?’”

Where they were less positive, service users suggested they would like more visits while in prison to make the transition more seamless, and more help with ETE and practicalities around accommodation, for example, with the purchase of household items.

As with the CRC cases, we found no evidence of translation into Welsh being required within the NPS cases we inspected, although we noted literature and information for service users was available in Welsh if needed or requested.

Some service users had experienced several changes of responsible officer, and this affected the consistency of the relationship. Of the cases we reviewed, almost half had two or more responsible officers for the case since allocation.

Reviewing progress

Reviews had been done well in over two-thirds of cases, yet suitable adjustments to reflect changing circumstances had been made in only half of them. The following demonstrates the benefits of reviewing well:

***Good practice example:** There was a period of time spent getting to know Bill and this meant he was able to start opening up to the responsible officer, discussing his offence and the motivations for it. Once this had occurred, the responsible officer updated the assessment, giving a full and comprehensive list of all the Child Protection conference and core group dates with outcomes listed beside them. The review provided a more coherent assessment with appropriate updates, and a (now irrelevant) objective was removed from plan.*

Impact and potential impact

In the large majority of cases, service users whose cases we reviewed had not been reconvicted since the start of their sentence or release on licence. Given the complex nature of the caseload, we found this demonstrated positive impact. Where they had reoffended, the frequency and seriousness of their offending was generally stable.

Most progress toward outcomes had been achieved in relation to accommodation, where in three-quarters of relevant cases there was positive progress. Other areas where the strongest progress had been made were alcohol misuse; thinking and behaviour; attitudes to offending; and emotional health and well-being. Table 11 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the NPS to reduce reoffending:

Table 11: List of enablers and barriers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	The quality of court reports was good, and sentencers had a high degree of confidence in the NPS.	1.	There was some confusion among NPS staff about the rate card and access to elective services. As a result the NPS was not always accessing services from the CRC.
2.	Assessments and planning to reduce reoffending provided a good basis on which to take forward the work.		
3.	Positive progress had been made towards reoffending outcomes, and the large majority of service users had not reoffended.		

The CRC and NPS working together

Working relationships between the CRC and NPS at all levels were positive.

At a senior management level there was continued investment of time in a range of partnership activities in the Gwent area, which promoted effective communication and working practices.

We were pleased to note that the CRC and NPS had both maintained a resource commitment to the delivery of IOM, with the NPS managing the team, and both organisations having staff based in the co-located facility.

The support for and services to women offenders from both organisations was a clear benefit. The strength of the Women’s Pathfinder is that cases were being diverted and women were given chance to address their social problems, as well as access to community resources and support. Both organisations had nominated specific points of contact for the Women’s Pathfinder.

The Dysgu Cymru events, involving peer review and shared learning, demonstrated clear commitment to working together to share and develop effective practice.

Table 12 identifies the key enablers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together to reduce reoffending. There were no identified barriers.

Table 12: List of enablers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.

Enablers	
1.	Relationships between the CRC and NPS at a strategic level were good, and both organisations demonstrated a commitment to partnership working, including in the IOM forum.
2.	The commitment to services and support for women offenders was good.
3.	Dysgu Cwmru events provided opportunity for staff from both organisations to learn together.

Abiding by the sentence

CRC effectiveness

The CRC was generally effective in supporting service users to abide by their sentence. Overall, we found sufficient progress had been made in delivering the requirements of the sentence or licence in three-quarters of cases, and almost two-thirds of service users complied with the whole of their sentence, some with no problems, and others after successful efforts to re-engage them.

While the number of appointments offered was mostly appropriate, there were too many acceptable absences in some cases, and non-engagement should have been tackled earlier. Coupled with cancellations of appointments due to lack of staff availability, this meant there were poor reporting arrangements for some service users.

Delivery

In relation to assessment and planning, we found that the service user's individual circumstances were appropriately taken into account in most cases, and in the delivery of interventions in around three-quarters of cases. The following examples demonstrate this being done well – and not so well:

Good practice example: Vanessa was a 40 year old convicted for theft, her first offence.

Her responsible officer involved Vanessa throughout the assessment and planning process. Account was taken of her individual needs by offering her a singleton post for her unpaid work, which she found a very positive and rewarding experience, and which offered her some support for her emotional needs. When consideration was given to transferring her case to the In-Touch hub, Vanessa was reluctant, as she felt nervous and that it might reduce her support. The responsible officer considered this with her manager, and a decision was made not to refer Vanessa to the hub, and instead to maintain face-to-face contact with her.

Given the needs of the case, this was a positive step which promoted engagement with Vanessa, and she complied fully with the requirements of her sentence.

Poor practice example: Phil was a chaotic drug user with a history of non-compliance and poor engagement. He was sentenced initially to an electronically monitored curfew order. This was returned to court after a few weeks, and an unpaid work order imposed in its place. This too was unsuitable as Phil was chaotic and unfit to work.

No new assessment or plans were completed for this order. Phil had a number of concurrent orders, the assessments for which were poor with gaps in information and no account being taken of the chaotic nature of the case. There was no evidence that Phil was involved in any planning and, indeed, the most relevant previous assessment stated that Phil was not seen prior to its completion. There were also gaps in the recording of contact information, and there was no evidence of meaningful contacts having taken place.

