

Quality & Impact inspection

The effectiveness of probation work in Northamptonshire

An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation
April 2017

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Foreword

This is the first inspection of adult probation work undertaken by a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) owned by Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro. We report on probation services provided in Northamptonshire by the South East & Eastern division of the National Probation Service (NPS) and the CRC.

The quality of NPS work was reasonably good overall, but there are nevertheless issues for leaders to address. There are notable variations in the quality of work from office to office, and an ongoing and unnecessary tension in the division's relationship with the CRC which leaders must resolve, in the interests of service users in both the NPS and the CRC.


Sodexo has an ambitious and conceptually sound operating model for its CRCs. Designed to engage the service user fully and address their readiness to change, it adopts a strengths-based approach. It makes a great deal of sense.

Leaders are enthusiastic about the model, but regrettably it is nowhere near fully implemented in Northamptonshire or (we understand) elsewhere. The prioritisation tool and an impressive case assessment and planning tool central to the model are not yet in place, in large part because the long-awaited, essential strategic (IT) gateway that will allow for critical case data and information to flow is still not available.

Sodexo has implemented other aspects of the model on its understanding with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service that the gateway would be here long before now. With the benefit of hindsight, leaders may reflect on whether part-implementation has served the organisation well, albeit some changes were no doubt necessary for pressing financial reasons. Certainly it has been problematic for staff and service users. Changes to the estate have been testing, staffing levels have oscillated, available interventions are under-used, and staff are now unclear about key processes. What is more, committed but stretched local leaders do not have a good enough grasp of, and hold on the quality of work actually being delivered.

We acknowledge that we have looked at work completed during a significant time of transformation for the CRC. We found, however, that the work of the CRC was simply not good enough. There was too little evidence of effective work to reduce reoffending and protect the public, and an increased risk that service users would not fulfil the requirements of their sentence.

We understand the strategic (IT) gateway is at the validation stage. The sooner it is implemented and the CRC's financial situation is stabilised and made certain, the better. Only then will we see whether Sodexo and its local leaders, managers and staff can apply this innovative operating model well, and really deliver.



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 Wales ¹
8,142	The number of offenders supervised by the Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire (BeNCH) CRC ¹
14,936	The number of offenders supervised by the South East & Eastern division of the NPS ¹
38%	The proportion of BeNCH CRC cases which relate to a custodial sentence (pre or post-release supervision) ¹ . The proportion for all England and Wales CRCs was 40%
61%	The proportion of offenders who were recorded as having successfully completed their period of licence or post-sentence supervision with the CRC following release from custody ² . The performance figure for all England and Wales was 75%, against a target of 65%
936	The number of MAPPA eligible offenders managed by the NPS in Northamptonshire ³
6 (of 21)	The number of CRCs owned by Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro

1 Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 26 January 2017, 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 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 Northamptonshire in September and October 2013, when such services were provided by one organisation, the Northamptonshire Probation Trust. Direct comparisons over time cannot be made, as we have since developed our inspection methodology, and in any event probation workloads and work types differed in 2013 (see Chapter 2). The outcomes from our 2013 inspection are summarised in Appendix 3.

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

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was poor.

The CRC was not sufficiently focused on public protection. Too many cases were assigned to staff without the skills and support needed to investigate, recognise and respond effectively to risk of harm. This undoubtedly affected the quality of information provided to, and focus of work by, partner agencies. Too little work was being delivered, for instance to reduce the likelihood of domestic abuse, and there were shortcomings in the consistency and effectiveness of joint working with the police and children's social care services, leaving victims and their children more vulnerable than necessary.

There was a lack of leadership, oversight and quality assurance for public protection work. Responsible officers were confused about the guidance available and how to access it, and unsure of the range of interventions available to help them manage risk of harm.

NPS effectiveness

Generally, the quality of work was good.

National policies and procedures were promoted at senior management level and were being followed. Responsible officers made good decisions about how to address the risk of harm posed by individuals. We were pleased to see examples of effective joint working with the police.

There were inconsistencies in the quantity, timeliness and quality of interventions delivered, however. There were also gaps in partnership working, especially with regard to safeguarding children. As a result, some service users completed their sentences without having fulfilled all requirements.

The CRC and NPS working together

There were sufficient links between the CRC's administrative hub and the NPS courts team to make sure information from court was recorded and available to CRC responsible officers. There were, however, ongoing issues relating to the quality

of information passed from the NPS to the CRC immediately after sentence which were yet to be resolved. This affected the CRC's ability to assign cases effectively to responsible officers and so impacted on the overall quality of work to manage risk of harm.

Both organisations had improved their recall processes. They were now working effectively.

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was poor.

Responsible officers did too little to understand the key factors linked to service users' offending behaviour. This led to limited sentence planning. There was greater focus on meeting sentence planning targets than meaningfully engaging with service users to get the plan right. Progress was slow and in many cases there were delays in delivering the interventions service users needed to support their desistance from offending.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of work was acceptable.

Initial assessments and plans reflected the needs of the case and represented the views and aspirations of service users. Individuals were making sufficient progress in many key areas related to their offending. There was, however, a lack of consistency in the type of work being delivered, and limited focus on tackling substance misuse, or addressing poor lifestyle choices.

The CRC and NPS working together

Access to accredited programmes had been constrained by staffing shortages in the CRC's programmes team. Access to three central programmes (RESOLVE, Thinking Skills and Building Better Relationships) was restricted, leaving service users unable to fulfil the requirements of their sentences and without the benefit of suitable interventions.

The NPS was not routinely using interventions available from the CRC. Both the NPS and CRC acknowledged the need to improve communication relating to CRC interventions, but meetings between them had not addressed the issues effectively. Liaison arrangements between the CRC's Chief Executive Officer and NPS's Deputy Director (South East & Eastern) had recently been strengthened, to drive improvement.

CRC effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was unsatisfactory, although there were examples of innovative practice to encourage service users to comply with their sentences.

Some responsible officers had an excellent rapport with service users, and were taking account of their individual needs and striving to remove barriers to engagement. Others had no relationship with them. This is quite at odds with the CRC's operating model intentions, and in a number of cases it was uncertain whether the CRC would deliver the legal requirements of the sentence.

The CRC's ability to influence change was limited by, in a number of cases, the length of time between appointments and the organisation's failure to initiate breach proceedings. As such, the court was not always aware that service users were not complying with their sentences and, therefore, was not able to take action to address this.

NPS effectiveness

Overall, the quality of work was acceptable, but there was room for improvement, particularly in relation to responses to non-compliance.

Responsible officers engaged well with service users, taking account of their individual needs and removing barriers to engagement. As is usual for NPS cases, a large proportion of service users were reluctant to comply with their sentences, however, and this inevitably inhibited progress and led to non-compliance. The NPS did not always take suitable action to address non-attendance, non-compliance and other inappropriate behaviours and was sometimes slow to take cases back to court. This is unusual compared with other NPS divisions recently inspected.

The CRC and NPS working together

Relationships were strained at an operational level between the CRC and NPS. Breach procedures had become complex with the CRC's hub central to the administration of processes. This left some practitioners confused about roles and responsibilities as well as the process.

Managers had worked hard to develop systems that provided for the effective flow of information between the two organisations. Although they were finding it difficult to meet timeliness targets consistently, the quality of breach applications had improved and rejections on the basis of quality were now historically low.

Recommendations

The Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service should:

1. regularly provide up to date information about CRC interventions and programmes to sentencers and all responsible officers
2. work together more effectively to give all service users timely access to appropriate interventions, including Through the Gate services.

The Community Rehabilitation Company should:

3. work with operational partners to make sure that monitoring of services provided by operational partners includes a focus on quantity and quality of service provision
4. implement effective workforce management so that senior probation officers have the capacity to oversee practice effectively, responsible officers have access to and use guidance available, and individual officers manage cases appropriate to their skills and knowledge
5. make sure that there is sufficient contact with service users, that interventions are delivered as appropriate, and non-compliance is addressed effectively
6. improve the cohesion of services expedited by the administrative hub and those delivered in the field in order provide a seamless, more effective service.

The National Probation Service should:

7. improve the quality of pre-sentence reports and of information supplied on individual cases from court staff to CRC colleagues at the point of allocation
8. make sure work with service users is consistently of good quality and deal with non-compliance promptly and effectively.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

9. implement the Strategic Partner Gateway at the first opportunity to support the implementation of new CRC operating models.

2. The arrangements for delivering probation services in Northamptonshire

- the national context
- the local context
- organisational arrangements

National context

In 2014, the UK government extended probation supervision for the first time to offenders released from prison sentences of under 12 months (over 40,000 people each year⁴). Now, over 260,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually⁵. 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 35 self-governing Probation Trusts working under the direction of the National Offender Management Service (now known as Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)). They are now provided in a mixed economy model. The government wished to promote innovation in probation services, and in June 2014, under the *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme, probation services in England and Wales 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.

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). CRCs supervise most other offenders presenting low and medium risk of harm, a considerable proportion of whom will have committed domestic abuse.

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 and 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 system 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 underdeveloped across England and Wales.

4 Figures relate to releases from determinate sentences of less than 12 months during 2015 (excluding 15-17 year olds). Source: Offender Management Statistics, Ministry of Justice, October 2016.

5 Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 26 January 2017, Ministry of Justice.

The overall volume of NPS work has risen noticeably in the last year, while staffing levels have risen marginally. The CRC caseload has risen⁶. The balance of sentencing, however, has changed recently. Payment under contract to the CRC reflects the weight of work attributed to sentence type and current sentencing trends have reduced the amount of payment CRCs receive for their total caseloads. The new arrangements provide opportunities to innovate and develop new systems, but payment shortfalls have led to financial constraints and uncertainty for CRCs, and reluctance to commit to longer-term investment or settled supply chains.

Anticipated income has not materialised in part because of falling conviction rates⁷ and changes to sentencing. The use of suspended sentences has increased, while community sentences have generally declined⁸. 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 2015⁹.

Local context

Here we report on probation services delivered in Northamptonshire by the Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire (BeNCH) CRC and the NPS South East & Eastern division. Northamptonshire has one county council and seven local authorities: the borough councils of Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough, and the district councils of Daventry, East Northamptonshire and South Northamptonshire. The inspected area is coterminous with the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) area.

We provide demographic data and information about the area in Appendix 2. Northamptonshire is a diverse county in the east midlands. Northampton, fairly central to the county, has the largest population in the county. Fewer black and minority ethnic residents live in the county than is average for England and Wales, with the highest density living in Northampton. Although the nature of employment has changed, employment rates are relatively high and deprivation levels lower than the England average. In a county with a mixture of towns and rural areas, however, and where public transport is limited, unemployment rates vary.

Across Northamptonshire, levels of reoffending and the average number of previous offences committed by those who have been proven to have reoffended are lower than the average for England and Wales.

The CRC is owned by Sodexo Justice Services, part of a large multinational private

6 Across the six Sodexo-owned CRCs, about 29,000 offenders are supervised at any one time: this includes about 6,200 in custody and 22,800 in the community. Source: *Changing Lives for the Better*, Sodexo, February 2017.

7 The total number of individuals sentenced by the courts in England & Wales has fallen from 1.46m in 2006 to 1.25m in 2016.

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

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

company with a wide range of commercial interests. In delivering probation services, it works in partnership with a well-known charity, Nacro. With contracts to deliver probation services across six CRCs¹⁰, it is the third largest owning company in the country by contract value, and has 19% of the market share¹¹. Sodexo also runs 4 of the 14 private prisons in England and Wales, with all 4 located in England¹².

End-state targets are now expected to be met for three contract performance targets, but the CRC is meeting only one of them. The latest monitoring reports¹³ for all contract performance measures show it performing poorly overall when compared to other CRCs. In contrast, the NPS South East & Eastern division has mixed performance against national targets and when compared to other divisions. It is performing above the national target on 6 of the 11 published measures for which data was available and at or above the national average on 4 of those measures.

Organisational arrangements in the CRC

Governance

Two Sodexo senior staff (known as Chief Executive Officers) each have oversight of a region - one in the north and one in the south of England - with each responsible for three CRCs, and working to the Director of Operations (Community) in Sodexo Justice Services. Corporate support services are provided by colleagues based in London and Salford and supplemented by regional CRC personnel covering human resources, finance, business development and communications.

Each individual CRC is led by a Director with overall responsibility for business management and performance, supported by deputy directors. The four deputy directors in BeNCH CRC are each responsible for services in nominated counties (see Figure 1.1) and each also carries an operational lead across the CRC on specific topics, such as unpaid work. BeNCH's headquarters is based in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, and is co-located with its administrative hub.

Sodexo and BeNCH priorities are influenced mainly by the need to meet the key CRC contract performance targets. The relationship between the local HMPPS's contract managers and BeNCH is yet to fully mature, with both wishing to achieve the best outcomes, but taking different perspectives. The CRC contract was established within a tight framework and this has presented a challenge for contract managers and CRC leaders to manage effectively. Both the CRC and contract managers have gone through organisational upheaval relating to regionalisation. Although these changes should, over time, improve the standardisation of practice, this has yet to settle down.

10 The six CRCs owned by Sodexo are: BeNCH; Cumbria & Lancashire; Essex; Norfolk & Suffolk; Northumbria; and South Yorkshire.

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

12 Private prisons run by Sodexo are: HMP Bronzefield; HMP/YOI Forest Bank; HMP Peterborough; and HMP Northumberland. Source: MoJ website, 30 January 2017.

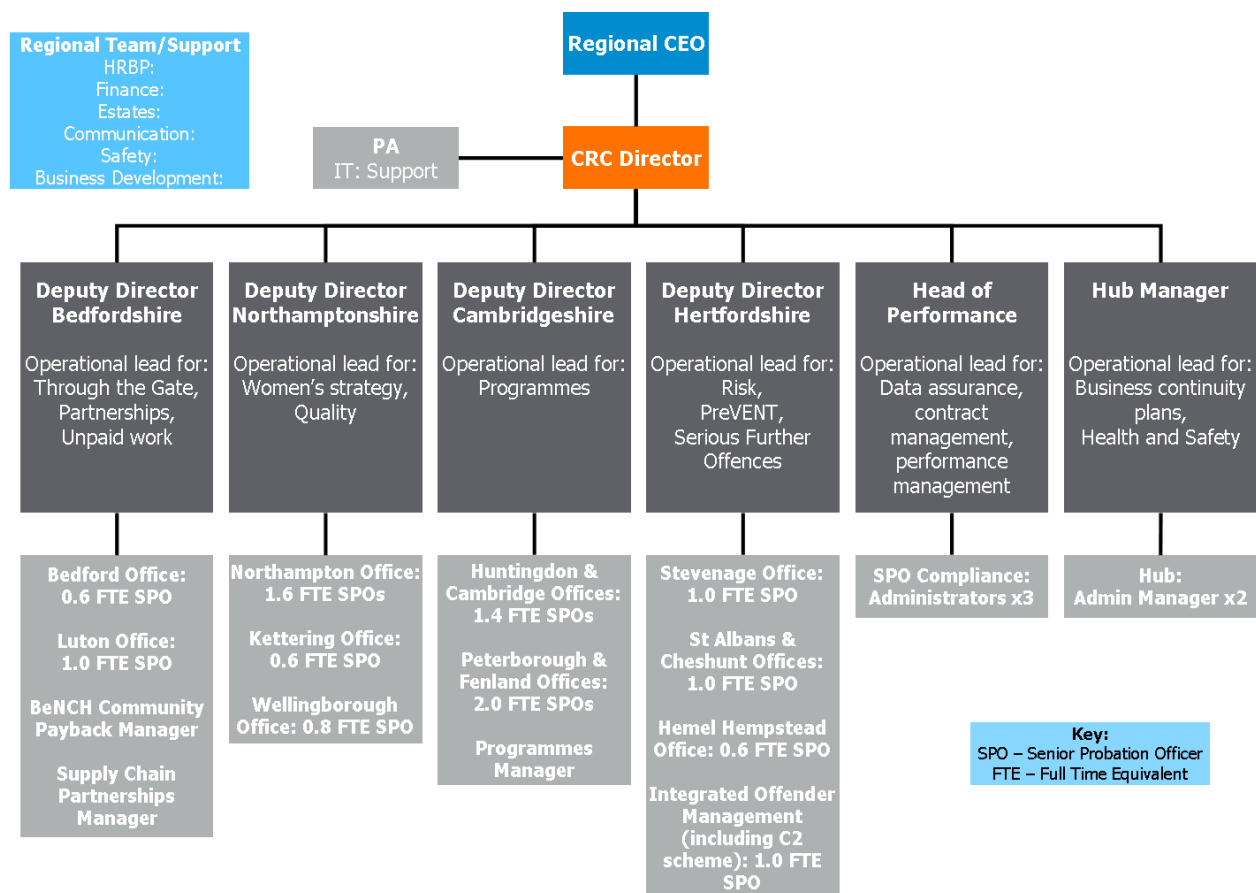
13 Community Performance Quarterly Management Information release, Ministry of Justice July–September 2016.

