

# **HMI Probation Stakeholder Survey 2017**

## **Summary report**

**February 2018**

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## 1. Introduction

This report sets out the main findings from the third annual survey of HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) stakeholders. The survey was designed to seek stakeholders' views on various aspects of the Inspectorate's work, including its communications and reports as well as its adherence to core values and other positive characteristics. The views expressed within the survey and future annual surveys will be used by the Inspectorate to help understand its strengths and weaknesses and to identify potential areas for development and improvement, thus maximising the quality, effectiveness and impact of its work.

## 2. Methodology

The survey was available online from 3<sup>rd</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017. It was thus conducted three months following the publication of our Corporate Plan for 2017-20 and three months after the publication of our final area report from the Inspection of Youth Offending Work (IYOW) programme. The wider context was increasing attention to the quality of adult probation services, and youth justice services facing the challenge of working with an increasingly smaller but more serious statutory caseload.

The survey included a range of fixed response questions and some supplementary open-ended questions about HMI Probation's values, characteristics, reports and communications. A link to the survey was emailed directly to registered stakeholders, as well as advertised on Twitter, LinkedIn and through the HMI Probation alerts service and communications. It was also promoted by Russell Webster through his website, Clinks, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) senior leaders' bulletin and the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

### 2.1 The sample

By the time the survey had closed, 100 usable returns had been received.<sup>1</sup> Nearly a third (31%) of the respondents received an email directly from HMI Probation, whilst about a quarter (24%) had found out about the survey via social networking platforms (Twitter and LinkedIn). A further 15% had received the link in an email from a friend or colleague.

As shown by Table 1, those working with adult offenders directly (manager, practitioner or partner) accounted for about two in five (42%) of the respondents, with an equivalent figure for those working with children of one in five (20%). The main decrease from the 2016 stakeholder survey was for those managing youth justice services, down from 29% of the sample last year to 14% this year. The largest increase from the 2016 stakeholder survey was magistrates/judges – up from 1% of the sample to 12%. We found a general lack of familiarity with our work amongst sentencers, with only 5 of the 12 having read one of our reports in the last 12 months.

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

**Table 1: Stakeholders' declared roles**

	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Work with adult offenders	22	22%
Management of probation services	15	15%
Management of youth justice services	14	14%
Magistrate or member of the judiciary	12	12%
Work for partner agency to probation	5	5%
Academic, researcher or student	5	5%
Offender	5	5%
Work with children who have offended	4	4%
Work for another inspectorate or similar	3	3%
Work on criminal justice policy	3	3%
Member of the public	3	3%
Work for partner agency to the youth justice service	2	2%
Family member/friend of offender	2	2%
Journalist	1	1%
Other	4	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Base: All (100; 0 missing)

Table 2 sets out the stakeholders' identified employers. The highest proportion of respondents outside of the 'other' category identified their employer as the National Probation Service (17%). A similar proportion (16%) worked for Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), with 13% working for youth offending teams.

**Table 2: Stakeholders' identified employers**

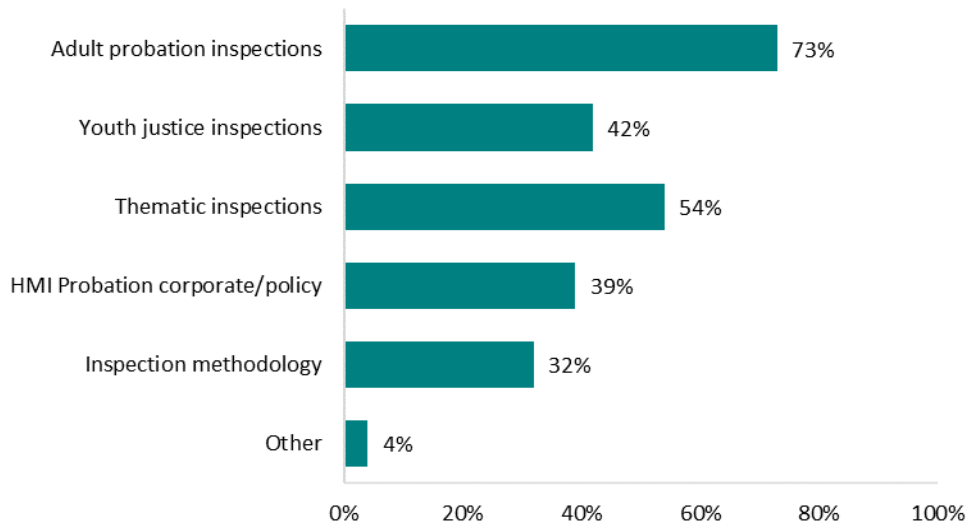
	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
National Probation Service	17	17%
Community Rehabilitation Company	16	16%
Youth Offending Team/Service	13	13%
Voluntary sector organisation	10	10%
Ministry of Justice	9	9%
Other government department, agency or arms-length body	7	7%
Other Private sector organisation	6	6%
Other	22	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Base: All (n=100; 0 missing)

