

Quality & Impact inspection

The effectiveness of probation work in West Mercia

An inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation
November 2017

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

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

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This publication is available for download at:

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
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Foreword

We report here on our inspection of work in West Mercia by the Warwickshire & West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and the Midlands division of the National Probation Service (NPS). Both organisations need to improve the quality of their work.

The NPS had experienced staff who managed offenders well and delivered good-quality interventions overall. Cases were not reviewed often enough or well enough, however. Due to inefficient court liaison processes for capturing and exchanging information, both local sentencers and (in many cases) the CRC find themselves under-informed and at a distinct disadvantage.

We found a further anomaly: despite NPS leaders' clear intentions, NPS staff were not using the wide range of interventions on offer from the CRC to the extent expected. Offenders may be denied the best help as a result, and the interventions themselves will be less viable over time, if they are not used enough. This is not the first time we have found this situation, and I do urge the NPS to review the position nationally.

CRC staff had manageable workloads, certainly when compared to those in some other CRCs. Yet basic offender management was not good enough. Not enough was being done, and offenders who missed appointments time after time were rarely taken back to court. This is a dispiriting picture: we saw good-quality work being done by some staff, while others with equal caseloads and experience lacked motivation and impact. The CRC was dealing with under-performance by practitioners in acute cases, but generally staff supervision and oversight were inadequate.

This CRC is in single ownership. It is doing some things well – for example, delivering effective unpaid work and providing services to women. Like others, it has had to make compromises in the way it operates, for financial and other reasons; nevertheless, much better overall performance should be within its grasp. However, senior managers' overriding concern is to contain and reduce costs, for pressing financial reasons. Substantial cuts in CRC funding to partners supplying effective interventions are on the cards. That is particularly regrettable, given that interventions delivered by this CRC's providers appear to be generally well regarded, and as other aspects of the CRC's offender management are so wanting.



Dame Glenys Stacey

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

November 2017

Key facts

267,146

The total number of offenders subject to probation supervision across England and Wales¹

3,454

The number of offenders supervised by the Warwickshire & West Mercia CRC¹

33%

The proportion of the CRC cases that relate to a custodial sentence (pre- or post-release supervision)¹. The proportion for all England and Wales CRCs was 40%

67%

The proportion of offenders who were recorded as having successfully completed their period of licence or post-sentence supervision with the CRC following a release from custody². The performance figure for all England and Wales was 77%, against a target of 65%

16,876

The number of offenders supervised by the Midlands division of the NPS¹

1,505

The number of MAPPA-eligible offenders managed by the NPS in West Mercia³

1 (of 21)

The number of CRCs owned by EOS Works Ltd

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

² CRC Service Level 9a, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics October – December 2016, Ministry of Justice.

³ Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report 2015/2016, October 2016, Ministry of Justice.

1. Overall judgements and recommendations

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

We last conducted a performance inspection of probation services in West Mercia in 2012, when services were provided by one organisation, the West Mercia 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 2012 (see Chapter 2). The outcomes from our 2012 inspection are summarised in Appendix 3.

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

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

The quality of CRC work to protect those at risk of harm was poor. It required improvement, particularly in cases of domestic abuse and those involving the safeguarding of children.

Initial assessment and sentence planning also required improvement. In some cases, there were undue delays from children's social care services in responding to child safeguarding inquiries.

The CRC was trying to increase the use of home visits to manage risk of harm but it had not made enough progress with this.

Some practitioners required more training and support to improve their practice in work to protect the public.

Management oversight failed to identify and rectify these problems.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of the NPS's work to manage risk of harm varied.

Assessment and planning to manage risk of harm to others were sufficient. The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements were working well and contributed to keeping people safe. Interventions needed to be more focused on protecting those at risk of harm, however, and in too many cases the NPS had not reviewed sufficiently the risks posed by the offender and had not responded adequately to changes in circumstances.

The CRC and NPS working together

Working relationships between the CRC and the NPS were good overall. Their relationships with children's social care services and the police supported effective arrangements for tackling domestic abuse. Efficient systems were in place to identify domestic abuse and child safeguarding issues in existing cases. However, for new cases, requests for information from children's social care services and the police were not adequately tracked and recorded.

Offenders with a high likelihood of reoffending received appropriate interventions supported by substantial levels of contact. In such cases, there was good ongoing joint work with the police.

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

The quality of assessments and planning by the CRC was poor.

The quality of case management was inconsistent. The CRC was not sufficiently effective in delivering enough interventions to reduce reoffending. A range of good-quality external services had been developed in partnership with the previous trust or the CRC, but their funding and use were being reduced for financial reasons.

As part of its contract, the CRC had introduced a new initial assessment and sentence planning tool and set up multi-functional hubs from which the CRC and its partner organisations would provide services for offenders. Neither of these innovations had been successful in delivering additional benefits in quality or effectiveness, and the CRC had largely reverted to previous models of delivery that better fitted the operational context.

Unpaid work was being delivered effectively.

NPS effectiveness

The NPS's court liaison work required improvement.

Pre-sentence reports were not of a consistently high enough standard, and court liaison work overall did not support the effective assessment of cases before allocation.

The quality of assessment and planning was sufficient once cases had been allocated, but progress was not reviewed adequately. As a result, in too many cases the NPS did not make enough progress in delivering work to achieve the objectives in offenders' plans. It provided good-quality interventions, but could have made more use of interventions available from the CRC.

The CRC and NPS working together

The variable quality of the NPS's work led to unnecessary pressures on the CRC.

The NPS did not assess cases well enough before allocating them. Court liaison arrangements did not ensure that the CRC was given adequate information on the cases allocated to it. This contributed to the poor quality of the CRC's initial assessments and plans.

Court liaison work had not reversed the under-use by sentencers of the CRC's accredited programmes to address domestic abuse, drink driving, and thinking skills, and this reduced the viability of their provision. These difficulties resulted from the drive for quicker sentencing and inadequate NPS staffing and resources for court liaison rather than a lack of knowledge by court liaison staff.

CRC effectiveness

The quality of the CRC's work to ensure sentences were fully implemented was poor. Offenders were not sufficiently involved in planning their order or licence, and contact was not sufficiently frequent or enforced. The number of absences deemed acceptable was too high. As a result, too few offenders completed the work that was required of them. The CRC needed to give more attention to increasing offender engagement.

NPS effectiveness

Overall, the NPS's work to make sure offenders abided by their sentence was good. Individuals were fully involved in planning their order or licence. The NPS took factors relating to diversity into account.

We found that the number of appointments offered was sufficient for offenders' needs. As a result, the NPS delivered the legal requirements of orders and licences well.

The CRC and NPS working together

The CRC and NPS were working well together where necessary to enforce court orders and licences. Progress against national performance targets had much improved. The NPS was introducing a centralised process for enforcement across West Mercia.

When cases were returned to court because of a breach, however, court listing arrangements resulted in considerable delays in hearing enforcement applications, with waits of up to six weeks at magistrates' courts and up to three months at the Crown Court. This was undermining sentencers' confidence in probation services.

Recommendations

The Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service should:

1. make sure that sentencers are fully aware of the content, suitability and availability of CRC interventions and programmes
2. make sure that requests for information made to the police and children's social care services are recorded clearly and tracked
3. make sure offenders' progress towards their sentence objectives is reviewed and recorded regularly
4. provide effective management oversight of all relevant cases.

The Community Rehabilitation Company should:

5. make sure there is a sufficient assessment and sentence plan in place for all offenders at the start of their supervision, and offenders are fully involved in planning their sentence
6. provide consistent and sufficient levels of contact to help offenders achieve their sentence objectives, and reduce the number of absences judged as acceptable
7. provide effective staff supervision that is appropriate to the individual's role, experience and qualifications.

The National Probation Service should:

8. improve the quality of court reports and pre-allocation assessments, and the supply of case information and documentation from court to the CRC
9. maximise referrals to effective interventions available from the CRC.

The Ministry of Justice should:

10. ensure the courts deal speedily with enforcement proceedings for breaches of community sentences.
-

2. The arrangements for delivering probation services in West Mercia

- the national context
- the local context
- organisational arrangements

National context

Some 260,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually. Probation services supervise individuals serving community orders, provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison (in anticipation of their release) and supervise for a minimum of 12 months all individuals released from prison⁴.

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

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

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

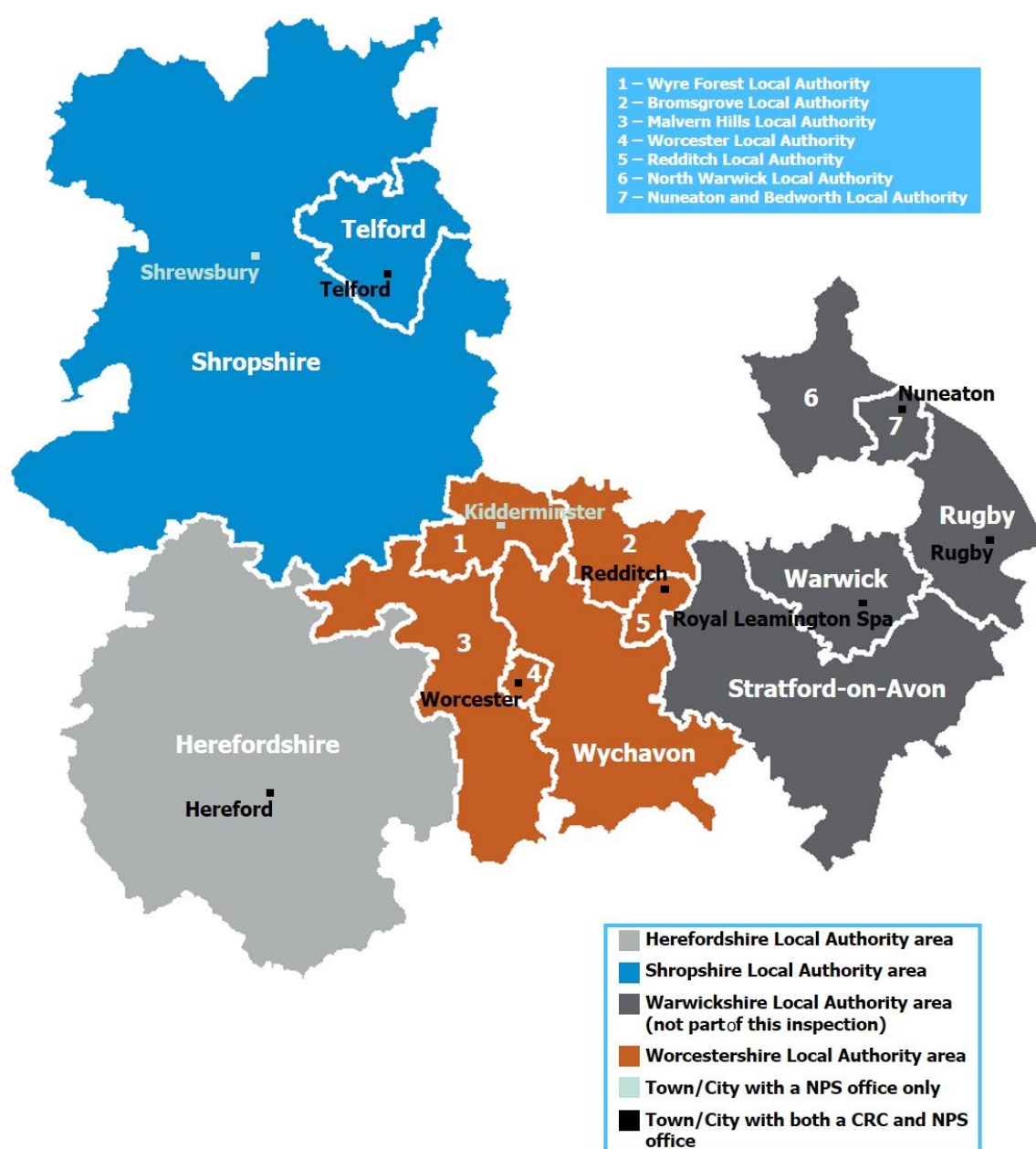
Local context

Here we report on probation services delivered in West Mercia by both the Warwickshire & West Mercia CRC and the NPS Midlands division.

West Mercia comprises Worcestershire County Council and the three unitary authorities of Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin. The CRC is split into three local delivery units (LDUs). Two of these – Shropshire, Telford & Herefordshire; and Worcestershire – were covered by this inspection. The third LDU – Warwickshire – was outside the remit of this inspection. The NPS in West Mercia forms one cluster within the Midlands division, which covers four LDUs: Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire. The area inspected was the same as that once covered by the West Mercia Probation Trust.

⁴ All those sentenced, for offences committed after the implementation of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, to more than one day and less than 24 months in custody, are supervised in the community for 12 months post-release. Others serving longer custodial sentences may have longer total periods of supervision on licence.

Figure 1.1: Map showing the area covered by Warwickshire & West Mercia CRC



The population of West Mercia was estimated to be nearly 1.26 million in 2016, with a notably higher proportion of white British residents (ranging from 89.5% to 95.4% across the four local authorities) than the England and Wales average (80.5%). Unemployment across West Mercia is 3.9% (below the England average of 4.8%), whereas the proven reoffending rate is the same, at 24.0%. We provide demographic data and information about the area in Appendix 2.

The CRC was the only one owned by EOS Works Ltd, which itself was subsequently purchased by the PeoplePlus group of companies owned by Staffline PLC. PeoplePlus is an employment support and training services company, and, with 2% of the national CRC caseload, is one of the smallest CRC-owning companies in the country⁵.

⁵ Source: Offender management statistics quarterly, October to December 2016 Table 4.10: Offenders supervised in the community at period end, by NPS Region, Division and CRC, England and Wales.

At the time of the inspection, the CRC had met four of the seven performance targets now expected in the most recently published data and was above the national average on four of these measures. The latest monitoring reports⁶ for all contract performance measures show that it was performing well overall when compared with other CRCs.