Phil did not comply with the requirements of his sentence. He was eventually breached and given a custodial sentence, although enforcement action should have been taken much sooner.

It was pleasing to see that the service user was meaningfully involved in planning in the large majority of cases. The situation was more disappointing in relation to reviewing, where the service user was appropriately involved in less than one-third of cases; we felt this reflected the lack of priority that the CRC gave to the need to review cases.

We judged that sufficient progress had been made in delivering the requirements of the sentence or licence in three-quarters of inspected cases, and that the number of appointments offered was appropriate in the large majority of cases.

While we saw some good examples of responsible officers trying to be flexible and responsive to service user needs, we felt that in some cases absences were often too readily deemed acceptable with too much leeway being given. This appears to be an emerging trend across recent inspections and one to which we will pay close attention in future. We saw cases where non-engagement should have been addressed earlier. In three of the cases we reviewed, there were eleven or more absences deemed acceptable. In other cases, we saw appointments being cancelled because of lack of staff availability.

The CRC had set up a process for engagement panels, intended to assist where service users were not complying appropriately with the requirements of their sentence. Where we saw evidence of these, they mostly seemed to constitute an additional supervision appointment with the responsible officer, rather than a formal panel.

Nevertheless, in almost three-quarters of cases, inappropriate behaviour, absences or non-compliance were responded to appropriately, and we saw only three cases in which breach action had not been taken when it should have been.

Impact and potential impact

In six out of every ten cases in our sample, service users had abided by their sentence, some of them after successful efforts to re-engage them following absence.

The number of absences, however, acted as a barrier to service users achieving positive outcomes in around four out of ten cases. Table 13 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the CRC gaining compliance of individuals with their sentence:

Table 13: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Responsible officers generally demonstrated a good understanding of the diverse needs of service users.	1.	The extent of organisational change had disrupted some aspects of service delivery. Staff departures and sickness absence had led to poor reporting arrangements for some of the cases in the inspection.
2.	The number of appointments offered largely met the assessed needs of the case.	2.	There were too many acceptable absences in some cases, and the number of absences acted as a barrier to service users achieving positive outcomes.
		3.	Service users were not involved well enough in reviews.

NPS effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was good. The large majority of service users abided by the requirements of their sentence, or where they did not, appropriate enforcement action was taken.

Delivery

We judged that sufficient progress had been made in delivering the requirements of the sentence in four out of every five cases in the sample. We were pleased to see that the number of appointments offered met the needs of the individual in every case.

We found that individuals' diverse needs had been taken into account in assessments, planning, review and delivery in almost all of the cases in the sample. There was evidence of good motivational work from responsible officers to promote compliance, together with resilience and persistence in engaging service users.

Good practice example: Warren was a 32 year old on licence for breach of a restraining order.

It was clear that the responsible officer took time to build a relationship with Warren, engaging him in identifying his own needs, and what he needed to do to support his own rehabilitation. Priorities for action were identified and then broken down into smaller, more manageable steps when he stated he did not know how to go about doing them. A referral was made to the mental health charity, MIND, for support to address Warren's anxiety and mood management. Barriers to engagement included time-keeping and forgetting appointments. There was evidence on the case management system of the responsible officer discussing this with Warren and encouraging him to identify ways to manage these issues.

Warren was facing breach proceedings for being late to appointments. The responsible officer, however, encouraged him to continue to attend, and consequently he had attended early for his appointments pending the breach court date.

Impact and potential impact

The large majority of those whose cases we inspected had abided by the sentence of the court. This had occurred through full compliance, or compliance after enforcement action had been taken, and we found that appropriate breach action or recall had been taken in every case where it was necessary to do so.

Table 14 identifies the key enablers to the NPS gaining the compliance of individuals with their sentence. There were no identified barriers to this work.

Table 14: List of enablers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers	
1.	Staff understood and responded consistently to service user diversity of need.
2.	There was resilience and perseverance from responsible officers in their work to support engagement.
3.	Responsible officers were robust in taking enforcement action when required.

The CRC and NPS working together

Enforcement

Some NPS staff reported they were unhappy about the quality of breach reports from the CRC, while CRC staff thought there was a degree of pedantry from NPS staff in rejecting breaches. Managers had now worked through this issue, and the quality of breach reports was improving.

Table 15 identifies the key enablers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together to gain compliance of individuals with their sentence. There were no identified barriers.

Table 15: List of enablers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers	
1.	There were effective channels of communication between CRC and NPS staff at a management level.

Appendices

- 1: Inspection methodology
- 2: Background data
- 3: Data analysis from inspected cases
- 4: Glossary
- 5: Acknowledgements

Appendix 1: Inspection methodology

HMI Probation's Quality & Impact programme commenced in April 2016, and 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 NPS and the CRC, and explore the contribution of any partners working with these organisations.

