



An inspection of

South East & Eastern Division

National Probation Service

SEPTEMBER 2019

This inspection was led by HM Inspector David Miners, supported by a team of inspectors, local assessors and operations and corporate staff. The manager responsible for this inspection programme is Sally Lester. We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in this 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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Foreword

The South East and Eastern Division of the NPS is the final division to be inspected in the first round of our current annual inspection programme.

The leadership of the division is a clear strength. Leaders are visible and viewed by all staff groups as accessible. Strategic priorities are communicated effectively, and comprehensive performance information is used to improve service delivery. Court work, however, is an area where audit recommendations and quality assurance reports have not resulted in improved service delivery. The standard of risk assessment in many court reports is insufficient.

This division has significant staff shortages. This is a long-standing issue in the division, exacerbated by its close proximity to London. With a shortfall of 102 probation officers at the time of our inspection, this should be a recruitment priority for the Ministry of Justice.

On the national workload management tool, this division has the highest workload of the NPS's seven divisions. Senior managers have implemented measures to support staff, but workload pressures remain acute in some local delivery units and over half of the responsible officers we interviewed reported that their workloads were unmanageable. We found staff morale to be high, despite these challenges. Staff wellbeing has been a strategic focus, and this has contributed to staff resilience.

The management of service users varies. As we have found in some other divisions, the quality of assessment and planning of the cases we looked at is sufficient, but implementation and reviews need improvement. In too many cases, we were concerned to find insufficient attention being paid to victims in the supervision of cases. Actions to protect victims should be integral to the management of all cases, including those assessed as posing a medium risk of serious harm.

The division's commitment to offenders' health is to be commended. Joint working with mental health teams has resulted in innovative arrangements in relation to diversion, court work and the management of complex, long-term prisoners.

As in other divisions, the performance of the facilities management contract, let and managed by the Ministry of Justice, is characterised by delay and confusing escalation processes. We saw examples of delays in work being completed, which undermined staff wellbeing. In the approved premises, these delays had a direct impact on the number of beds the division had to manage complex and potentially dangerous individuals after release from prison.

The overall rating for the South East and Eastern division is 'Requires improvement'. The division has identifiable strengths but there are currently shortfalls in key areas of service delivery. I hope that our findings and recommendations help the division to improve in these areas.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Overall findings

Overall, NPS South East and Eastern (SEE) division is rated as: **Requires improvement**. This rating has been determined by inspecting this provider in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those three domains are described here:

	Organisational delivery
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NPS SEE division scores well on leadership and the range of services it provides, but workloads are too high and the performance of the Ministry of Justice facilities management contract is poor and undermines the division's ability to provide quality services.

Our key findings about the organisation were as follows:

- the delivery of quality services is a strategic focus and this is communicated effectively to staff, with three-quarters of those we interviewed recognising this focus.
- the division has effective staff wellbeing policies that encourage staff engagement and help to maintain staff resilience.
- information on performance and quality is communicated effectively; the comprehensive profile of service users informs service provision.
- workloads, particularly for senior probation officers and responsible officers, are too high and are the highest of any of the seven NPS divisions; 16 per cent of probation officer posts are vacant – a shortfall of 102 probation officers.
- there are unacceptable delays in repairs to offices and premises, which adversely affects staff, service users and the division's capacity to manage individuals assessed as presenting a high-risk of serious harm.

	Case supervision
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We examined 120 cases from across 10 local delivery units and interviewed 95 individual responsible officers about these cases and about their experiences more generally of supervision and training. Although assessment and planning of work were found to be sufficient in most cases, we had concerns in relation to the delivery and review of services, with particular concerns around the management of risk of harm to others.

Our key findings about case supervision were as follows:

- assessments demonstrated positive professional relationships and good analysis of strengths and protective factors. In 73 per cent of cases, factors related to risk of serious harm were analysed sufficiently.

- service users engaged with supervision, but personal strengths and protective factors were not considered in over a third of sentence plans. In 69 per cent of cases where it was deemed necessary by inspectors, staff used information from key agencies, such as children’s social care, to inform planning to manage the risk of serious harm. In the remaining cases, information from other agencies was not sufficiently included in sentence planning.
- the management of cases did not routinely identify the risks to victims or potential victims. Necessary actions to manage the risk of serious harm were taken inconsistently.
- reviews did not consistently include information from partner agencies and, where necessary, result in changes to the sentence plan. In over a third of cases, a review was not initiated following a significant change in risk factors.

NPS	NPS-specific work
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We reviewed 121 court reports and 50 custodial cases where the victim was eligible for statutory victim contact by the NPS, to assess how well this division met these two core NPS tasks. While statutory victim work was generally carried out to a good standard, we had concerns about the division’s court reports and case allocation, which were insufficient in some key areas.

Our key findings about other core activities specific to NPS SEE division were as follows:

Court reports and case allocation

- The quality of court reports was sufficient to support the court’s decision-making in just over half of the cases inspected. Staff did not sufficiently analyse the risk of serious harm or consider victims and potential victims. For example, domestic abuse enquiries were not made for 68 per cent of reports where inspectors considered it necessary. Child protection enquiries were undertaken in only half of the reports where inspectors deemed it was required.
- allocation following the sentence was prompt, but insufficient information was made available to the organisations managing the cases.

Statutory victim work

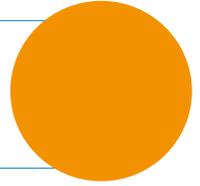
- Victims receive a personalised service and are encouraged to engage with the victim contact service. Appropriate and timely information is communicated. Victims’ concerns and views are considered at key points in the sentence.

Service: NPS South East & Eastern Division

Fieldwork started: May 2019

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Requires improvement	
1.3	Services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Requires improvement	

2. Case supervision

2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Good	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4	Reviewing	Requires improvement	

3. NPS specific work

3.1	Court reports and case allocation	Requires improvement	
3.2	Statutory victim work	Good	

Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made nine recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of probation services in NPS South East and Eastern division.

The NPS South East and Eastern division should:

1. ensure that actions are taken to protect victims in all cases, including those assessed as medium risk of serious harm
2. fully implement the process for MAPPA level 1 reviews
3. ensure that risk of serious harm screening is undertaken at court and identifies all known risk factors and potential victims
4. ensure that court reports contain a comprehensive risk analysis and that a written record is available for organisations managing sentences
5. ensure that court quality assurance processes are followed and used to improve reports on black and minority ethnic and women defendants.

HM Prison and Probation Service should:

6. review the quality assurance processes for same-day reports
7. deliver court report training for court-based staff
8. introduce mandatory risk assessment refresher training for all operational staff as a key element of continuing professional development.

The Ministry of Justice should:

9. review the facilities management contract to ensure that work orders prioritise public protection, and staff and service users' wellbeing
10. prioritise its recruitment processes to ensure that the NPS South East and Eastern division recruits the staff required to deliver a high-quality service.

Background

An explanation of probation services

Around 260,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually.¹ 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 prison.²

To protect the public, probation staff assess and manage the risks that offenders pose to the community. They help to rehabilitate these individuals by dealing with problems such as drug and alcohol misuse and lack of employment or housing, 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 generally report them to court or request recall to prison.

These services are currently provided by a publicly owned National Probation Service (NPS) and 21 privately owned Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) that provide services under contract. The government has announced its intention to change the arrangements for delivering probation services, and has given notice to CRCs that it will terminate their contracts early, by spring 2021. Responsibility for offender management will pass to the NPS at that point.

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.

The South East and Eastern NPS division

The NPS comprises seven divisions: six across England and one in Wales. Services are provided in-house, apart from those commissioned from the CRC. As a national organisation, the NPS has standardised processes and guidance on policies and practice. These documents are available to all staff through an online platform called EQuIP. Use of this system is monitored and staff are kept informed of updates.

NPS South East and Eastern division stretches from Lowestoft in the east to Brighton in the south. The division consists of 10 local delivery units (LDUs), each led by a senior manager responsible for delivering services in their area. Each LDU lead also has a divisional strategic lead in areas such as courts, safeguarding and extremism. There are also three divisional teams, also led by a senior manager, that are responsible for public protection, stakeholder engagement and performance and quality management.

Two CRCs owners, Sodexo and Seotec, are responsible for the four contract package areas in the division. There are 23 prisons, including a women's prison and a foreign nationals prison. There are 11 approved premises, one of which is for women, located

¹ Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 September 2018*.

² 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.

in Bedford. SEE's strategic partnership arrangements include relationships with 83 community safety partnerships and 10 police and crime commissioners.