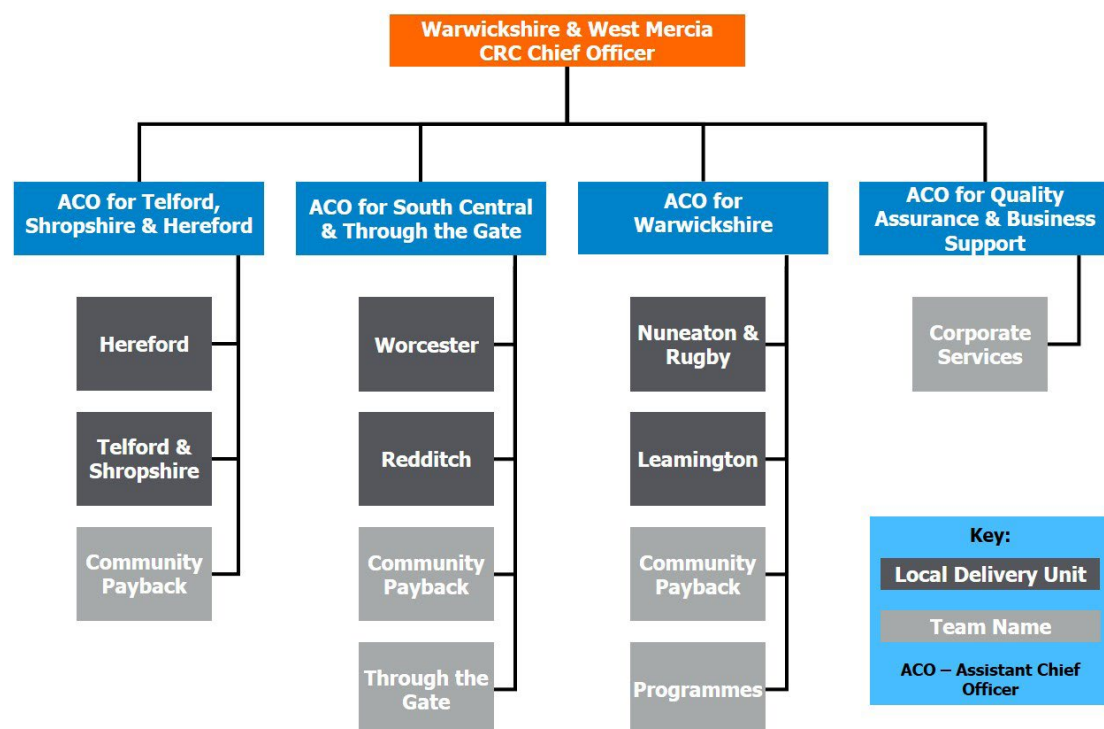
The NPS Midlands division's performance was mixed, compared with national targets and other divisions. At the time of the inspection, the most recently published data showed that it was performing above the national target on 6 of the 11 published measures and at or above the national average on 4 of those measures⁶.

Organisational arrangements in the CRC

Governance

The CRC's management structure is similar to that of the former probation trust. This structure has been slimmed down to reflect that some operational functions are now provided separately by the NPS, while corporate functions are provided by PeoplePlus.

Figure 1.2: Organogram of Warwickshire & West Mercia CRC



The Chief Officer of the CRC reports to the PeoplePlus Director for Strategy, Communities and Justice. They work together on implementing strategic change. All operational matters are managed through the Chief Officer.

⁶ Source: Community performance quarterly management information release, Ministry of Justice, October to December 2016

The operating model

The CRC sought to avoid disrupting the effective operating model it inherited from the probation trust, but agreed changes to it during initial contract negotiations with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Those changes had not been successful, and aspects of the model have become unaffordable due to lower than anticipated caseloads. Despite initial promise, the operating model is now compromised in a number of ways.

The probation trust had delivered services locally, in a decentralised model particularly suited to the rural area it covered and with services often provided through partnerships between the trust and local independent sector organisations. Potentially higher delivery costs were offset by the ability of partners to match probation funding from other sources and by a low reliance on accredited programmes that can be costly.

This legacy is well suited to the current legal framework, in which non-accredited interventions can be provided through rehabilitation activity requirements (RARs). The contractual arrangements finally agreed with the MoJ, however, provided for delivery of probation services to be concentrated in large CRC offices, to be known as STEP centres. In addition, a new initial assessment and planning tool, the Rehabilitation, Assessment and Progression Plan (RAPP), was introduced to enable sentence plans to be put in place quickly for community sentences.

STEP centres were to become multi-functional offices from which the CRC and all organisations working with it would deliver services to offenders, alongside the offenders' routine reporting. Cafés were to be included within the centres, to provide training and employment opportunities.

The CRC conceded on inspection that the RAPP was not an assessment tool it would have chosen; despite revisions, it did not fully meet operational requirements, and led to work having to be completed twice. The CRC's preferred option, to revert to an 'OASys only' model, will involve the slow bureaucracy of a contractual change.

The vision of one-stop probation bazaars that put offenders at the centre of community-based networks of help, support and encouragement, along with significant material backing to realise it, had been well received by staff. Bright, spacious, well-appointed and freshly refurbished office accommodation designed and obtained with this vision in mind is now mostly empty, however. The STEP centre approach was partially in place in Telford, but in Worcester, the largest centre of population in West Mercia, it had not proved viable, largely because the volumes of work were too low for this model of delivery.

Partners had to provide a presence every weekday to encourage the take-up of their services, but the daily throughput of offenders had not been high enough to make this viable for the partners. As a result, offenders continued to access services by individual appointment at the provider's own premises, undermining the STEP centre concept.

Meanwhile, the CRC had chosen to reinvigorate and expand provision of accredited programmes, encouraged by the funding attached. The CRC faced a continual struggle to maintain sufficient throughput on accredited programmes to justify the fixed costs, however. The new NPS arrangements for court work limited the number of programme requirements ordered.

PeoplePlus had subsequently adopted a strategy of making minimal changes to its CRC operating model. Combined with the CRC's strong focus on hitting performance targets, this had contributed to the CRC not incurring any penalties under Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's (HMPPS) performance regime.

More recently, funding shortfalls had led PeoplePlus to try to minimise its losses by planning funding cuts to contracted suppliers and further changes to arrangements for service delivery. The Chief Officer was determined not to reduce front-line staffing further, but faced the possibility of further cuts and, therefore, a hard choice: either the same number of staff would have to undertake additional work that had previously been contracted out, or services could continue to be outsourced and funded by a reduction in staff. A third option, to simply deliver fewer services within the same or a reduced budget, ran the risk of causing outcomes for offenders to deteriorate.

Leadership and management

PeoplePlus saw the CRC business and its staff as an integral part of its organisation, but was happy for CRC staff to see themselves as separate if this supported a loyalty to the CRC and its objectives. CRC managers with corporate responsibilities said they struggled to maintain working relationships with colleagues in PeoplePlus because of frequent staff changes. They observed that they were continually having to educate new members about the CRC business.

The CRC was anxious that the overriding concern of PeoplePlus was now to manage the cost base, and this created a tension between the priorities of the organisations and senior managers.

The CRC was engaged in local inter-agency partnerships at a senior level, although its input was constrained by the small size of the senior management team (SMT) and the number of authorities and organisations it had to cover. Strategic relationships with key partners were preoccupied with handling reductions in CRC funding and alterations to service requirements.

Members of the CRC's SMT attempted to maximise their presence in their respective delivery units. However, that was not always easy given the large area covered by the organisation and the pressures of their role within a reduced SMT. Practitioners nonetheless complained that senior managers were not sufficiently visible or accessible. Senior managers were aware of the potentially isolating nature of their role in a rural area, but aimed to meet weekly and appeared to work well with each other.

There were staff meetings at team and LDU level, but as in some other CRCs, staff complained of being managed in an impersonal way (via email) that was at odds with working in an organisation whose function was to work with people to bring about change through personal interaction.

The organisation was being driven by performance targets, as one might expect, and there was a strong central drive to discern how to meet targets and then do so. Managers and practitioners both recognised that this had little to do with delivering positive outcomes for individual offenders. Success in managing performance targets was not matched by efforts to maintain and raise the quality of offender management and to achieve positive outcomes with offenders.

Staffing and caseloads

The CRC was organised into geographically-based generic offender management teams, with separate units for accredited programmes, Through the Gate (resettlement activity) and unpaid work. Unpaid work teams took full responsibility for offenders with a single requirement for unpaid work (or unpaid work coupled with a restrictive requirement such as a curfew). Other unpaid work cases were allocated to one of the offender management teams.

The average caseload of the responsible officers within our sample was 50 cases per full-time equivalent responsible officer. This was in line with average figures for West Mercia produced by the CRC. Local data showed that workloads were rising, mainly because of staff reductions. The number of probation services officer (PSO) posts had been reduced, while the CRC continued to carry vacancies for probation officers (POs). The CRC found it difficult to recruit POs because of the more attractive remuneration packages offered by the NPS. As a result, the CRC relied on the long-term and expensive use of agency staff.

Many responsible officers considered their caseloads to be high and told us that this contributed to deficiencies in their work, although we saw some cases managed very well by officers with equally high caseloads. Under-performance appeared to us to be caused by general dissatisfaction with their situation rather than by the size of their caseloads, which were generally lower than in some other CRCs. Many were anxious about their future in the organisation and concerned about the impact of changes on their ability to do the job. Figures supplied by the CRC showed a fairly low level of staff sickness. Monthly absence rates for October 2016 to June 2017 ranged between 3.8% and 6.2%.

Frequency of formal supervision meetings varied widely, from monthly to less than quarterly. Most staff welcomed that local team managers were available for consultation about work on an open-door basis. Generally, supervision focused on performance management rather than on developing practice and skills, and some practitioners complained about the superficial nature of supervision. Discussion about difficult cases was limited to those presented by the practitioner rather than a random or targeted selection of cases by the manager.

Senior managers recognised that staff reductions had left the organisation less able to carry underperforming staff and were taking a more active approach to managing capability. The CRC contract included the routine observation of practice by managers as part of the training and development strategy, but this was not happening.

The CRC had a comprehensive learning and development plan. Training was provided through generic online computer tools, as well as conventional training events. Responsible officers had recently attended training in sentence planning and a five-day course to deliver the Becoming Respectful programme. We identified a further need: for refresher training in the assessment and management of risk of harm.

Available services provided by the CRC

The CRC has invested resources in providing more accredited programmes. It offers a wider range of these than some other CRCs. Programmes include Building Better

Relationships (BBR) for domestic abusers, Resolve for other violent offenders, the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP), and the Drink Impaired Drivers (DIDs) programme. Waiting times to start programmes vary, with delays in accessing BBR.

Programmes are provided at a range of locations and in the evenings as well as daytime, although geography continues to make access difficult for some offenders. The CRC is working to maximise the use of these programmes, but struggles to ensure that they are ordered appropriately and in as many eligible cases as possible. As a result, the CRC does not have a clear calendar of forthcoming programmes, which makes it hard for responsible officers and court liaison staff to get a clear overview of medium-term availability. This lack of information potentially reduces demand, creating a vicious circle. It also makes it difficult to optimise programme staffing.

At the time of the inspection, the CRC was introducing the Becoming Respectful domestic abuse programme. It had provided area-wide training for practitioners to deliver this to offenders individually. A range of other structured and semi-structured work was being delivered in various locations in the CRC, either individually or in groups.

Unpaid work

In the CRC's bid, unpaid work was to be delivered through a community interest company. The company would charge the beneficiaries for the work done, and the proceeds would be used to support local community projects. This approach made little sense, given that the unpaid work itself is of benefit to the community. It would have been equally beneficial and administratively less complex to simply not charge for the work, and leave the money with the community project receiving the labour.

In practice, the community interest company model has not been pursued and unpaid work is delivered directly by the CRC. It charges for the work provided to some organisations (where they are willing and able to pay) but not for others. It avoids setting charges at a level that would prevent it from finding sufficient work to meet the number of hours being ordered by the courts.

Managers were unclear about what happened to the money raised from unpaid work, and how much of this income, if any, was being used to fund the service. Unpaid work staff complained that they were not told where the money went, and so they could not answer when the beneficiaries of the work quite reasonably asked what happened to the charge they paid. This had caused some local public relations difficulties.

The management of unpaid work had been neglected in the recent past, but the CRC has addressed this over the last year to ensure that unpaid work is delivered more safely and effectively. Single placements are now subject to a CRC risk assessment and induction, with clear negotiated arrangements for giving feedback to the unpaid work unit. CRC staff have developed good working relationships with placement providers. There was, however, a missed opportunity to provide detailed information about the performance and progress of individuals in their case files, to aid responsible officers.

Services provided by external organisations

Services delivered by external organisations are a significant component of the CRC's delivery model. Some of the long-term partnerships developed with the previous probation trust remain, such as with Willowdene and YSS⁷; others are no longer used. We also found new projects that the CRC has set up.

Support for problems with alcohol and drugs is provided by either Addaction or Swanswell, depending on the offender's location. Good relationships exist at management level, but not always at practitioner level. Poor communication about cases can lead to limited sharing of information and confusion about why drug services are sometimes withdrawn.

We met several practitioners who had a poor view of the Swanswell service, and one offender we interviewed said:

“They [Swanswell] haven’t helped me with my drugs problem; I have done everything myself. They are quick enough to give you methadone or tablets to stop you ‘rattling’ but they don’t look under the surface to tackle the reasons you take drugs. All they do is monitor you via drug tests”.

Willowdene

Willowdene is a well-established day and residential provision offering a wide range of services and interventions for both male and female offenders. Its services are available throughout West Mercia, although they are difficult to access from those parts of the area furthest from the project. Services include a range of rehabilitative and restorative activities; skills training programmes; and direct access to multi-agency support services in: physical and mental health; substance misuse; accommodation; employment, training and education (ETE); domestic and sexual abuse; and finance and debt.

Willowdene provides a 12- to 25-week counselling and skills support programme, including accredited qualifications, delivered through RARs, and work placements for unpaid work. On average, about 100 people per year have benefited from the counselling and skills support services alone. This provision is, however, less accessible to those living in Herefordshire. A similar project based in Herefordshire was no longer available.