An inspection team visited the area for two full weeks in November-December 2016. Prior to starting fieldwork, we held fact-finding meetings with the CRC and NPS in Gwent 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 Gwent, the sample consisted of 47 cases, 31 of which were CRC cases and 16 of which were NPS cases.

The team then returned two weeks later to pursue lines of enquiry emerging from the first week, observing specific activities and interventions and speaking with key staff, managers and partners, in focus groups, meetings, or on a one-to-one basis.

In this inspection we conducted two staff focus groups involving 17 staff, and also spoke with 67 other stakeholders: 33 managers, 22 magistrates and 12 staff from partner agencies.

We attempted to speak with those service users who provided their consent to being contacted. In this inspection, we spoke with 19 service users (9 from the CRC and 10 from the NPS) whose cases we inspected, or who were attending specific interventions.

We made available information in Welsh about the inspection for service users and staff, and managers were given the option to have any inspection documents being translated into Welsh. Service users and staff were offered opportunity to have their interviews conducted in Welsh, and to that end we had a Welsh-speaking inspector on site and available if required. No-one opted for interviews in Welsh.

The inspection focused on assessing how the quality of practice contributed to achieving positive outcomes for service users, and 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 reoffending was reduced, the public were protected from harm and individuals had abided by their sentence.

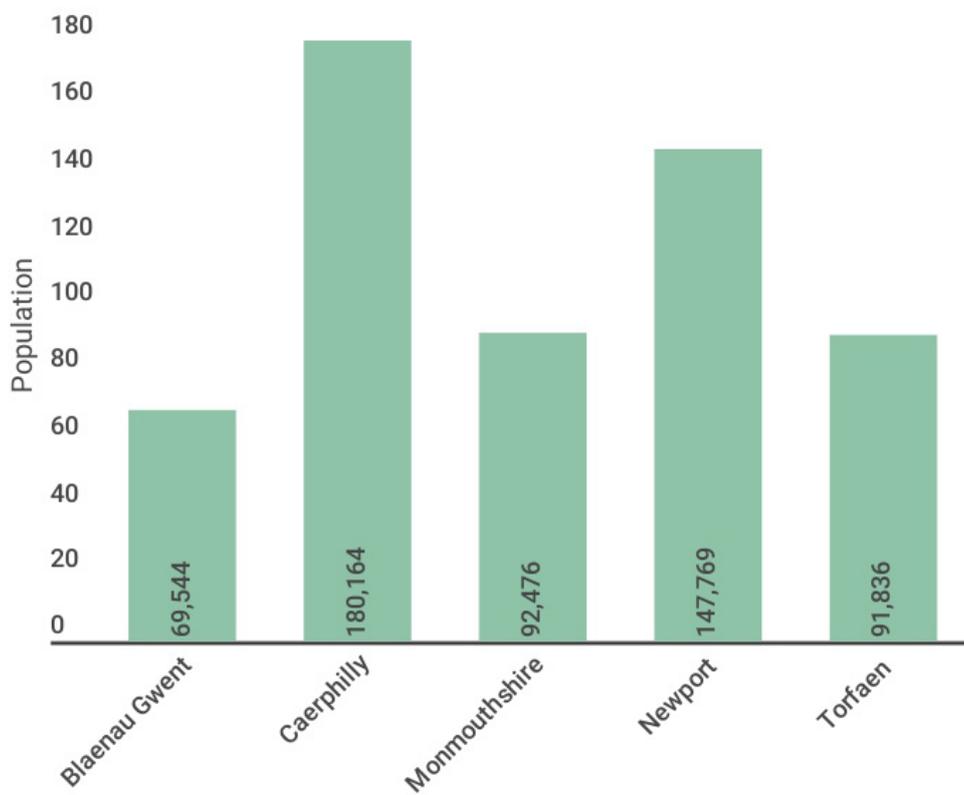
Appendix 2: Background data

This inspection covers Gwent comprising of the unitary authorities of Blaenau Gwent County Borough, Caerphilly County Borough, Monmouthshire County Council, the City of Newport and Torfaen County Borough.

Population demographics

The population of the historic county of Gwent was estimated at 581,789 in 2015.