In March 2019, the NPS South East and Eastern division was managing 16,514 cases, which is 15 per cent of the national caseload.³ Cases in custody accounted for 51 per cent of its caseload, 30.5 per cent were supervised in the community on licence and 18.5 per cent were the subject of a community order.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children. We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

We inspect against 10 standards. These standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with people who have offended.⁴

³ Caseload data supplied by NPS South East and Eastern division.

⁴ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

Contextual facts

105,549

The total number of individuals subject to probation supervision by the NPS across England and Wales⁵

16,514

The number of individuals supervised by the South East and Eastern division of the NPS³

13,097

The number of MAPPA-eligible individuals managed by the South East and Eastern division of the NPS⁶

35.3%

The proportion of South East and Eastern NPS service users with a proven reoffence⁷

82%

The proportion of individuals who were recorded as having successfully completed their community orders or suspended sentence orders with the NPS. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 76%, against a target of 75%⁸

56%

The proportion of positive completions of licences and, where applicable, post-sentence supervision periods by the NPS. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 53%, against a target of 65%⁹

100%

The proportion of pre-sentence reports completed by the NPS within the timescales set by the court. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 100%, against a target of 95%¹⁰

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (December 2018). *Offender Management Caseload Statistics*.

⁶ Ministry of Justice. (October 2018). *Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report 2017-2018*.

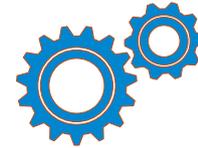
⁷ Ministry of Justice. (April 2019). *Proven reoffending, April to June 2017 cohort*.

⁸ Ministry of Justice. *NPS Service Level 18, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics, October 2017 - December 2018, Q3*.

⁹ Ministry of Justice. *NPS Service Level 19, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics, October 2017 - December 2018, Q3*.

¹⁰ Ministry of Justice. *NPS Service Level 1, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics, October 2017 - December 2018, Q3*.

1. Organisational delivery



NPS South East and Eastern division (SEE) has a clear vision and strategy, which are communicated effectively to its staff. Its analysis of service users, including its recording of protected characteristics, is comprehensive and used to inform strategy and to commission services. It has positive partnership arrangements, particularly in relation to mental health. However, relationships with sentencers are inconsistent across the division.

Workloads are too high, particularly for senior probation officers and operational staff. However, managers are accessible, and staff wellbeing and resilience are prioritised within the division. The quality assurance processes do not consistently improve practice, particularly in relation to risk management and court work. Training and induction are insufficient for key staff. The performance of the facilities management contract is poor and undermines the division's ability to provide quality services.

Strengths:

- There is a comprehensive strategy and a clear plan to deliver quality services in key areas of operation.
- There is effective communication between staff and managers in the division.
- There is a comprehensive and up-to-date service user profile that underpins the commissioning of services and the development of partnerships.
- The division has examples of innovative partnership arrangements that focus on service users' wellbeing, although these are not available in all LDUs.

Areas for improvement:

- Standardised induction and training are not available for all staff groups.
- The division's response to audits is not coordinated effectively, and quality assurance processes are not applied consistently.
- High vacancy rates (16 per cent) and a shortfall of 102 probation officers mean that workloads for operational staff are too high – the highest of any of the NPS divisions on the workload management tool, with probation officers managing an average of 42.5 cases. This adversely affects their ability to deliver a quality service.
- The poor performance of the facilities management contract undermines the delivery of high-quality services.

1.1. Leadership	Good
The leadership of the organisation supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users.	

Is there a clear vision and strategy to deliver a high-quality service for all service users?

SEE has a clear strategic focus on the delivery of quality services, and this is embodied in the 2019-2020 divisional delivery plan. This plan was formulated following a whole management meeting and staff consultation exercise. It identifies 12 priority areas, each underpinned by objectives that focus on delivering high-quality services. The division’s focus on the quality of services is recognised by managers at all levels and by three-quarters of the responsible officers interviewed. The deputy director and senior managers are accessible and strongly identified with a transparent and supportive management culture.

The key strategic priorities and performance targets are managed effectively through local delivery units (LDU) in a dispersed governance framework. Performance information is disseminated effectively by the performance and quality unit. The divisional director holds LDU leaders to account through monthly senior leadership meetings and under-performance is addressed by the implementation of LDU performance improvement plans. Accountability meetings held to review the plans are chaired by the divisional director. There is evidence that LDUs have improved their performance following the implementation of this process.

SEE has established productive working relationships with local strategic partners, including the local CRCs, the local police and crime commissioner’s offices and the prison group directors. Communication with strategic partners is managed locally by LDU leaders. This is not coordinated as part of a divisional strategy. Communication with key stakeholders, such as sentencers, is inconsistent.

Are potential risks to service delivery anticipated and planned for in advance?

SEE’s capacity on the national workload management tool stands at 103 per cent compared with the national average of 98 per cent. This is the highest of the seven divisions and rightly identified as the major risk to service delivery. The workforce planning committee meets monthly and has taken action to address the shortage of qualified probation officers (POs) in the division, which stands at 19 per cent. These include recruitment to vacant probation service officer (PSO) posts and the targeting of recruits to the professional qualification in probation (PQiP) programme in the LDUs with the most acute staff shortages. Staff redeployments have also been implemented.

The implementation of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) will further increase the staffing pressures on community teams. The divisional director chairs the Divisional Implementation Board (DIB). The division is aware of the potential risks of implementation and has a structured plan, including a detailed risk register, to manage them.

The divisional business risk register is reviewed by the senior leadership team quarterly. Risk controls, actions and ownership are clearly identified. Business managers lead on business continuity planning and there are sufficient plans in place in each LDU. Plans are also reviewed quarterly with the LDU head.

Does the current operating model support effective service delivery, meeting the needs of all service users?

SEE has implemented the NPS Effectiveness, Efficiency and Excellence (E3) operating model across the division. Managers and staff understand their roles and are clear about their responsibilities. Staff shortages have resulted in some local variations to the E3 operating model being implemented. For example, in some areas, offender manager tasks, such as parole reports, are completed by court officers and senior probation officers (SPOs) hold cases. Additional SPOs have been recruited to manage the high number of trainee POs and inexperienced PSOs.

The dispersed LDU governance framework has not enabled a consistent operational response to divisional quality improvement objectives. In September 2018, the Operational and System Assurance Group (OSAG) undertook an audit of court services. The divisional lead for court services was responsible for implementing the necessary improvements, but accountability for court performance remained with the LDU leaders. The tracking of performance in the LDUs was not coordinated effectively. We found insufficient progress across the LDUs in the areas identified for improvement.

The quality development officer (QDO) role has been prioritised for recruitment, to maintain the division’s focus on the quality of practice. Ten per cent of the OASys assessments completed are quality assured bi-annually. There is limited evidence that this is improving practice. Of the OASys sample quality assured in quarter one, 2018-2019, 26.9 per cent were marked as good or sufficient. In quarter three, the figure was 27 per cent.

1.2 Staff	Requires improvement
Staff within the organisation are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users.	

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?

POs are key to the delivery of high-quality services, but in SEE their workloads are too high and this undermines service delivery. The division has a shortfall of 102 POs, and in nine out of the ten LDUs, POs’ workloads stand at over 100 per cent on the workload management tool. The average PO caseload nationally is 38.7. In SEE, the average is 42.5. Over half of the responsible officers we interviewed reported that their workloads are unmanageable.

The actions to address the shortfall have included the recruitment of agency staff. There were 34.6 agency staff working in offender management across the division at the time of the inspection. The PO shortage in the Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk and Surrey LDUs has been acute. The division has requested that the market forces supplement for salaries is applied in these areas. This has been implemented in one of the LDUs, and the division anticipates that the other two will soon be included. The division will also be piloting the national detached duty scheme and has successfully attracted PQiP applications by adjusting starting salaries in the pressurised areas.

Workload prioritisation plans have been implemented in three LDUs to address the excessive staff workload. As part of these plans, PSOs have been given tasks to support POs with their cases. The division recognises that this has had a marginal impact on reducing workloads. There are few tasks in relation to the management of individuals assessed as high risk of serious harm, that are not a priority.

The effective management of individuals who pose a high risk of serious harm requires that SPOs support POs and PSOs effectively in supervising cases. In SEE, we had concerns that the breadth of SPO responsibility was too great to enable this. For instance, the responsibilities include managing staff sickness and absence. POs and PSOs had the highest recorded absence rate for any staff group in the eight months before December 2018.

Do the skills and profile of staff support the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?

Cases are allocated in line with the national tiering framework to responsible officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the cases. Ninety-six per cent of officers reported that cases are allocated to them in line with their training and experience. PSOs who support POs in managing high risk of serious harm cases are given appropriate support and guidance.