The unique service provided by Willowdene is considered an excellent resource by probation staff, sentencers and other agencies. However, the CRC plans to reduce its funding to the project and end its use for delivering RARs. Willowdene had originally been a key component of the STEP centre delivery model, but its on-site presence at the centres did not generate sufficient additional referrals, and its withdrawal from this arrangement contributed to the abandonment of the STEP centre model. Managers at Willowdene observed that the cost to the NPS of purchasing its services

⁷ Originally derived from Youth Support Service, ‘YSS’ is now a trading name, rather than an abbreviation.

via the CRC rate card had been considerably more than the cost of providing them, and this had been a possible disincentive for the NPS to use them. This had led to tension in the senior management relationship between the CRC and Willowdene.

YSS

YSS is another well-established project. It provides an Enhanced Support Service, delivered using RARs, and a Meet and Mentor service as part of the Through the Gate provision. Its intensive packages of supervision played a key role in many Integrated Offender Management (IOM) cases. YSS employs keyworkers and uses volunteer mentors to carry out tasks including support with registering with doctors, opening bank accounts, and applying to other agencies for assistance, such as housing. Its services are available throughout West Mercia. They are delivered from the CRC's offices in Hereford and Telford and from YSS's own premises in Worcester. YSS contact takes place in various other venues, and includes home visits (supported by a full risk assessment from the CRC or NPS on referral).

YSS also faces planned funding cuts by the CRC. Once implemented, the organisation will only be funded to work with IOM cases and others with a high likelihood of reoffending. YSS expressed concern that lower usage by the CRC, and the resulting cut in funding, would increase its unit costs and put match-funding at risk. YSS attributed this risk to the *Transforming Rehabilitation* model rather than a lack of demand for its services.

Counselling

The CRC has established its own provision for offenders requiring therapeutic counselling, as an alternative to counselling services provided by the NHS, for which there is an 18-month waiting list.

This involves a partnership with Worcester University, in which a tutor for the university counselling course is paid a fee to assess the suitability of offenders referred by the CRC. Counselling is provided for suitable offenders by second-year students on the course, as part of their practical training and under monthly supervision from the tutor. They have already completed training and 50 hours of counselling.

The service consists of an initial six sessions, with a further six sessions if merited by the case. The service is not available to NPS offenders, but, at the time of the inspection, 16 CRC offenders were engaged with this service. The counsellors are said to work to national information-sharing guidelines covering a range of issues, but there was minimal recording of counselling contacts and sharing or analysis of individual outcomes. There was no evidence that counsellors were specifically aware of the need to share information relating to potential risk of harm.

Gym project

The CRC has a partnership with Sports England to run a 12-week 'Healthier Happier Fitter' programme using a local gym. The programme caters for eight offenders aged 18 to 25 years but tends to be restricted to those who can easily reach Worcester or

Droitwich. It provides physical training in a pro-social gym environment to promote fitness, well-being and healthy living. The two-hour sessions include fitness activities and workbook exercises to help offenders learn about nutrition and to promote healthy lifestyles. Sessions count towards RAR days and are delivered jointly by gym and CRC staff.

Services for women

Women offenders were allocated to female officers automatically, and the CRC had a blanket policy that male staff did not supervise women offenders. In some locations, women were allocated to semi-specialist practitioners, and the CRC had a member of staff at each office leading on work with women to support the development of practice.

Support services for women were provided by the Willowdene project and YSS, whose caseload is 25% female. Structured work was delivered through a community centre in Hereford and a 12-session group programme delivered by CRC staff in Worcester. This programme was delivered on a rolling basis, with the order of sessions adjusted to suit the priorities of the current group. Attendance was open to offenders on licence and community orders, and once finished, participants were allowed to repeat the sessions on a voluntary basis. Participants travel in from other towns as required. There was no crèche facility, but one was being organised, albeit with some difficulty due to financial constraints.

We met a number of female offenders who had attended the programme, and observed an introductory session on the group delivered to two new and two existing members. Four other participants had not attended because of childcare difficulties. The style of the two facilitators was relaxed but authoritative, and highly responsive to the needs of the group. The facilitators worked well with one another.

Resettlement services

Through the Gate services are provided directly by CRC staff in Her Majesty's Prisons Hewell, Featherstone and Eastwood Park. Provision includes basic custody screenings and resettlement plans, with onward referral to required services. The provision involves Willowdene, which provides the Self-Awareness and Relationship Management (SARM) programme, both before and after release; and YSS services, including mentoring, for released prisoners. Other Willowdene services are also available as part of post-sentence supervision.

Working environment

The CRC has invested in good-quality accommodation for the new offices it acquired following separation from the NPS. This includes suites of safe and private interview rooms, and ample space for delivering group programmes, with separate 'break-out' rooms and refreshment facilities. The CRC remains co-located with the NPS in Hereford.

Reporting centres operate in some smaller towns. Staff have been given laptops to access case records remotely, although additional machines were needed to improve

the resilience of this facility. Other IT difficulties included staff being unable to print documents for use in sessions with offenders, and restrictions on internet use that prevented access to information and materials required for legitimate work.

There were widespread problems in communicating with external organisations in relation to specific cases because information could only be sent to criminal justice secure email accounts, even where other agencies had alternative secure accounts.

Quality assurance

The CRC is running a rigorous programme of audits that looks at a different aspect of work each month. Findings from these are fed back to staff, but some focused primarily on performance targets rather than improving professional practice. The relentless nature of this audit programme, with its ever-changing focus, has made it difficult for middle managers and their teams to use the results to make sustainable changes to practice and improve individual performance.

In addition to the HMPPS national offender survey, exit questionnaires are used for those completing unpaid work and accredited programmes. Supply agreements require Willowdene and YSS to issue feedback forms at the end of each session, but this is a recognised gap in relation to other provision. YSS produces a comprehensive quarterly report for the CRC that demonstrates impact and progress in individual cases. Apart from this, the CRC was not routinely monitoring the quality of services provided through its supply chain partners. The CRC has produced briefings for staff to set out its expectations in relation to practice and quality for various areas of work, such as RARs and home visits, but there were insufficient checks on compliance with these expectations.

The NPS is a relatively new national, regionalised organisation. Operational services are delivered in-house, save for those commissioned from the CRC. Staff are drawn mainly from the former probation trusts. The NPS is part-way through an ambitious programme, known as E3⁸, to standardise processes nationally.

Phase one of E3 has now been achieved. Phase two involves the roll-out from July 2017 of the new Offender Management Model in prisons, where greater numbers of probation practitioners will be deployed into prisons with a view to improving the integration of the custodial and community stages of sentences.

Leadership and management

West Mercia forms part of the Midlands division of the NPS. It consists of a single cluster of the four LDUs of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Worcestershire.

Although there was a large senior management team in the days of the probation

8 National Probation Service (2016) E3 Operating Model, (Effectiveness, Efficiency and Excellence).

trust, at the time of the inspection the four LDUs were headed by a single senior LDU manager. Just as we have found in other NPS divisions, spans of managerial control were extensive. The Head of the LDU Cluster (LDUC) was supported by a deputy, a business manager, eight operational senior probation officers (SPOs), and a Personality Disorder Project lead SPO. The NPS Probation Divisional Director was responsible for nine LDUCs. Many key management functions, such as oversight of sex offender groupwork and approved premises, were held centrally in the division.

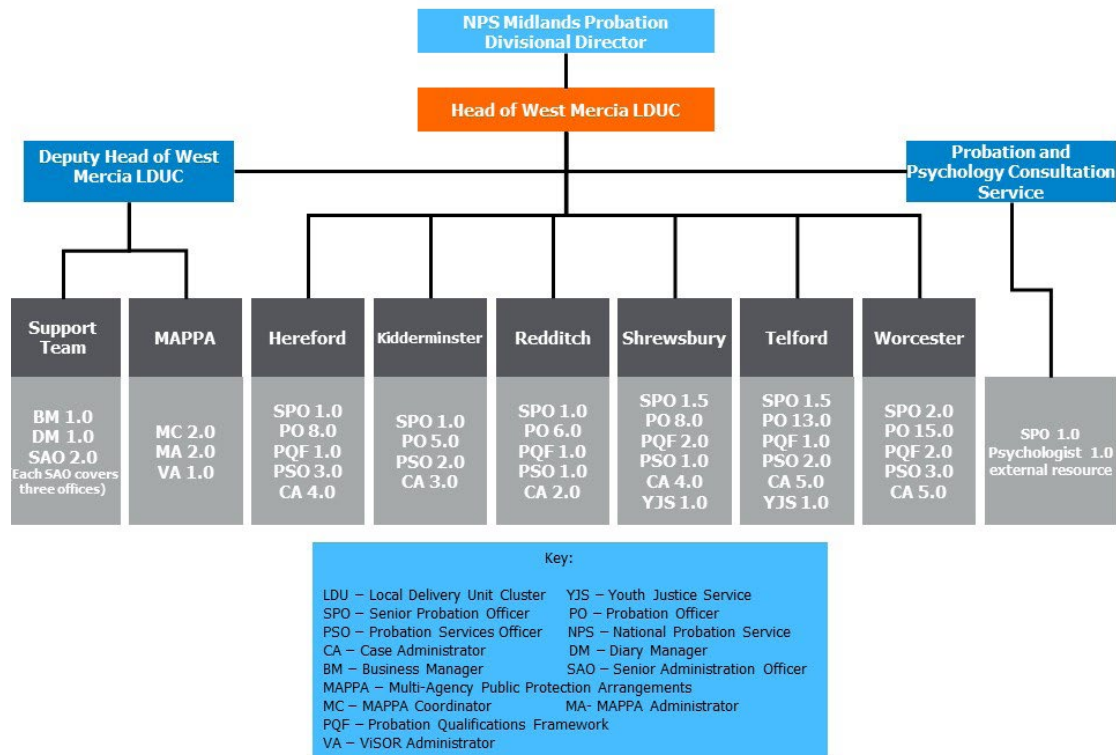


Figure 1.3: Organogram of NPS Midlands Division West Mercia Cluster

The West Mercia LDUC is the largest geographically within the division. Because of the area's rural nature and the LDUC's comparatively stable staff group, organisational arrangements had changed little since the probation trust. Many staff had felt keenly the separation from colleagues now working in the CRC, and regretted the loss of strong local links with partners and other agencies.

Staff shortages, reduced availability of external resources, and the challenges of the geography had hampered the progress of change, such as in increasing the proportion of court reports produced on the day of sentence and in raising the quality of work generally. Although divisional performance against quality targets has improved, West Mercia had not kept pace with other LDUCs in the division.

Staffing and caseloads

The average caseload of the responsible officers within our NPS sample was 50 cases per full-time equivalent responsible officer. This equated to average CRC caseloads but, as such, did not take into account the different nature of the NPS caseload.

Data produced by the NPS from the national workload management tool showed an average workload for the area of 128%, against the national benchmark of 100%. There were wide variations in this figure between offices, suggesting that the organisation was struggling to balance staffing resources. NPS caseloads in West Mercia were generally higher than we have seen elsewhere and had risen by 21% over three years. Workloads and staffing capacity were under active review across the area at the time of the inspection. Figures supplied by the NPS showed a higher level of sickness than in the CRC. Monthly absence rates for October 2016 to June 2017 indicated an upward trend ranging between 4.6% and 16.0%.

Staff have formal supervision meetings every four to eight weeks, although some remarked that they never received notes of such meetings.

Training was driven by policy rather than based on developing individual skills. Staff felt that it was designed to get them to comply with processes to meet targets rather than to develop skills to achieve productive outcomes. Staff complained that e-learning was difficult to use on the IT system provided, and consisted of *“just off the shelf stuff”*. Training had been provided in child safeguarding and domestic abuse, but there was a need for further training in risk assessment for PSOs.

Available services

The majority of services are provided in-house. Sex offender group programmes are managed through a division-wide approach developed by NPS Midlands, which is being adopted as the national delivery model. Arrangements are consistent across the area; there are no reported difficulties with programme waiting times, and completion targets are met.

Many of the key services that the CRC has procured through contractual arrangements with external partnerships are also available to the NPS to purchase through the rate card arrangement. There are some restrictions: the Willowdene project is available for NPS offenders, but not for sex offenders and those demonstrating significant levels of violence. YSS is also bought for NPS offenders through the CRC rate card, and for a greater proportion of NPS cases than had initially been thought likely.

The NPS experienced the same difficulties as the CRC in accessing services from statutory authorities such as health and housing, particularly given constraints on partners' respective budgets.

As with the CRC, a range of services are available for women who have offended, and similarly, these are localised and vary in quality, as they did in the past. The NPS recognised the need to obtain improved segmented data on the number and nature of women offenders across the area.

Working environment

Despite its smaller caseload, the NPS operates from more offices in West Mercia than the CRC. In the main, it occupies the original trust offices. These have been vacated by the CRC, except in Hereford, where the CRC and NPS remain co-located.

Quality assurance

The NPS division produces monthly performance reports against measures for each LDUC. The process relates mostly to processes rather than outcomes. At the time of the inspection, the division was focusing on ETE recording. There were plans to look in more detail at impact and outcomes in the future. West Mercia had implemented the nationally produced tools for reviewing the quality of parole reports, risk of serious harm assessments and risk management plans.

Each cluster has an assigned quality development officer (QDO) to improve professional practice. At the time of the inspection, the cluster was waiting for its QDO to start in post.

3. An evaluation of the quality of probation services in West Mercia

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

Protecting the public

CRC effectiveness

The quality of the CRC's work to protect those at risk of harm was poor and left some victims vulnerable. This was particularly concerning in cases of domestic abuse and those involving the safeguarding of children. There was insufficient management oversight to identify and rectify these problems. Some practitioners required more training and support to improve their practice in work to protect the public.