The respondents' declared areas of interest reflected their backgrounds. Almost three in four (73%) were interested in adult probation inspections, whilst about two in five (42%) were

interested in youth justice inspections (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> There was a similar level of interest in thematic inspections (54%) as there was in the 2016 stakeholder survey (57%).

**Figure 1: Stakeholders' declared areas of interest**



Base: All (n=100; 0 missing)

As the sample is self-selecting, the survey findings presented in the rest of this report should not be viewed as being necessarily representative of all stakeholders. The findings between years may also not be fully comparable – some differences from the 2016 sample are noted above. Approximately one in four (23%) respondents indicated that they had completed our 2016 survey.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Communications

About two in three (65%) of the stakeholders had visited the HMI Probation website in the year before the survey. Of these respondents, the section that most recalled viewing was 'Inspection reports', which almost all stakeholders (92%) had visited (see Table 3). Nearly two in five (38%) had visited the section that described our work, while half (50%) had visited the corporate pages listing information about the Inspectorate. A quarter (26%) said that they had read our Corporate Plan for 2017-20 (published in June 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Respondents could choose multiple areas of interest.

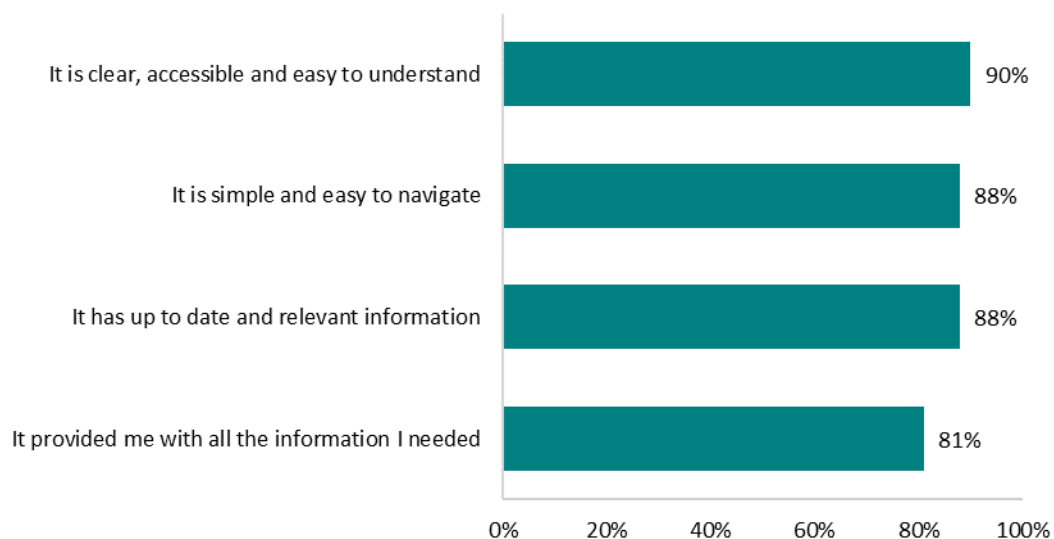
**Table 3: Sections of the HMI Probation website viewed by stakeholders**

	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Inspection reports	48	92%
About HMI Probation section	26	50%
About our work	20	38%
Media section	11	21%
Jobs	9	17%
Cymraeg	1	2%

Base: All who viewed website in the past year (n=52; 0 missing)

As shown by Figure 2, around nine out of ten stakeholders responded that the website was: (i) up to date and relevant; (ii) clear, accessible and easy to understand; and (iii) easy to navigate. There was slightly less consensus regarding the information provided by the website. Whilst four-fifths (81%) of stakeholders responded positively, this was down from our 2016 survey (95%).