There is an evident commitment from senior leaders to improve the quality of outcomes for service users. So, for example, Sodexo Justice Services is in the process of developing good practice standards and taking steps to make sure the interventions it offers maximise opportunities to reduce reoffending consistently across its CRCs.

Work at a local level is less systematic. In March 2016, BeNCH produced a document entitled 'Improving Responsible Officer Quality' with a focus on the SEEDS approach (Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision). It remains aspirational, however, rather than fully implemented or embedded. More immediately, BeNCH leaders use quality assurance sampling to understand reasons for dips in performance and this informs improvement plans submitted to HMPPS. These plans, however, are at BeNCH level, and local leaders state they tend to be task rather than quality-orientated.

Governance arrangements include regular meetings at all levels, with each providing for the exchange of information relating to areas of performance, risk and good practice. Managers in Northamptonshire local delivery unit (LDU) – the area we were inspecting - are well-attuned to the CRC's performance on contractual measures but are less cognisant of the quality of practice for individual service users.

Figure 1.1: BeNCH CRC Leadership Team (November 2016)



Information source: BeNCH CRC

The operating model

Sodexo's planned operating model was developed with support from Leicester University. It takes into account robust reducing reoffending research on the need to develop strong and meaningful relationships, and the importance of taking a holistic approach to developing a positive self-identity and to tackling practical issues with the support of the local community. The model is to be rolled out across each of its six CRCs, with implementation led by local leadership teams. It has several innovative features, including a prioritisation model and a planning and assessment tool known as Justice Star.

In brief, each CRC is to categorise each new service user using the prioritisation model, as shown in Figure 1.2. Once categorised, service users are to work with responsible officers to agree together the service user's strengths and needs, and the work they need to do to achieve their goals using Justice Star. Service users can be recategorised, for example after a significant event, such as a breach.

Figure 1.2: Sodexo's 'Changing lives for the better'¹⁴, description of the focus and nature of work expected with categories of service users:

GREEN	YELLOW	RED	BLUE
<p>This group is assessed as low risk of harm, with a low risk of reoffending - research shows that over engagement with this cohort can be counter productive.</p>	<p>This is a broad group of offenders who are assessed as low risk of harm with a high risk of reoffending OR medium risk of harm with a low risk of reoffending, with low motivation to change.</p>	<p>This group is assessed as close to change and will be offered the most intensive package of support.</p>	<p>This group is not close to change and represents the greatest risk to the public, so work will focus on protecting the public through use of monitoring, surveillance and control.</p>
<p>A minimum offer of 12 hours will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours New Directions meeting • 10 hours contact – this may include 1-1 sessions, group-work delivered by the CRC or operational partner • Signposting to community agencies • Supplemented by kiosk reporting sessions as required until completion of Order 	<p>A minimum offer of 24 hours will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours at the New Directions Meeting • 22 hours contact – this may include a combination of 1-1 sessions, group-work, family/low intensity mentoring and/or Community Integration Service support • Supplemented by kiosk reporting sessions as required until completion of Order 	<p>A minimum offer of 35 hours will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours at the New Directions meeting • 33 hours of face to face contact including a combination of 1-1 sessions with CRC practitioner, group-work, high intensity mentoring and Community Integration Service support • Supplemented by kiosk reporting sessions as required until completion of Order 	<p>A minimum offer of 35 hours will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours at the New Directions meeting • 33 hours of face to face contact including a combination of 1-1 sessions with CRC practitioner, group-work, family/low intensity mentoring and Community Integration Service support • Supplemented by kiosk reporting sessions as required until completion of Order

A step-down process provides for lighter-touch case management at a reporting centre towards the end of sentence. Reporting centres are based in each office and facilitated by dedicated probation services officers (PSOs). The original responsible officer retains responsibility for the case during this time and service users can be referred back to them for more intensive management as the need arises. The model includes supplementary reporting using biometric technology.

Finally, each CRC has a central administrative hub, to act as the single point of contact for all stakeholders and to support or deliver key functions such as assignment of cases, making supervision appointments, setting up service user

¹⁴ *Changing lives for the better. Working in partnership to reduce reoffending and improve communities*: Sodexo, 2016.

attendance on intervention programmes, liaison with partner agencies and enforcement action.

The operating model in practice

In Northamptonshire, the model is not fully implemented and is not working at all as intended. Implementation of most key tenets of the operating model had faltered: we found little progress since we inspected Bedfordshire LDU informally in February and March 2016, when piloting our inspection methodology. The main stumbling block is that the all-important planned new IT systems have not been implemented yet, and the organisation has no clear interim operating model.

The administrative hubs were up and running, but some processes remain under development. Cases that would have been assessed as green, for management by the hub, were still being managed locally by responsible officers, keeping their caseloads high. The planned biometric technology (finger-print recognition) had not been implemented. Like others, BeNCH was still waiting for the long promised national Strategic Partner Gateway to enable the secure flow of information between HMPPS and the CRC. Without the prerequisite IT systems, the CRC was unable to realise the full benefits of having most of its case administration managed by the hub or of introducing 'Closeness to Change' or Justice Star, the new practice management tools on which the new case prioritisation model relied.

On the face of it, Sodexo's plan was a sound one. The company had anticipated implementing new IT systems by autumn 2015. Changes to the estate would follow, and a workforce redundancy programme was timed to meet the anticipated efficiency savings to be brought about by new working practices. A 12 month redundancy programme was introduced in the spring of 2015, but without new IT systems, the organisation and its staff were left in limbo with some staff uncertain about interim or longer-term processes and responsibilities.

This is an ambitious change programme, and it is difficult to understand why Sodexo gave so little attention to contingency planning, and went ahead with large-scale redundancies, given the clear dependencies and inherent risks. What is more, interim operating arrangements are now patchy, and unclear to many staff. The CRC had held workshops to introduce the new operating model and case management tools to staff but in reality, responsible officers were unable to gauge how far the model had been implemented, and which of any available new tools they should be using.

Managers in Northamptonshire described their focus now as crisis management and contractual targets, with little time to concentrate on the quality of practice and outcomes.

The Hub

BeNCH had involved staff of all levels in the design and implementation of its administrative hub, including agreeing and piloting processes with their input. Managers communicated proactively with practitioners, briefing them about changes in processes as these developed. Responsible officers, however, were still confused about processes and responsibilities in key areas such as enforcement.

There was a tension in the relationship between the hub and local practitioners, with the latter describing the hub as *“the elephant in the room”*.

More than one local practitioner worried that *“hub systems are automated and service users are not”* and *“the hub does not deal with the complexity of the lives of our service users”*.

Hub teams were arranged around processes, and this added work for the responsible officer and had an impact on the service user’s experience. For example, a service user who failed to attend an appointment would receive two letters, one from the enforcement team and one from the appointments team.

Without the anticipated new IT systems, many hub processes depended on the correct use of the current case management system, nDelius. This had a substantial, negative impact on the smooth running of administrative processes. Responsible officers were improving their use of nDelius, but nevertheless there were still variations in their practice. Moreover, nDelius is unreliable, with system updates and failures making it periodically unavailable to staff.

Regrettably, delays in implementing key aspects of the operating model had led to a perhaps avoidable disconnect and tension between the hub and the field. A number of seemingly trivial but exasperating issues were affecting practitioners, and inhibiting staff confidence in BeNCH systems. So for example, practitioners must scan completed induction packs through the IT network to the hub when they do not always have access to the necessary equipment, and the provision of evidence to accept a service user absence is presented locally but needed centrally.

Wider stakeholder confidence in the CRC was adversely affected by difficulties in communicating with the hub. This led to frustration for Northamptonshire staff, operational partners, service users and the NPS. As a consequence, CRC responsible officers circumvented the BeNCH communications model and provided their direct contact details.

Leadership and management

The CEO for Sodexo’s southern region took up post at the end of May 2016.

Described by his management colleagues as a *“breath of fresh air”*, the new CEO has a good overarching understanding of his organisation and an evident commitment to driving improvement. Despite the breadth of his remit, he recognises the importance of staff engagement, communications, and equality and inclusion, and kept these high on his agenda.

The ‘CEO Huddle’, a staff newsletter issued weekly across Sodexo’s southern region, provides a lively and staff-centred overview of practice and priorities. The profile of support networks has also been raised by the new CEO and a proactive staff recognition programme introduced. By March 2017, all BeNCH managers will have attended a management behaviour training course. A new vocational qualification is also about to be introduced for selected probation services officers.

Leadership at an operational level is less decisive. Deputy directors, essential for the smooth translation of strategy into practice appear stretched. As elsewhere, the role of senior probation officers (SPOs) has evolved to include the management of corporate tasks such as workforce resourcing. Competing priorities and volume of work limit the time SPOs have to provide sufficient oversight of case management quality. Variability in the effectiveness of leadership across the LDU was reflected in the quality of practice but we were pleased to see that the CRC had taken recent measures to try and improve consistency across offices.

Available services and involvement of the third sector

The CRC offers a range of services and interventions to meet rehabilitation activity requirements (RAR) and offending behaviour programme requirements either directly or through their supply chain. Local managers in Northamptonshire are rightly proud of the number of operational partners they have and the extent of services on offer.

The CRC offers an in-house, education, training and employment (ETE) service and two important accredited programmes, Building Better Relationships (BBR) and the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP). The programme RESOLVE had been part of the suite of accredited programmes but was no longer accepting referrals at the time of inspection. The CRC also works in partnership with Substance 2 Solutions to support service users with substance misuse and alcohol issues. Service users can also access, through the CRC's operational partners, mentoring, family support, and a number of relevant offending behaviour interventions. The CRC had maintained its relationship with C2C Social Action which had had strong links with the former probation trust. It had also commissioned the services of Bold Moves, Ormiston Families, Sova, and Nacro in order to deliver a range of interventions not available previously. This included specialist services, for example to support armed services veterans. The CRC, however, had yet to complete a needs assessment for Northamptonshire LDU, to match the needs of stakeholders with the services on offer, and address any deficits. Nonetheless, the CRC was responsive when new needs were identified. For instance, they had introduced family support and responded to responsible officer feedback (supported by nDelius data) to commission provision for women who commit violent offences.

There was an expectation that both CRC and NPS responsible officers would commission their interventions from the operational partners where appropriate. The operational partners knew each other well and this provided for a strong sense of teamwork and mutual support, enhanced by regular meetings of the operational partnership forum. Operational partners had been involved in devising the CRC's interventions and 'rate card' brochures and felt they had a good relationship with BeNCH's responsible officers.

There were a number of rubbing points, however, between the operational partners and the CRC. These included the delays in providing IT support; a lower rate of referrals than expected for some and too many un-prioritised referrals for others; difficulties in communicating through the hub; and the CRC's focus on targets rather than on quality of provision and outcomes.

Overall, the use of interventions offered by the CRC's operational partners was less than BeNCH expected. Administrative problems were partially responsible for

this. There were long waiting lists, however, for some courses and others had been cancelled. This damaged the reputation of services provided by operational partners and reduced the motivation of responsible officers in both the CRC and NPS to make referrals to them. The NPS advised that the lack of information about the content and evidence base for some interventions deters them further. The use of operational partners, however, has been shown as incrementally increasing by staff in the CRC.

Services for women

The Deputy Director for Northamptonshire LDU is BeNCH's lead manager for women's services. BeNCH's women's strategy, issued in April 2016, sets out a range of helpful actions to support effective service provision. Improving services across the BeNCH area will enhance provision in Northamptonshire. There was no specific needs-led plan for this LDU, however, and no evidence that local provision reflected the views of local stakeholders including service users.

Services for women were provided in the most part by C2C Social Action in Northampton. The C2C building comprised two discrete areas. The popular and well-respected commercial enterprise, the Good Loaf, was 'front of house'. This comprised a kitchen making artisan breads for purchase by local companies and a café, where individuals and groups convened for light refreshments, some to facilitate their business meetings. Behind a secure door, in a women-only environment, service users could join a range of groups, learn basic skills, and access support and mentoring.

Women service users could complete their unpaid work requirements and RARs at the Good Loaf, learning skills in a group setting, or on an individual basis in the women-only area. Some went on to paid employment there. All women were automatically assigned to female responsible officers and could be seen at their first appointment and induction in a female-only setting in the C2C building.

Women who lived outside Northampton were offered outreach support services. Unpaid work options for women, however, were limited to the Good Loaf in Northampton (with support for public transport fares). Other placements were available in Wellingborough and Corby but these were in mixed gender working parties. One woman working at the Good Loaf advised:

"I can't take public transport and so travel by taxi, which I have to pay for myself. I was offered work in Wellingborough but preferred to come here... I was offered work with a mixed group, men and women, cutting down trees..."

Resettlement services

The main resettlement prison for Northamptonshire is HMP Bedford, but BeNCH also covers HMP The Mount, HMP Woodhill, HMP Peterborough (male inmates) and relevant prisoners in HMP Peterborough (female inmates). The CRC acknowledged that it is struggling to fulfil its Through the Gate contractual requirements, lacking

the capacity to do so. The CRC had commissioned Nacro to help prisoners find accommodation on their release from custody, but those services were provided by a single worker with neither the time, nor access to sufficient housing, to meet their needs.

Staffing and caseloads

In the main we found the workforce buoyant, evidently committed to the work and hoping to achieve the best for service users and the public. Staff attendance was good and the absence rate was lower than the overall rate for BeNCH. In the 12 months leading to November 2016, the Northamptonshire LDU had lost a total of 263 days to sickness; an average of 8 days' work per staff member¹⁵.

Many in the field teams welcomed the lack of corporate restraints in the CRC, and looked forward to the freedoms that working there would bring in the future. Nevertheless, after a lengthy period of change and uncertainty, they lacked faith that the new operating model would work well for them or meet the needs of service users effectively. They felt undermined by the hub, distanced from staff there, and that the service was now fragmented and made for a measure of duplication of work.

Staff and some managers were unaware that there was a workload management tool, accessible to all staff. The tool assumed, however, that the operating model had been fully implemented – with the hub taking some of the burden of the caseload – when in practice responsible officers were required to hold onto cases destined for the hub.

Local data¹⁵ suggested that average individual caseloads had risen from 42 in 2014 to 74 in January 2016, decreasing to 46 by January 2017. This pattern fits with the programme of redundancy and subsequent recruitment that had taken place. An individual caseload of 50 cases or so would not be unusual or necessarily unmanageable, but the data is incomplete. In any event, responsible officers felt their workloads were too high and that new cases were assigned to them despite the particular demands of the cases they already had. With the exception of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) role, caseloads were not adjusted to reflect the complexity of specialist work and this deterred responsible officers from volunteering for these roles.

The LDU had lost experienced staff, either to the strong local labour market or through redundancy. It has since supplemented permanent staff with temporary staff. In December 2016 (shortly before our inspection) about one-quarter of its office-based responsible officers were agency staff, and some of them did not stay long. This is clearly unsatisfactory, albeit senior managers told us that reliance on agency staff has since reduced.

The LDU had maintained its balance between probation officer (PO) and probation services officer grades despite these difficulties.

¹⁵ Data provided by BeNCH CRC.

Training and development

Training for staff is available and responsible officers generally know about the training on offer. Most of it is, however, offered at Stevenage, which is not readily accessible to all. Most indicated that they only attended training when told to by managers, preferring to prioritise their case management.