Assessment and planning

In our sample of cases, the large majority were assessed as posing a medium risk of serious harm to others, with the remainder assessed as low risk. This demonstrated a notably higher level of risk within the West Mercia caseload than we have found elsewhere. In nearly all cases, this level had been correctly identified throughout the period of supervision.

However, we found that the quality of assessments and plans to address risk of harm was poor. Less than half those we inspected were of a sufficient standard, markedly lower than in other Quality & Impact inspections undertaken to date. Deficiencies included insufficient regard for previous convictions or behaviour. In some cases, we found that the assessment and management of risk of harm had been hampered by a lack professional curiosity by the responsible officer, who had not been sufficiently inquisitive about the offender and their circumstances.

It was CRC policy to assign domestic abuse cases and those involving looked after children or child protection concerns to POs only. Other medium risk of serious harm cases were assigned to PSOs, but this approach depended on good screening being carried out at the point of assignment. This did not always happen, and we found cases that had been assigned in error to the 'wrong' grade of responsible officer, as in the following example:

Poor practice example: *We met with a newly appointed PSO who had been reallocated a batch of cases transferred from a member of staff who was leaving. She had received only two formal supervision sessions in her first five months, and there had been little formal oversight of her cases until the inspection was announced. She discovered subsequently that some of the reallocated cases featured domestic abuse or child protection concerns, and should have been transferred to a qualified PO.*

In some cases, there had been a delay in the CRC receiving a response from children's social care services to initial safeguarding inquiries, but there was rarely evidence of this information being actively pursued. To counter this problem in Telford, a member of staff had been located in the children's social care services department one half day per week to enable checks to be carried out and to exchange information with local CRC staff.

Delivery

In more than half of relevant cases, the work delivered by the responsible officer was not sufficiently focused on protecting those at risk of harm. The lack of planning noted earlier often led to reactive work. In a small proportion of cases, some of the work was delivered by external providers; it had been sufficiently focused on public protection in less than half of them. In four relevant cases, issues related to risk of harm had not been prioritised and work done to address them was not of a good enough standard.

It was CRC policy that home visits should be undertaken in domestic abuse cases: responsible officers were expected to undertake at least four visits per month across their whole caseload. We saw some effective use of home visiting, but very little of it overall. We also met some women offenders who said they had been promised home visits in their induction meeting but these had not happened.

The BBR programme was the main intervention for domestic abusers, but in some cases the waiting time was up to a year, especially for those who could only attend at their nearest venue. As an alternative, some of the work covered by the programme could be undertaken on an individual basis, but this would not be accompanied by corresponding input from a women's safety worker.

Some responsible officers were unclear about what was expected of them in relation to child safeguarding and attending 'child in need' meetings for cases with single unpaid work requirements.

***Poor practice example:** Gary had assaulted his ex-partner when she had her child in her arms, and then bombarded her with 300 text messages a day. This was followed by a further assault and breach of a restraining order. He was released from the resulting prison sentence on licence but there was little sign that any offence-focused work had been undertaken either in custody or post-release.*

The original responsible officer had left in March, but Gary was not advised of this and was not seen between March and June.

Checks on domestic abuse call-outs and for any children's social care input were said to have been requested at start of the licence but there was no audit trail for these. They were not on the file, and they had not been followed up.

A new responsible officer carried out a home visit shortly before the inspection and completed an OASys review.

Reviewing progress and measuring impact

In only half of the cases sampled had there been sufficient review of progress in managing risk of harm and, where required, an appropriate response to changing circumstances in relation to risk of harm.

Poor practice example: A review of Darren's case was completed shortly before the inspection, following recent management oversight of the case. The review should have been completed much earlier, as there had been several changes in circumstances, including a change of responsible officer when child protection and domestic abuse issues became apparent. At that earlier time, Darren had formed a new relationship with a woman with young children who was possibly pregnant, and there had been a domestic abuse incident involving a police call-out.

There had also been a subsequent incident where Darren was arrested for possessing a knife and assaulting a police officer following a drug overdose. He was later referred for mental health treatment.

We saw no evidence of management oversight in most of the inspected cases between the start of the order or licence in October 2016 and the announcement of our inspection in May 2017. Management oversight of casework – where it *did* occur – was largely reactive. We also found little evidence of the use of professional judgement and reviews by responsible officers. This was particularly concerning given that more than three-quarters of the case sample were assessed as posing a medium risk of serious harm to others.

Impact and potential impact

The responsible officer had taken all reasonable action to keep the offender's risk of harm to others to a minimum in just over half of the cases inspected. Overall, sufficient progress had been made to minimise the risk of harm posed in just over one-third of cases. This proportion is markedly lower than in the other Quality & Impact inspections undertaken so far, for which the average is 52%.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Domestic abuse cases and those with looked after children or child protection concerns were assigned to POs.	1.	The quality of initial assessments and sentence planning was insufficient.
	It was CRC policy to undertake home visits in domestic abuse cases.	2.	There were delays in children's social care services' responses to child safeguarding inquiries.
		3.	Insufficient home visits were undertaken.
		4.	There were long waiting times to start BBR.

NPS effectiveness

The quality of the NPS's work to protect those at risk of harm was mixed. The service was not reviewing cases sufficiently often, or well enough; however, sufficient progress been made in minimising the risk of harm posed in more than three-quarters of the sampled cases. MAPPA were working well.

Assessment and planning

In our sample of cases, we assessed three-quarters as posing a high risk of serious harm to others, with the remainder assessed as medium risk. This was much higher than the overall figure for other Quality & Impact inspections undertaken so far, for which less than half posed a high or very high risk of serious harm. As with the CRC's caseload, neither the NPS, CRC or ourselves could explain why the risk profile of the West Mercia NPS caseload should be higher than elsewhere. In all but one case the risk of serious harm level had been identified correctly throughout the period of supervision.

The assessment of the risk of harm posed to others was good enough in nearly all the cases we inspected, and planning to manage the risk of harm was sufficient in more than three-quarters.

In some instances, however, there was no copy of the case allocation system (CAS) form completed by the NPS prior to cases being allocated to the CRC.

Delivery

The work delivered by the responsible officer was not sufficiently focused on protecting those at risk of harm in one-quarter of relevant cases. Where work was delivered by external providers, it had been sufficiently focused on public protection in most of them.

Staff noted that the availability of places on the BBR programme run by the CRC had improved and waiting times reduced. For cases that were unsuitable for groupwork, the NPS had a domestic abuse workbook for use with individuals, which was similar in content to BBR.

Approved premises are a valuable resource in the management and resettlement of those offenders who pose the highest risk of harm. The only approved premises in West Mercia – Braley House hostel – rarely had vacancies. However, all 19 approved premises in the division were now being managed through a central referral unit, to ensure that the places were allocated to maximise their benefit.

MAPPA and ViSOR

The MAPPA scheme used an integrated approach, co-located with police IOM teams and the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) units. There were good working relationships with the police. An experienced MAPPA coordinator at middle manager grade chaired all Level 2 and 3 boards, which provided consistency in delivery and an independent overview of all MAPPA cases. He also had lead responsibility for training on all MAPPA-related business. The standing panel members for Level 3 reviews were at a higher grade than for those at Level

2 (head of service and detective chief inspector); this ensured that resources were allocated to where they were most needed. A recent and positive development had been the involvement of IOM in all MAPPA Level 2 cases. This has improved joint supervision of these cases.

Our sample included 14 cases that were eligible for MAPPA. Of these, only 2 were managed at Level 2 (for cases requiring active multi-agency input). The remainder were managed at Level 1. We judged that all were managed at the correct level. Level 1 MAPPA cases were generally well managed, with all the normal multi-agency support in place, including the use of approved premises. In the two applicable cases, MAPPA contributed sufficiently to keeping people safe.

Practitioners and managers spoke positively about the operation of MAPPA at Level 2. Problem areas included lack of input from housing, in terms of both inconsistent attendance and inability to provide practical assistance; and children's social care services because of inconsistent attendance. More than one person spoke of problems with cases at Level 3 not benefiting from additional resources, and inappropriate referrals being made into the arrangements to deal with critical public protection cases as a result.

The West Mercia Head of Service was aware of difficulties with the ViSOR. Staff said that it was not used proactively and that there was a lack of clarity about how it should be used.

Reviewing progress and measuring impact

In almost half of the cases sampled, responsible officers had not reviewed progress well enough or sufficiently frequently in relation to the risk of harm individuals posed. For cases that required a response to changing circumstances in relation to risk of harm, the response was insufficient in nearly half.

Reviews of the impact of accredited programmes and improvements in protective factors such as employment were not sufficiently regular or thorough. We were concerned to find that there had been no review of an individual sentenced for an offence of rape three months after the start of his supervision. The following case also lacked attention to the need to review progress:

Poor practice example: Ben had been released on licence following imprisonment for carrying an offensive weapon. On licence, he continued to abuse alcohol and drugs but did not reoffend.

Little offence-focused work was completed by the responsible officer. There had been no exploration of the triggers to Ben's offending or why he felt the need to protect himself from others by carrying weapons.

The current situation of Ben's ex-partner and children in relation to his previous domestic abuse had not been investigated with either Ben or with children's social care services. There was no review of the case to consider any new risks that might be posed to them or others when Ben said he was homeless and his drugs worker reported he had been asking about their address.

Despite this lack of reviewing, all reasonable action had been taken by the responsible officer to keep the offender's risk of harm to a minimum in three-quarters of the cases inspected. Where work was delivered by external providers, the provider had taken all reasonable action in almost all cases. The following case illustrates this being done well.

Good practice example: Mustafa was on licence following a custodial sentence for sexual offences against children. All reasonable action had been taken by the responsible officer, the IOM police officer, children's social care services and the charity Circles of Support and Accountability to keep his risk of harm to girls to a minimum.

The responsible officer had completed an individual programme of structured work to address thinking skills and attitudes towards offending. Mustafa's access to the internet, public libraries and attendance at mosque had been restricted, and his contact with his girls had been supervised. He had been accommodated away from his family, and Circles of Support and Accountability had helped him to reintegrate into the community.

Sufficient progress had been made in minimising the risk of harm posed in more than three-quarters of cases overall. This proportion is markedly higher than in the other Quality & Impact inspections undertaken so far, for which the average is just less than two-thirds.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Risk of harm assessment and planning were sufficient.	1.	There was insufficient focus on public protection in delivering interventions.
2.	MAPPA were managed well.	2.	The use of ViSOR required improvement.

The CRC and NPS working together

Working relationships between the CRC and NPS, children's social care services and the police supported effective arrangements for tackling domestic abuse and cases with a high likelihood of reoffending.

Inter-agency working

West Mercia Police and the children's social care services in the area held daily triage discussions to review new domestic abuse cases coming to the police's attention. Written notifications to the CRC and NPS enabled them to check all new domestic abuse call-outs against their caseloads. However, the process excluded incidents assessed as low risk by the police, and these could only be identified through routine enquiry checks to the police.

The NPS requested information from children's social care services and police domestic abuse units at the pre-sentence stage, but in many cases, we found no clear record of this request having been made or of the actions taken by the NPS or CRC to follow up responses and record the outcome. Replies to cases subsequently allocated to the CRC but returned to the NPS, which had initiated them, were not being forwarded to the CRC. The CRC and NPS were setting up arrangements through the Local Safeguarding Children Board so that the CRC would not request information that had already been sent to the NPS.

Integrated Offender Management

We found good arrangements for IOM. Worcester had started piloting a national approach to bring more MAPPA and domestic abuse cases within the scope of IOM, and to integrate IOM work more closely with the police MOSOVO teams.

CRC and NPS staff were co-located with the police at Kidderminster police station and the NPS planned to co-locate NPS and police IOM staff in either police or NPS premises at all locations.

IOM cases had an intensive level of contact, with busy weekly programmes of activity. We saw evidence of good-quality relationships between offenders and responsible officers, probably enhanced by the frequency of reporting and relatively low level of turnover of IOM staff. Some offenders with substance misuse problems were left vulnerable to relapse, however, due to insufficient input from drug agencies; instead, they had to rely on their own efforts to remain motivated towards a drug-free lifestyle.

We met offenders who readily acknowledged that the IOM input had made a significant difference to them, compared with their previous experience of probation.

Risk escalation

Only one case in our sample had been escalated from the CRC to the NPS.

Some NPS staff thought the level of referrals for escalation from the CRC was too

high, and proportionately more compared with other parts of the division. CRC figures for the year ending March 2017 showed that 45 cases had been referred for escalation in West Mercia, of which 39 (87%) were accepted. The high proportion accepted suggests that the process was working correctly, in line with the joint protocol between the NPS and CRC covering risk escalation.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Domestic abuse and child safeguarding cases were identified effectively through inter-agency processes.	1.	Tracking and recording of information requests to children's social care services and police were inadequate.
2.	Joint working with police MOSOVO teams was good.		
3.	There was frequent contact in some IOM cases.		

Reducing reoffending

CRC effectiveness

The quality of assessment and planning by the CRC was poor. A good range of interventions was available, but the quality of case management was inconsistent and the CRC was not effective in delivering sufficient interventions to reduce reoffending.

Unpaid work requirements were being delivered effectively.

Assessment and planning

The CRC had met the HMPPS target for timeliness of completion of initial assessments following assignment, but these were sufficiently comprehensive in only one-third of the cases we inspected. This proportion is markedly lower than in the other Quality & Impact inspections undertaken so far, for which the average is nearly two-thirds. We found a lack of consistency as to where particular documents used in assessments were attached within the case management system, nDelius, and this may have contributed to sub-standard assessments.

There was a clear sentence plan in place within an appropriate time in less than half of the cases we inspected. This was in line with the results from the HMPPS national offender survey. Overall, planning at the start of the order or licence sufficiently addressed the factors we identified as being associated with reoffending in less than two-thirds of the cases.

Planning was slightly better in relation to addressing thinking and behaviour and relationships, two key factors related to domestic abuse, but less good in relation to drug misuse and lifestyle and associates. Planning did not sufficiently recognise or support relevant protective factors, such as employment or positive family relationships, in more than half of the cases sampled. Planning documents frequently failed to mention intended referral to specific agencies or services.