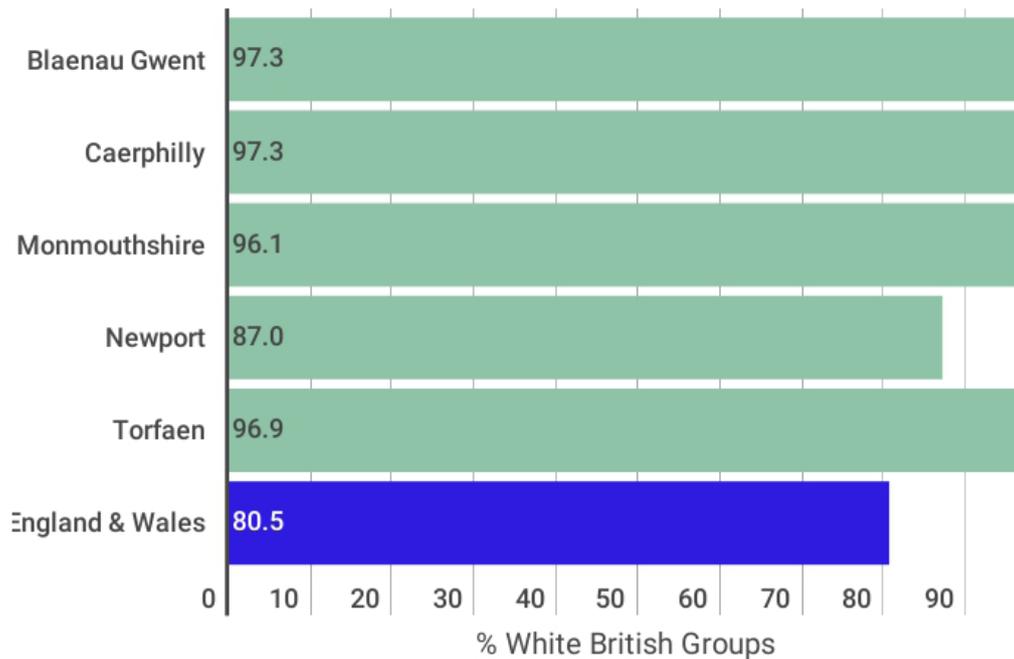
Figure 2.1: Population estimate, mid-2015



Source: Office for National Statistics, June 2016

The residents of the four boroughs of Gwent are largely made up of white British groups; the city of Newport has more diverse communities.

Figure 2.2: Ethnicity in Gwent, 2011 census

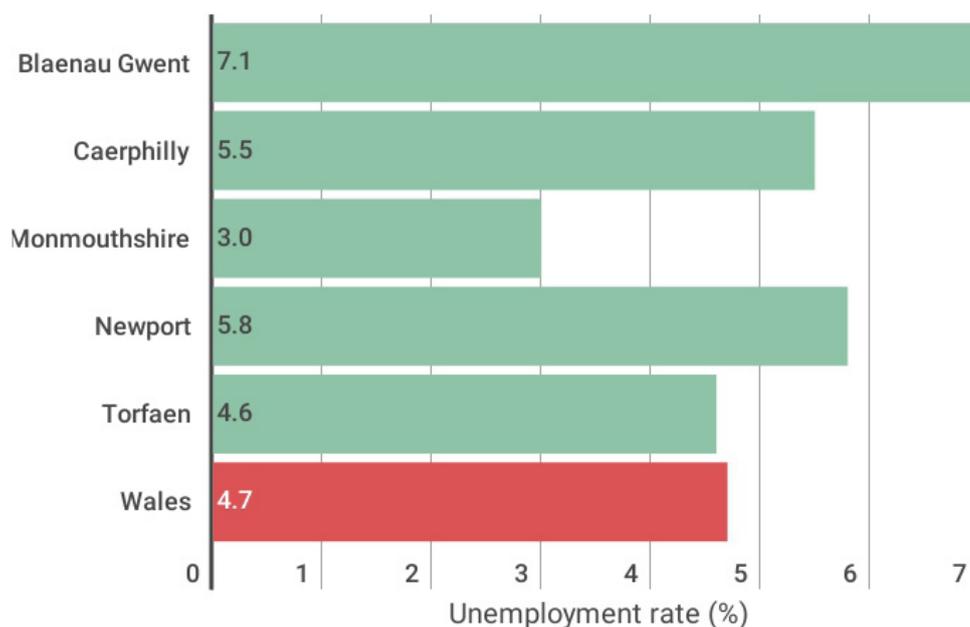


Source: Office for National Statistics, December 2012.

Levels of unemployment

As shown by Figure 2.3, unemployment in Gwent is higher than the Wales average but the picture varies greatly by locality.

Figure 2.3: Unemployment in Gwent, 2015/2016



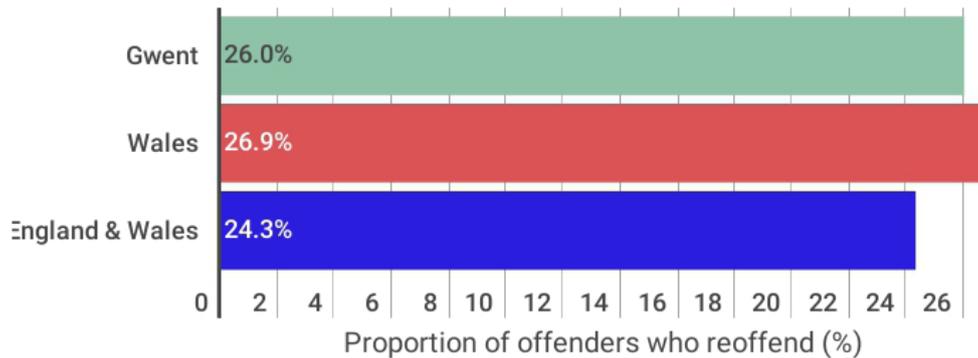
Source: Office for National Statistics, January 2017.

Levels of reoffending

The proven reoffending rate for Gwent is set out in Figure 2.4, based upon adult offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a caution in the period April 2014 to March 2015.