The CRC had trained all staff on its new operating model, case management tool and expected practice, with an expectation that all staff should understand all that it entailed. In reality, many were unsure how much of the model was actually implemented and confused about lines of responsibility and current procedures, especially those relating to the hub.

Senior managers found this confusion hard to understand, particularly as policies and procedures were available on BeNCH's intranet, but responsible officers working in the neighbourhood centres explained that they had limited access to the intranet. They relied on a Wi-Fi connection that did not always work effectively. Some understood that there was no material available, and others knew only about legacy policies and guidance that might no longer be extant. Several felt they had not benefited from recent training events. As a result, most were not making use of the CRC's practice tools, such as those designed to engage service users in sentence planning.

Working environment

The CRC had planned for Northampton to be the main office base, with responsible officers working remotely across the community with their service users. Managers were, however, quick to realise and address the continuing need for bases in both Kettering and Wellingborough, which now both offer dedicated neighbourhood centres.

In Kettering, responsible officers work from an allocated space in Kettering Borough Council's Municipal Offices. This provides easy access to facilities such as advice on housing, finance and employment. A decision had been made by the CRC in May 2016 to remain co-located with the NPS in the Wellingborough office. Managers, however, acknowledge that staff there had lived with a period of uncertainty that had been difficult for them, and facilities at this office, for instance access to printers and reliable IT, were far from adequate. We were pleased to note that improvement work at Wellingborough was imminent and staff were soon to have better access to IT systems.

When we last visited the CRC (during a pilot inspection in February and March 2016) we noted a lack of privacy for service users attending the Luton and Bedford offices. We were disappointed to find a similar arrangement in the new Northampton CRC office. The entrance to the office space opens immediately onto a small service user area. This included the reception desk, five exposed interview booths and a waiting area comprising a corridor lined with fixed seats and an array of helpful and accessible information about available services (Figure 1.3). A fixed but partial screen separated the service user booths from the open plan staff office, and conversations could be overheard (Figure 1.4). Three private rooms were in the vicinity for responsible officers to use, but these were often unavailable.

While a small number of service users told us they found the layout welcoming and unthreatening, the majority of staff and service users expressed concern about security, well-being and the lack of privacy. Responsible officers told us this impeded progress of some individuals who refused to undertake work of a personal nature in the booths. We understood that service users had had easy access to a comments book, but this was no longer in sight.

Security was a key concern. Areas used by service users were covered by CCTV which was monitored by the receptionist, who had sole responsibility for watching the cameras. Staff were worried about the lack of alarms in the private rooms, but more importantly about the lack of privacy in their open plan office. They felt unable to discuss cases with colleagues and cited examples where service users had heard them talking about offences, victims and other service users. They felt the current arrangement also deterred them from using 'Language Line' (for translation purposes) as often as they should.

We understand that plans to introduce measures to enhance privacy have been delayed but are now imminent.

Figure 1.3: Photograph of the service user waiting area in the CRC's Northampton office



Figure 1.4: Photograph of a booth where Probation staff meet with services users to complete interviews and work to address offending behaviour in the CRC's Northampton office



Quality assurance

Quality assurance had focused on meeting contractual targets, with SPOs expected to participate in checks guided by dashboard performance¹⁶, some of which were large-scale. A new BeNCH quality and compliance team, however, had recently been set up to expand the focus to the quality of practice, and it was considering the appropriate tools to measure quality. At the time of inspection, there was no system embedded for checking the quality of practice on a regular basis.

Responsible officers found their SPOs to be accessible and that they provided helpful advice on practice, and we saw this in practice during our inspection. The lack of routine management oversight, however, even in cases involving child safeguarding issues, meant that practice shortcomings were not being identified and addressed often or well enough.

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

¹⁶ A performance dashboard is a summary of performance against key performance indicators, normally accessed via the internet or intranet and linked to a database, automatically updating as new data is added.

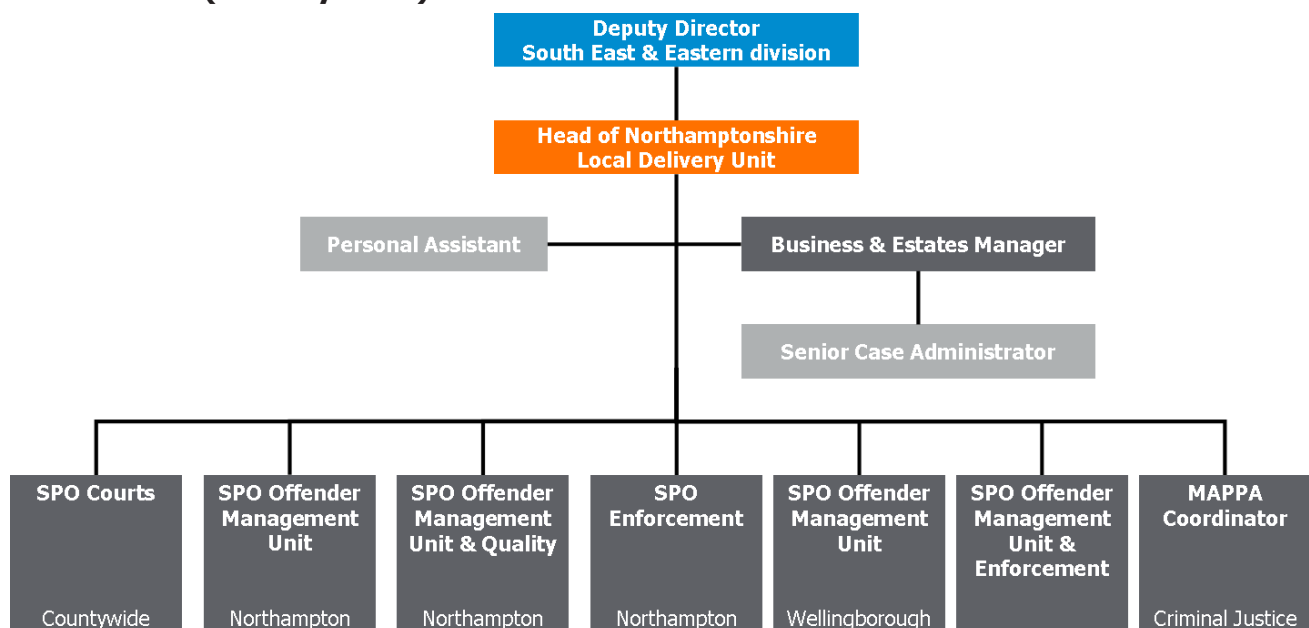
predominantly from the former Probation Trusts. The NPS is part-way through an ambitious programme (known as E3¹⁷) to standardise processes nationally.

Leadership and management

There was a strong sense of leadership at the top of the LDU, with enthusiasm for the E3 agenda and the benefits of having corporate values. Resources were shared across the division, when necessary. A mixture of events and regular meetings helped to spread this enthusiasm and provide updates to senior probation staff. Additionally, the LDU had its own business plan with priorities at a local level, and monitored progress against them. The SPOs formed a knowledgeable and authoritative team, working together to identify and address variations in the quality of management, structures and services.

Despite these apparent strengths, results from the most recent national offender survey¹⁸ show that only 69% of service users were satisfied with the services provided by the NPS in Northamptonshire; this was lower than the average for the division (of 79.5%) and lower than that of CRC service users (of 84%).

Figure 1.5: South East & Eastern NPS – Northamptonshire LDU Leadership Team (January 2017)



Staffing and caseloads

The Northamptonshire LDU had been lean in terms of staffing from the outset of *Transforming Rehabilitation* and was still carrying a number of vacancies, mostly at PSO level. Caseloads had been rising steadily and responsible officers each

¹⁷ NPS E3 Operating Model, 2016 (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Excellence).

¹⁸ These results are extracted from the November 2016 NOMS offender management survey facilitated on an annual basis by both CRCs and the NPS.

now managed an average of 40 cases¹⁹, more than we have found in recent NPS inspections elsewhere.

The LDU lead took a proactive approach to staff resourcing, asking responsible officers to move offices on a temporary and voluntary basis in order to manage absence at other offices and provide a degree of continuity for service users. Additionally, court staff worked on a peripatetic basis so as to strengthen the skills mix and resilience of the team.

Responsible officers were encouraged to complete online training (in line with the E3 approach) and, where access was difficult in offices, were given time to complete this at home.

Staff felt their workloads were manageable and they had undertaken enough training to meet the needs of their cases. They advised that their managers encouraged a fair *“balance between reflection and accountability”*, were accessible and offered helpful management oversight of their work. We understand that, as with the CRC, there had been variability between offices in the quality of leadership, leading to work to improve the consistency and quality of management across the LDU.

Managers were working hard to invest in their staff and responsible officers appreciated this and the support provided both on a professional and personal level by them and by the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway team. Supported by a specialist link worker with both a probation and mental health background, the team helped responsible officers to assess and address the emotional well-being and mental health needs in their cases, and identify how best to manage the more challenging offenders within their cohort.

Available services

The NPS could access the range of CRC commissioned services supplied by operational partners, but rarely did so. We were advised by responsible officers and their managers that responsible officers distrusted the content of the interventions, and instead identified community resources which were free to use. Among these was Circles of Support and Accountability. Set up to help those who had committed sexual offences integrate into the community, this had the potential to make a significant and helpful contribution to public protection. It was embraced by the NPS but driven by an enthusiastic and committed coordinator, who had good links with the Northamptonshire MAPPA team, and not by a strategic approach to managing sexual offending. The NPS also made use of C2C's social action project (the Good Loaf) for their female offenders, which responsible officers trusted.

The NPS found the lack of reliable Through the Gate services frustrating and had taken constructive action to introduce two dedicated resettlement PSO roles: one to signpost to accommodation and the other to ETE. While this does not sit comfortably with the *Transforming Rehabilitation* model, we understood the motivation for this move.

Working environment

19 Data on caseload was provided by the NPS Northamptonshire LDU.

The NPS worked with service users in three offices in Northamptonshire. The largest and busiest was Northampton. This offered acceptable accommodation. Service users were provided with an enclosed and functional waiting room. Private interview rooms were available; most were slightly isolated but the room for working with service users who posed the greatest risk of harm had two exits and was situated close to reception staff. The departure of the CRC from the second floor had left large empty spaces and there was now a noticeable division between NPS management, which remained on the third floor, and their colleagues in the open plan office on the first floor.

At the time of our inspection, the NPS also had office bases in Wellingborough and Kettering. Wellingborough was shared with the CRC and offered a joint reception area; it was dated but adequate.

Once the CRC had left it, the Kettering office was deemed to be unsustainable and a sensible process was in place to gradually move the NPS staff to Wellingborough. We were pleased to see both organisations working together to improve the working environment and facilities in this building.

Additionally, the NPS courts team had bases in Northampton Crown Court, Northampton Magistrates' Court and Wellingborough Magistrates' Court. Office space had tightened since the closure of neighbouring court houses. This impacted most notably in Northampton Magistrates' Court where responsible officers shared desks and computers, and the shortage of private space led to delays in interviewing service users.

Quality assurance

The NPS followed a range of centrally-driven quality assurance processes. These included a standardised tool for staff supervision and a range of quality audit tools. These were welcomed by managers who felt their use (for instance, to assess the quality of plans to manage risk of harm) was leading to improvements in practice.

Practice was not automatically quality assured, however, and poor practice was often only identified when cases were reassigned. Nonetheless, managers worked together to assess and address issues as they became aware of them. Some of this was driven by the need to meet targets but they also took relevant action to understand issues with the quality of practice by individual practitioners once these become evident.

Organisational strength: *The NPS had an established, strong leadership structure. Policies, practice guidance and practice improvement tools were increasingly available. Overall, there was a wealth of competence and authority at management level and good provision of support for responsible officers.*

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

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

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

The CRC was not focused sufficiently on public protection, leaving some victims vulnerable to further harm. There had been a delay in issuing relevant, up to date practice guidance, and there were considerable deficits in management oversight of practice, especially in cases involving child safeguarding. The CRC had appropriate structures in place, but practitioners were not making a sufficient contribution to protecting children. Overall, too little progress was being made in managing and reducing the risk of harm individuals posed to others.

Assessment and planning

Risk of harm was evident in many of the CRC's cases, but in some the level of harm and related needs had been underestimated. Current probation service arrangements presume that risk of harm will have been adequately assessed before cases leave the NPS courts team so as to allocate them to the correct organisation and assign them to a responsible officer with the right skills to manage the complexity of the case. This was not always happening. In many cases, insufficient information had been passed from NPS court staff to the CRC; less than half provided enough information about child safeguarding concerns. In many instances responsible officers in the CRC failed to improve their understanding of the risk of harm in the cases assigned to them. In some, the NPS had identified the need for the CRC to follow up on initial enquiries but this was not happening.

Assessment by the CRC tended to focus on the current offence and there was often a lack of exploration of the wider offending behaviour.

Planning to manage risk of harm was poor, especially in cases where there were concerns relating to domestic abuse and the safety and well-being of children. There was also a lack of focus on protecting staff and, in cases where the police were victims, a tendency to minimise the risks to them. Plans to manage risk of harm seldom represented the views and needs of victims, or enough detail about how they would be protected.

Restorative justice could have been a helpful tool in reducing risk of harm in some cases, but this had too low a profile and responsible officers were not considering how to integrate this into their work to reduce risk of harm.

Complex cases were being assigned by the hub to PSOs or agency staff. Managers had the ability to reassign them but, in practice, this rarely happened unless responsible officers lobbied for this. In the main, managers were approachable and provided advice when asked. There was, however, little evidence of proactive management oversight of risk of harm work. Responsible officers varied in skill and knowledge and it was evident that some were not equipped to manage their more complex cases. Most responsible officers had attended a domestic abuse awareness course last year but few were recorded as having completed their child safeguarding training. The following three examples show the wide range of practice in the area of assessing and planning work to reduce the risks of harm posed.

Good practice example: Matthew²⁰, in his fifties, received a suspended sentence order for his first conviction, domestic abuse against his wife. The responsible officer recognised the overarching needs for Matthew and his family. She worked closely with children's social care services to assess and plan how to manage the risk of harm Matthew posed and to make sure his children could have safe contact with their father. She appropriately allocated the RAR days, referring Matthew to the partner agency, Bold Moves, to complete relevant courses. Close monitoring of his restraining order made sure swift action could be taken when he breached this on one occasion. Overall, however, Matthew was making good progress and changing his thinking and attitudes.

Poor practice example: Nick was released on licence following his 20 month custodial sentence for an unprovoked violent assault. He was in a relationship with a woman who had a young son. While Nick's responsible officer completed timely checks to see if the child was known to children's social care services, she could not understand the need to provide information to this department about Nick's offending. Nick had little insight into his behaviour (including his use of alcohol) and the impact it had on others. This left his girlfriend's son vulnerable to the risk of harm he posed.

Poor practice example: Fiona had a history of assaults against police, one of which was described as a vicious attack.

There was no assessment of this pattern of offending and her general behaviour was minimised to the extent that, when she was given further sentences for similar offences, the original assessment and plan were simply duplicated. This could have been an appropriate case for considering restorative justice but this had not been given due consideration.

There was no evidence that Fiona would improve her behaviour towards the police.

20 Please note, all the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

Delivery and review

Work undertaken by responsible officers with service users was sufficiently sighted on public protection issues in less than one-third of the cases inspected and in some cases there was no work completed to manage and reduce risk of harm. There was a lack of consistency in the quality of partnership working with children's social care services. Some responsible officers advised that they did not receive invitations to Child Protection and Child In Need meetings, while others worked closely with the social workers throughout the sentence and made a real difference to children's lives. The quality of work to manage risk of harm was notably better in cases managed by POs compared with those managed by PSOs.

Good practice example: *Simon had a history of domestic abuse against several former partners and was now serving a suspended custodial sentence. He completed a safer relationships course with Bold Moves and a family-focused course jointly delivered by his responsible officer and Ormiston Families. There had been no further episodes of domestic abuse since his last conviction and there were indications that the level of conflict with a previous victim and partner had reduced. Importantly for Simon, the various parties involved in his case were reaching an understanding that would enable him to have access to his child.*

We saw cases where the responsible officer had reviewed progress but having done so, they did not necessarily adjust their approach or their work to reflect changes in risk of harm. Overall, we judged that sufficient progress had been made in minimising risk of harm in less than one-third of the cases inspected.