The CRC's RAPP was a promising and innovative tool to help staff produce quickly a simple and accessible initial assessment, risk management plan and sentence plan. While RAPPs were completed quickly, as intended, we found very few examples of good-quality RAPPs or OASys assessments. The CRC had undertaken a quality audit of sentence plans and had recently rolled out generic training in how to formulate them. It planned to abandon the RAPP and revert to using OASys for initial assessments and plans.

Delivery

The poor quality of work in assessment and planning was reflected in a lack of progress in delivering required interventions. Sufficient progress had been made in less than one-third of the cases by the time of the inspection, approximately nine months into the order or licence period. In the majority of cases with little or no progress, responsible officers had not made enough effort or lacked suitable

interventions. In the other cases, the offender had not engaged with supervision, despite sufficient effort by the responsible officer. In many cases, contact logs contained only minimal information about the work being undertaken by other parties.

Overall, sufficient interventions had actually been delivered to address the identified needs of the case in less than half of the instances where an intervention was required. We saw some cases where appropriate services were available to meet the offender's needs but no referral had been made.

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 sufficient interventions delivered
Thinking and behaviour	42
Drug misuse	35
Alcohol misuse	44
Relationships	31
Emotional well-being	40
Lifestyle and associates	33
Attitudes to offending	40
Accommodation	60
Employment, training and education	33

There had been no recent analysis of the offending-related and other needs of the CRC offender population. Managers observed that a localised analysis would be useful given that needs were likely to vary across the CRC area.

Most of the CRC's interventions were delivered as part of a RAR. This created difficulties where the court had not set a high enough maximum number of RAR days for the desired programme of activity. However, in most of the cases we inspected where not enough interventions had been delivered, the maximum number of contacts had not been reached.

Interventions

The CRC had access to a variety of interventions. For use with individuals, there was a range of workbook materials available electronically, including materials on alcohol misuse, anger management and general thinking skills. We saw minimal evidence of these being used in the cases we inspected, and some practitioners were not convinced of their quality. Practitioners had also developed some in-house group programmes.

Accommodation options were generally limited. There was only one hostel in West Mercia to which homeless people could be directly admitted, but the CRC had found offenders places in a Nacro-run accommodation project.

The CRC worked with Ixion for employment, training and education services. We met with one offender who had completed their railway track maintenance skills programme and gone on to secure employment with a contractor for Network Rail.

Accredited programmes

We observed the delivery of an evening BBR programme session, attended by nine offenders. The two tutors were well prepared, enthusiastic and committed to their role. We judged the session to have been delivered well, in line with accredited programme methodology. Before the session, we met with three of the participants, who spoke positively about their experience of the programme. One remarked:

“I find it useful. Whatever has happened you can learn from it. Makes you think about things. Chance to reflect. Not as bad as I thought”.

Another participant said:

“You learn a lot about yourselves and how to stop bad situations. It’s making me think about my life differently. They help you to think before you act”.

Unpaid work

We found unpaid work being delivered well, and underpinned by a welcome commitment to making sure offenders benefited from the experience.

Unpaid work was now being provided on a minimum of four days per week at all locations, although this had only been the case since March 2017. The CRC had been slow to respond to the national requirement that all unemployed offenders should be required to work their ordered hours at a rate of at least four days per week. Work was available on Sundays, but for some offenders limited public transport made getting to worksites or CRC pick-up points difficult.

We were pleased to find offenders being encouraged to work their required number of hours quickly. We found minimal incidence of offenders being unable to work because placements were unavailable on the day. This is often a problem elsewhere.

The unpaid work units had a good range of work projects available, including charity shops, and group placements, mainly on outdoor environmental projects. The CRC aimed to make use of the national allowance for up to 20% of the ordered hours to be used for activities, such as completing assessments or classroom learning, to support the learning and accreditation of skills gained through undertaking unpaid work itself. Many of the unpaid work placements provided useful employment experience. Practitioners had been asked to make greater use of the opportunities to learn skills but felt insufficiently informed about how to go about it. The CRC had not been able to set up arrangements for skills accreditation on any individual placements or internally provided group placements.

We spoke to five offenders who were undertaking unpaid work within groups. All thought they were treated well and with respect by the supervisors, and individual circumstances such as paid employment were taken into account in arranging work days. They found the work enjoyable and saw its value to the local community.

Managers and staff responsible for delivering unpaid work were aware of the particular issues to be considered in providing suitable work for women offenders, but we found inconsistent understanding of the CRC's actual policy for providing placements for women. Historically, women had only been allocated to individual placements, but this was no longer the practice. The CRC was developing guidance to support the safe operation of mixed-gender work groups, and was committed to giving women a choice about their placement. It was intending to recruit an additional female supervisor to facilitate this. However, some practitioners were less clear about the current policy that group placements should already be available for women at all locations, and the women offenders we met had all been allocated individual placements.

Reviewing progress

Reviews had not been carried out at all or well enough in more than half of the cases. In a similar proportion, planning had not been adjusted to make sure that outcomes could be achieved. Less than half of the reviews were based on sufficient information from contracted providers and partner organisations.

The complete absence of reviews in many cases was a concern given that for those in our sample the average length of the period of supervision was 15 months. A review at some point within the first four to eight months would have provided a check on the rate of progress towards achieving objectives. In many cases, reviews had not been completed following changes of circumstance or on transfer to a new responsible officer. The following case exemplifies what can happen when a case is not kept under regular review:

Poor practice example: *Martin was on a community order for theft, with a requirement to complete the TSP.*

He had eventually dropped out of contact, and the programmes team decided he was unsuitable for the TSP. No alternative plan to address thinking skills was put in place, and there was no plan to deal with the outstanding accredited programme requirement.

Contact log entries relating to other interventions contained little or no detail of what he was doing, or even what the intervention was and who was delivering it. The responsible officer was unclear about precisely what had been achieved.

Impact and potential impact

We judged that there had been sufficient progress towards achieving the desired outcome for just over one-quarter of the factors associated with offending in the cases we inspected. In a few cases, there had been a deterioration, while for

the majority of factors there had been insufficient progress. This was particularly concerning in cases involving domestic abuse.

In more than half of the cases, there was evidence that the offender had been convicted, cautioned or had another out-of-court disposal for an offence committed since the start of sentence or release on licence. This was higher than the rate of reoffending in other areas.

All offenders undertaking RARs at Willowdene who completed the programme gained at least one nationally accredited qualification, ranging from Entry Level to Level 2. Willowdene set a target for all participants to gain at least two qualifications, and most completing the programme gained ten. More important than the specific subject of the qualifications was the increased self-esteem that came as a result of participation. The responsiveness of the programme contributed to a high retention rate, quoted as 84% of those starting.

One offender we met reported how her seven-week residential placement at Willowdene had enabled her to wean herself off excessive alcohol consumption, while another attending two days per week said:

“It’s changed my life. I have not got a bad word to say about it. The staff are really good: very understanding”.

This woman was proud to show us her bird-box that she had made. It was clear that being able to produce this item had boosted her self-esteem.

At the gym project, participating offenders completed an assessment at the start and end of the programme, administered through Sports England, to measure any changes in thinking and behaviour. Offenders from the first cohort (September to December 2016) indicated that they had increased in self-confidence, contributing to constructive activity and communication skills.

We spoke with two offenders who had successfully completed the gym programme, including the following individual:

Good practice example: *Jack, a 21-year-old with a significant history of drug offences and theft, had received a community order with 25 RAR days. After attending the gym programme, he had returned to repeat the course as a volunteer graduate mentor. Having become motivated to pursue a career in sports and physical activity, he had embarked on a qualification in fitness instruction. Jack told us:*

“Just doing exercise sheets doesn’t work. This course actually gets you doing stuff. It makes you feel more positive and less bored about everything. I feel better about myself and less anxious and I’ve used the exercise to help cope with anxiety”.

In some cases, offenders undertaking unpaid work in charity shop placements continued to work in the shop as a volunteer after their ordered hours had been completed.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	There was a good-quality range of external services developed in partnership with the previous trust and the CRC.	1.	The quality of assessment and planning was poor.
2.	The range and quality of accredited programmes were good.	2.	Insufficient work was done to reduce offending.
		3.	There was insufficient recording of feedback from service providers.
		4.	Reviewing of progress was insufficient.

NPS effectiveness

The NPS's court liaison work required improvement. Pre-sentence reports were not of a consistently high enough standard, and court liaison work overall did not support the effective assessment of cases before allocation. Post-allocation assessment and planning to reduce reoffending were sufficient, although more progress should have been made in some cases. More use could have been made of interventions available from the CRC. There was effective delivery of good-quality NPS interventions, but insufficient reviewing of progress.

Work in court and allocating cases

We inspected 29 court reports prepared by the NPS in West Mercia, of which 19 were for cases subsequently allocated to the CRC. Most had been produced at court on the day of sentence.

Nearly one-quarter of all the reports did not sufficiently identify and analyse the areas linked to offending. In higher-risk cases subsequently allocated to the NPS there was better analysis than in lower-risk cases that were allocated to the CRC.

More positively, report proposals focused on the right offending-related issues in most cases.

The court liaison staff we met had sufficient skills to undertake assessments and to present them in court. They had good knowledge and understanding of available interventions. Sometimes, the details of the index offence and previous convictions, and patterns of offending behaviour, were not analysed or explored sufficiently. NPS staff were aware that mental health and learning disabilities were not always

identified properly in court reports. Deficiencies in court reporting resulted from staff not having enough time to interview defendants and the use of agency workers to cover for shortages of NPS staff at some courts.

The proportion of court reports produced on the day of sentence in magistrates' courts had increased from 47% to 75% over the past 18 months. This was still short of the national target, which required a further 15% to be produced either on the day or in a short written format⁹. This appeared to be due to continuing difficulties in court staffing, and operational arrangements for delivery of court services.

There was insufficient access to information in Worcester magistrates' court, with no direct access for NPS staff to court IT systems, and poor information flows from the court and Crown Prosecution Service. This led to difficulties in assessing offending, and domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns. At Worcester Crown Court, there was insufficient access to appropriate interviewing facilities. These factors contributed to inadequate reports being produced on the day, or to cases having to be adjourned to ensure that a good-quality report was provided.

One sentencer told us:

“We do see some awful reports. Some are inconsistent and not worth the paper they are written on... Some reports only tell us that he would find custody difficult”.

Senior NPS managers were invited to six-monthly magistrates' forums, but staff observed that changes in the court service had made relationships less personal and reduced their influence.

In our sample of CRC cases, we found that all but one had been correctly allocated by the NPS.

Assessment and planning

Following allocation, there was a sufficient assessment in place within an appropriate time in most of the cases inspected. Similarly, there was a sufficient sentence plan in place within an appropriate time in three-quarters of the cases. Planning at the start of the order or licence sufficiently addressed the factors we identified as being associated with potential reoffending, and recognised or supported relevant protective factors, in all but one case.

Delivery

The implementation of sentence plans was not so good. In one-third of cases, there had been insufficient progress in delivering interventions by the time of the inspection, approximately nine months into the order or licence period. As with the CRC cases, this was due either to insufficient effort by the responsible officer or a lack of suitable interventions. In only one case was a failure to deliver the required interventions due to the offender's lack of engagement with supervision despite sufficient effort by the responsible officer.

⁹ Data provided by the NPS.

While senior NPS managers were clear that NPS cases should be allocated the resources necessary to address their offending, some NPS practitioners were more concerned about budgets and minimising expenditure. As a result, they were not purchasing places on programmes provided by the CRC. This meant that some offenders may not have received the most appropriate intervention to avoid further offending.

Overall, sufficient interventions had been delivered to address the offender's identified needs in more than two-thirds of the instances where an intervention was required.

Interventions

The West Mercia LDUC and the South Staffordshire & Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust had worked in partnership to set up a psychology and probation consultation service. This supported the management of offenders who had difficulties consistent with the diagnosis of personality disorder through a service provided across the whole of West Mercia by probation and health service staff. Routine screening was linked to nDelius reporting to identify cases that had been missed, and positive screenings led to referral to appropriate services. Information and advice were given to responsible officers through case consultation, and opportunities for staff learning and development had been promoted.

The NPS runs the well-established sex offender group programme as well as the Better Lives follow-on programme. The internet sex offender group programme is being replaced with the new Horizons programme. Experienced programme facilitators run groups at various times and locations, with support (to cover for leave, for example) from other staff in the division. Clinical supervision is provided to facilitators at least every six months. For female sex offenders and male cases unsuitable for group programmes, responsible officers were expected to deliver structured work individually using the Maps for Change toolkit.

We received complimentary feedback about the work of the NPS from those who had committed sexual offences. One told us:

“They have given me an opportunity to look in a very forensic and honest way at the short, medium and long-term consequences of offending, and have given me the opportunity to address this in the group, and in my own time after the group. I want to get the most out of this as possible. I cannot speak highly enough of it. I sometimes pinch myself that we have been given the opportunity to address our guilt and look forward in a positive way. The distance that all have come has been marked”.

Another said:

“My life is so different; it has happened slowly... I have been

shown what do to and where to go, and have been supported through it. My PO is so fantastic and supportive. They explain things in a way that they are not speaking to me as a child, but are aware that it is difficult for me to sometimes understand”.

Reviewing progress

Reviews had not been carried out at all or well enough in nearly half of the inspected cases. In a similar proportion, planning had not been adjusted to make sure that outcomes could be achieved. The NPS struggled to gain feedback from the drugs agencies (Addaction and Swanswell), as did the CRC, although this had not been a problem in the cases we inspected. A lack of relevant information from contracted providers and partner organisations had not contributed to poor-quality reviews. The following case shows the benefit of reviewing progress well:

Good practice example: *Andrew had been released on licence following a custodial sentence for sexual offences.*

Over the course of the licence period, supervision plans were reviewed well by the responsible officer. Work was carried out jointly with the police MOSOVO unit to ensure that Andrew was placed in appropriate accommodation following his move from an approved premises. These reviews contributed to reducing his risk of harm and the likelihood of his reoffending through a decision to undertake individual sex offender programme work with him. This offered a more effective means of addressing his thinking and behaviour than continuing on a group programme, to which he had not been suited.