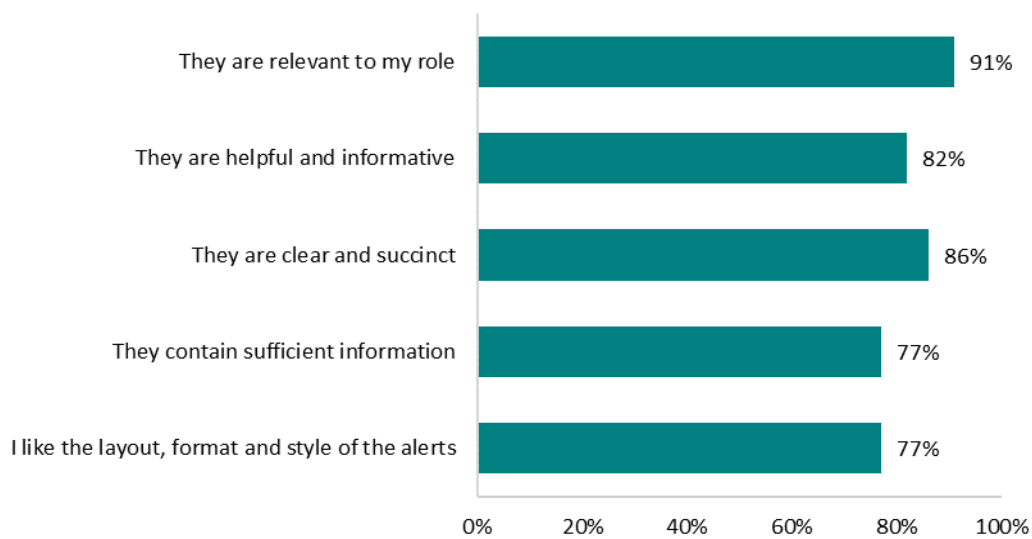
**Figure 2: Stakeholders' views of our website**



Base: All who viewed website in the past year (n=52; 0 missing)

Around a quarter (26%) of the stakeholders reported that they received alerts from HMI Probation. As shown by Figure 3, the alerts were well received by these respondents – the large majority considered them to be relevant to their role (91%), helpful and informative (82%), and clear and succinct (86%). Approximately three in four (77%) liked the format of the alerts and felt that they contained sufficient information (77%). It is perhaps unsurprising then that almost all (91%) of those stakeholders who received the alerts would recommend the service to other colleagues.

**Figure 3: Stakeholders' views of our alerts**



Base: All receiving alerts (n=22; 0 missing)

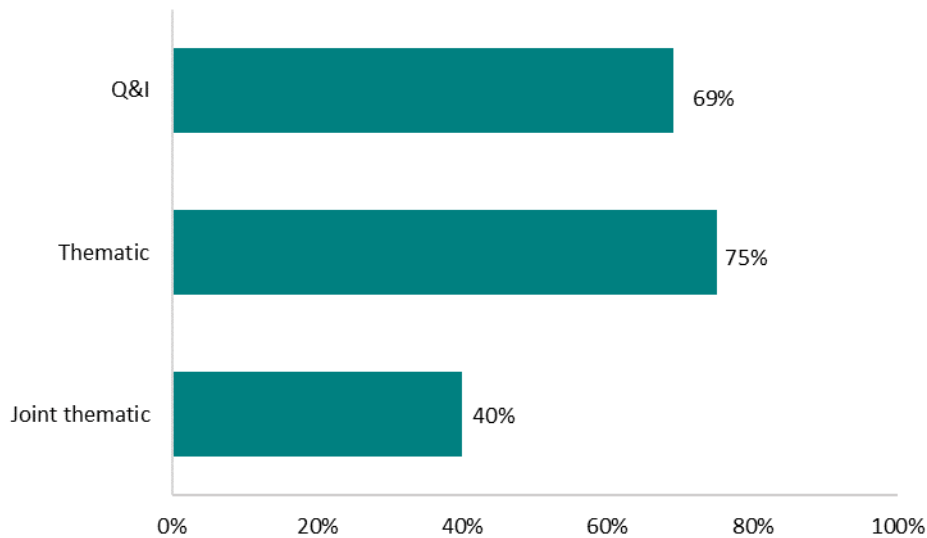
About two in five (39%) respondents stated that they followed HMI Probation on Twitter. This was an increase from 29% of respondents in our 2016 survey and from 9% in our 2015 survey, showing the increasing importance of Twitter in our communications.