Poor practice example: *Raymond was given a community order for domestic abuse against his partner. He was correctly assessed as posing a medium risk of harm to others and appropriately assigned to a PO. During his sentence, however, he was reassigned to a PSO who did not understand public protection fully. The PSO failed to recognise a number of indicators that Raymond's risk of harm to others had increased and the potential need to escalate the case to the NPS.*

Impact and potential impact

A NOMS (now known as HMPPS) audit of the CRC's management of risk of harm in February 2016 had identified a number of issues in common with our inspection findings, but BeNCH had made little progress since then.

We found that responsible officers had taken enough action to keep to a minimum the risk of harm service users posed to others in only 8 of the 30 cases where there was a need to do so, and this had an impact on the progress service users were making.

Many responsible officers felt that the training they had attended, for instance, the domestic abuse awareness training, had not prepared them sufficiently well for the complex cases they were managing. Fluctuating workloads, the movement of cases between responsible officers to reflect changes in the workforce, and the assignment of complex cases to inexperienced officers were affecting the quality of work. The CRC had issued BeNCH guidance on the management of risk of harm in September 2016. There was a clear BeNCH child safeguarding policy in place before this but other guidance had been inherited from the former probation trust and responsible officers found it difficult to identify current practice guidelines. In many cases, management oversight of risk of harm work was superficial and had made an effective contribution to protecting the public in only 4 of the 25 cases that merited it.

Table 1 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC contributing to public protection.

Table 1: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	There were examples of good practice and purposeful relationships between service users and responsible officers which could be harnessed in order to spread effective practice.	1.	Cases were assigned to responsible officers who did not have the necessary skills to manage them effectively.
		2.	There was a lack of management oversight for public protection work.
		3.	Workloads and a lack of training hindered the effective management of cases.
		4.	There was a lack of written guidance available for this work.

NPS effectiveness

NPS performance was generally good. Appropriate policies and guidance were available to staff and quality audit tools were being used to check aspects of work to manage public protection. Staff had the right skills and, in the main, the right support for their practice. Variations in practice between offices made a real impact on overall performance. This was especially noticeable in work to manage and respond to changes in the risk of harm service users posed to others, albeit managers were taking action to address these variations.

Allocating cases

In about half the cases we looked at the service users had been identified as posing either a high or very high risk of harm. We agreed with the assessed risk of serious harm classification in all but one case and with the MAPPA level in all relevant cases. Our sample included 16 individuals being managed through MAPPA, 13 of whom were being managed at Level 1. We were content that cases had been correctly allocated to the NPS and that there was the right balance of staff available to manage them. We found, however, a number of cases where, at the court stage, the risk of harm assessment was lacking in detail, which increased the possibility of inappropriate allocations being made. The following example shows the repercussions of insufficient assessment at the allocation stage.

Poor practice example: *Adrian had a previous custodial sentence for violence and a history of domestic abuse. Neither of these had been assessed well enough by the NPS before the case was allocated to the CRC. His current offence involved theft and he was assessed as posing a low risk of harm to others. On this basis, his case was assigned to an officer in the CRC without the skills and training to manage the complexity of the case. Managers did not identify these issues or make sure the responsible officer understood the issues in the case, such as the need to take account of the restraining order. As such, none of the risks were considered sufficiently.*

Assessment and planning

Overall, responsible officers were doing enough to understand the factors linked to public protection and were working well with partner agencies to plan how to manage and minimise the risk of harm service users posed to others. There was, however, more to be done to identify and understand child safeguarding concerns and to make sufficient plans where necessary to protect children. This was surprising, given the investment which the division had made to train staff in this key area of work. There follows two examples where greater attention to child safeguarding was needed:

Poor practice example: Max was serving a suspended sentence order for downloading indecent images of children. He lived with his mother and was complying fully with the terms of his sentence. He had, however, a sister with whom he spent time and his responsible officer had lacked the curiosity to make the necessary enquiries as to whether she had children and if they were known to children's social care services.

Poor practice example: Liam was on a suspended sentence order for a violent offence. He was living with his family, including a son with special needs. He was yet to start TSP and was making little progress in his sentence but his responsible officer had not contacted children's social care services to identify if Liam's son was known to them or if there were any child safeguarding issues in the case.

The relationship with children's social care services was not always effective, with responsible officers in some cases concerned about the quality of joint work, but feeling unable to address this effectively.

Service users leaving custody were governed by helpful licence conditions. These put appropriate controls in place to protect victims and there were examples of excellent coordination and joint work with the police to guarantee compliance with these.

Delivering the sentence and reviewing progress

In about three-quarters of the cases we inspected, responsible officers maintained sufficient focus on public protection throughout the sentence and responded effectively to changes in circumstances that could affect risk of harm to others. The quality of delivery was variable, however. Some were completing structured one-to-one work with service users and working with partner agencies to reinforce progress, while in other cases there was a lack of appropriate focus on victim awareness work.

We saw cases where responsible officers were determined to make a positive difference, despite the denial and indifference of service users. Furthermore, we saw good joint work with the NPS's OPD pathway team. The following example demonstrates how a good assessment underpinned quality work which was kept under close review:

Good practice example: Nigel was subject to a community sentence for offences involving domestic abuse. He had two requirements attached to his order: RAR days and the BBR programme.

His responsible officer involved Nigel in a thorough assessment of his needs. This identified a range of issues in Nigel's history and the responsible officer started work quickly to complete a timeline exercise. This identified that he had been a witness to domestic abuse as a child, and this was used as a method to get him to think about his own actions. He was quickly referred to BBR and started the programme soon into the order. The responsible officer liaised well with the programme provider and met with Nigel each week before the BBR sessions to reinforce the learning from the previous session and identify and manage any factors that could impact on his engagement in the following one.

As a result, Nigel was progressing well through his sentence and learning from the BBR course.

Not all responsible officers paid sufficient attention to reviewing progress against their intended outcomes. In some cases, there were delays in starting programmes designed to reduce the risk of harm individuals posed, and no assurance that service users would be able to complete these before the end of their sentences.

NPS court staff had limited access to information on the Violent and Sexual Offenders' Register (ViSOR) and this affected the quality of checks completed pre-sentence. We welcome the NPS's national drive, through its E3 programme, to improve access to and use of ViSOR.

Arrangements to keep victims and potential victims safe were not working effectively in one of the three cases in our sample where active MAPPA management (at Level 2 or 3) was required.

Poor practice example: Frank had been sentenced to custody for sexual assault. He was released on licence with numerous conditions, including living at an approved premises.

The case was referred to MAPPA appropriately but the analysis of Frank's offending lacked sophistication and there was no exploration of his behaviour during the period of time he had lived abroad. Similarly, there had not been sufficient consideration of concerns with his behaviour post-release and of indicators that he would not meet his licence conditions. This affected the robustness of the NPS plan for managing the risk of harm Frank posed to others. The success of MAPPA is heavily dependent on the quality of information provided by probation services. In this case, deficits in the quality of information the NPS presented at MAPPA meetings would have affected their ability to monitor and manage Frank's licence conditions and implement public protection measures effectively. After a short period of time on licence, Frank absconded abroad.

There was evidence of effective joint working with the police to conduct home visits and protect victims. MAPPA supported work by Circles of Support and Accountability, mentioned previously, and effective links with local authorities led to successful move-on arrangements for service users leaving approved premises.

The local approved premises applied a strict three-month move-on policy. This was seen by other agencies as being unduly arbitrary, and it created anxiety for responsible officers, as in the following case:

Poor practice example: Troy was an older gentleman sentenced for historical sexual offences against his children.

He was released to an approved premises, but was evicted from there after three months with no stable accommodation. As a result, he moved in on a temporary basis with a female friend who had grandchildren, who were known to Troy. Although the friend provided assurances that she would not allow contact between her grandchildren and Troy, she refused to provide their names.

After discussions with the police and the SPO, the NPS consented to this arrangement but it was far from adequate and left all parties at risk of harm.

The resources available to approved premises staff did not always allow them sufficient time to undertake key work with service users. We saw examples, however, where work by these staff had made a positive difference to public protection.

Good practice example: Brian had a history of violent offending, was released homeless and eventually recalled.

On re-release he was discharged to the care of the local approved premises. His responsible officer worked well with the staff there to engage Brian in planning work for the rest of his licence period and he is successfully progressing through his sentence.

Impact and potential impact

Responsible officers had taken all reasonable action to manage risk of harm in three-quarters of relevant cases. This was reflected in the amount of progress service users were making. Generally, relevant action was being taken to protect staff but the NPS needed to make greater progress in protecting known victims (often victims of domestic abuse) and prisoners. There was a need for far greater management oversight of this aspect of public protection work, and for the following types of good practice to be disseminated more widely:

Good practice example: Barry was on a community order for offences of making indecent photographs of children.

A robust risk management plan was put in place which clarified how MAPPA would contribute and the detail of the various restrictions and requirements. There was good communication between the SPO and the police-led management of sexual offenders and violent offenders team. The agencies worked closely together to provide clear messages to Barry about the expectations of behaviour and ViSOR had been used well to support the management of the case.

The effective exchange of information led to an appropriate further arrest, and enforcement action. As such, the risk of harm Barry posed was well managed.

Good practice example: Joseph was an older and isolated man on licence for breach of a sexual offences prevention order imposed for a range of sexual offences.

He had twice-weekly appointments with his responsible officer who, jointly with the police, undertook planned and unplanned home visits. She also undertook structured one-to-one work with Joseph which led to his improved cooperation and agreement to the periodic use of voluntary police GPS tracking.

This enhanced the NPS's ability to identify any ongoing risks and quick detection when Joseph breached his order.

Table 2 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the NPS contributing to public protection.

Table 2: List of enablers and barriers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Responsible officers had the necessary skills to manage risks to the public and were well supported in their work by the offender personality disorder pathway team.	1.	Relations between responsible officers and children's social workers were sometimes poor and not addressed effectively.
2.	Pre-release work focused on the development of sound licence conditions.	2.	There was over-reliance on the police to access ViSOR.
3.	Responsible officers worked well with the police to monitor and manage risk of harm, often conducting joint home visiting as appropriate.		

The CRC and NPS working together

Transforming Rehabilitation has created a number of interdependencies between the CRCs and the NPS. One of the most critical of these - and one which left room for improvement in Northamptonshire - relates to the post-sentence stage. The system for passing information from the NPS's courts team to BeNCH's administrative hub worked effectively. The quality of information, however, provided by the NPS on cases allocated to the CRC was wanting in too many cases, as in the following example:

Poor practice example: Perry had a long history of domestic abuse. Information provided about his case by NPS court staff to the CRC was poor. His court report provided little information about Perry and no information on his violent offending history. He had previously been assessed as posing a very high risk of harm to others and this was entered on ViSOR - but the information about this was not immediately obvious within the main case record on nDelius.

The case was appropriately assigned to a PO in the CRC who made enquiries about the ViSOR entry but was unable to obtain the detail from the NPS. This limited the quality of assessment and planning in this case.

Several months later, Perry was arrested and given a custodial sentence for a further serious offence of domestic abuse against the same victim.

Risk escalation

None of the CRC cases we inspected had been referred to the NPS as a result of increase in risk of harm. We judged, however, that one should have been. We were assured that CRC staff were not being deterred from following escalation procedures. We deduced that, had responsible officers been reviewing their cases more effectively, the number would have been higher.

Recall

Recall processes had been running smoothly in recent months. Both organisations had taken action to identify and address issues with the quality of their recall processes as part of their work to meet performance targets for licence completions.

Table 3 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together effectively to achieve positive public protection outcomes.

Table 3: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC and NPS working together, relating to the inspection domain of protecting the public.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Interface meetings attended by SPOs from the NPS and CRC helped to identify and address process issues, for example, in relation to recall.	1.	Information provided by the NPS to the CRC at the point of allocation did not always take fully into account the risk of harm individuals posed.

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

The CRC had not done enough to help service users reduce their offending behaviour and many went on to reoffend or to be arrested or charged with further offences.

Assessment and planning

Pre-sentence reports were prepared in 18 of the cases we inspected. About one-third provided sufficient information about the offending behaviour and circumstances of the service user. This meant that there was work to be done, post allocation to the CRC, to understand better the factors linked to offending. Despite this, we saw little improvement in the quality of assessments completed by the CRC responsible officer to whom the case had been assigned.

Overall, less than half the sentence plans we looked at were good enough. In many cases, assessments and plans were either missing or had been completed far too late to be of use. Some had been duplicated from previous sentences without being updated so that it was difficult to identify the current offence and the factors behind it.

There was insufficient planning to tackle offence-related factors, such as thinking and behaviour, alcohol misuse and relationship difficulties. With the high prevalence of domestic abuse within the CRC caseload, this was a crucial deficit. In contrast, responsible officers were good at identifying the significance of drugs misuse and planning how best to address this. They did not all have access to printing facilities, however, so were unable to provide a copy of sentence objectives for service users; this would undoubtedly have affected service users' ability to engage with the process.

Many service users we spoke with did not remember receiving a copy of their sentence plan or even whether they had one. Others knew exactly what their plan of action was, and said that they were being well supported in completing the work they needed to, and could identify how probation had made a positive difference for them.

Poor practice example: *Morgan is a 46 year old on a lengthy licence following a conviction for fraud.*

On release he did not receive an adequate induction. In the meetings that followed there was no engagement with Morgan about his sentence plan. Although two objectives were set by the responsible officer, there was no evidence of any work being done since his release seven months ago. The vast amount of time was spent 'checking in' with Morgan and there was no focus on addressing fully his assessed mental health need. Too quickly, reporting moved to monthly and then two-monthly.

As a result, Morgan's assessed needs were left unaddressed.

The following provides a better example of sentence planning:

Good practice example: *Spencer is a 36 year old with mental health needs, sentenced to a community order for an offence of domestic abuse on a partner who he had known for a short period of time. Prone to outbursts of violence, this was his third domestic abuse conviction in relation to three different women.*

The responsible officer had made very good use of the information contained in a detailed court report. This had informed the sentence plan and the objectives were meaningful. Mental health interventions were identified and subsequent partnership working with mental health services was excellent in this case. The responsible officer also identified - and delivered - work aimed at addressing Spencer's offending behaviour.

There had been no further offending over the course of six months.

Work had been undertaken to improve sentence planning but this had yet to take full effect. Recently improved staffing levels, however, within the Northamptonshire CRC programmes team, coupled with a positive strategic approach towards programmes from senior leaders, were beginning to improve the availability of interventions. This, in turn, was likely to have a positive impact on the quality of sentence planning work.

Delivery

Sufficient progress had been made in delivering the right interventions in less than one-third of CRC cases. In some, no interventions had been delivered at all. In others, the timeliness of referrals to interventions varied, with some service users able to engage quickly in the work they needed, while others had yet to start any meaningful work some months after sentence.

Interventions were not always available as needed. For instance, RESOLVE was no longer accepting referrals and was being withdrawn, and there was a waiting list for TSP, BBR and some of the Bold Moves relationship courses. The CRC's programmes team had for some months been short of staff, so much so that TSP had been temporarily withdrawn for a time. Consequently, some service users had been unable to complete the required work and their cases had been returned to court as unworkable; this undoubtedly damaged sentencer and NPS confidence in the CRC's ability to provide necessary services. The CRC had worked hard to address this and the Northamptonshire treatment manager was working closely with the NPS to rebuild confidence in programme delivery. Reflecting that attrition rates were high and referral numbers low, the programmes manager had introduced a rolling TSP programme that offenders could join at any point.

Responsible officers valued the interventions provided by their operational partners but the high demand for some courses led to long waiting lists and impacted on the level of confidence in service delivery. The next example is not an exception:

Poor practice example: Toby's responsible officer assessed that he would benefit from a Bold Moves course. She worried, however, that with the long waiting list for this programme, Toby would not be able to attend before the end of his sentence. Her belief that the interventions provision was "falling apart" deterred her from referring to the CRC's contracted providers and meant that she was more likely to refer to partner agencies in the community.