There is limited training for court staff, particularly in relation to writing reports. The national PSO training does not include a report writing module, and the training available focuses more on the offender management role. Induction and training for report writing are inconsistent across the 10 LDUs in the division.

The SEE staffing profile does not match the profile of its service users. Eighty-eight per cent of staff have recorded their ethnicity, with nine per cent identifying as coming from a black and minority ethnic (BAME) background. Over 90 per cent of service users have recorded their ethnicity, with 14 per cent identifying as BAME.

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

SEE has a supportive and accessible management culture that emanates from the senior management team. Staff report that the management ethos contributes to the overall resilience of the organisation. In almost all cases, where staff have required reasonable adjustments to undertake their work, these have been made.

The Seeds 2 model of supervision is being implemented across the division. Most staff have regular meetings with their manager. For responsible officers, the focus of these meetings is normally casework. All staff have an annual appraisal and most have an equalities objective recorded.

SPOs are usually available to respond to immediate casework concerns. The competing priorities of the role impedes the SPOs' ability to maintain detailed oversight of team caseloads.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Learning and professional development are promoted in SEE and most staff feel they have access to appropriate training. Much of this training is online. Staff report that the lack of reflective discussion limits the scope of professional development. Workload demands also prevent responsible officers from attending training events.

Apart from safeguarding training, there is no mandatory refresher training for operational staff. Responsible officers are therefore not required to attend training on topics such as risk management or report writing as part of ongoing professional development. In view of the complexity of the cases, this should be incorporated into the continuing professional development arrangements.

All SEE staff attend a corporate induction when they take up their posts, but the work-based induction into posts is inconsistent. PSOs complete the national training modules and there is a standardised classroom event for new case administrators. The quality of their office induction depends on the quality of management oversight. This is inconsistent. New operational managers attend the first line managers programme. Administration managers have variable access to this programme.

The division has used its resources to enhance learning and professional development. Programmes team officers have worked with QDOs to deliver briefings to responsible officers on strengths-based approaches. In addition, the equalities manager has developed practice guidance on areas such as working with transsexual service users and unconscious bias. These initiatives are valued by the staff teams.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

All LDUs have a staff wellbeing and engagement lead. Wellbeing activities are evident across the division. In the eight offices that inspectors visited, there was evidence of wellbeing events, to both engage staff and maintain morale. The initiatives included breakfast clubs, mindfulness and team building days.

The “you said, we did” engagement process operates in most offices and this has been used to feed back some health and safety issues. In one office, there were concerns about lighting in the car park, and these were subsequently addressed. Staff use appreciation notice boards and newsletters to feed back positive messages to colleagues. Nominations for national awards are also invited, and SEE had three finalists in the 2019 National Probation Awards scheme. Two-thirds of the responsible officers were aware of the reward and recognition processes in place.

1.3. Services	Good
A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service for all service users.	

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of service users, to ensure that the division can deliver well-targeted services?

SEE has a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of its service users, which includes both offending-related and desistance factors. The division uses this to identify strategic targets and to commission services from the CRCs. Information specific to each LDU is produced so that managers have information about the service users in their area. This includes information on individuals convicted of domestic abuse and sexual offending. Bespoke data sets can also be produced from this information. For instance, detailed profiles in respect of BAME service users and women were provided for the court lead.

One of the division’s strategic targets was to increase the recording of service users’ protected characteristics to 90 per cent. This was successfully overseen by the equalities manager. The information has been used to inform court services, but is not currently used enough. For instance, it has not yet been used to monitor recalls to

prison or referrals to accredited programmes. In our inspection of cases, we also found that diversity considerations were not routinely considered in sentence planning.

The division has analysed service users to inform its female service user strategy and action. The updated information from this analysis is used effectively to monitor progress.

Does the division provide the volume, range and quality of services to meet the needs of the service users?

The division's commissioning of CRC rate card services in 2019-2020 is based on its analysis of service users' needs and its strategic priorities. In 2018-2019, unpaid work and accredited programmes were largely purchased in line with the set targets. The one programme that was under-commissioned was the Thinking Skills programme. The main cause of this was that the two CRCs in the division had different interpretations of the eligibility criteria for the programme. Consistency has now been established, following senior management meetings.

The discretionary services commissioned by SEE from the rate card include women's services; mentoring; and education, training and employment (ETE). These are purchased in line with the set target. Sixty-eight per cent of the responsible officers interviewed felt they had access to the necessary range of services. Mentoring services and women's services were viewed very positively. The lack of access to suitable accommodation was the greatest concern.

There are examples of excellent service provision for women, although these services are not available consistently across the division. One project inspected in Northamptonshire, partly funded by the Ministry of Justice as part of its Female Offender strategy,¹¹ is available through the rate card.

Northamptonshire magistrates' court is part of a joint initiative by the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Care to use more community sentence treatment requirements. Initially, this initiative focused on mental health treatment requirements for women, and 120 were made in 2018-2019. This joint working has now expanded to include men who have a dual diagnosis of mental health problems and drug addiction.

The programmes manager has taken effective action to reduce the waiting times for the accredited programmes delivered by the division. Demand and resources are now managed centrally, and waiting times are reducing. At the time of the inspection, however, 21 per cent of service users had waited over 12 months for a programme.

Are relationships with providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services to service users?

At a strategic and operational level, SEE has good relationships with external agencies, but these do not consistently result in improved service delivery. SEE has staff located in nine multi-agency safeguarding hubs across the division. We found that, despite these welcome arrangements, information-sharing did not consistently underpin the management of cases.

¹¹ The strategy was published in June 2018: www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-offender-strategy

In one police and crime commissioner area, a senior manager from SEE chairs the offenders sub-group of the Criminal Justice Board. SEE's contribution is considered effective in developing key pathways for service users. There are also effective partnerships with mental health services across the division. The offender personality disorder pathway is embedded in the division and psychologists and community psychiatric nurses provide services in both offices and approved premises. There has been additional funding for the pathway in Kent, Sussex and Surrey to fund joint working with the mental health intensive risk management service. In Hertfordshire, SEE staff sit on a mentally disordered offenders advisory panel. The panel advises on diverting individuals who have been arrested away from the criminal justice system.

SEE has quarterly meetings with its CRC partners, Sodexo and Seetec, at senior and middle management level. Meetings focus on improving service delivery. SEE has also commissioned individualised services for service users. These include one-to-one programmes to address emotional and cognitive issues.

Accommodation provision for high risk of harm service users is difficult to access across the division, but there are examples of effective pathways. An initiative by one MAPPA strategic management board led to an accommodation project that prioritises MAPPA-eligible service users.

Example of good practice

The mental health risk management service in Kent, Surrey and Sussex has received additional funding in 2019-2020 to work with individuals who have been assessed as posing a high risk of serious harm and who have complex mental health problems. The team is located alongside probation officers. It targets prisoners serving long sentences who have exhibited challenging behaviour in custody. This includes prisoners who have been recalled or are serving indeterminate sentences. Probation officers and psychologists visit service users before release, to complete assessments and agree an intensive package of support as part of the sentence plan. The support includes interventions from support workers, occupational therapists and psychologists. Access to community mental health teams can also be made available through this service.

Services to court

The 'effective proposal framework' has been implemented in the division to improve the consistency and quality of reports and proposals. Information on the NPS's performance nationally shows that this framework has been successful in SEE, particularly in relation to accredited programme proposals. However, the overall quality of the reports inspected was of concern, particularly in relation to the assessment of risk of serious harm. The risk of serious harm screenings did not identify all the relevant factors in 38 per cent of cases.

Quality assurance tools have been implemented, but staff use these inconsistently. In some teams, they are used only as checklists. Seventy-two per cent of inspected reports were delivered orally. There is no quality assurance process for these reports. The results of the quality assurance undertaken are fed back individually to report writers in management meetings. A process for collating the information to systematically improve practice is not in place.

The approach to female service users adopted in September 2018 has a clear focus on court work. There is evidence that more community orders are being proposed for women but this is not a consistent pattern across the division.

Fifty-eight per cent of the operational staff at court are PSOs. This includes 15 agency staff. There is limited PSO training for court work and report writing. This contributes to the poor quality of court work in the division.

Our sentencer survey received feedback from 51 sentencers across the division, and 86 per cent reported effective relationships with probation staff to support high-quality services. However, 31 per cent of sentencers reported that courts were not made sufficiently aware of the services available to support sentencing options. The sentencer meeting arrangements are inconsistent across the division. The divisional court lead meets with judges and magistrate chairs quarterly. Court SPOs in each LDU are responsible for the local liaison with sentencers and these arrangements vary. The implementation of a consistent strategy is an objective of the divisional delivery plan 2019-2020.