Reoffending in Gwent is slightly higher than the England and Wales average, but is slightly lower than the Wales average.

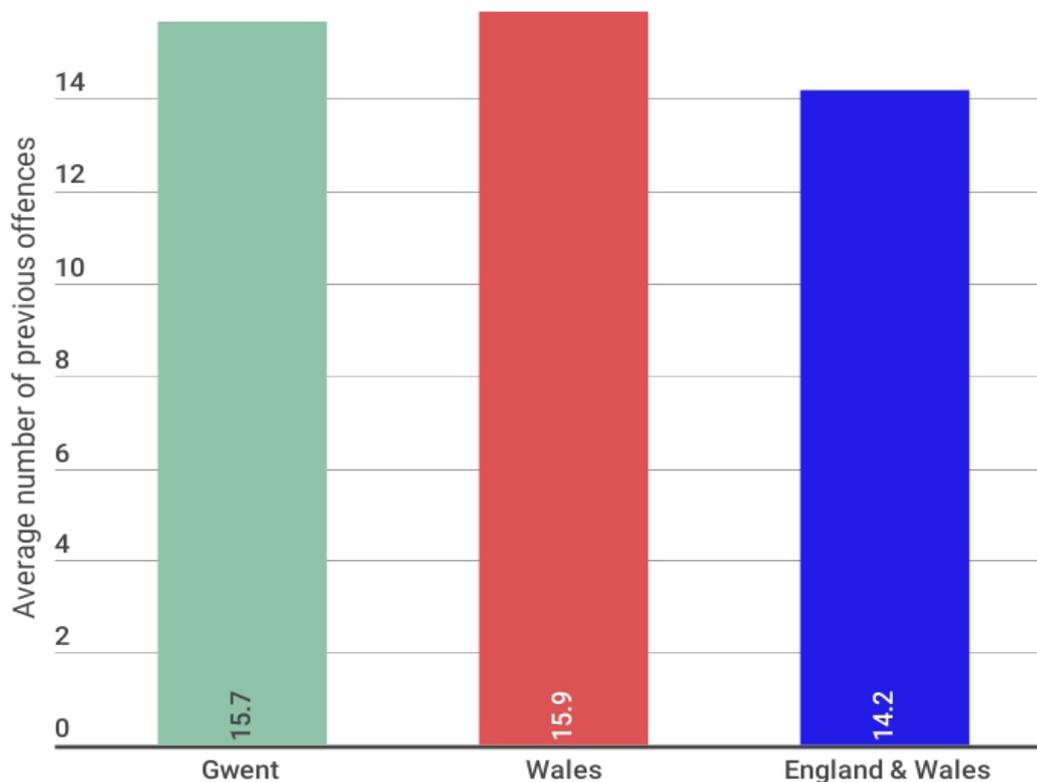
Figure 2.4: Proven reoffending rate for the Gwent, April 2014 to March 2015



Source: Ministry of Justice, January 2017.

The average number of previous offences per offender is shown in Figure 2.5 for Gwent is higher than the England and Wales average, but is slightly lower than the Wales average.

Figure 2.5: Offending histories in Gwent, April 2014 to March 2015



Appendix 3: 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 3.1 Public Protection