Responsible officers inherited cases from colleagues who had left on which no work had been completed; the lack of routine management oversight had failed to identify and address this until the cases changed hands. In some of these cases, there was too little time left to meet the requirements of the sentence, as the next example demonstrates:

Poor practice example: Derek was expected to complete a maximum of 20 RAR days during his sentence. His responsible officer failed to plan for this and after his initial appointment, he was not offered further appointments with a responsible officer for many months. Once contact was re-established too little priority was given to completing the RAR days and it was now difficult to see how Derek would complete this requirement of his sentence sufficiently.

Some service users (about one-quarter) refused to engage in the work on offer. The lack of private space in the Northampton office contributed to this.

Poor practice example: It was disappointing to find that despite having supervised Jeremy for nearly five months, the responsible officer had very little knowledge of him. He could not explain why or how Jeremy had become involved in gambling. He could not recount Jeremy's family circumstances despite the details being included in the OASys assessment. In short, the responsible officer was not at all familiar with Jeremy's case. It was unsurprising, therefore, that no relevant work had been carried out.

In other cases the work was more impressive, especially where this was delivered by operational and community partners.

Good practice example: Louise could not easily access C2C's services for women, available at the Good Loaf in Northampton. Instead, she worked with the charity, Ormiston Families, who helped her in relation to accessing her children, gave her a mentor and supported her improving her physical and mental health.

This, coupled with a methadone prescription via the NHS drug service, enabled her to function more effectively and she was gradually making progress.

Good practice example: Ian and his pregnant partner were being supported by Ormiston Families while Ian was serving his community sentence. Although there were medical complications with the pregnancy, the couple were reluctant to seek appropriate medical help, given their fear of the authorities, and were planning to have their baby at home and then abscond.

Encouraged by the Ormiston worker, who had developed a strong relationship with the couple, they sought proper medical care and came to appreciate and rely on the worker's support. As the birth of their new baby approached, the Ormiston Families worker (and the CRC responsible officer on occasions) accompanied them to hospital appointments.

The child was born safely and removed into foster care, with the Ormiston worker accompanying the police at the point of removal, in order to support the couple. She had demonstrated a high level of care and tenacity in her work which had helped safeguard the couple and their child, and this was commended by both Ormiston and the CRC.

Table 4 shows the proportion of the cases we looked at where sufficient interventions had been delivered.

Table 4: Sufficiency scores from the inspection findings relating to the most prevalent assessed needs of cases in the CRC inspection sample, listed in priority order.

Assessed need (in order of priority)	% of cases where interventions delivered sufficiently
Thinking and behaviour	31
Emotional well-being	43
Alcohol misuse	43
Relationships	21
Drug misuse	38
Accommodation	56
Attitudes to offending	25

We saw examples of effective engagement between operational partners, community agencies and service users. Veterans who had offended engaged particularly well with Bold Moves courses run by a retired member of the armed forces. We also saw responsible officers prioritising the action they planned to take and focusing on

medical stability first in order to help service users engage with offending behaviour work. We saw too few referrals to drug and alcohol services, despite these areas of need often being identified in assessments and plans. Local managers acknowledged that access to mental health services was a challenge - as we often find it to be - and that they needed to engage more effectively with health providers so as to improve the life chances of their service users.

Communication between the CRC and other agencies was not always easy, however. Not all operational partners could input information directly into CRC IT systems or contact the hub when necessary. This disrupted the flow of information with responsible officers who were not receiving timely updates about their service users' progress, including when they failed to attend.

Integrated Offender Management

There was an inconsistent approach to IOM across the county. Partners were co-located in Kettering and responsible officers visited on a weekly basis. In Northampton a responsible officer with specialist responsibility for IOM had introduced 'IOM Fridays', inviting the IOM police to spend time at the CRC office in order to enhance joint working. IOM was acknowledged as an area for development and a recent change in leadership within the local police was adding impetus to this.

Rehabilitation activity requirements

The speed at which CRCs could advertise their suite of interventions and the mechanisms for purchasing these through the rate card was guided by the speed of legislation to support the process, and HMPPS's approval of their rate card offers. Despite the fact that RARs were introduced in February 2015, BeNCH's rate card was approved in September-October that year. After approval, the CRC took action to help sentencers and the NPS understand the services on offer. We found, however, that both the NPS and Northamptonshire magistrates' courts were frustrated by the lack of information about interventions offered through the CRC. Sentencers had only recently been provided with information setting out the number of RAR days linked to the different interventions on offer by the CRC. Magistrates were concerned that this had arrived late, contained too little information about the content of interventions and would have been more helpful if it were tailored to the needs of Northamptonshire rather than covering the whole of BeNCH. The NPS advised that responsible officers would welcome more detail about the services commissioned through the CRC's operational partners, especially in terms of the evidence base for these.

Northamptonshire was visited during our recent thematic inspection of RARs²¹. In line with our findings in other Quality & Impact inspections, we found responsible officers uncertain about RAR processes and how RARs should be used. Field teams did not understand the spirit of RARs; instead they planned, in many instances, the same amount of work whether the court imposed a maximum of 10 or 30 days. There was inconsistency in recording and few sentence plans made reference to RARs and how

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they would be used. The following case from this inspection illustrates the nature of the problem:

Poor practice example: William is a 36 year old convicted of domestic abuse on a partner and sentenced to a community order. The RAR element of the order was not delivered well. There was no mention of the RAR in the sentence plan and, where RAR days had been recorded, the content of the work was supervisory contact, not an activity supporting him to desist from offending.

RAR training had been rolled out in December 2016. Many staff found this helpful but a small number of responsible officers worried that they still felt unable to record RARs through their IT system.

Despite this, we saw examples of excellent thought being given to RARs and to making sure that these were used to the benefit of service users and to reduce reoffending. We observed a Bold Moves course, which took place in a pleasant setting, with course leads managing the group well and with due care. Service users attending this appreciated the approach being used during sessions; they considered the facilitators to be helpful and down-to-earth and advised that the course had helped them to improve the way they managed their relationships.

Good practice example: Tom was on a 12 month suspended sentence order for an offence against a former partner. He engaged well with the Bold Moves Safer Relationships programme, and demonstrated progress against his RAR days. There was a clear plan for the second half of his order that would support his desire to demonstrate he had learned child-centred parenting skills. As a result of the work completed with Tom, he was able to demonstrate that he could be entrusted at some time in the future with seeing a child from a previous relationship.

Reviewing progress

Responsible officers were not reviewing often enough the progress being made through the sentence. We saw a small number of cases where they had undertaken good work to review progress on a continuous basis, making sure one area of work was completed before moving on to another. This, however, was happening far too infrequently.

Where cases were reviewed well, there was clear evidence of positive progress.

Good practice example: Alec was a young adult who transferred to Northamptonshire during the course of his sentence.

He arrived without an OASys and his new responsible officer did not address this. Despite the lack of records, she engaged quickly and thoroughly with Alec to assess the needs of the case, gaining a full understanding of work to be completed. She continued to review progress, addressing his medical needs as a priority then building on this success with the CRC's partner agencies and providers.

Alec was making excellent progress and had reduced his likelihood of offending.

Impact and potential impact

Overall, there was too little structured work being delivered and too few referrals made to relevant services. This reduced the impact responsible officers were having on reducing reoffending. This was most noticeable for those needing help to change their thinking and behaviour, improve their relationships or emotional well-being, and reduce their drugs and alcohol misuse. Management oversight had made a positive impact on the management of reducing reoffending work in only 4 of the 28 cases that needed it. Many service users went on to reoffend or be arrested or charged.

Table 5 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC to reduce reoffending.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Operational partners offered a good range of interventions.	1.	There were too few structured interventions being delivered. In some cases there was a lack of referral to appropriate agencies, despite the range on offer.
		2.	There were long waiting lists and delays in the start for programmes, with no guarantee that all service users would complete their programme requirement before the end of their sentence.

		3.	The potential for positive outcomes was hindered in some cases where responsible officers did not review progress against sentence plans.
		4.	Lack of quality assurance work meant that deficits in practice were not identified and addressed.

NPS effectiveness

The NPS was performing reasonably well but variation in practice across offices impacted on the quality of work overall. Sentencing proposals focused on the right issues, and responsible officers were achieving the right level of understanding about factors linked to offending, putting appropriate plans in place. They were, however, not always making sure the right interventions were being delivered or reviewing progress through the sentence. This affected their potential impact on reducing reoffending.

Court reporting

Court reports are prepared by the NPS in order to help inform sentencing decisions. As such, they need to provide a clear outline and analysis of the factors linked to offending and this information needs to be recorded on nDelius. Nearly half of the court reports we looked at did not provide sufficient information. Many reports had been provided orally and there were scant records of the thinking behind the sentencing proposals they offered. The underpinning offender assessments (OASys) were either very basic or, in many cases, absent. Additionally, the courts team, which had experienced recent staffing shortages, had negotiated with sentencers that, where they were unable to complete a report on the day requested, the hearing would be adjourned. Wherever possible the report would be delivered at the later hearing by the member of staff who had prepared the court report. On occasions, however, these reports were prepared by one officer and presented by another who had not interviewed the service user and had to rely on sometimes limited notes entered on file. Despite this, the NPS was making appropriate sentencing proposals and capturing relevant child safeguarding issues for those cases which were subsequently allocated to them.

Allocating cases

There were gaps in assessment prior to allocation in just over one-third of the cases issued to the NPS. The national guidance which encourages speedy justice meant that there was a lack of pre-sentence reports for some cases involving violent offending. This gave us cause for concern. In the main, nevertheless, cases were being allocated correctly to either the NPS or CRC.

Assessment and planning

Pre-sentence reports were prepared for four-fifths the NPS community cases we inspected. Almost two-thirds provided enough information about the service user's offending behaviour. Responsible officers worked well to improve the quality of assessments after they were assigned their cases and to plan what work needed to be completed during the sentence. Some sentence plans contained good information but were completed late. In others, responsible officers had limited their focus to current offending and so had omitted to include work to address other relevant offending behaviour. Responsible officers needed to pay more attention to how to address and manage emotional well-being issues but, overall, most plans were of sufficient quality and addressed the main factors linked to desistance.

Good practice example: *The responsible officer completed a thorough assessment of factors linked to Geoff's offending, which involved the viewing of indecent images of children. She kept the objectives on his sentence plan relevant but realistic, focusing on victim awareness, helping Geoff understand the motivation for his offending and encouraging him to comply with his order.*

Good practice example: *Virgil was a foreign national offender who was released to the management of the NPS during his post-sentence supervision period.*

The responsible officer attempted to engage with the Home Office, and other relevant agencies, to ascertain his offending history but was unsuccessful, partly due to conflicting information about Virgil's name and date of birth. Despite this, she worked with Virgil to draw together a sentence plan to support desistance.

Not all cases were as well planned, however:

Poor practice example: *Tony was a young adult sentenced to a substantial community order for violent offending.*

The assessment of the needs in this case focused on his current offence and lacked insight into the wider factors linked to Tony's offending. This was reflected in his sentence plan; there was no plan to help Tony understand or address issues in his life which would lead to sustainable changes in his behaviour.

Although Tony fully complied with his sentence, he had started to regress to his old lifestyle and had been linked to a further offence.

Delivery

The lack of effective CRC resettlement services was frustrating both the NPS and their service users. One service user advised:

“the day I got out was the first time I knew of my release plan. I made applications and applications to see someone from resettlement but no-one came, when they finally came ten days before my release, she just said “Oh, I didn’t know you were disabled”. So on the day I got out I got a taxi to Bridge Street [The probation office] and reported as homeless”.

The NPS’s response to the limited resettlement service on offer was to introduce dedicated resettlement workers to help services users gain paid employment and accommodation after leaving custody.

Responsible officers were referring service users for interventions such as mental health services and sexual offending programmes but most interventions comprised one-to-one work between the service user and responsible officer. Work on timelines was being used effectively to help both the responsible officer and service user understand the underlying issues in the case and help shape and agree what could be done to address these. There were also cases, however, where programmes, particularly TSP, were unavailable due to staffing pressures in the CRC, and very little structured intervention work took place to meet the need which TSP might have filled.

A number of responsible officers were unsure what interventions the CRC offered and NPS colleagues had collaborated to draw up and share a list of free community services. These were more familiar to responsible officers than the services provided through the CRC offer, and more likely to be trusted and used. Local leaders complained, however, that community services were rather fragmented across the county, but said that they were in dialogue with the local PCC about improving the strategic vision for such services.

Table 6 shows the proportion of the cases we looked at where sufficient interventions had been delivered.

Table 6: Sufficiency scores from the inspection findings relating to the most prevalent assessed needs of cases in the NPS inspection sample, listed in priority order.

Assessed need (in order of priority)	% of cases where interventions delivered sufficiently
Thinking and behaviour	52
Emotional well-being	69
Lifestyle and associates	45
Attitudes to offending	67
Accommodation	86
Relationships	67
Drug misuse	0
Education, training and employment	100

Rehabilitation activity requirements

The degree to which responsible officers in the NPS were applying RAR processes varied. Some evidently understood what was expected, while others advised they had been instructed not to record RARs until issued with formal guidance. As we reported in our RAR thematic inspection, national guidance issued to date has been high level and, therefore, not entirely helpful to front-line practitioners.

Not all service users understood what their RAR meant to them or how they were expected to fulfil this requirement. Some responsible officers were using the days to deliver nominal supervision. Others were delivering structured one-to-one work or referring to service providers, such as substance misuse agencies, known to them in the community. The inconsistencies in recording of RAR activity made it difficult to identify how these requirements were being fulfilled.

NPS responsible officers were familiar with the Good Loaf and C2C's Social Action interventions and were content to refer women there when appropriate. They advised, however, they would have liked a greater range of services for women living in rural areas.

Good practice example: Sarah was a young adult who was subject to a suspended sentence for violent offending.

She accessed trauma support from C2C Social Action, and completed timeline work with her responsible officer. This helped her to address issues arising from her negative experience of being a child in care. After each session, she participated in a mindfulness reflection session with her responsible officer.

Sarah has found her experience useful as a way of managing her anxiety and has now secured paid employment at the Good Loaf.

Meeting the needs of service users

Service users provided good insight into their experiences with the NPS. Those that we spoke with advised that their time with probation had provided them with crucial support:

“I came out and I was in a hostel, and that was okay, but I am now in my own flat, which I got with help from probation and the council, it’s on the ground floor because of my health problems and they have made sure it’s not near any parks or schools. I see [my responsible officer] every three weeks and she has been a help, we talk about how I am getting on and any problems that I may have, she has been helpful...”

“[The psychologist] showed me how the brain worked and I found that really helpful, I could still do with a little more help but I’m alright at the moment.”

“I find coming here like therapy, the very first day I wanted to be anywhere but here, but now I look forward to coming here.”

“My experience ten years ago was that probation was an extension of the sentence, there was nothing I could relate to, it was just being risk assessed. This time round it’s completely different, it’s like night versus day.”

“I have a mentor now to help me...I’m still on weekly, but that’s okay, it’s nice to have someone to talk to.”

Reviewing progress

We found gaps in the quality of reviewing. Not enough responsible officers were assessing how well service users were progressing through their sentences or changing their plan of action to meet the changing needs of the case.

Poor practice example: Jerry was on a suspended sentence order, with requirements for supervision, unpaid work and TSP.

His responsible officer reviewed his case too late and found key elements of the sentence were yet to be delivered. Jerry’s attendance was poor. He was, however, not offered appointments to replace those he failed to attend and it was often three weeks before he was expected to attend again.

After nine months on his sentence he had yet to complete TSP and the CRC had withdrawn the course, due to staffing difficulties.

Impact and potential impact

We would have expected to have seen more consistency in the quantity and overall quality of work delivered by the NPS. Overall, sufficient progress had been made in delivering interventions in marginally more than half of the cases we inspected. Management oversight had made a positive impact on the effectiveness of work to reduce reoffending in 9 of the 14 cases that needed it.

Despite this, the majority of service users had not been convicted, cautioned, or had another out of court disposal for an offence since the start of their sentence or licence; where service users had reoffended, the seriousness and frequency of this tended to have reduced.