Services to victims

The services to victims in SEE are good. Personalised contact is made promptly after sentence and the initial contact is routinely followed up if there is no response. The communication with victims routinely considers diversity issues and the victims team is responsive to any new additional personal information that it receives. Victims are consistently updated on the progress of sentences and their concerns are communicated effectively at the key decision points in the sentence.

Victims teams work in clusters across the division. Staffing arrangements are flexible to manage fluctuating workloads. Court information systems are used systematically to ensure all relevant cases are identified and responded to. Victim contact officers and responsible officers exchange information effectively.

1.4. Information and facilities	Requires improvement
Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all service users.	

Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?

SEE has effective internal communication processes. Staff say that the deputy director’s newsletter and LDU weekly bulletins are valuable sources of information and guidance. These provide links to policy and highlight developments in effective practice.

Team meetings and QDO briefings are used to reinforce key policy changes and effective practice in areas such as safeguarding. Short team briefings are also used to highlight immediate concerns about performance or quality.

SEE’s knowledge management strategy is in its infancy. Integral to the approach is the expectation that staff take responsibility for their professional development and attend discussions on effective practice. The current operational workloads have prevented responsible officers from attending these meetings regularly. Seven-minute best practice videos, produced by the division as part of this strategy, have been circulated.

EQuIP is available to staff as a guide to policy and practice. In our interviews with responsible officers, this was not identified as their key source of guidance.

The division's recording policy is not clear, and recording across the division is inconsistent. The CRISSA structured supervision and recording model has been promoted as best practice through the SEE Offender Manager Quality Forum. In the inspected files, however, we found limited evidence of its use.

Do the premises and offices enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?

The performance of the facilities management contract is poor across the division. Business managers are involved in the complicated escalation process for outstanding work and repairs. This process has several stages and is ineffective in ensuring outstanding jobs are completed quickly. The business managers keep a record of all outstanding jobs and a forward planning register for NPS buildings.

The ineffectiveness of the contract is time-consuming for managers and has a negative effect on staff morale. Over extended periods, offices have been without heating systems; staff have had ineffective personal alarms; and residents in approved premises have had fewer washing facilities.

The demand for beds in approved premises, to accommodate individuals assessed as posing a high risk of serious harm, is very high. It is therefore unacceptable that the performance of the facilities management contract results in approved premises beds being lost for reasons such as broken locks and the CCTV not working.

Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?

Staff are provided with laptops and mobile phones, which helps them to deliver a quality service. The increased flexibility in relation to IT access and working location has resulted in more effective recording and more information-sharing. Tasks such as urgent referrals to services for supervised individuals can also be completed more efficiently.

We inspected the information-sharing on ViSOR in nine cases. In eight of the nine cases examined, appropriate information had been shared with the other responsible authorities. The most recent NPS risk management plans, however, had not been uploaded in all cases. Responsible officers are aware of the nDelius extract process for ViSOR, but not all of them understand what information should be shared.

Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The division comprehensively analyses and collates data. Performance information, in relation to national delivery targets, is communicated to managers for each LDU. There is clear evidence of accountability and improved performance resulting from this oversight. Similarly, learning from serious further offence (SFO) reviews and external case reviews are communicated consistently via newsletters, QDO briefings and team meetings. There has been a positive response to the HMIP thematic inspection report on the management and supervision of sexual offenders.¹² Strength based practice has been re-launched, with the QDO and programmes teams providing oversight. The response to the Lammy Review, however, was mixed. The division demonstrated initiative in undertaking quality assurance on its reports prepared on

¹² HM Inspectorate of Probation and HMI Prisons. (2019). Management and supervision of men convicted of sexual offences.

BAME service users in July 2018 and April 2019. However, service improvements from this process are yet to be demonstrated.

The inspection of court work identified that the division's response to the September 2018 OSAG audit on SEE's court services has similarly not resulted in improved service quality. LDU action plans in response to the audit were not effectively coordinated, and insufficient progress has been made in the three key areas identified for improvement: the analysis of risk of serious harm, the quality of proposals and the consistent application of quality assurance processes.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 120 cases from across the division over two weeks. The cases inspected had been supervised either on licence or on a community order for six to seven months. The inspection of each case took the form of reviewing the case file and interviewing the responsible officer. The key areas of the case reviewed were engagement, planning, implementation, and review.

We found that responsible officers engaged individuals in assessment and planning effectively. There was evidence that positive working relationships were developed. The assessment of offending-related factors was strong but personal and diversity information was not routinely used to inform sentence planning and contact arrangements. Services were not used consistently to address offending-related and desistance factors. Reviews were not systematic and did not consistently include information from other agencies or consider potential victims.

Strengths:

- Responsible officers engage individuals well in the assessment and planning stages of supervision.
- Community sentences and licence periods begin promptly.
- Offending-related factors are identified and analysed appropriately.
- Responsible officers effectively address offending-related factors in the planning of cases.
- Responsible officers effectively re-engage with service users following enforcement action.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessments do not always consider personal circumstances and diversity factors.
- A focus on potential victims is not always maintained, particularly in cases assessed as medium risk of serious harm.
- Risk management and contingency planning are not sufficiently personalised to consider all the presenting behaviour and circumstances.
- Services are not always used when they could have made a positive impact.
- Reviews of risk of serious harm do not always include information from other agencies or consider changes to the risk management plan.

2.1. Assessment	Good
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	

The inspected cases demonstrated that four out of five assessments were sufficient in terms of service user engagement and the analysis of offending and desistance factors. In just under three-quarters of cases, assessments focused sufficiently on the risk of harm to others.

Does the assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

Responsible officers engaged constructively with service users in 79 per cent of cases. This was just below the average of 82 per cent in other NPS divisions. In a quarter of cases, however, the potential impact of diversity factors such as ethnicity and child care was not incorporated into the assessment. When included, there is evidence of this information being used positively to enhance engagement. In 84 per cent of cases, the assessment of the individual’s engagement occurred within an appropriate period from the start of sentence or release on licence.

In 78 per cent of cases, service users were actively engaged in the assessment process. This included pre-release planning meetings and home visits following release from prison. This helped to develop positive working relationships between responsible officers and service users, and helped service users understand licence requirements. There is also evidence of the self-assessment questionnaire being routinely used at the beginning of orders and licence periods, to improve service users’ engagement. In some cases, however, important information identified by the service user is not used. This results in factors such as mental health, physical health and illegal drug use not being assessed sufficiently.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?

Assessment focused sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance in 82 per cent of cases. This is consistent with our findings in other divisions. In 90 per cent of assessments, offending-related factors were identified and in 78 per cent of cases these were sufficiently analysed. The main factors identified included friends and associates, thinking and behaviour, and relationships. Strengths and protective factors were also assessed in 86 per cent of cases. These included parental relationships, the service user’s motivation, and employment.

Comprehensive assessments should not rely too heavily on the service user’s self-disclosure. In 74 per cent of cases, responsible officers included information from sources such as mental health services, the Crown Prosecution Service and children’s services. In these cases, the assessment was sufficient and it included information such as a service user’s involvement in organised crime. However, a small number of cases were identified where the service user’s account was the primary source of information. This resulted in an incomplete analysis of the service user’s behaviour.

OASys is the main tool used by responsible officers as part of the assessment process. ARMS is used inconsistently across the division for the assessment of sexual offenders. Where it was used, it enhanced the assessment of the case. In one example, where a service user denied his offence, it contributed to a more detailed analysis of offending and desistance factors.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on the risk of harm to others?

Assessments focused sufficiently on the risk of serious harm to others in 73 per cent of cases. This is in line with the average finding of 75 per cent for the other divisions. Eighty-three per cent of cases specified individuals who were potentially at risk, but this information was only analysed effectively in 73 per cent of cases.

Information-sharing is fundamental to comprehensive risk assessments. In SEE, assessments were not informed by information from key agencies in 33 per cent of the cases inspected. This included concerns in relation to domestic abuse and children, where the assessments should have included information from the police and children's services. There were also cases where previous offences were not assessed.

There were also good examples of information-sharing in the case sample, particularly evidence of strong working relationships with the police. In one case, information exchange before a service user's release resulted in a MAPPA level 2 referral and a comprehensive release plan.

2.2 Planning	Good
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the service user.	

The inspected cases demonstrated that planning sufficiently engaged service users in just over two-thirds of cases. In over two-thirds of cases, planning focused sufficiently on reducing offending and supporting desistance. In two-thirds of cases, planning sufficiently addressed the risk of harm to others.