### **3.2 Reports**

Three quarters (75%) of the stakeholders stated that they had read an HMI Probation report in the past year. This was a notable increase from 2015 (57%), but a decrease from 2016 (91%). This decrease likely reflects the change in the profile of respondents, particularly the increase in responses from sentencers. As shown by Figure 4, the reports most commonly accessed, by three in four respondents, were our thematic reports. Just over two-thirds (69%) had read one of our Quality and Impact reports (Q&I) – the reports from our inspection programme for adult probation services – and two in five (40%) had read one of our joint thematic reports.

Because our IYOW programme ended halfway through 2017, with the last report being published in July, we did not this year ask questions about our youth reports.

**Figure 4: Reports read by stakeholders in the past year**



Base: All who had read an inspection report in the last 12 months (n=71; 1 missing for Q&I, 2 missing for thematics, and 3 missing for joint thematics)

Table 4 sets out the levels of agreement with a number of statements for those sub-samples who had read each type of report. As can be seen, our reports were viewed generally favourably with nearly all responses above 80% and nothing below the three-quarters mark – an improvement from 2016. The lowest positive responses were for the reports having influenced individual’s work (Q&I, 77%) and the reports having addressed equality and diversity issues adequately (76% for thematics and 77% for Q&I). A large majority of respondents felt that the reports were informative (96%) and useful (91% to 98%).

*Definitely it's improvements for me in terms of readability, less professional jargon. I also appreciate the directness of the introduction and accompanying press releases.*

Academic

*They [the reports] are very important, providing an independent overview of good practice when the public and politicians have little knowledge and understanding of this vital service.*

Academic



**Table 4: Stakeholders' views of our inspection reports**

	% agree/strongly agree		
	Q&I	Thematic	Joint thematic
Publication of reports is sufficiently timely	83%	85%	92%
The reports are informative	96%	96%	96%
The reports are sufficiently clear and accessible	94%	88%	92%
The reports are direct and incisive	87%	88%	88%
The reports are useful	91%	98%	92%
The reports are sufficiently evidence-based	81%	82%	88%
The reports present findings fairly and objectively	85%	92%	88%
The reports address equality and diversity issues adequately	77%	76%	92%
The reports have influenced my work	77%	86%	88%

Base: All who had read an inspection report in the last 12 months (n=48 for Q&I, 52 for thematic and 27 for joint thematic; 0-2 missing across all responses)

Specific suggestions for improvements to our reports included the need to: (i) reduce the time between fieldwork and publication; and (ii) follow up on the reports' recommendations.

*Whilst I understand workload pressures it sometimes feels they [reports] come out a bit too late after the event.*

National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) Representative

*It would be good to see more action taken on the recommendations and the recommendations followed up and enforced in a timely manner.*