Table 7 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the NPS to reduce reoffending.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	The NPS resettlement officers were offering a necessary and helpful service, in the absence of an effective service from the CRC.	1.	Responsible officers were not making sure service users were offered enough structured interventions.
2.	There was a good range of services on offer and where referrals were made to partner agencies this work was supporting desistance.	2.	The focus on oral reports and low level of staffing in the NPS courts team had left gaps in the information available to pass to the NPS and CRC on case allocation.
		3.	There was a need for more management oversight of work to reduce reoffending.

The CRC and NPS working together

Responsible officers and the programmes team in the CRC were content with the level of pre-sentence communication from the NPS courts team and felt involved in the process to identify appropriate proposals. There were instances, however, when the NPS team was unable to check the appropriateness of programmes with the CRC, prior to including these in their proposals for sentencing. Consequently, some referrals post-sentence were rejected on the ground of eligibility. This caused a level of grievance, as such cases had to be returned to court.

We were not assured that either the NPS or sentencers fully understood the full nature of the interventions on offer to meet RARs, or the eligibility requirements for accredited programmes. The CRC and NPS both understood there was more to do to improve the understanding and use of the CRC's interventions offer. There had been a flurry of work by the CRC to raise awareness in April 2016 and this had been appreciated by both sentencers and the NPS. The interventions and rate card brochures had been amended to reflect the views of sentencers and now provided more helpful advice. Despite this, the CRC was frustrated by barriers to communicating with sentencers but confident that their relationship was strengthening; they had provided a workshop in late 2016 on vulnerable women and were currently agreeing a date for another meeting with sentencers.

There was a measure of friction between the CRC and NPS with both sides seemingly committed to working together but concerned about barriers they perceived were being raised by the other organisation. We were pleased to see the increased impetus at a senior level in both the CRC and NPS to address this and to 'sell' the CRC's interventions offer to responsible officers in the NPS.

Table 8 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together to reduce reoffending.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Senior leaders in the CRC demonstrated a renewed impetus in promoting the CRC's interventions offer with sentencers and the NPS.	1.	Lack of resources in the CRC's programmes team had left gaps in programmes and complications for the NPS courts team who needed to check the eligibility of programmes before proposing these to sentencers.

Abiding by the sentence

CRC effectiveness

Performance in this area of work was unsatisfactory. We saw examples of good practice to engage service users in a meaningful way, to take a holistic approach to the sentence and to enforce compliance with court orders. Practice, however, varied considerably according to office and grade of responsible officer. Many service users were reluctant to comply with their sentences and in too many cases, the CRC had made too little progress in delivering the legal requirements of the sentence.

Delivery

Responsible officers prioritised timeliness of OASys assessments and plans over quality. Many assessments and plans, especially at the review stage, were completed without the involvement of the service user. In some of these cases, responsible officers tried to draw on what they knew about the aspirations and issues of service users and information from operational and community partners. The lack of meaningful engagement, however, with service users to agree a plan of work impacted negatively on how readily the plan could be implemented.

Poor practice example: Patrick was a 19 year old given a suspended sentence order for an offence of arson.

The responsible officer considered carefully how to meet his 50 day RAR and how best to engage Patrick in these activities. She, however, had not considered his level of maturity well enough or made sure Patrick agreed with all the work.

As a result, Patrick's compliance was inconsistent and he had missed some appointments.

The CRC expected responsible officers to follow a set, thorough induction process. We saw examples of good inductions, where responsible officers had provided service users with clear information about their sentences and expectations relating to compliance. We were pleased to see that the induction process was completed on a one-to-one basis by the responsible officer assigned to the case.

Good practice example: Sean was a young man sentenced to a community order for motoring offences.

His one-to-one induction was completed by his responsible officer; it was very thorough and supported good compliance work. The responsible officer clarified the requirements of the order and checked that Sean understood what was expected of him. He clarified how often he would be seen, what the arrangements for the unpaid work element of the order would entail, what Sean needed to do if he could not attend an appointment and the type of evidence that was acceptable if he failed to keep an appointment. A self-assessment questionnaire was completed and this provided some good information to support effective desistance work.

In the space of seven months Sean was seen on 40 occasions. He has complied fully and there has been no further offending.

We saw many cases where the responsible officer had taken time to identify individual need and barriers to engagement but had not recorded these appropriately in their assessments and plans or flagged them correctly on nDelius. As a result, relevant information could not be picked up by the hub and would be lost if the case were reassigned. Some responsible officers did not know how to address the barriers to engagement identified. These included working with service users who identified they had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or emotional well-being issues.

Good practice example: The responsible officer had made an excellent assessment of Patsy's diversity needs and vulnerabilities. She had made deliberate choices about when and where to see Patsy and agreed to telephone meetings as well as meetings in the Good Loaf and other places where appropriate. Patsy was involved in planning the work and, when she frequently changed her mind about her needs and aspirations, her responsible officer adapted her plans to match these, showing a degree of flexibility around compliance and motivational techniques to encourage Patsy's commitment to her order.

We spoke with a number of service users during this inspection. As we expected, their views varied, sometimes according to their personal circumstances. Some advised that they enjoyed the layout in the Northampton office, seeing it as welcoming and felt they had access to private space when it was needed. Others said the arrangements there affected the quality of their relationship with their responsible officer. Frustration with administrative processes was high on their agenda; some felt it was impossible to make contact with the hub. On balance, however, feedback from service users about their experience with the CRC was positive. This finding was echoed in the most recent survey of service users: 84%

were satisfied with the service they received from the CRC in Northamptonshire²². This was higher than both the national and BeNCH averages, and that of NPS service users.

The number of appointments offered did not always meet the needs of service users or encourage engagement and compliance. Despite local records suggesting otherwise, we saw at least five cases where there were long periods with no contact between the service user and the responsible officer, with the individual becoming 'lost' due to administrative errors or lack of management oversight. Some service users had not been seen by their responsible officers from the outset of their sentences. Some appointments, such as for unpaid work, were automatically generated by the hub, but these were, at times, merely a 'paper exercise' such as in the case of one service user given an appointment to attend unpaid work on Christmas Day. In many cases, too few appointments had been offered and this had affected the service user's progress towards desistance, reducing the likelihood that they would complete their sentence successfully.

Enforcement

There were issues relating to absence, non-compliance or inappropriate behaviour in 32 of the 40 cases we inspected. We judged that the CRC had taken the right action to address this problem in just over half of these. In many, responsible officers showed too much leniency and did not pursue robustly the service user's failure to attend appointments.

Poor practice example: *Dustin, who was serving a community sentence, had a habit of 'forgetting' to attend his appointments. During the course of nine weeks he had seven acceptable absences. Despite the fact that he had a history of poor compliance with his previous court order, no action was taken to improve his attendance. Dustin's behaviour had never been appropriately challenged, making it difficult to break his cycle of behaviour. Enforcement action should have been taken sooner.*

By contrast, we also saw examples of good and well evidenced involvement of managers in dealing with non-compliance, especially to support breach sentencing proposals.

BeNCH's administrative hub followed strict enforcement processes in order to meet the CRC's timeliness target. Where the target was missed, the urgency to enforce diminished. The hub's enforcement team had had difficulties with both staffing and IT systems. They recognised that they had a backlog but did not have the resource to address this; inevitably - and quite appropriately - they prioritised recall action over other enforcement work.

22 BeNCH CRC's Offender Survey, November 2016. The survey, facilitated by BeNCH, was supported by NOMS tools, and completed by all CRCs.

Automated enforcement processes in use at the hub depended on the correct use of nDelius flags. This in turn depended on the reliability of IT systems and the accurate recording of absences by responsible officers. Neither of these was fully reliable.

The enforcement process did not provide for staff absence. SPOs felt they received too little notice of urgent action and were unable, therefore, to deal with this effectively.

In some cases administrative errors arose, such as sending warning letters to the wrong address or with inaccurate information. These errors could delay enforcement proceedings for months or lead to a withdrawal of enforcement action, and we saw a number of cases that should have been referred to the courts for their consideration – but had not been.

Responsible officers were concerned that they no longer understood the lines of responsibility between themselves and the hub and acknowledged that this led to confusion and delays in enforcement.

Unpaid work

Unpaid work was provided by BeNCH for both the CRC and NPS. The CRC felt this was running reasonably well, although they recognised that there was a lack of flexibility within the unpaid work arrangements and were taking steps to address this. The NPS was not as positive about unpaid work, complaining about the lack of individual placements. We found a number of skills-based placements on offer for both women and men and, at an individual level, responsible officers working with service users to agree ongoing arrangements that would enable them to meet other responsibilities, such as childcare and employment.

In theory, inductions for unpaid work could be facilitated at a local office if the need arose, or service users living in rural areas provided with transport to the induction site in Wellingborough. In practice, with little exception, service users were expected to travel independently to Wellingborough for their unpaid work induction. There were no concessions for those with childcare responsibilities or disabilities, or those hampered by a lack of transport.

Automated hub processes created extra work. They could not cater for flexible unpaid work arrangements, issuing warning letters for unacceptable absences before responsible officers were able to make them acceptable, upsetting service users and potentially lowering their motivation to engage, as in the following example:

Poor practice example: Kerry was a single parent who travelled to Northampton to complete her unpaid hours at the Good Loaf.

She had been offered an alternative placement more locally but this would have involved heavy gardening. She had been offered support with public transport fares but she advised that the journey would have been difficult and she had felt obliged to use a taxi, at her own cost. Her responsible officer had agreed for her to attend on a flexible basis to help with childcare arrangements and Kerry was complying with this agreement. Nonetheless, she received a non-attendance warning letter, which, she explained, mortified her as it threatened imprisonment. Her responsible officer subsequently provided her with assurance and she now ignored such letters when they arrived.

While there was flexibility around dates of appointments, there was no flexibility around start times. Each day started at 08:45 hours, which some service users with school-age children found difficult to meet. The positive step to purchase new buses for the unpaid work parties had had the unintended consequence of reducing the number of seats available; we heard (but were unable to verify) that on occasion, service users were left behind due to lack of space on the bus.

The CRC worked well with C2C Social Action and Northampton Borough Council to offer placements, but the number of links with community organisations had noticeably decreased. There were no one-to-one opportunities for hard-to-place service users, such as high risk sexual offenders.

Meeting the needs of service users

Many service users appreciated the support of the CRC and felt they had gained from their experience on courses. A small number felt their responsible officers were too busy to be appropriately interested in them and that they did not have enough contact to develop a good relationship with them. Most of the negative comments we received related to service users' experience of unpaid work.

"It was impossible for me to get to Wellingborough for my first appointment so I couldn't get any appointments to complete my work. I'm reimbursed for my bus fares, but if I don't arrive on time, there's nobody to give me back my money: £6.80. I depend on that".

"It was difficult to get to my [unpaid work] appointments but I was allowed a lot of flexibility. It was hard to get to Northampton to start work – I got there really early or too late. It was very rigid. I couldn't get to Wellingborough for my induction. I would have needed to have left the night before so eventually it was moved to Northampton".

"I don't like discussing things in groups, and the Drug Rehabilitation Requirement is delivered in groups. I felt, if I can't change myself then others won't be able to. I kept getting positive results, but nothing was done about them. My probation officer would discuss general things about my drugs with me".

"[My responsible officer] has done a lot of things for me. I've gone to BBR and she has tried to teach me how to control my emotions. A few years ago I would have responded very differently to the way I respond now. I can now walk away from the situation. If I don't know what to do, I'll ask her, I've made real progress. My family is shocked by how I've changed and it's all come from [my responsible officer]".

Impact and potential impact

Although some service users were progressing well through their sentences, less than two-thirds were making enough progress against the legal requirements of their sentences and less than half were engaging willingly with their orders. In a number of cases, responsible officers had made successful efforts to re-engage service users or had initiated enforcement action appropriately to improve their motivation to comply. Conversely, in a small number of cases, the lack of contact and delays in enforcement action had led to service users disengaging completely with the CRC and requirements of their sentences. Management oversight had made a positive impact on work to support service users abide by their sentences in only 4 of the 28 cases that needed it.

Table 9 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the CRC gaining compliance of individuals with their sentence.

Table 9: List of enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Responsible officers were interested in the individual needs of service users and tried to provide some flexibility in order to encourage compliance and engagement.	1.	There was a measure of inflexibility, and a lack of individual placements for unpaid work that demotivated service users.

2.	Many service users were motivated to complete their sentence requirements as quickly as possible.	2.	Not all responsible officers had the knowledge to engage meaningfully with service users and take action to address barriers to engagement.
		3.	There was too much leniency by responsible officers relating to levels of contact and in some cases too few appointments offered to support desistance.
		4.	Hub processes complicated unpaid work and enforcement arrangements.

NPS effectiveness

The NPS performed reasonably well in this area of work, but with room for improvement.

Inconsistencies in practice across offices had an impact on the overall quality and outcomes of service provision. In the main, however, the NPS was good at involving service users in deciding how their sentence would best be fulfilled, taking account of their individual needs and removing barriers to their engagement. A lack of contact with some service users and degree of patience with non-compliance was affecting progress through sentences and, in some cases, the number of appointments offered did not meet the complex needs in the case.

Delivery

Responsible officers had a good understanding about diversity, how to assess individual need and in many cases were determined to engage successfully. The diverse needs of service users were being taken into account in nearly every case. Success in this area was supported by thorough assessment and the negotiation of agreed approaches to meet firmly set expectations. This was especially noticeable where there were language or health issues to address. Home visits were used strategically to support engagement.

Good practice example: *Martin was on licence for a serious offence.*

He posed a high risk of serious harm and had a number of significant health issues. Having missed an appointment, his responsible officer tried unsuccessfully to contact him. She liaised with the police about this and when she learned that Martin did not meet the criteria for a police welfare visit she put a safety plan in place and arranged to visit him with a colleague. Still unsuccessful, she returned again with a colleague of Martin's who granted her access to the property after noticing Martin on the floor.

The responsible officer's determination showed concern and could have meant the difference between life and death for Martin.

Good practice example: *Fred was a prolific offender with a history of serious offending, refusing treatment for his substance misuse and breaching his licence conditions.*

Despite this, the NPS provided an ongoing commitment to supporting him in order to reduce his risk of harm to others.

With appropriate help from approved premises staff, he found employment. There was good work with the police through the IOM scheme and determined and successful efforts to recognise and treat Fred's ADHD.

He had progressed through his licence with no further charge or conviction for longer than he had done on previous sentences.

Responsible officers encouraged engagement through the completion of pre and post-programme work which helped to prepare service users for what was to come and to reinforce the messages from these courses. Staff worked well with the police, through the IOM scheme, to keep service users engaged and to address any reductions in engagement.

Not all responsible officers were equally adept at removing barriers to engagement. This was particularly relevant where, for instance, service users had continuous care responsibilities, a chaotic lifestyle linked to drug use, or emotional well-being issues that affected their ability to engage. In these cases, the absence of work to remove these barriers was due more to a lack of knowledge than of interest by both the responsible officer and their service user.

Poor practice example: Gerard was subject to a community order for dangerous driving which included an unpaid work requirement.

He initially started his unpaid work and completed a number of sessions, but he was moved from an individual placement due to his risk factors and placed with a group. He failed to attend a number of sessions and stopped attending, attributing some of this to his ADHD. His responsible officer accepted this and agreed to return the unpaid work requirement to court as unworkable. She failed, however, to investigate why Gerard had been able to participate in other group work.

Several months later she had yet to start the process to refer the order back to court.

The majority of service users were offered enough appointments to complete the right work during their sentences. There was room for improvement, however, in the way they responded to non-attendance or poor behaviour. We judged that they had not addressed these issues sufficiently well in almost half of the cases where action was needed. The most common response to non-attendance was the decision to take cases back to court and this had occurred in six of the ten cases where action had been needed to encourage compliance.

Impact and potential impact

Two-thirds of NPS service users were progressing well through their sentences, more than half without any detrimental lapse in engagement. There were delays in enforcement action in some cases which was affecting progress. Management oversight had made a positive impact on work to support service users abiding by their sentences in 7 of the 16 cases that needed it.

Table 10 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the NPS gaining the compliance of individuals with their sentence.

Table 10: List of enablers and barriers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Responsible officers completed thorough inductions, setting out the expectations of the sentence firmly from the outset and completing pre and post-programme work to motivate and address barriers to engagement.	1.	Some responsible officers were allowing too much flexibility with non-attendance and were not responding sufficiently robustly.