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

Planning focused sufficiently on engaging the service user in 68 per cent of cases. This was lower than in other divisions, where the average was 78 per cent.

The service user's view was considered in 71 per cent of the inspected cases. There was evidence of responsible officers engaging positively with service users to plan the sentence. When home visits were undertaken, both pre-and post-release, these were effective in motivating service users and engaging with family members involved. Three-way meetings involving other professionals were also examples of the service user being engaged effectively in sentence planning.

The self-assessment questionnaire is used consistently by responsible officers as a focus for the initial sentence plan. When the information disclosed by the service user was incorporated, plans were comprehensive. This also enabled consideration of diversity. Insufficient consideration of diversity and personal circumstances was, however, found in 34 per cent of cases. This undermined effective planning.

In 82 per cent of cases, planning included the level and pattern of contact but details of how the plan would be implemented were not routinely set out. A written record of the plan was recorded within an appropriate period of the start of an order or release on licence in 73 per cent of cases.

Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?

Planning focused sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance in 71 per cent of cases. This was in line with our findings in other divisions.

Planning prioritised the most critical offending-related factors in 74 per cent of cases. The factors identified included relationships, attitudes to offending and drug use. For 72 per cent of high risk of harm cases, accommodation planning was sufficient. This is a welcome finding, as securing accommodation for this profile of service user is frequently difficult.

In 37 per cent of cases, strengths and protective factors were not built on as part of planning. In the cases where strengths such as relationships, motivation to change and employment were identified, they were appropriately incorporated in planning.

Example of good practice

John was sentenced to 20 weeks in prison for offences of theft and assault. He was assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm. The NPS received his case through the risk escalation process from the CRC at the point of sentence. John had no accommodation to go to on release from prison and this was identified as a key risk factor.

The responsible officer undertook prison visits and detailed pre-release work. This included liaison with mental health services, the police and substance misuse services. A meeting of professionals was arranged by the responsible officer and services were coordinated as part of release planning. An approved premises bed was not available, but the responsible officer's persistence, combined with help from the police, enabled suitable accommodation to be secured. On release, John resided at the address with an appropriate release package in place.

Does planning address appropriately factors associated with the risk of harm to others?

Planning was sufficient to keep people safe in 66 per cent of the cases inspected. This was in line with our findings in other divisions. The omissions included failing to make children's services referrals, not planning to protect potential victims of domestic abuse and using unedited plans from previous supervision periods. Links with other agencies were made in 69 per cent of cases that warranted multi-agency working. In these cases, there was evidence of effective multi-agency working to manage the risk of harm.

Effective contingency planning was identified in 67 per cent of cases. There were examples of very good practice. It was identified, however, that generic contingency templates were often used and these were not always personalised. Similarly, some risk management plans included too much detail. It was difficult to identify the key actions to manage risk in these cases. Responsible officers reported that the level of detail included was required by the OASys quality assessment tool.

2.3. Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging the service user.	

The inspected cases demonstrated that service users were sufficiently engaged in over four out of five cases. In nearly three-quarters of cases, the delivery of services built sufficiently on service users’ strengths. However, the delivery of services to manage the risk of harm to others was deemed insufficient in more than a third of the cases inspected.

Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately with a focus on engaging the service user?

In 83 per cent of cases, the sentence/post-custody period was implemented with a focus on engaging the service user. This was in line with our findings in other NPS divisions.

In three-quarters of licence cases, the responsible officer made appropriate contact with the service user before their release from custody. We saw cases where this clearly enhanced compliance on licence. There were also cases where home visits both before and after release were used effectively to improve service users’ engagement through building relationships with family members.

In 95 per cent of cases, appropriate effort was made to re-engage service users following enforcement action. In some of these cases, effective re-engagement was necessary on more than one occasion and this was achieved by the responsible officer. A focus on maintaining effective relationships with service users was identified in 88 per cent of cases. This included adopting a flexible approach to enable the service user to complete their sentence.

Does supervision focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user’s desistance?

The implementation and delivery of services supported the service user’s desistance in 58 per cent of cases. This is below the average figure of 67 per cent for the other NPS divisions.

In 71 per cent of cases, the delivery of services built on strengths. In these cases, there was effective liaison with services such as adult social care, mental health and accommodation. There were also examples of responsible officers delivering structured one-to-one interventions to address offending-related factors and to improve the desistance of service users. In 42 per cent of cases, however, alcohol was identified as a key factor but insufficient services were delivered. In some cases, positive professional relationships did not result in appropriate referrals.

Ninety-five per cent of cases had been managed by either one or two responsible officers. In view of the workload management issues faced by SEE, this demonstrates an effective management focus on maintaining consistent professional relationships.

Does supervision focus appropriately on managing and minimising the risk of harm to others?

The delivery of services to manage the risk of harm to others was sufficient in 59 per cent of cases. This was below the average figure of 66 per cent for the other divisions. The figure for high risk of serious harm cases in the division was 67 per cent. This was higher than the figure for medium risk of serious harm cases, which was 52 per cent.

In 63 per cent of cases, sufficient attention was paid to victims and potential victims. The figure for high risk of serious harm cases was 71 per cent, which was significantly higher than the figure of 57 per cent for medium risk of serious harm cases. The evidence indicates that less attention is given to victims’ concerns in cases assessed as medium risk of serious harm. Actions taken to protect victims included disclosures to family members, safeguarding referrals and joint work with adult social care. Cases that were assessed as unsatisfactory included those with concerns regarding domestic abuse, risks to family members and contingency plans not being activated in relation to information-sharing.

Home visits are key to minimising the risk to others, and were undertaken in 71 per cent of cases. There were examples of unplanned home visits and evidence of effective working relationships with the police.

2.4. Reviewing	Requires improvement
Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	

In the inspected cases reviewing sufficiently supported compliance in over three-quarters of cases. In over two-thirds of cases reviewing supported progress towards desistance. However, reviewing was only deemed sufficient in focusing on the risk of harm to others in just over half the cases.

Does reviewing effectively support the service user’s compliance and engagement?

In 77 per cent of cases, reviewing was sufficient to support compliance and engagement. This was in line with our findings in the other NPS divisions. There was evidence of appointment times being adjusted to allow for employment and, in one case, polygraph testing being instituted to manage the levels of risk.

In 68 per cent of cases, service users were meaningfully involved in reviews. Positive professional relationships enabled reviews to be part of ongoing contact with the service user

Seventy-six per cent of reviews were recorded and actions identified to enhance the service user’s compliance and engagement. We found good examples of reviews being recorded as part of management oversight.

Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?

Reviewing supported progress towards desistance in 70 per cent of cases. This was in line with our findings in other divisions. There was evidence of reviewing being used to motivate and facilitate access to appropriate services. In one case, the responsible

officer's responsiveness to the service user's increased maturity enabled effective safeguarding arrangements following the birth of a child.

Adjustments to the plan of work, however, were not made in 37 per cent of the reviewed cases. In a similar proportion of cases, information from other agencies did not inform the review. This resulted in ineffective reviews and responsible officers not responding effectively to changes affecting service users, such as changes in lifestyle and health, and substance misuse.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on the risk of harm to others?

Reviews focused sufficiently on keeping people safe in 54 per cent of cases. This is lower than the average figure from the inspection of other divisions and is therefore of concern.

In 37 per cent of cases, a review was not undertaken following changes in risk factors. The changes that should have triggered reviews and did not included intelligence from the police, resumed illegal drug use and the breaching of a restraining order. There was minimal evidence of MAPPA level 1 reviews being routinely undertaken in the cases reviewed.

Example of poor practice

Peter was sentenced to a 24-month community order with requirements to attend the Building Better Relationships programme; a 15-day rehabilitation activity requirement; and 80 hours of unpaid work. His index offence was breach of a restraining order. The pre-sentence report identified that the offence had occurred with a two-year old child present. It also stated that Peter had previously been the victim of a stabbing.

Peter was not seen by his responsible officer until nearly three weeks after his sentence. The level of subsequent contact was insufficient and there were no reviews undertaken post-sentence. Safeguarding referrals were not made and there were no domestic abuse checks undertaken with the police. Peter was subsequently convicted of a further breach of the restraining order, again involving intimidating behaviour, against the same victim.

Reviews of risk of serious harm were not met with appropriate actions in 46 per cent of cases. This included not increasing contact following evidence that the service user was involved in an organised crime group and not responding to information that a service user's relationship had broken down.