CRC respondent

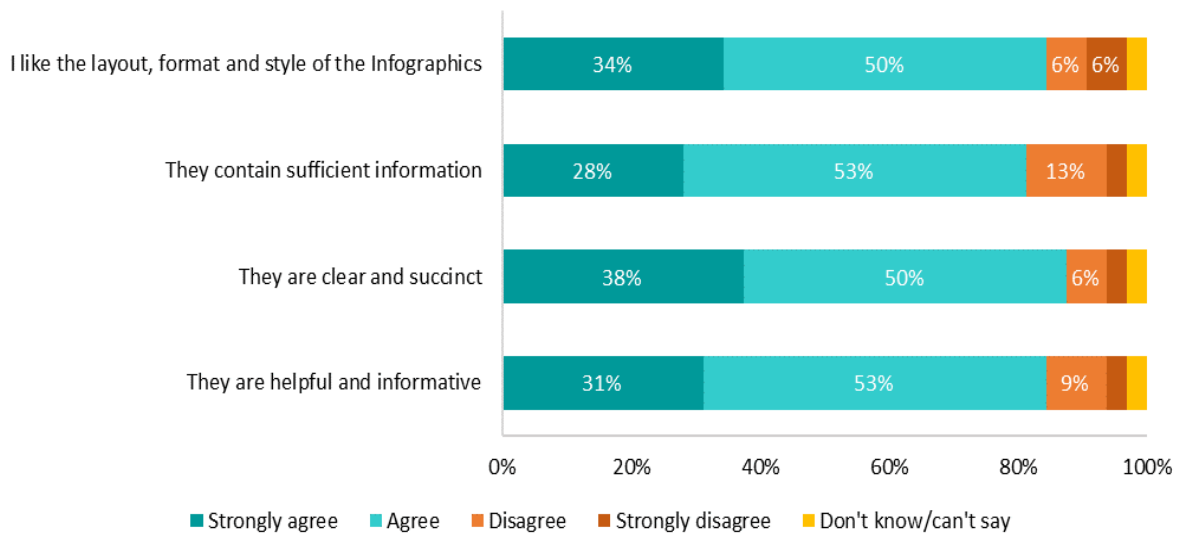
Some of the comments we received highlighted the changes made to adult probation services through Transforming Rehabilitation, with consequent recommendations for our future inspection reports.

*Reports need to fully take account of current operating models and contractual landscapes - but I am aware this is being taken in to account and the opportunity to comment upon the way forward has been most appreciated.*

Community Rehabilitation Company manager

As part of the 2017 survey we introduced a question about our infographics. One in three (34%) said they had seen them in the last 12 months. As set out in Figure 5 the overall response was positive with more than four in five strongly agreeing or agreeing that they were helpful, clear, contained sufficient information and that they liked the layout and style.

**Figure 5: Stakeholders' views of our Infographics**



Base: All who had viewed an infographic in the last 12 months (n=33; 1 missing)

### 3.3 Values

Stakeholders were asked to rate HMI Probation against its stated values. As shown by Figure 6, views were generally positive about the extent to which we adhered to our values. Most positively, 85% felt that the Inspectorate works in an honest, open, professional, fair and polite way, with three in ten (29%) 'strongly' agreeing with this statement.

The greatest uncertainty related to whether we drive improvement through valid inspection and published reports, with one in five (20%) respondents answering this question as "Don't know/Can't say".

There were several comments from respondents regarding a gap between the Inspectorate identifying the need for improvements and those improvements being made. This was variously attributed to a lack of influence on ministers or providers, lack of powers to hold bodies to account and recommendations not being followed up.

*One wishes that the recommendations in your reports were acted on to greater effect.*  
Partner Agency

*I feel that HMIP is not given the sufficient powers it needs to hold providers and ministers to account.*  
NAPO Representative

**Figure 6: Stakeholders' views on our adherence to stated values**



Base: All (n=100; 8-9 missing)