2.	Responsible officers had the skill and motivation to support engagement effectively.		
3.	Many service users were motivated to comply with their sentences.		

The CRC and NPS working together

A number of structures had been introduced to enhance understanding between the CRC and NPS and regular meetings were held to discuss and address interface issues. Nonetheless, concerns remained. Some responsible officers were still grieving the loss of past structures and relationships; they felt hurt by the *Transforming Rehabilitation* divide and the resultant friction with those they used to call friends.

The hub, set up to systemise and improve administrative processes, was complicating the route to effective solutions, especially as hub processes were not fully embedded. There was now, however, a clear process in place for facilitating the flow of information between the NPS courts team and the hub; Northamptonshire NPS court team was considered by local managers to be the best among the LDUs within BeNCH.

Work relating to enforcement was less developed. This was being continuously reviewed at interface meetings and improvements negotiated. An example included the helpful agreement that the NPS return breach reports for improvement rather than rejecting them immediately. CRC responsible officers advised that generally their reports were being accepted; those whose reports were returned were unclear whether this was from the hub or the NPS. They were more concerned about the occasions when the NPS had withdrawn a breach application without consulting with them.

Interface meetings were also being used to improve administrative processes for unpaid work requirements for NPS service users. Notes of discussions between middle managers at these meetings were scant but indicated an honest exchange and commitment to developing effective systems.

Despite the ongoing improvement to administrative processes, there remained a number of gaps, especially with regard to communication between responsible officers in the NPS and the unpaid work team. This was impacting on how well service users could comply with the requirements of their sentences.

Poor practice example: There had been problems delivering unpaid work because twice Vincent had been identified as a sex offender by peers on group work parties and his position had become unsafe as a result. The NPS responsible officer understood from the CRC unpaid work team that there were no individual placements available. As a result the order would need to be returned to court but the responsible officer was unclear what alternative could be offered to the court as a substitute requirement.

Table 11 identifies the key enablers and barriers to the work of the CRC and NPS working together to gain compliance of individuals with their sentence.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	There was evident commitment by both organisations to improve the interface between their organisations.	1.	There was a lack of communication between NPS responsible officers and the unpaid work team in the CRC; this left NPS practitioners unsure about what was on offer for harder-to-place service users.

Appendices

- 1: Inspection methodology
- 2: Background data
- 3: Background information:
Northamptonshire Probation Trust 2013
inspection outcomes
- 4: Data analysis from inspected cases
- 5: Glossary
- 6: 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/PCC area, regardless of who delivers the work. We inspect the work of both the CRC and the NPS, and explore the contribution of any partners working with these organisations.

An inspection team visited the area for two full weeks in January and February 2017. Prior to starting fieldwork, we held fact-finding meetings with the CRC and NPS in Northamptonshire and gathered a range of evidence in advance. In the first week of fieldwork, we inspected a predetermined 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 Northamptonshire, the sample consisted of 61 cases, 40 of which were CRC cases and 21 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 4 staff focus groups involving 13 responsible officers and 10 middle managers. We spoke with the business managers for the CRC and NPS and BeNCH deputy directors leading on a range of strategic priorities. We observed and spoke with course facilitators and programme managers. We met with youth offending service managers and seven representatives from the police. We interviewed HMPPS contract managers and sought the views of the clerk to the justices. Staff and managers spoken with worked either in Northamptonshire, or across BeNCH and the NPS division. In the CRC we also met with Sodexo's south regional CEO and the Director for BeNCH.

We observed court reporting in the magistrates' court and interviewed managers and staff in the NPS courts team. We met with representatives from the CRC and NPS programmes team, Circles of Support, Substance 2 Solutions, C2C, Ormiston Families, SOVA, Nacro and Bold Moves. We visited and spoke with staff at the approved premises and interviewed the CRC's ETE workers and the NPS's resettlement workers. We facilitated meetings and observed practice in the CRC's hub and looked at facilities at each of the CRC's and NPS' office spaces. We also met with representatives from the youth offending service and the NPS's OPD pathway team.

We attempted to speak with those service users who provided their consent to being contacted. In this inspection, we spoke with nine service users whose cases we inspected: four from the CRC and five from the NPS. In addition we spoke with service users on an ad hoc basis and attending specific interventions and completing their unpaid work requirements at the Good Loaf; 13 of these were working with the CRC and 5 with the NPS.

The inspection focused on assessing how the quality of practice contributed to achieving positive outcomes for service users, and evaluating what encouraging

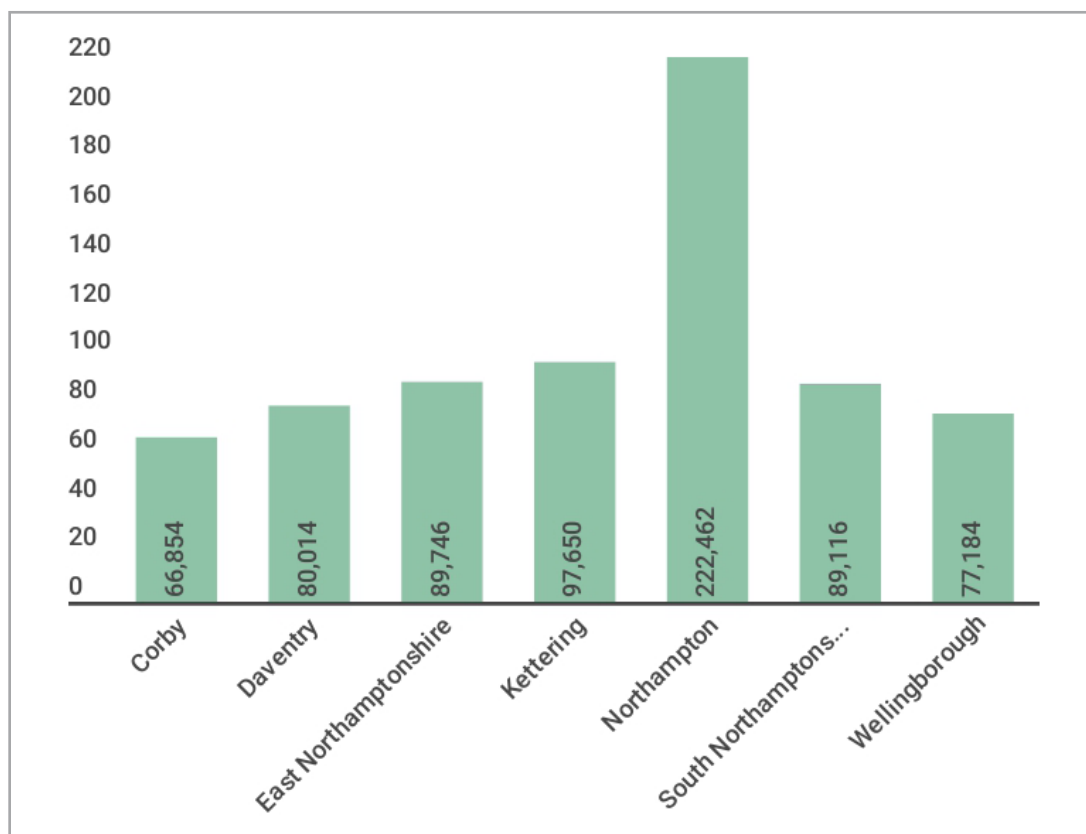
impact had been achieved. We were mindful that current impact could provide evidence of progress towards long-term desistance. In particular, we were seeking to report on whether the work undertaken was likely to lead to reduced reoffending, the public were protected from harm and individuals had abided by their sentence.

Appendix 2: Background data

This inspection covers the local authority areas of Corby, Daventry, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Northampton, South Northamptonshire and Wellingborough.

Population

Figure 2.1: Population estimates by local authority, mid 2015

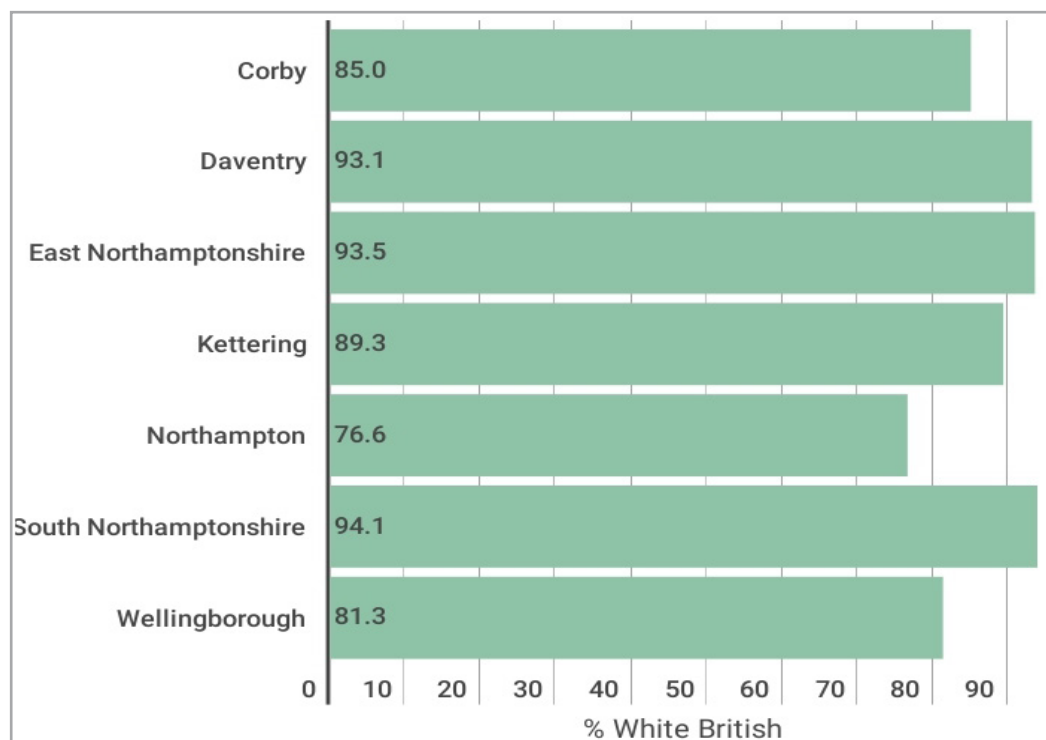


The population of Northamptonshire was estimated at 723,026 in 2015.

Source: Office for National Statistics, June 2016.

Ethnicity

Figure 2.2: Ethnicity by local authority, 2011 census

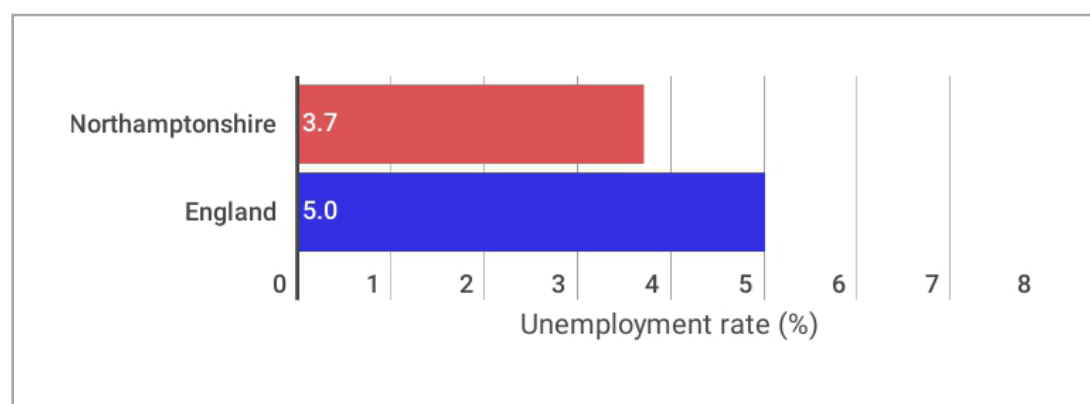


The population make-up of Northamptonshire is mainly white (86%), higher than the average for England and Wales of 80.5%, although that of the town of Northampton is lower.

Source: Office for National Statistics, December 2012.

Unemployment

Figure 2.3: Northamptonshire, October 2015 to September 2016



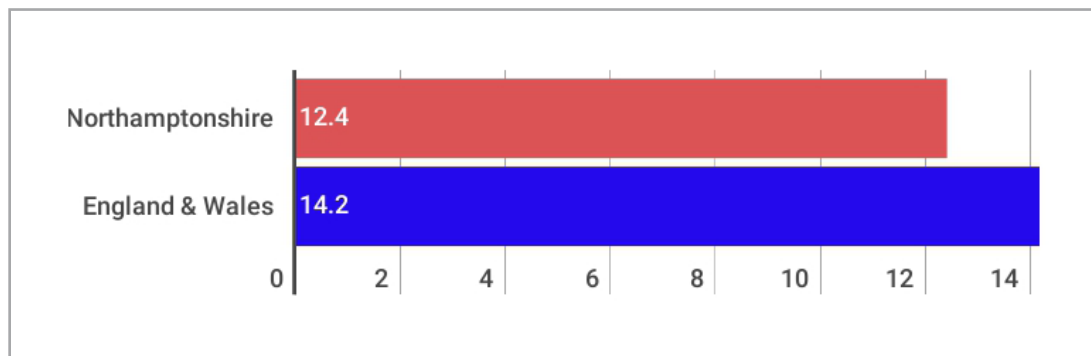
The unemployment rate is lower than the average across England.

Source: Office for National Statistics, January 2017.

Levels of reoffending

There were 12.4 previous offences on average for the Northamptonshire offender cohort who reoffended which is fewer than the England and Wales average.

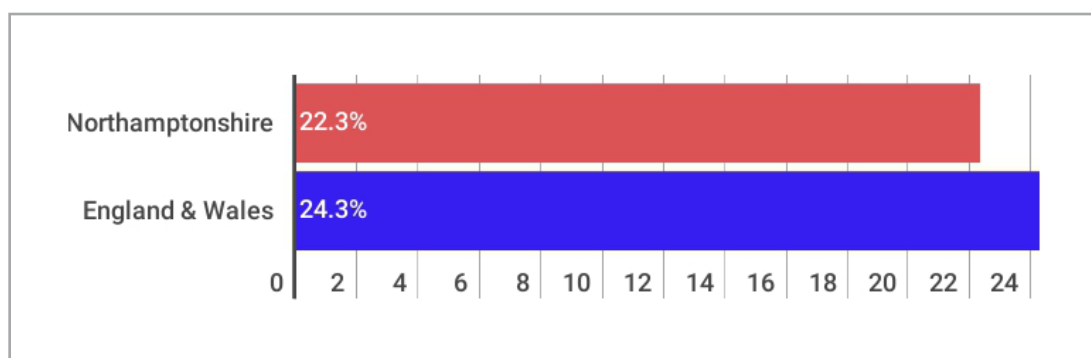
Figure 2.4: Offending histories in Northamptonshire, April 2014 to March 2015



Source: Ministry of Justice, January 2017.

The proven reoffending rates for Northamptonshire are set out in Figure 2.5, 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. This is lower than the England and Wales average.

Figure 2.5: Proven reoffending rate, April 2014 to March 2015



Source: Ministry of Justice, January 2017.

Appendix 3: Background information: Northamptonshire Probation Trust 2013 inspection outcomes

Table 12: Northamptonshire Probation Trust 2013 inspection outcomes

Outcomes	The proportion of work judged to have been done well enough
Assisting sentencing	78%
Delivering the sentence of the court	79%
Reducing the likelihood of reoffending	73%
Protecting the public	68%
Delivering effective work for victims	74%

In our 2013 inspection, we found that court reports helped sentencers make informed sentencing decisions and the trust worked well with partners to deliver a range of interventions to reduce reoffending. There was room for improvement in the quality of work to manage risk of harm, especially in protecting children and victims, and a lack of effective management oversight of this work.