Reviews were informed by information from other agencies in 63 per cent of cases. There were good examples of close working relationships with the police in the management of sexual offenders. The shared information in these cases was the basis for the comprehensive reviews.

Example of good practice

Tom was sentenced to imprisonment for sexual offences against a child and released from prison on licence. There has been regular contact with the police in the management of the case, including home visits and the completion of an ARMS assessment. At the point of a change in responsible officer, a comprehensive review was undertaken, which incorporated information from the police and the victim liaison officer. The ARMS assessment was discussed with Tom and updated in several key areas, as part of the review. Actions arising from the review included an amendment to the exclusion zone.

3. NPS-specific work

In total, we reviewed 121 court reports that had been completed nine weeks before the inspection and where the sentence was a community order, a suspended sentence order or immediate custody. As well as the reports, case management and assessment systems were accessed to inspect the work undertaken.

SEE's performance in relation to court reports and case allocation is insufficient in key areas. In the risk assessments, there is too much emphasis on the individual's account of the offence and reports do not routinely consider victim issues. Significant information from key agencies is not always included. Joint initiatives with mental health teams have been successful at two of the courts. Records of court assessments are not consistently shared with organisations managing the cases.

Statutory victim work is carried out to a good standard within the division. Victims are engaged effectively and communication methods routinely take diversity issues into consideration. Victim contact officers maintain contact with victims consistently during a sentence. They ensure victims' concerns are considered when key decisions are taken.

Strengths:

- Defendants are engaged in the preparation of their court reports.
- Personalised letters are sent promptly to victims, informing them of the victim contact service.
- Victim liaison officers engage victims effectively.
- Victims' concerns are consistently considered at the key decision points of an individual's sentence.

Areas for improvement:

- Court reports do not routinely consider the victims' perspective.
- Risk of serious harm screenings do not consistently identify all the key factors.
- Full risk of serious harm assessments are not completed as required.
- Court reports are not consistently shared with organisations responsible for managing sentenced individuals.

3.1 Court reports and case allocation	Requires improvement
The pre-sentence information and advice provided to court supports its decision-making, with cases being allocated appropriately following sentencing.	

Is the pre-sentence advice sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court’s decision-making?

Pre-sentence reports and advice to the court contained sufficient analysis and personalised information in 53 per cent of cases. Eighty-eight per cent of the reports inspected had been prepared for magistrates’ courts and nearly 63 per cent were prepared on the same day as the plea or finding of guilt. The majority of reports were presented either orally or in a short format.

In 81 per cent of cases, there was evidence that individuals had been engaged and reports had taken their views into account. In 34 per cent of cases, however, this contact did not result in an assessment of the individual’s motivation to change or consideration of diversity factors. Seventy per cent of the reports demonstrated that the risk of re-offending had been considered by the author, but this was the case in only 51 per cent of reports where it was necessary in relation to risk of harm. Factors that were not assessed included mental health, children’s safeguarding and alcohol use. There was also evidence of report authors relying solely on the individual’s explanation when analysing offences and offending patterns. The advice to court failed to include victim information in 49 per cent of cases where it was required. This underlines the insufficient standard of analysis in the court reports overall.

The effective proposal framework has been implemented in the division, and in 68 per cent of cases, proposals to court were judged appropriate. Requirements made as part of community orders included mental health treatment requirements; alcohol treatment requirements; accredited programmes including thinking skills; and rehabilitation activity requirements.

At one court in the division, the NPS has been part of a national pilot to increase the use of mental health treatment requirements. The success of the pilot has resulted in the scheme being adopted at another of the division’s courts. Inspectors saw good evidence of the effectiveness of this initiative. Joint assessment by the NPS court teams and mental health teams that informed a comprehensive report and proposal saw a woman with mental health problems receive a treatment requirement as part of a community sentence.

Example of poor practice

June was under the supervision of the CRC, and the court officer undertook an oral report, requested for further offences of shoplifting and assault. The offences were influenced by her drug use and jointly committed with her partner. She had four children, who it was believed were in care. This was not checked with children’s services. A domestic abuse check was submitted but this was not returned prior to sentencing.

The proposal for a community order with an exclusion requirement was unsuitable. The rationale for the proposal was not clear and the progress on the current orders was not articulated. The responsible officer ruled out a drug rehabilitation requirement because June had previously been assessed as unsuitable. This should

have been re-considered alongside other requirements. The court imposed a custodial sentence.

Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate, and based on sufficient information?

The allocation of the case was based on sufficient information in 49 per cent of cases. Allocation of cases was prompt in 98 per cent of cases, with 88 per cent going to the CRC. Report authors used previous convictions and prosecution papers to inform their assessments in nearly all the reports inspected. A sufficient record of the assessment, however, was not identifiable in 38 per cent of cases. Organisations managing cases therefore did not receive the necessary information at the start of sentence.

A risk of serious harm screening was carried out in over 74 per cent of cases, but we found that in 38 per cent of cases the screening was not comprehensive. This included a failure to identify the need for a full risk of serious harm assessment in over a third of cases. This is of concern. Risk factors and potential victims should be identified at the start of a sentence to manage a case effectively. It is also of concern that in 68 per cent of reports where inspectors viewed it as necessary, domestic abuse enquiries were not made to the police. Where inspectors viewed it as necessary to make child protection inquiries, these had been made in 50 per cent of cases. This lack of information-sharing with key agencies is consistent with our findings from the cases we inspected. Forty-one per cent of the community orders had not had a pre-allocation children's safeguarding referral when it was assessed that they should have. Again, this means that important information was not available to supervising officers at the beginning of the sentence.

3.2 Statutory victim work	Good
Relevant and timely information is provided to the victim/s of a serious offence, and they are given the opportunity to contribute their views at key points in the sentence.	

Does the initial contact with the victims encourage engagement with the victim contact scheme?

Initial contact with victims encouraged engagement with the victim contact scheme in 78 per cent of cases. In 82 per cent of cases, contact was made promptly by means of a personalised letter. The letter explains the scheme, outlines the timeframes and includes the name of the victim liaison officer. Information on services is included, although only 24 per cent of the cases we examined had information on the HMPPS national victim helpline.

If the letter receives no response, victim liaison officers follow it up with a phone call to ensure that, where possible, all victims have the necessary information to opt into the scheme. This approach allows the officers to respond effectively to any diversity issues that may impede the victim's involvement. For example, in one case where there were concerns that the victim had dementia, adult social care were contacted for advice.

Example of good practice

The response to the initial contact was from a family member who informed the victim liaison officer that the victim of domestic abuse was a vulnerable adult with serious mental health problems. The family member had concerns that direct contact with the scheme could worsen her health. The victim liaison officer agreed, with the victim's consent, to maintain contact via the family member. The victim liaison officer's subsequent contact with the family focused on confirming the status of a restraining order. The victim's views on licence conditions for the perpetrator on release from prison were also obtained. The offender manager was informed of these, and recommended conditions, taking account of the concerns expressed. When the licence was finally confirmed, the victim was notified of the relevant conditions.

Is the personal contact with the victim timely and supportive, providing appropriate information about the criminal justice system?

The personal contact with victims was sensitive and timely in 82 per cent of cases. It included relevant information about the criminal justice process. In 91 per cent of cases, victims were informed of what they could expect to receive at the different points of the sentence. Depending on the victim's preference, contact was made either in person or by phone. Where necessary, interpreters were engaged or other services, such as adult social care, contacted.

The inspected cases demonstrated that victims were kept informed at each stage of the criminal justice process and were able to express any concerns to the victim liaison officer. In most cases, victim liaison officers kept detailed records of the meetings and any actions taken.

Does pre-release contact with the victims allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release?

In 79 per cent of cases, pre-release contact with victims enabled them to express their views on licence conditions. In 87 per cent of cases, the concerns of the victim and their safety were considered in release planning. Victim liaison officers attend all MAPPA level 2 and 3 meetings in the division and there is evidence of good information exchange between responsible officers and victim liaison officers. This enables victim liaison officers to communicate the concerns of victims and play an effective role in release planning.

In most of the inspected cases, any concerns expressed by victims about an individual's release were addressed by victim liaison officers. It was also evident from the records that attention was paid to victims' safety in release planning. This included ensuring that licence conditions such as exclusion zones focused on the safety of victims.

Annex 1: Methodology

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The provider submitted evidence in advance and the NPS divisional director delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How does the leadership of the organisation support and promote the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users?
- How are staff in the organisation empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users?
- Is there a comprehensive range of high-quality services in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service for all service users?
- Is timely and relevant information available, and are there appropriate facilities to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all service users?
- What are your priorities for further improvement, and why?