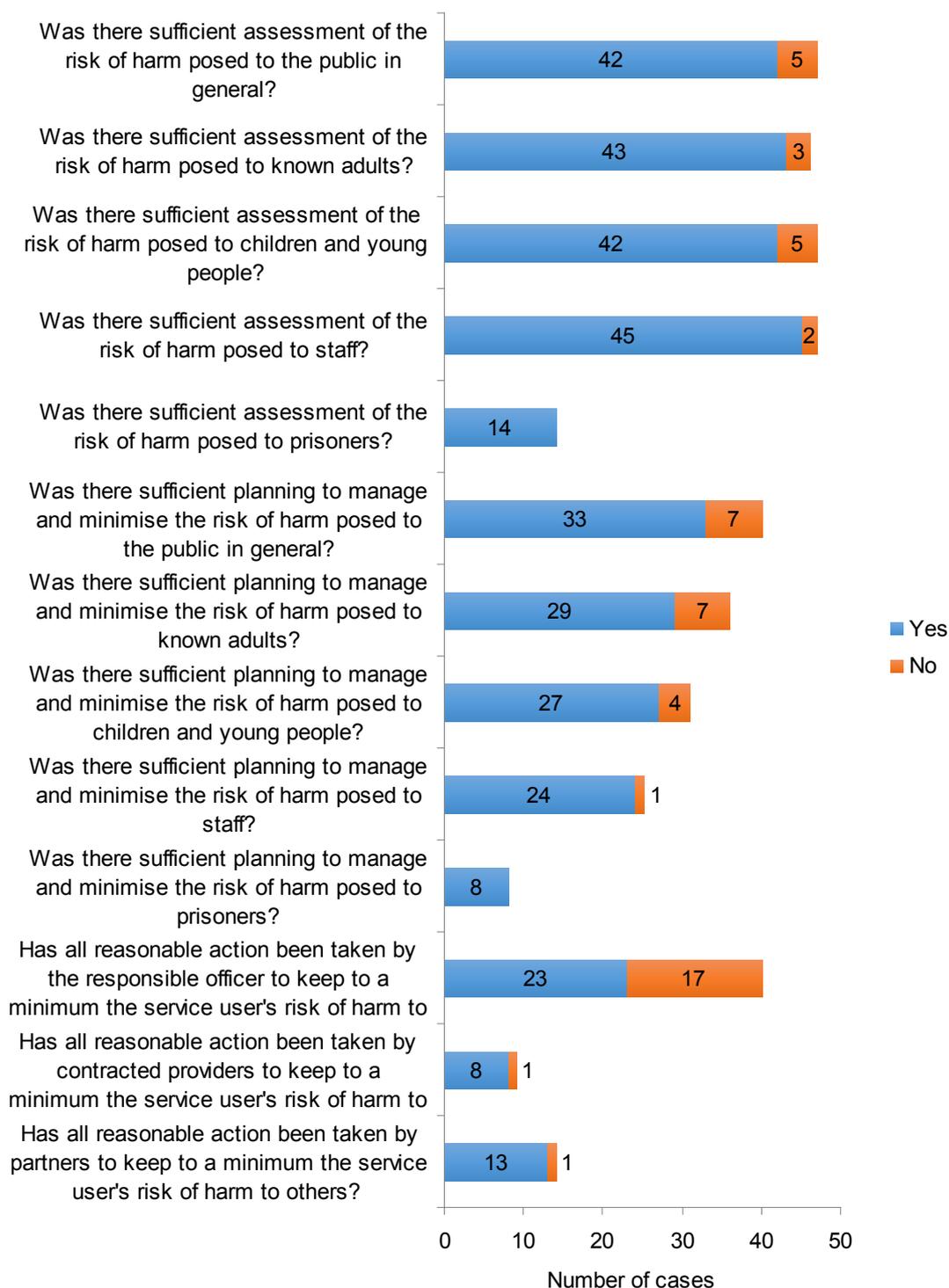


Figure 3.2 Public Protection

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:

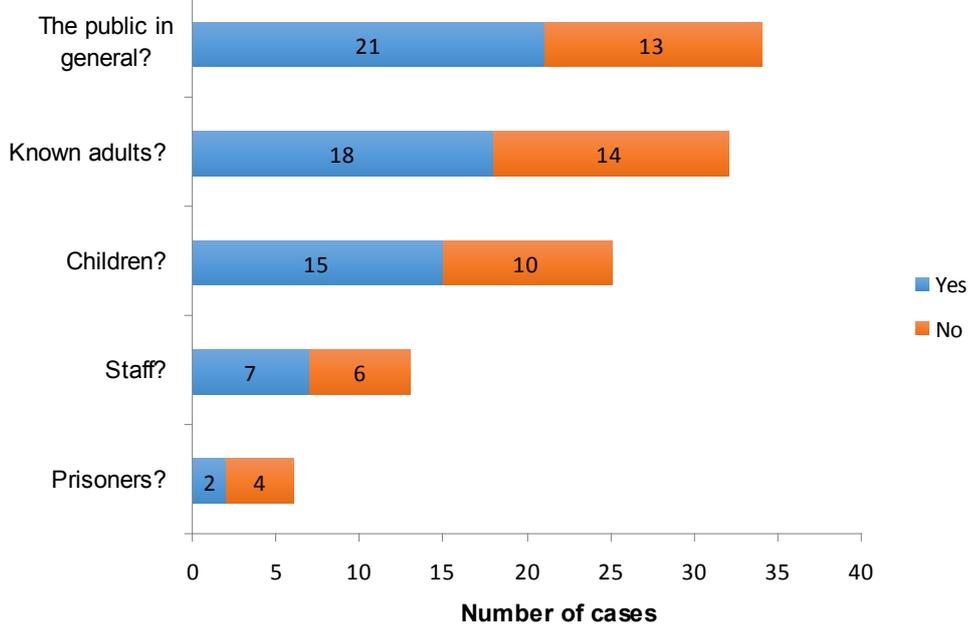


Figure 3.3 Reducing Reoffending

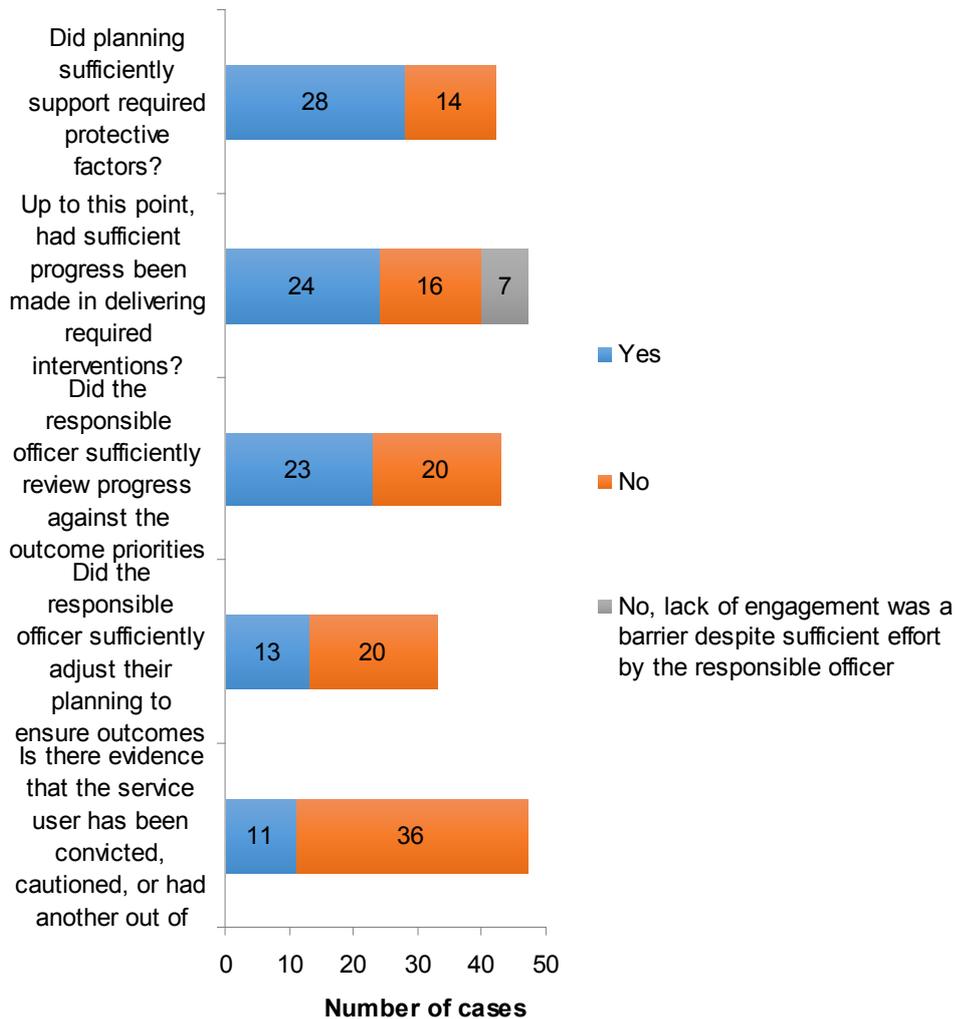
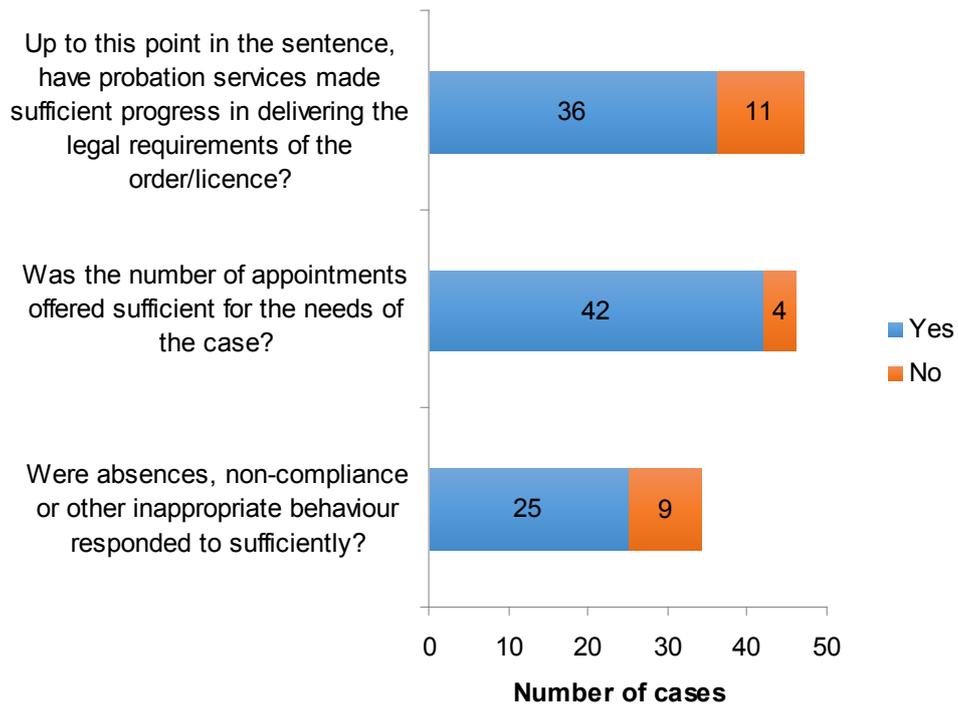