Appendix 4: Data analysis from inspected cases

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

Figure 4.1 Public Protection

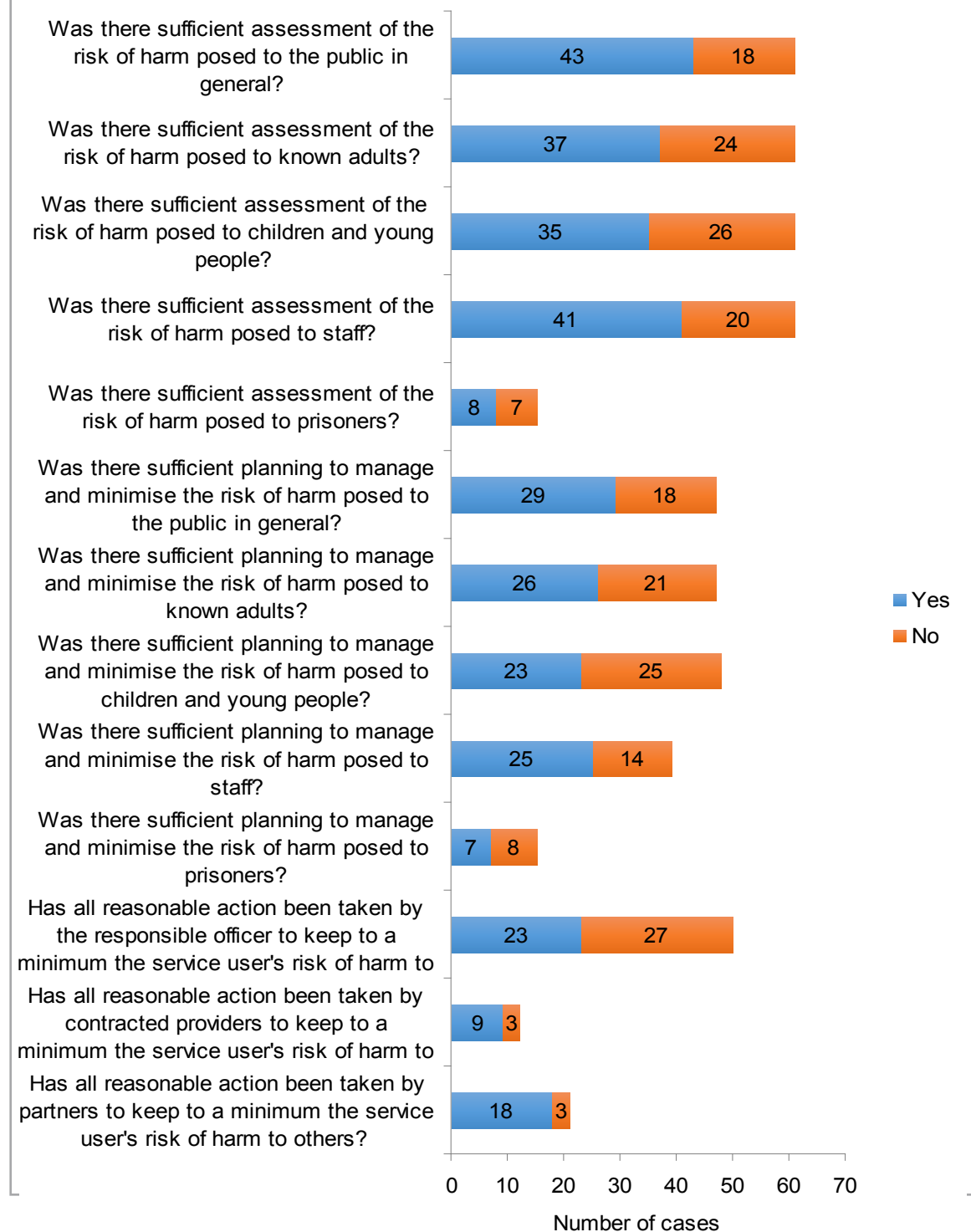


Figure 4.2 Public Protection

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

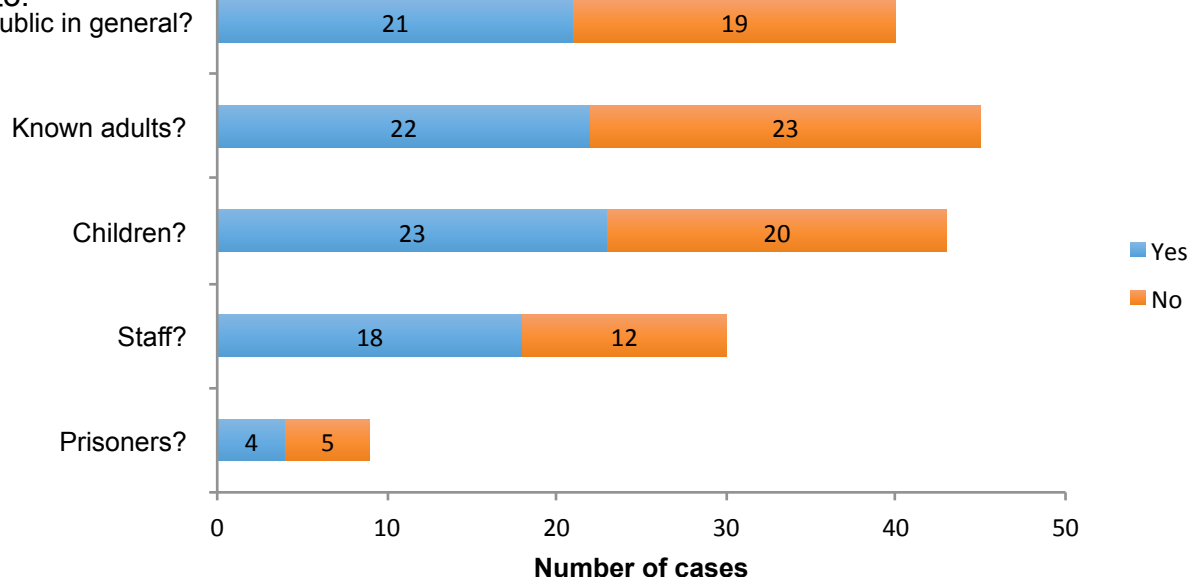


Figure 4.3 Reducing Reoffending

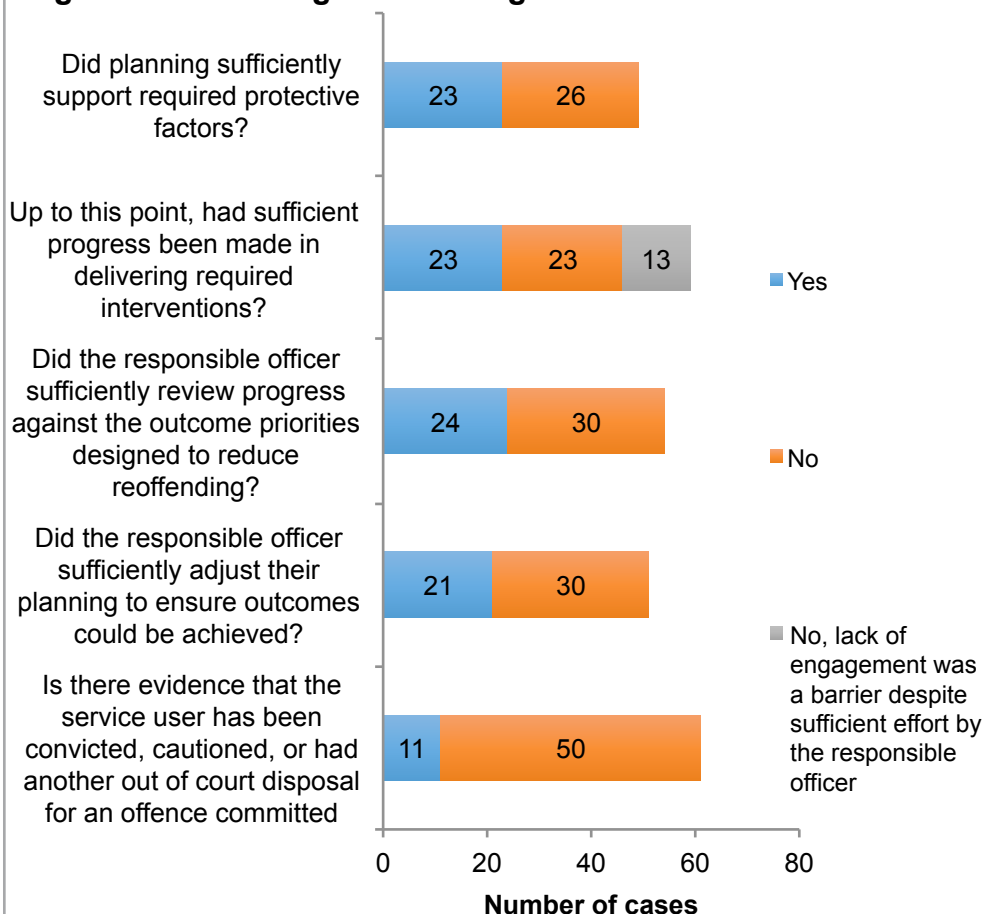
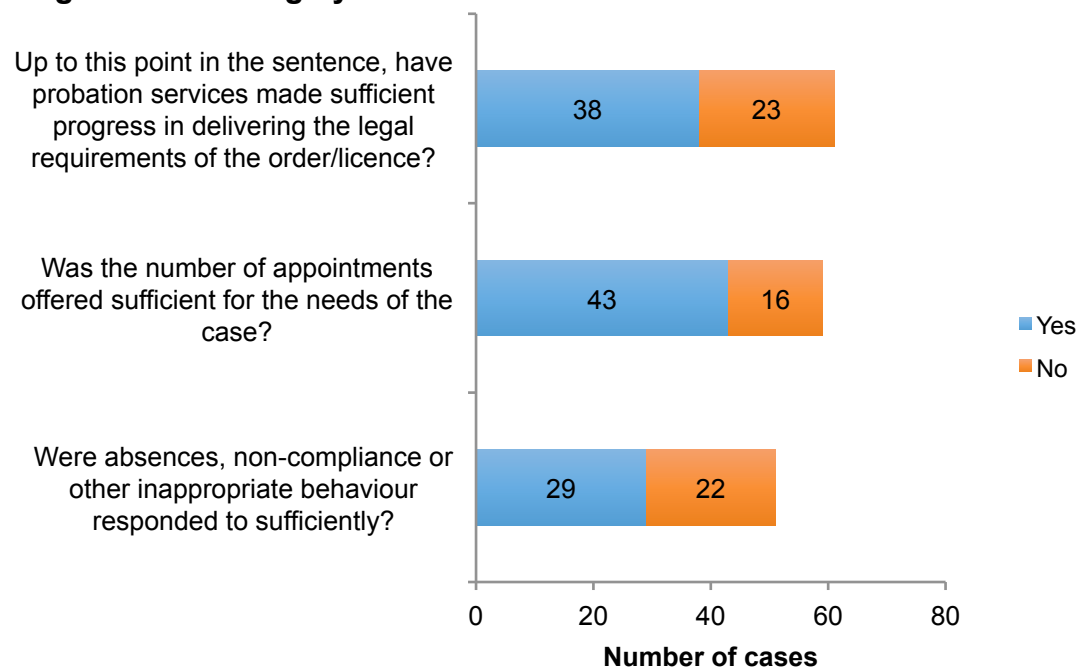


Figure 4.4 Abiding by the sentence



Appendix 5: Glossary

Allocation	The process by which a decision is made about whether an offender will be supervised by a CRC or the NPS
Assignment	The process by which an offender is linked to a single responsible officer, who will arrange and coordinate all the interventions to be delivered during their sentence
Bold Moves	Bold Moves is one of BeNCH CRC's operational partners. It is an independent organisation that offers a range of group interventions to improve family relationships. Courses focus on, for example, anger management, domestic abuse, victim awareness and motivation. Bold Moves also provides specific support for male victims of domestic abuse and veterans
BBR	Building Better Relationships: a nationally accredited groupwork programme designed to reduce reoffending by adult male perpetrators of intimate partner violence
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company: 21 such companies were set up in June 2014, to manage most offenders who present low or medium risk of serious harm
C2C	C2C Social Action: a charity based in Northamptonshire that provides services to individuals at any stage in the criminal justice process in order to support them and help reduce their offending behaviour
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement: a requirement that a court may attach to a community order or a suspended sentence order aimed at tackling drugs misuse
E3	E3 stands for 'Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Excellence'. The E3 programme was created following the <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, including: community supervision; court services; custody; youth offending services; victims' services and approved premises
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
Foreign national offender	A foreign national who has been convicted of a crime in the UK
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison

HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service: from 01 April 2017 HMPPS became the single agency responsible for delivering prison and probation services across England and Wales. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice took on the responsibility of overall policy direction, setting standards, scrutinising prison performance and commissioning services which used to fall under the remit of the National Offender Management Service (the agency that has been replaced by HMPPS)
HMYOI	Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution: a facility of incarceration for individuals aged up to 21 years old. Young Offender Institutions have a greater focus on education and training than the typical adult prison estate
IOM	Integrated Offender Management: a cross-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together
Language Line	A company contracted to provide professional interpreting and translation services for (but not limited to) a range of public sector organisations either in person or using IT solutions, including the telephone
LDU	Local delivery unit: an operational unit comprising an office or offices, generally coterminous with police basic command units and local authority structures
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
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

Nacro	Formerly known by the acronym of NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), Nacro is a social justice charity which for over fifty years has offered a range of services to support people to change their lives and to prevent crime and the risk of reoffending
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the CRCs and NPS in England and Wales
NOMS	National Offender Management Service: the single agency responsible for both prisons and probation services in England and Wales until 31 March 2017. Since 01 April 2017 this service has been superseded by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service 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 in England and Wales
OASys	Offender Assessment System: currently used in England and Wales by the CRCs and the NPS to measure the risks and needs of offenders under supervision
Ormiston Families	One of BeNCH CRC's operational partners; this is a charity working to provide family support, mentoring and group interventions to enhance parenting skills
Partners	Partners include statutory and non-statutory organisations, working with the participant/offender through a partnership agreement with a CRC or the NPS
Providers, known as Operational Partners by BeNCH	Providers deliver a service or input commissioned by and provided under contract to a CRC or the NPS. This includes the staff and services provided under the contract, even when they are integrated or located within a CRC or the NPS
Pre-sentence report	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 2014</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 by the NPS with their service users, which also details the price
RESOLVE	A moderate-intensity cognitive-behavioural intervention that aims to reduce violence in medium risk adult male offenders. The programme includes group and individual sessions and is suitable for offenders with a history of reactive or instrumental violence
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case
SEEDS	Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision: a skills-based practice framework for effective engagement with offenders, intended to bring about reductions in reoffending; piloted by Probation Trusts in 2011-2012 and implemented incrementally in various Trusts thereafter
Sexual offences prevention order	Sexual offences prevention order: introduced by the <i>Sexual Offences Act 2003</i> and replaced sexual offender orders and restraining orders. It is a civil measure available to the court when it convicts a person of an offence listed in schedule 3 or schedule 5 to the <i>Sexual Offences Act 2003</i> , or on the application of the police in respect of a person who has previously been dealt with for such an offence. The order places restrictions on the subject and triggers the notification requirements
SOVA	A charity in England and Wales that seeks to give individuals the stability and confidence to steer clear of crime, to make better choices and to live healthier lives
Substance 2 Solutions	A service provided by the charity Change, Grow, Live that helps individuals, including those who offend, to understand, manage and address their substance misuse issues

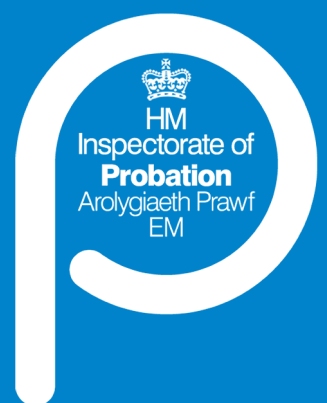
Supply chain	Providers of services commissioned by the CRC
TSP	Thinking Skills Programme: an accredited group programme designed to develop an offender's thinking skills to help them stay out of trouble
Third sector	The third sector includes voluntary and community organisations (both registered charities and other organisations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives
Through the Gate	Through the Gate services are designed to help those sentenced to more than one day in prison to settle back into the community upon release and receive rehabilitation support so they can turn their lives around
<i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i>	The government's programme for how offenders are managed in England and Wales from June 2014
Unpaid work	A 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. Since February 2015, unpaid work has been delivered by CRCs

Appendix 6: Acknowledgements

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