As with the CRC, the complete absence of reviews in many cases was a concern, given the length of supervision already completed. This was all the more so given that the NPS cases posed a higher risk of harm to others, and reviews might have helped to address the lack of progress in delivering required interventions. We found that some cases had not been reviewed following changes of circumstance or on transfer to a new responsible officer. This chimed with what we have found in other NPS divisions.

Impact and potential impact

We judged that there had been sufficient progress towards achieving the desired outcome for just under two-thirds of the factors associated with offending. In two cases, there had been a deterioration, while for the remainder there had been insufficient progress. In more than one-third of the cases, there was evidence that the offender had been convicted, cautioned or had another out-of-court disposal for an offence committed since the start of sentence or release on licence.

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

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Initial assessment and planning were sufficient.	1.	There were insufficient time and facilities to undertake adequate court reports.
		2.	There was insufficient use of available interventions.
		3.	There was insufficient reviewing of progress.

The CRC and NPS working together

The quality of the NPS's court liaison work was not good enough. This impacted on the quality of the CRC's initial assessment and planning, and contributed to the under-use of accredited programme requirements and the making of unsuitable orders.

Information-sharing

In many of the new community sentence cases allocated to the CRC we found that copies of court reports, court orders, CAS documents and/or prosecution papers were either not completed or missing. This was a serious impediment to the CRC completing a timely initial assessment and plan in those cases. The CRC complained that it also resulted in unsuitable orders being made, including unpaid work requirements for people with significant mental health or substance misuse problems, which then had to be returned to court for re-sentencing.

The CRC reported that staff were frequently not told about court appearances by offenders under their supervision. This meant that they did not know the offender had appeared in court, or they had no confirmation of the outcome. The NPS and CRC held regular meetings to address issues relating to allocation and enforcement. These dealt with specific problems in individual cases, but had not been successful in resolving some systemic difficulties.

Accredited programmes

The CRC realised that if it had more referrals for accredited programmes it could reverse the vicious circle of insufficient referrals making the provision less frequent and accessible, resulting in even fewer referrals. Noting that the courts were making fewer accredited programme requirements, the CRC had undertaken an internal audit of its cases last year. It found that the court had not made a requirement in half of those cases that were eligible and suitable for an accredited programme. As a result, the CRC had planned to place staff in court liaison teams to provide information about accredited programmes, to ensure requirements were proposed in every

appropriate case. This arrangement was piloted but the plan was stopped because very little use was made of the facility.

The under-use of accredited programmes requirements by the courts applied to all programmes provided by the CRC, including BBR and DIDs. The CRC had no evidence of a lack of demand. However, the CRC thought that waiting times for BBR might deter some NPS staff from proposing the programme, and that DIDs was being replaced by courts ordering unpaid work where the offender agreed to complete a Department for Transport driving programme.

The CRC was also concerned that inappropriate accredited programme requirements were being made, as the CRC incurred financial penalties for including offenders that did not meet the eligibility criteria. Nonetheless, the NPS had been unable to prevent the court from making some accredited programme requirements for cases that did not meet the necessary eligibility or suitability criteria; moreover, in some instances the court had subsequently refused to remove such requirements when asked to.

The CRC attributed both of these difficulties to the drive for quicker sentencing rather than a widespread lack of knowledge by NPS court liaison staff. One senior manager considered that:

“The push towards same-day sentencing has been devastating. It’s all about getting a report and offender ‘done on the day’, not about getting the right outcome”.

Our recent thematic report on RARs¹⁰ found that the drive by the court service to have cases concluded quickly, and the limited resources of NPS court liaison teams, resulted in NPS liaison officers proposing that RARs were made in cases suitable for accredited programmes. This was because the former could be proposed without an adjournment for detailed inquiries and assessment. Evidence found in the thematic inspection also suggested that sentencers were not always clear about the operational and legal distinctions between accredited programmes and the interventions commonly used as part of RARs.

The CRC noted that, for NPS licence cases, BBR was the only accredited programme being used, but there was no financial incentive for the NPS to work with the CRC to establish the degree to which greater use could be made of BBR or TSP in licence cases.

The CRC had noted that the programme completion rate for NPS cases was lower than for CRC cases, but had not investigated why this might be.

Table 7: Barriers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of reducing reoffending.

Barriers	
1.	Assessment of CRC cases at court by the NPS was inadequate.
2.	Information received on CRC cases on allocation from NPS was insufficient.

Note: For the domain of reducing reoffending there were no identified enablers found for the CRC and NPS working together.

¹⁰ HMI Probation (February 2017) *The Implementation and Delivery of Rehabilitation Activity Requirements*.

Abiding by the sentence

CRC effectiveness

The quality of the CRC's work to ensure sentences were fully implemented was poor. The frequency and enforcement of contact were insufficient, and the number of absences deemed acceptable was too high. As a result, too few offenders completed the work that was required of them. The CRC needed to pay more attention to addressing barriers to offender engagement.

Delivery

Half of the cases in our sample had been supervised by a single responsible officer for the current sentence, and almost all of the remainder had been supervised by either two or three different officers. Only two offenders had been supervised by more than three officers. Most of the women offenders we met had been supervised by a single responsible officer throughout their order or licence. Ordinarily, we find that consistency of responsible officer tends to improve the quality and impact of work: this was not the case here.

We found that one-third of offenders should have been more fully involved in planning for the delivery of their order or licence. In particular, they should have had their diverse needs more fully taken into account, from assessment and planning to delivery and review.

In relevant cases, the responsible officer did not sufficiently identify barriers to the offender's engagement in more than one-third of cases, and did not adequately seek to overcome them in nearly half of the cases.

Poor practice example: *Duncan was on a community order for burglary.*

It was clear from the outset that he could not read or write and that his traveller identity was very important to him. It was disappointing, therefore, that the option to deliver offence-focused work through visual imagery had not been explored. This meant little structured and meaningful offence-focused work had been delivered in the RAR activity sessions.

A greater use of home visiting would have supported engagement with some offenders who lived in isolated locations and those with pre-school children.

We found that the number of appointments offered was not sufficient for the needs of the case in more than one-third of cases. As a result, the CRC had not made sufficient progress in delivering the legal requirements of the order or licence in the same proportion of cases.

In half of the cases, up to five absences had been deemed acceptable by the responsible officer. In nearly half of the cases, there had been five or more acceptable absences, with seven cases having eleven or more. We considered that

this level was much too high. Even if these absences were correctly judged to have been acceptable, such high levels of absence made achieving the planned objectives difficult, and gave these individuals permission to not comply with their sentence. Those cases where the offender's inability to comply persisted should have been returned to court for review, but we saw no evidence of this happening.

Overall, we found that the numbers of absences recorded as unacceptable was low, and noted that in half of the cases no unacceptable absence had been recorded at all. This was consistent with too many absences being viewed as acceptable, and in some cases reflected significant periods where no appointments had been offered at all.

Impact and potential impact

Overall, we considered that in one-third of cases absences and non-compliance had not been responded to effectively. The number of absences had been a barrier to achieving the sentence outcomes of public protection and reduced reoffending in more than one-third of cases.

A little over half of the offenders had abided by their sentence, either without incident or in a few cases following enforcement action or recall. Of the remainder, one-third had not abided by their sentence and had been breached or recalled, and in five cases they had not complied with their sentence but enforcement action had not been taken.

Table 8: Enablers and barriers for the CRC relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	Offenders on unpaid work were able to complete their hours quickly.	1.	Barriers to engagement were not effectively identified and addressed.
2.	The range and quality of accredited programmes were good.	2.	There were insufficient levels of contact to deliver the legal requirements of orders.

Overall, the quality of the NPS's work was good.

Delivery

Sixteen of the twenty-one NPS offenders in our sample had been supervised by a single responsible officer for the current period of supervision. All but one of the remainder had been supervised by either two or three different officers. One had had more than three responsible officers.

We found that almost all offenders had been fully involved in planning for the delivery of their order or licence, and their diverse needs were taken into account in assessment, planning, delivery and review.

In relevant cases, the responsible officer identified barriers to the offender's engagement in all but one case, and sought to overcome barriers in all of them. This compares well with findings from the aggregate of all NPS cases inspected and no doubt reflects the consistency of responsible officer.

We found that the number of appointments offered was sufficient for the individual's needs in all but one case. As a result, the NPS had made sufficient progress in delivering the legal requirements of the order or licence in all but two cases.

In cases where there had been insufficient progress in delivering interventions, this was a consequence of the content of supervision rather than the number of appointments. In half of the cases, up to four absences had been deemed acceptable by the responsible officer, but only three cases had a higher number of acceptable absences.

We saw examples of reporting arrangements tailored to fit with times for religious observance and mobility problems. There was a practice of asking women offenders if they minded being allocated to a male responsible officer, and reassigning them if they said they did. We were concerned that the offender might have objections but feel unable to express these, particularly if asked by the male officer to whom they had already been assigned. We thought they should be offered the option of a female officer as a default, followed by a conversation about being allocated to a male officer where this might be more appropriate to their specific needs.

Some practitioners thought that recording of offenders' diversity factors was not as good as it had been before *Transforming Rehabilitation*, but the performance team was aware of the need to improve this, and sent regular reports of missing information to LDUCs. The performance team was involved in developing a diversity monitoring tool to measure completion of programmes.

Impact and potential impact

Overall, we considered that in all but one case absences and non-compliance had been responded to effectively. Although there could have been more progress towards achieving the desired outcomes in some cases, the number of absences had been a barrier to achieving the sentence outcomes of public protection and reduced reoffending in only two and three cases respectively.

All but two of the offenders had abided by their sentence without the need for enforcement action or recall.

Table 9: Enablers for the NPS relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers	
1.	Offenders were involved in planning their sentence.
2.	Barriers to engagement were effectively identified and addressed.
3.	There were sufficient levels of contact to deliver the legal requirements of orders.
4.	Non-compliance was responded to effectively.

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

The CRC and NPS working together

The CRC and NPS worked well together to enforce court orders where necessary. Progress against enforcement performance targets by both organisations was much improved. Some parts of the NPS had moved to operating enforcement through a centralised process to improve consistency, and there were plans to extend this across West Mercia. Once a decision to pursue enforcement action had been taken, this was instigated promptly by the CRC or NPS.

We were concerned to find that once applications were made to court by the NPS there was a considerable delay in dealing with them. This was caused by listing delays in the courts. It was typical to wait up to six weeks for an initial hearing at magistrates' courts, and up to three months at the Crown Court. This was understandably causing frustration to sentencers, and undermining their confidence in community sentences. However, sentencers we met assumed that these delays were a result of failings by the NPS or CRC and not, as they were, due to court service listing priorities.

Table 10: Enablers and barriers for the CRC and NPS working together relating to the inspection domain of abiding by the sentence.

Enablers		Barriers	
1.	There was improved performance against national targets for enforcement processes.	1.	There were significant delays by the court service in listing enforcement hearings.

Appendix 1: Inspection methodology

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

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

- 78 front-line staff, including responsible officers, and unpaid work and programme staff
- 10 responsible officers within 2 staff focus groups
- 1 Judge and 5 magistrates
- 17 managers within the CRC and NPS
- 21 staff and managers from partner organisations.

We attempted to speak with those offenders who had consented to being contacted. In this inspection, we spoke with 46 offenders (40 from the CRC and 6 from the NPS); 26 were interviewed individually, and 20 in groups. The inspection focused on assessing how the quality of practice contributed to achieving positive outcomes for offenders, 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.

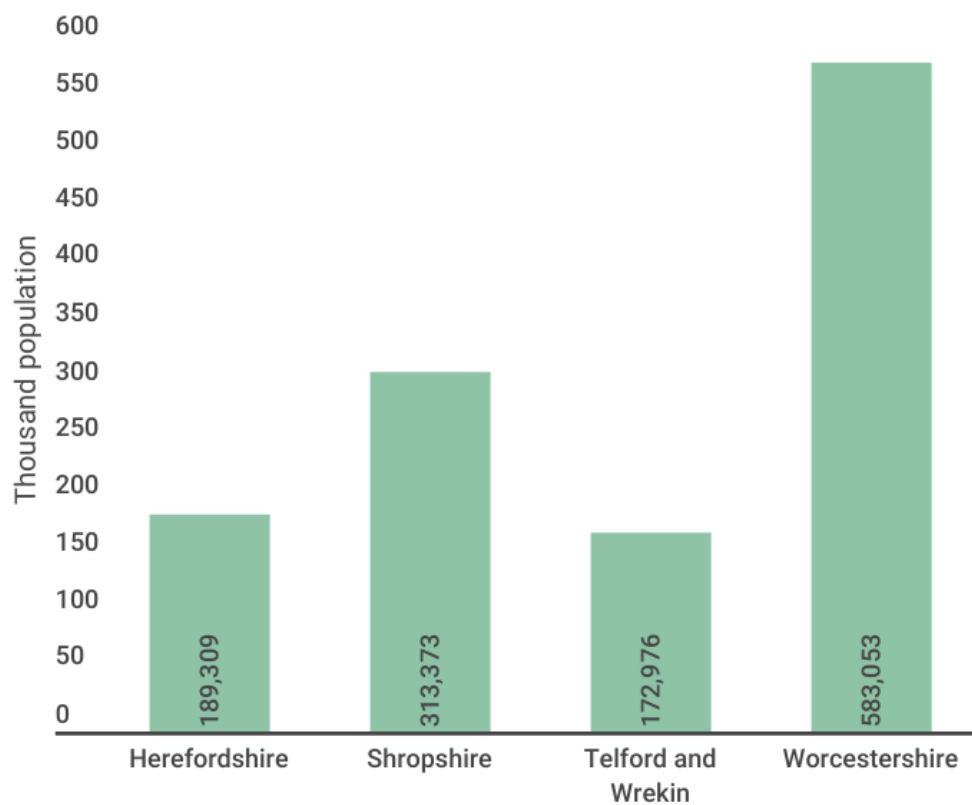
Appendix 2: Background data

This inspection covers West Mercia, which comprises four local authorities: Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Worcestershire.