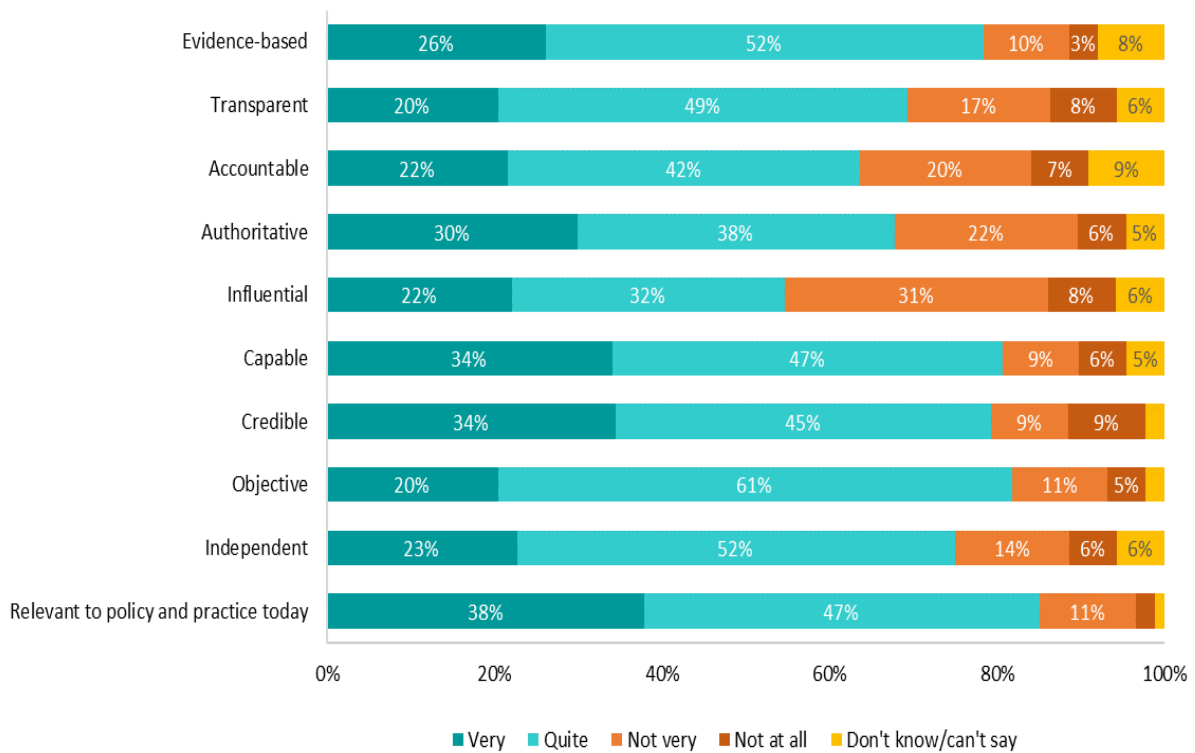
### 3.4 Our Role and Impact

Stakeholders were asked about how well we reflected those characteristics which are fundamental to our role (see Figure 7). Responses were generally positive, with agreement (very/quite) ranging from 53% for 'influential' to 85% for 'relevant to policy and practice today'. In summary, whilst we were viewed as relevant, capable and credible, many believed that we were less strong in terms of our influence. This mirrors our 2016 results

*“As stated before, HMIP in my view, does not have enough power to influence practice or service delivery. Probation try to implement recommendations but there is no recourse if they do not. Policy makers are not in my view listening to HMIP anywhere near enough.”*

NAPO respondent

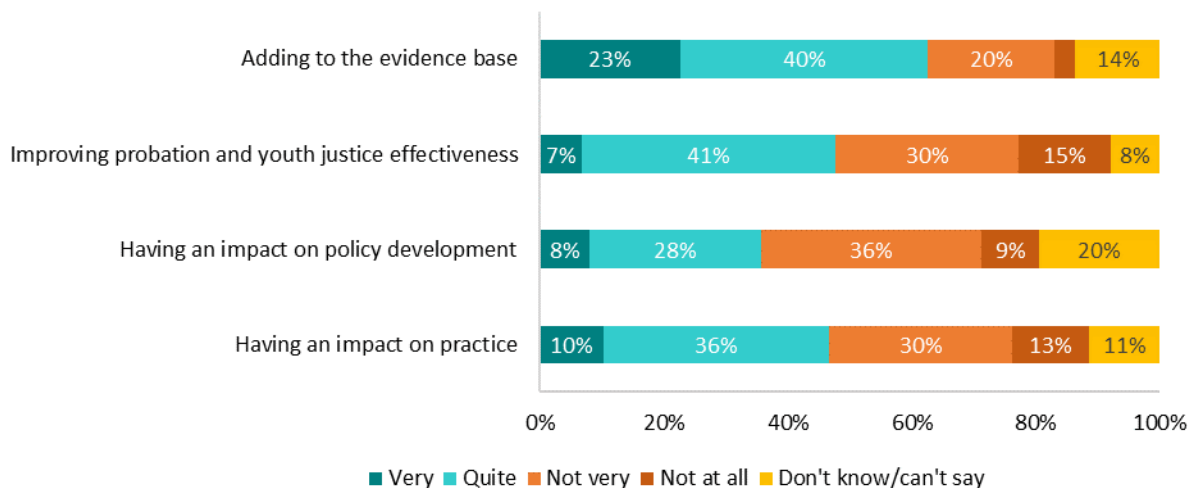
**Figure 7: Stakeholders' views on our reflection of specific characteristics**