During the main fieldwork phase, we interviewed 95 individual responsible officers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings and focus groups, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 33 such meetings. The evidence explored under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.¹³

Domain two: case supervision

We completed case assessments over a two-week period, examining service users' files and interviewing responsible officers. The cases selected were those of individuals who had been under community supervision for approximately six to seven months (either through a community sentence or following release from custody). This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined 120 cases from across 10 LDUs. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, type of disposal and risk of serious harm level matched those in the eligible population.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples, for example male/female cases, or probation officer/probation service officer cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Domain three: sector-specific work

We completed case assessments for two further samples: (i) court reports and case allocation and (ii) victim work.

¹³ HM Inspectorate's domain one ratings characteristics can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/Probation-Domain-One-rating-characteristics-March-18-final.pdf>

Court reports and case allocation

As in domain two, sample sizes were set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5). We selected cases in which the court report had been completed nine weeks previously, and in which the individual had been sentenced to a community order, suspended sentence order, or immediate custody. We examined 121 cases, ensuring that the ratios in relation to report type and CRC/NPS allocation matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases, judging the quality of the written evidence in the report provided to court, the quality of information-gathering at the court and allocation stage, and the accuracy of the allocation decision.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information:

- the senior manager responsible for services to courts
- senior probation officers responsible for managing court teams
- court duty staff from different court settings.

Victim work

We examined 50 custodial cases that had begun six to seven months previously and where the victim was eligible for statutory victim contact. This sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), based on the number of cases where victim contact had commenced. We looked at how initial pre-and post-release contact was made, whether this was timely, and the quality of the contact offered. The sample included a proportionate ratio of cases where the contact was taken up and cases in which it was not. To examine pre- and post-release victim work, we drew upon 24 cases from our domain two case sample. Published data is insufficient to calculate accurate confidence levels for the sample size for victim contact, so these cases were identified from within the domain two case sample.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups:

- the senior manager responsible for the victim contact service, which included a review of the findings of the annual victim satisfaction survey
- a group of victim contact officers.

Annex 2: Inspection results: domains two and three

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of 120 domain two cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment, planning, implementation/delivery and reviewing. Within each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which service users were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed – and to manage that risk.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for one of the domain two key questions, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'.

The rating at the standard level is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding

2. Case supervision

Standard/Key question	Rating/% yes
2.1. Assessment	
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user	Good
2.1.1. Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	79%
2.1.2. Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	82%
2.1.3. Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	73%
2.2. Planning	
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Good

2.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	68%
2.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?	71%
2.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹⁴	66%

2.3. Implementation and delivery

High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging the service user

Requires improvement

2.3.1. Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the service user?	83%
2.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance?	58%
2.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	59%

2.4. Reviewing

Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user

Requires improvement

2.4.1. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's compliance and engagement?	77%
2.4.2. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance?	70%
2.4.3. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	54%

3. NPS-specific work

Standard/Key question

Rating/% yes

3.1. Court reports and case allocation

The pre-sentence information and advice provided to court supports its decision-making, with cases being allocated appropriately following sentencing¹⁵

Requires improvement

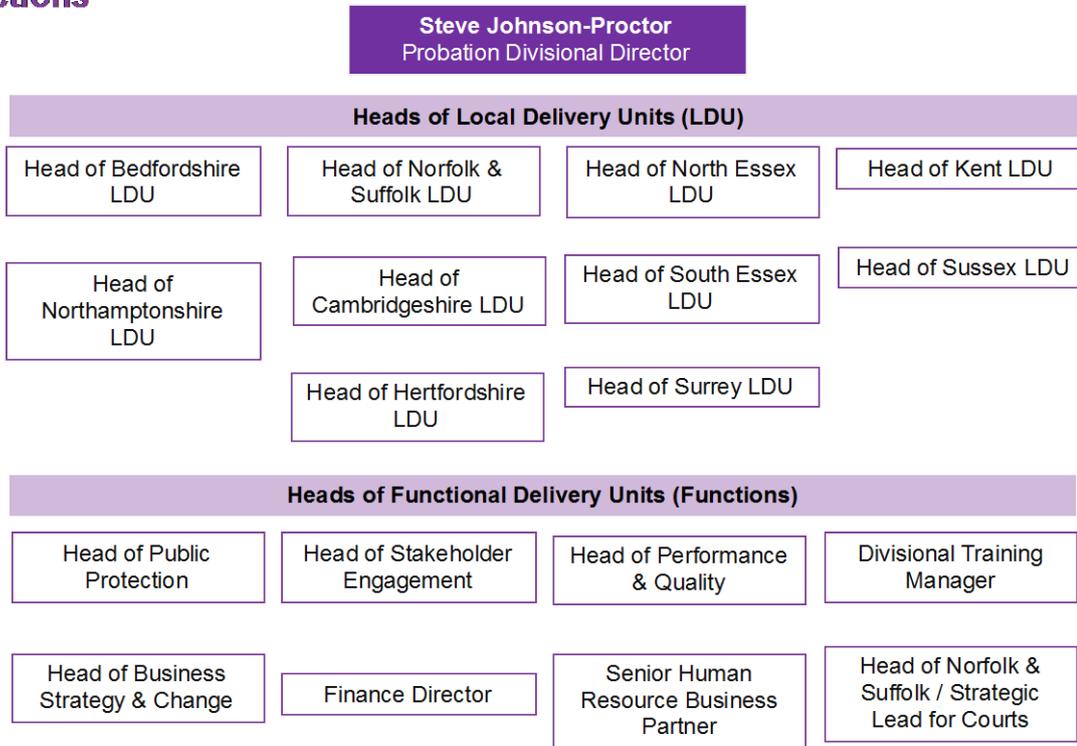
¹⁴ Please note: percentages relating to questions 2.2.3, 2.3.3 and 2.4.3 are calculated for the *relevant* sub-sample – that is, those cases where risk of serious harm issues apply, rather than for the *total* inspected sample.

¹⁵ Following a post-inspection review of the domain three court reporting data, we exercised professional judgement to amend the rating for this standard from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires improvement'.

Standard/Key question	Rating/% yes
3.1.1. Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court's decision-making?	53%
3.1.2. Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate, and based on sufficient information?	49%
3.2. Statutory victim work	
Relevant and timely information is provided to the victim/s of a serious offence, and they are given the opportunity to contribute their views at key points in the sentence	Good
3.2.1. Does the initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the victim contact scheme?	78%
3.2.2. Is the personal contact with the victim/s timely and supportive, providing appropriate information about the criminal justice process?	82%
3.2.3. Does pre-release contact with the victim/s allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release?	79%
3.2.4. Is there good communication between offender management and victim liaison to support the safety of victim/s?	86%