Population demographics

The population of West Mercia was estimated at 1,258,711 in 2016.

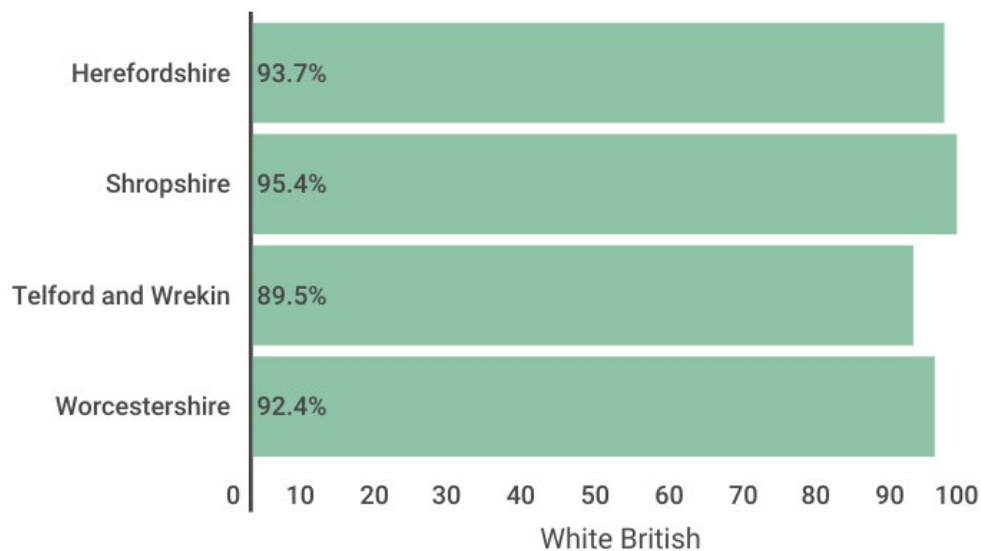
Figure 2.1: Population estimate, mid-2016



Source: Office for National Statistics, June 2017

Shropshire has the highest proportion of white British residents (95.4%) within West Mercia. All four local authorities have a higher proportion than the England and Wales average (80.5%).

Figure 2.2: Ethnicity in West Mercia, 2011 census

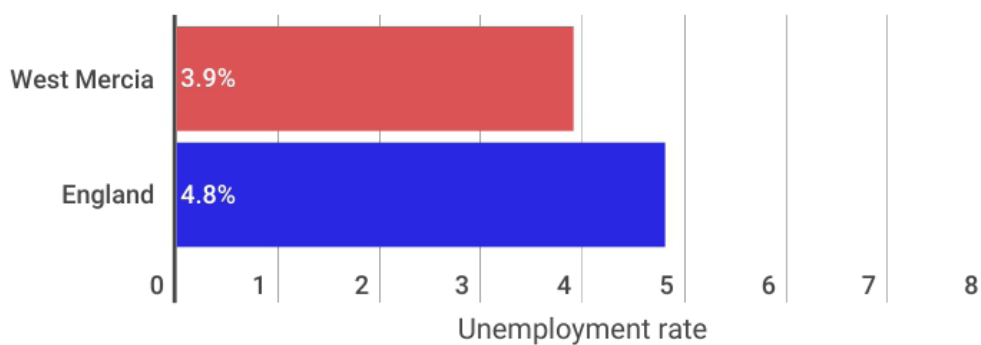


Source: Office for National Statistics, December 2012

Levels of deprivation and crime

Unemployment in West Mercia is lower than the English average (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Unemployment in West Mercia, January 2016 – December 2016

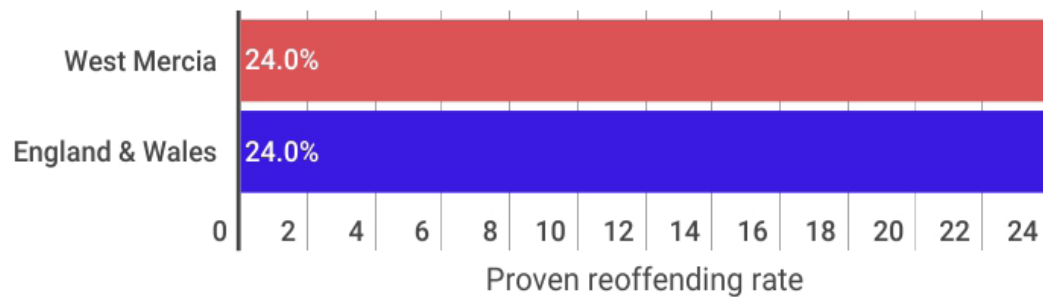


Source: Office for National Statistics, April 2017

Levels of reoffending

The proven reoffending rates for West Mercia are set out in Figure 2.4. They are based on adult offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court or received a caution in the period July 2014 to June 2015. West Mercia has the same reoffending rate as the England and Wales average.

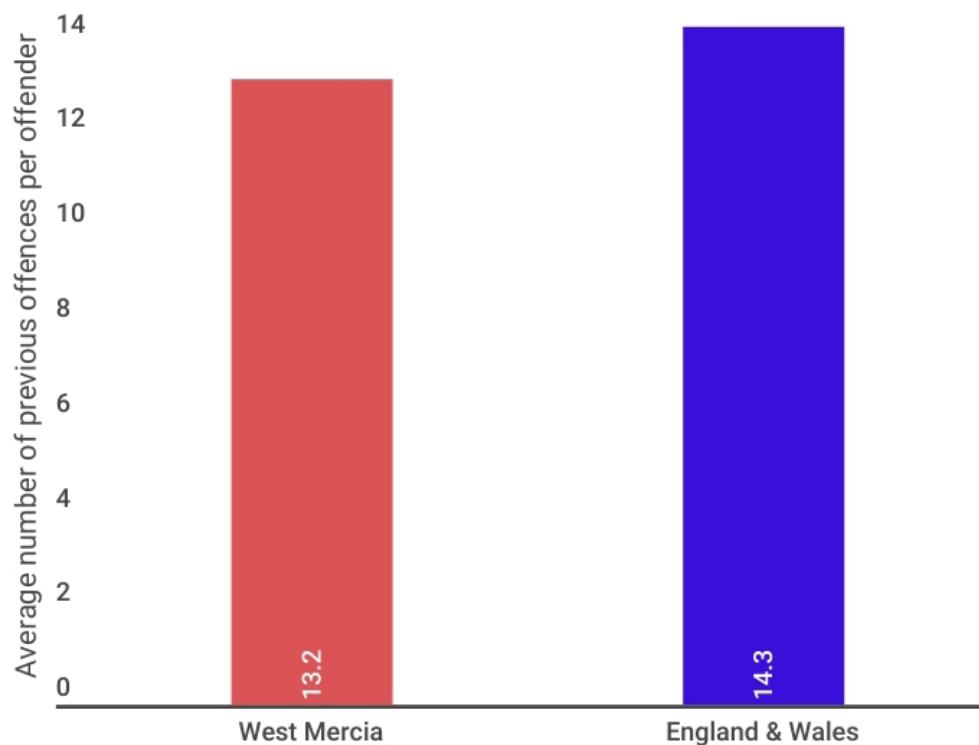
Figure 2.4: Proven reoffending rate, July 2014 to June 2015



Source: Ministry of Justice, April 2017

The West Mercia offender cohort had committed 13.2 previous offences on average, which is lower than the England and Wales average (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Offending histories, July 2014 to June 2015



Source: Ministry of Justice, April 2017

Appendix 3: West Mercia Probation Trust 2012 inspection outcomes

Table 11: Findings scores for the West Mercia Probation Trust during the 2012 inspection.

	Scores from the English regions that had been inspected to that point			Scores for West Mercia
	Lowest	Highest	Average	
'Control' - 'Risk of Harm to others' work <i>(action to protect the public)</i>	64%	83%	74%	82%
'Help' and 'Change' - Likelihood of Reoffending work <i>(individual less likely to reoffend)</i>	62%	82%	73%	81%
'Punish' - Compliance and Enforcement work <i>(individual serves his/her sentence)</i>	69%	86%	79%	83%

We considered this a very creditable set of findings. West Mercia Probation Trust had a reputation for developing innovative partnerships to provide a range of local resources to support offender managers in helping offenders to make positive changes in their lives. We found that this was matched by a strong commitment to public protection, which was to the credit of front-line staff and their managers throughout the trust.

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

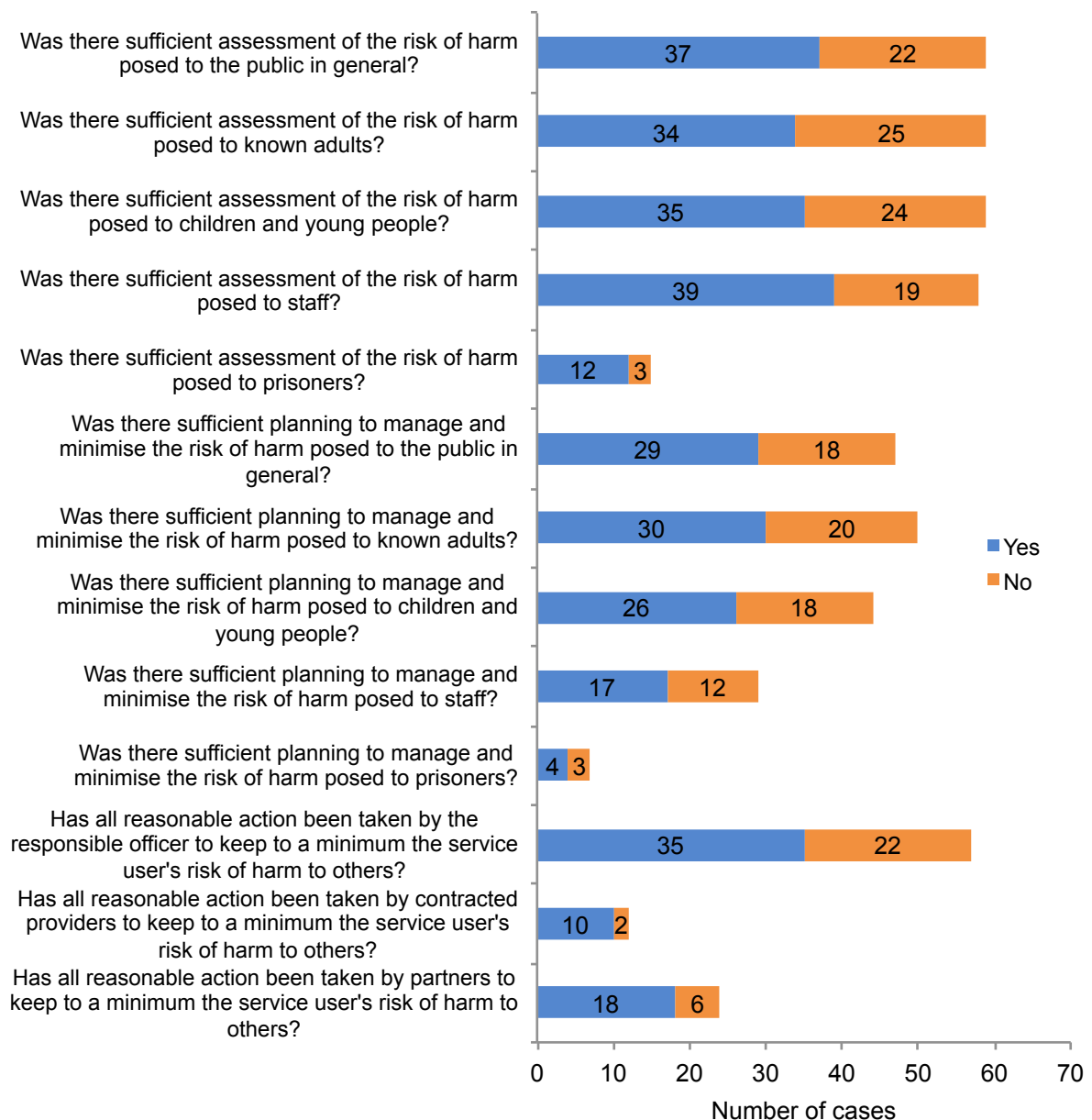


Figure 4.2 Public Protection

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:

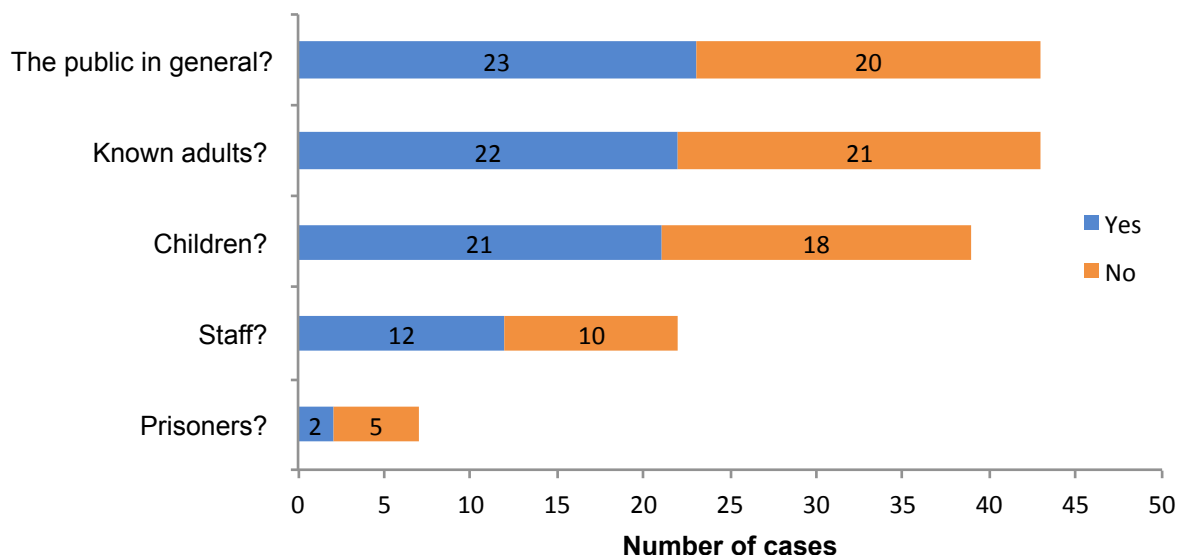


Figure 4.3 Reducing Reoffending

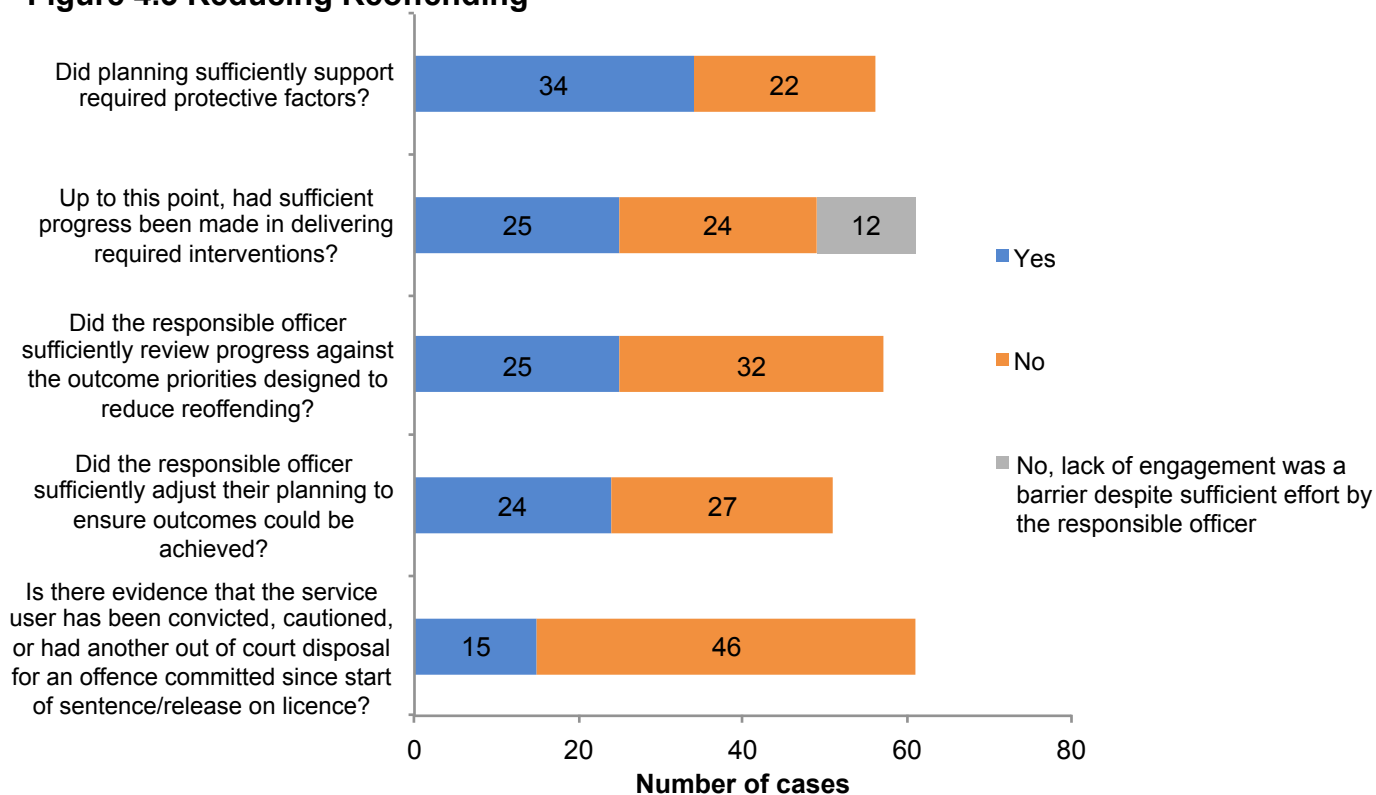
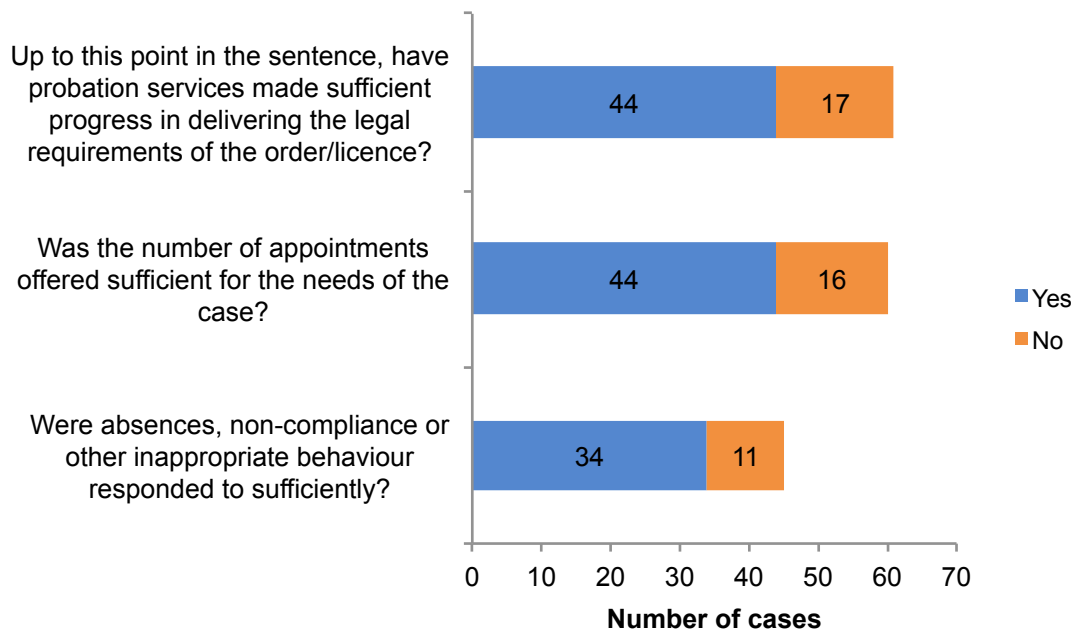


Figure 4.4 Abiding by the sentence



Appendix 5: Glossary

Accredited programme	A programme of work delivered to offenders in groups or individually through a requirement in a community order or a suspended sentence order, or part of a custodial sentence or a condition in a prison licence. Accredited programmes are accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel as being effective in reducing the likelihood of reoffending
Allocation	The process by which a decision is made about whether an offender will be supervised by a CRC or the NPS
Approved premises	Premises approved under Section 13 of the <i>Offender Management Act 2007</i> , managed either by the NPS or by independent organisations, used as a short-term residence for an offender considered a high risk of serious harm, who requires close monitoring and supervision to begin to integrate them back into the community
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
Breach (of an order or licence)	Where an offender fails to comply with the conditions of a court order or licence. Enforcement action may be taken to return the offender to court for additional action or recall them to prison
BBR	Building Better Relationships: A nationally accredited groupwork programme designed to reduce reoffending by adult male perpetrators of intimate partner violence
CAS	Case Allocation System: A document that needs to be completed prior to the allocation of a case to a CRC or the NPS
Circles of Support and Accountability	A registered charity working across England and Wales to provide groups of volunteers with professional supervision to support sexual offenders to reintegrate into society after their release from prison
Cluster	A grouping of adjacent local delivery units to assist in administration and monitoring

Community interest company	A business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community rather than for maximising profit for the shareholders or owners. They are designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good
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
Department for Transport driving programmes	Driving educational programmes run by private providers on behalf of the Department for Transport and local police services, undertaken as an alternative to receiving fixed penalty points and fines
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour
DIDs	Drink Impaired Drivers programme: A nationally accredited programme that aims to confront offenders with issues related to drinking and driving
E3	E3 stands for 'Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Excellence'. The E3 programme was created following the <i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i> programme in June 2014. The basic principle is to standardise NPS delivery, redesigning the NPS structure with six key areas of focus, including: community supervision; court services; custody; youth offending services; victims' services; and approved premises
ETE	Education, training and employment: Work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
Escalation	The term used to describe the process where a case allocated to a CRC is referred to the NPS for reallocation on the grounds that an increase in the risk of harm posed by the service user now places that person within the category of those that should be supervised by the NPS

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. These used to fall under the remit of the National Offender Management Service (the agency that has been replaced by HMPPS)
Horizons	A community-based programme of work for sex offenders assessed as a medium risk of serious harm
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
Intervention	Work with an individual that is designed to change their offending behaviour and/or to support public protection
Ixion	Ixion is a not for profit organisation that works with people to gain education and skills and support their social inclusion and personal development
Licence	This is a period of supervision immediately following release from custody, and is typically implemented after an offender has served half of their sentence. Any breaches to the conditions of the licence can lead to a recall to prison where the offender could remain in custody for the duration of their original sentence
LDU	Local delivery unit: An operational unit comprising an office or offices, generally coterminous with police basic command units and local authority structures
Local Safeguarding Children Board	Set up in each local authority (as a result of the Children Act 2004) to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of the multi-agency work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality

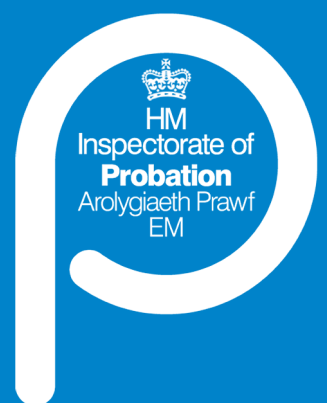
Looked After (Child)	The term used in the <i>Children Act 1989</i> to describe a child who is cared for by a local authority for more than 24 hours. Typically this is by a local authority's children's social care services department
MOSOVO	Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders: The accredited training course provides police Public Protection Unit practitioners with the skills and knowledge to enable them to identify and manage sex offenders, violent offenders and other dangerous offenders falling within the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
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
Maps for Change toolkit	A programme of structured work authorised by the National Offender Management Service, to be used on an individual basis with sex offenders. It is not an alternative to accredited sex offender group programmes, but can be used by the responsible officer in addition to attendance on a programme, or with those who are unsuitable for group programmes
MoJ	Ministry of Justice: The government department with responsibility for the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom
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 50 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 NPS and the CRCs in England and Wales

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
<i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i>	Implemented in February 2015, applying to offences committed on or after that date, the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i> is the Act of Parliament that accompanies the <i>Transforming Rehabilitation</i> programme
Partners	Partners include statutory and non-statutory organisations, working with the participant/ offender through a partnership agreement with a CRC or the NPS
Post-sentence supervision	A period of supervision following the end of a licence. Any breaches are enforced by the magistrates' court. Introduced as part of the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i>
Providers	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	This refers to any report prepared for a court, whether delivered orally or in a written format
PO	Probation officer: This is the term for a qualified responsible officer who has undertaken a higher education-based course for two years. The name of the qualification and content of the training varies depending on when it was undertaken. They manage more complex cases

PSO	Probation services officer: This is the term for a responsible officer who was originally recruited with no qualification. They may access locally determined training to qualify as a probation services officer or to build on this to qualify as a probation officer. They may manage all but the most complex cases depending on their level of training and experience. Some PSOs work within the court setting, where their duties include the writing of pre-sentence reports
Rate card	A directory of services offered by the CRC for use with the NPS with their service users, detailing the price
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
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case
Risk of Serious Harm	Risk of Serious Harm: A term used in OASys. All cases are classified as presenting a low/ medium/ high/ very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term risk of harm when referring to the analysis which has to take place in order to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. The term Risk of Serious Harm only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those offenders for whom lower impact/ severity harmful behaviour is probable
SPO	Senior probation officer: First line manager within the NPS
Sex Offender Treatment Programme	A programme that is suitable for any offender with a current or previous conviction for a sexual offence, or another offence which has an identifiable sexual element, to aid in the desistance of this type of behaviour
SPO	Senior probation officer: First line manager within the NPS

STEP centre	Formerly an acronym for 'situation, transformation, education and progression', STEP is now the name given by the Warwickshire West Mercia CRC and PeoplePlus to multi-functional offices in which a wide range of services are delivered to offenders from a single place
Supply chain	Providers of services commissioned by the CRC
Suspended sentence order	A custodial sentence that is suspended and carried out in the community
TSP	Thinking Skills Programme: An accredited group programme designed to develop an offender's thinking skills to help them stay out of trouble
Through the Gate	Through the Gate services are designed to help those sentenced to more than one day in prison to settle back into the community upon release and receive rehabilitation support so they can turn their lives around
<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
ViSOR	ViSOR is a national confidential database that supports MAPPA. It facilitates the effective sharing of information and intelligence on violent and sexual offenders between the three MAPPA Responsible Authority agencies (police, probation and prisons). ViSOR is no longer an acronym (for Violent and Sexual Offenders' Register) but is the formal name of the database
Women's centre	A centre dedicated to services for women. This may include education, training and interventions to help with confidence and self-esteem
Workload management tool	A tool to calculate the overall workload of an individual responsible officer. It takes into account numbers and types of cases as well as particular work such as parole reports

Women's safety worker	<p>Women's safety workers provide voluntary support to the victims of offenders undertaking the Building Better Relationships programme. They provide information about the programme and the progress made by the offender, and also ensure the victim has an arranged place of safety, emergency contact numbers, and access to support services such as counselling</p>
Youth Offending Service/Team	<p>A local authority funded service working with children aged up to 18 years old, to deter them from crime and/or to manage court orders for offences committed by such children.</p> <p>In West Mercia, this service came under the remit of the Police and Crime Commissioner from 01 April 2017</p>



ISBN: 978-1-84099-797-2