Base: All (n=100; 12-14 missing)

A further set of survey questions focused specifically on the Inspectorate's impact (Figure 8). More than three in five (63%) felt that we were adding to the evidence base, but less than half felt we were having an impact on practice (47%) or improving the effectiveness of services (48%). Our impact was perceived to be weakest in terms of policy development, with approximately one in three (36%) feeling that the Inspectorate was having little or no impact.

**Figure 8: Stakeholders' views on our impact**



Base: All (n=100; 12-13 missing)

#### 4. Conclusions

Whilst the self-selecting nature of the survey does not support fully representative findings, the responses remain vital in helping HMI Probation to understand its strengths and potential areas for development and improvement. The responses are generally positive, although some concerns are expressed regarding our influence and impact upon policy and the performance and effectiveness of providers.

##### *Impact on policy*

In our inspection reports, we will continue to target our recommendations at the appropriate organisational level, including recommendations to the Ministry of Justice, HMPPS and the YJB when action is required at a national policy, commissioning or operational level.

Our thematic inspections and joint inspections with other inspectorates are most read, and have a strong potential to influence policy. We will continue to prioritise thematic topics according to (i) the current level of risk to the successful delivery of probation and youth offending services and (ii) the potential impact of the findings.

Our most recent annual report (December 2017) provided consolidated data and information to enable ministers and others to see how recent policy developments are working in practice. We intend to produce annual reports each year, and to maximise the use and dissemination of our collated inspection programme data, reporting on the delivery for differing sub-groups where appropriate and beneficial.

We continue to meet with ministers and their officials, to present our evidence, findings and views on the quality of probation and youth offending services, with the aim of informing ministers and influencing policy development.

### *Impact on the quality of work of providers.*

We want to do more to drive improvements in probation and youth offending services, where they are needed, and we will launch new inspection programmes in 2018-19. On the probation side, we will move to annual inspection of all providers.

The programmes will be underpinned by new inspection standards, which we have developed through a consultative and consensual approach. They are grounded in evidence, learning and experience, covering those key inputs and activities which contribute to effective service delivery and positive outcomes. We know from experience that there is a close relationship between good strategic and operational management and leadership, and the quality of probation and youth offending services – both will be considered in our inspections. The standards also highlight the need for organisations to have a good understanding of all those individuals they supervise, recognising their diversity and their unique needs and expectations. The need to pay attention to issues of disproportionality is also highlighted.

We will produce ratings for all those organisations we inspect, including an overall (composite) provider rating. Composite ratings are common in other spheres and they are used in the criminal justice arena by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. We believe that an overall (composite) rating for each inspection will best drive improvements where needed. We have seen that approach work in other inspectorates.

We will also provide ratings at the standard level. These ratings will enable providers to see clearly where they are performing well and where they can improve, and so improve the quality of service and any future overall rating.

We are currently reviewing our arrangements for monitoring and following through on providers' progress and actions against our recommendations. That said, our move to annual inspection of all NPS divisions and all CRCs will provide a good opportunity to check implementation of the action plans produced in response to our recommendations.

### *Other matters raised*

We are currently reviewing our website presentation and content. We will seek to maximise the value and usefulness of the website for all our external stakeholders, taking the opportunity to improve navigation and information provision.

We will always have timely reporting as our goal, and have recently improved the time between fieldwork and the publication of our thematic reports. For our new inspection programmes, we will seek to minimise the time between fieldwork and publication, whilst ensuring that we have the necessary steps in place to produce reports which are fair, accurate and as comprehensive as possible.

We are also strengthening our research function, enabling us to make further valuable contributions to the policy and operational evidence-base for probation and youth offending services. We will make full and effective use of our internal resource and actively engage with the wider research community, maximising links, learning lessons and working in collaboration where beneficial.