Annex 3: Operating model

South East & Eastern Division Senior Leadership Locations & Functions



Source: HMPPS/South East & Eastern NPS Division

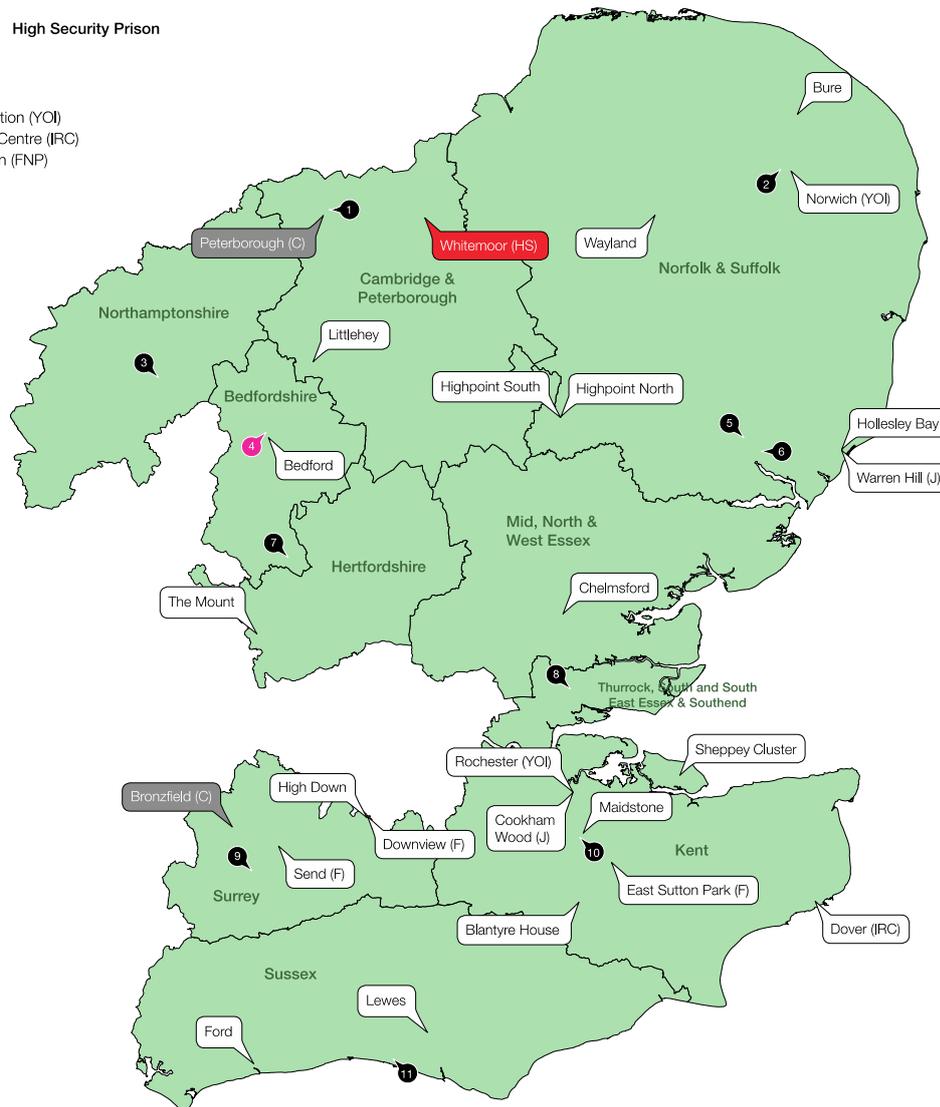
Key

- 10 **Approved Premises**
- 4 **Independent Approved Premises**
- Kent **Local Delivery Unit Cluster**
- Chelmsford **Prison**
- Bronzfield (C) **Contracted Prison**
- Whitemoor (HS) **High Security Prison**

- Juvenile (J)
- Female (F)
- Young Offender Institution (YOI)
- Immigration Removal Centre (IRC)
- Foreign National Prison (FNP)

List of Approved Premises

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Peterborough | 7. Napier Road |
| 2. John Boag House | 8. Felmores |
| 3. Bridgewood | 9. St Catherine's Priory |
| 4. Bedford | 10. Fleming House |
| 5. The Cottage | 11. Brighton |
| 6. Lightfoot House | |



NOTE: See London Division map for the location of South East Divisional Support Hub.

Source: HMPPS/South East & Eastern NPS Division

Annex 4: Glossary

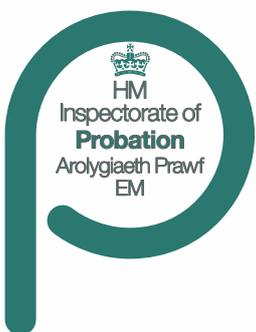
Accredited programme	A programme of work delivered to offenders in groups or individually through a requirement in a community order or a suspended sentence order, or as part of a custodial sentence or a condition in a prison licence. Accredited programmes are accredited by the Correctional Services Accredited Panel as being effective in reducing the likelihood of reoffending
Allocation	The process by which a decision is made about whether an offender will be supervised by a CRC or the NPS
Approved premises	Premises approved under Section 13 of the <i>Offender Management Act 2007</i> , managed either by the National Probation Service or by independent organisations. Approved premises are used as a short-term residence for an offender considered a high risk of serious harm, who requires close monitoring and supervision, and support to begin to integrate back into the community
ARMS	Active Risk Management System: provides an approved framework for working with sexual offenders who are subject to statutory supervision
Assessment	The process by which a decision is made about the things an individual may need to do to reduce the likelihood of them reoffending and/or causing further harm
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
Child protection	Work to make sure that all reasonable action has been taken to keep to a minimum the risk of a child coming to harm
Court report	This refers to any report prepared for a court to inform sentencing, whether delivered orally or in a written format
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company: 21 CRCs were set up in June 2014, to manage most offenders who present low or medium risk of serious harm
Criminal justice system	Involves any or all of the agencies involved in upholding and implementing the law – police, courts, youth offending teams, probation and prisons
CRISSA	A standardised method for recording entries on to NDelius
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour
Diversity	The extent to which people within an organisation recognise, appreciate and utilise the characteristics that make an organisation and its service users unique. Diversity can relate to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sex
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement: a requirement that a court may attach to a community order or a suspended sentence order aimed at tackling drugs misuse

Dual diagnosis	Individuals who have serious mental health and addiction problems
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
Enforcement	Action taken by a responsible officer in response to an individual's non-compliance with a community sentence or licence. Enforcement can be punitive or motivational
EQuIP	Excellence and Quality in Process: a NPS web-based national resource providing consistent information about the processes to be followed in all aspects of the NPS's work. The process mapping is underpinned by quality assurance measures
Escalation	The term used to describe the process where a case allocated to a CRC is referred to the NPS for reallocation because an increase in the risk of harm posed by the offender now places that person within the category of those who should be supervised by the NPS
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service: from 01 April 2017, HMPPS became the single agency responsible for delivering prison and probation services across England and Wales. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice took on responsibility for 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)
Intervention	Work with an individual that is designed to change their offending behaviour and/or to support public protection. A constructive intervention is where the primary purpose is to reduce likelihood of reoffending. A restrictive intervention is where the primary purpose is to keep to a minimum the individual's risk of harm to others. With a sexual offender, for example, a constructive intervention might be to put them through an accredited sex offender treatment programme; a restrictive intervention (to minimise their risk of harm to others) might be to monitor regularly and meticulously their accommodation, their employment and the places they frequent, imposing and enforcing clear restrictions as appropriate to each case. Both types of intervention are important
Lammy review	The Lammy Review, chaired by David Lammy MP, is an independent review of the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system
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
Local delivery unit	An operational unit comprising an office or offices, generally coterminous with police basic command units and local authority structures. For example, in the South East and Eastern division, Cambridgeshire LDU has three offices, in Peterborough, Cambridge and Huntingdon
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: where NPS, 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
Mental Health Intensive Risk Management Service	This team is located in Kent and works alongside probation officers
Mentoring	The advice and guidance offered by a more experienced person to develop an individual's potential
MoJ	Ministry of Justice: the government department with responsibility for the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the CRCs and the NPS in England and Wales
NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service that 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
NSI	Non-statutory intervention, used as the interface between NPS and CRCs on nDelius
OASys/eOASys/OASys R	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
Offender management	A core principle of offender management is that a single practitioner takes responsibility for managing an offender throughout their sentence, whether in custody or the community
OMiC	Offender Management in Custody. This refers to the new offender management structures and processes for sentenced prisoners being implemented in 2019.
OSAG	Operational and system assurance group. This is an internal HMPPS audit group that audits operational delivery and reports to the HMPPS executive committee and the Ministry of Justice
Partners	Partners include statutory and non-statutory organisations, working with the participant/offender through a partnership agreement with a CRC or the NPS

PO	Probation officer: this is the term for a responsible officer who has completed a higher-education-based professional qualification. The name of the qualification and content of the training varies depending on when it was undertaken. They manage more complex cases
Pre-sentence report	This refers to any report prepared for a court, whether delivered orally or in a written format
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
PSO	Probation services officer: this is the term for a responsible officer who was originally recruited with no professional 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 writing pre-sentence reports
QDO	Quality development officers: a specialist role within the NPS. QDOs work closely with local managers, practice tutors and operational staff to promote and improve the quality of work with offenders and victims
RAR	Rehabilitation Activity Requirement: from February 2015, when the <i>Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014</i> was implemented, courts can specify a number of RAR days within an order; it is for probation services to decide on the precise work to be done during the RAR days awarded
Rate card	A directory of services offered by the CRC for the NPS to use with its offenders, detailing the price
Responsible officer	The term used for the officer (previously entitled 'offender manager') who holds lead responsibility for managing a case
RoSH	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 must 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
SEEDS	Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision: a skills-based practice framework for enhancing offender engagement
SFO	Serious Further Offence: where an individual subject to (or recently subject to) probation commits one of a number of serious offences (such as murder, manslaughter or rape). The CRC and/or NPS must notify HMPPS of any such individual charged with one of these offences. A review is then conducted with a view to identifying lessons learned
SPO	Senior probation officer: first line manager within the NPS

Thinking Skills Programme	An accredited group programme designed to develop an offender's thinking skills to help them stay out of trouble
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 exchange 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 but is the formal name of the database
Workload management tool	A tool to calculate the overall workload of an individual responsible officer. It takes into account numbers and types of cases



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