Figure 3.4 Abiding by the sentence



Appendix 4: Glossary

Accredited programme	A programme of work delivered to offenders in groups or individually through a requirement in a community order or a suspended sentence order, or part of a custodial sentence or a condition in a prison licence. Accredited programmes are accredited by the Correctional Services Accredited Panel as being effective in reducing the likelihood of reoffending
Allocation	The process by which a decision is made about whether an offender will be supervised by the NPS or a CRC
Active Risk Management System	Provides a framework for working with all male sexual offenders who are subject to statutory supervision. It aids the assessment of dynamic risk and protective factors (see Probation Instruction 15/2015 for more information)
BBR	Building Better Relationships: a nationally accredited groupwork programme designed to reduce reoffending by adult male perpetrators of intimate partner violence
Careers Wales	A Welsh Government careers information, advice and guidance service
Cluster	A grouping of offices. In Gwent, both the NPS and CRC currently have offices in Caerphilly, East Gwent (Pontypool), Ebbw Vale, and Newport
Communities First	A Welsh Government community focused tackling poverty programme
Control of violence and anger in impulsive drinkers	A nationally accredited series of programmes aimed at reducing reoffending primarily by young men; the different versions can be delivered as group-work or on a one-to-one basis
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company: 21 such companies were set up in June 2014, to manage most offenders who present a low or medium risk of serious harm
Drink Impaired Drivers Programme	A nationally accredited programme which aims to confront offenders with issues related to drinking and driving
E3	E3 stands for 'Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Excellence'. The E3 programme was created following the <i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i> programme in June 2014. The basic principle is to standardise NPS delivery, redesigning the NPS structure with six key areas of focus, one of which is victims' services
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects

Front office case manager	The local term used for front-line practitioners (responsible officers) delivering offender management
Indictable offences	These refer to triable either way or indictable only offences. Triable either way offences may be tried either at the Crown Court or at a magistrates' court. They include criminal damage where the value is £5,000 or greater; theft; burglary; and drink driving. Triable only on indictment and triable either way are frequently amalgamated to form indictable offences. Indictable only offences are the most serious breaches of the criminal law and must be tried at the Crown Court before a judge and jury. Indictable only offences include murder, manslaughter, rape and robbery
IOM	Integrated Offender Management: brings 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
In-Touch hub	In-Touch hubs are part of the Working Links operating model. They are intended to remove routine case administration roles from frontline staff and maximise offender-facing time for case managers. Those rated as low risk of harm are managed by the hub, mostly through telephone contact
LDU	Local delivery unit: an operational unit comprising an office or offices, generally coterminous with police basic command units and local authority structures
Local Safeguarding Children Board	Set up in each local authority (as a result of the <i>Children Act 2004</i>) to coordinate and make sure there is effectiveness of the multi-agency work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality
MAPPA	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: act as 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

MOSOVO	Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders. The accredited training course provides police Public Protection Unit practitioners with the skills and knowledge to enable them to identify and manage sex offenders, violent offenders and other dangerous offenders falling within the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the NPS and CRCs in England and Wales
NOMS	National Offender Management Service: the single agency responsible for both prisons and probation services. From April 2017, NOMS will be replaced by HM Prison and Probation Service
NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service which 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
OASys	Offender assessment system currently used in England and Wales by the NPS and CRCs to measure the risks and needs of offenders under supervision
Partners	Partners include statutory and non-statutory organisations, working with the offender, often through a partnership agreement with the NPS or CRC
Providers	Providers deliver a service or input commissioned by and provided under contract to the NPS or CRC. This includes the staff and services provided under the contract, even when they are integrated or located within the NPS or CRC
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 probation 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

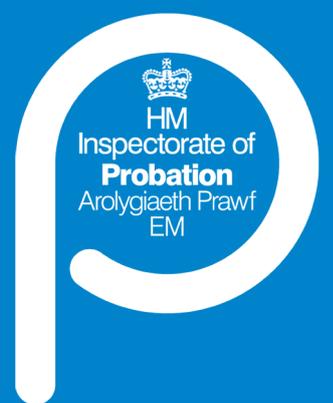
RAR	Rehabilitation activity requirement: From February 2015, when the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act</i> was implemented, courts can specify a number of RAR days within an order; it is for probation services to decide on the precise work to be done during the RAR days awarded
Rate card	A directory of services offered by the CRC for use with the NPS with their service users, detailing the price
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case
Summary offence	These offences are usually heard only by a magistrates' court. This group is dominated by motoring offences, for some of which fixed penalties can be issued, but also includes typically less serious offences such as common assault and criminal damage of up to £5,000
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 rehabilitation services delivered by CRCs, designed to help those sentenced to more than one day in prison to settle back into the community upon release.
<i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i>	The government's programme for how offenders are managed in England and Wales from June 2014
Unpaid Work	The court can include an unpaid work requirement as part of a community order. Offenders can be required to work for up to 300 hours on community projects under supervision. From February 2015, unpaid work has been delivered by CRCs
ViSOR	ViSOR is a national confidential database that supports MAPPAs. It facilitates the effective sharing of information and intelligence on violent and sexual offenders between the three MAPPAs Responsible Authority agencies (police, probation and prisons). ViSOR is no longer an acronym but is the formal name of the database
Victim liaison officer	Responsible for delivering services to victims in line with the NPS's statutory responsibilities
Women's Aid	A national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children

Appendix 5: Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who took part in this inspection; without their cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

We would like, in particular, to thank the senior managers and their personal/executive assistants for facilitating the inspection and making the necessary arrangements for the fieldwork weeks.

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