



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of probation services in:
Staffordshire and West Midlands
Community Rehabilitation Company

HMI Probation, March 2020

Acknowledgements

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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.

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

The fieldwork for this inspection started on 30 September 2019.

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Foreword

We last inspected Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) in December 2018. At that time, we rated the work of the CRC as 'Requires improvement'. In this inspection, while there are some signs of progress, we were disappointed to find that the CRC remains in the 'Requires improvement' category, with serious concerns remaining about the quality of its case supervision.

Since we last visited Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC, the government has announced new plans for the future structure of the probation service. It is encouraging that senior managers from the CRC are playing a full and active part in working with colleagues from the National Probation Service to manage the transition to a new, unified national case management service.

There are some positive aspects to the way this CRC delivers services. In spite of reductions to overall income, they have sought to protect frontline services. There remains a good range of interventions, including a forward-looking and successful approach to the employment of people previously supervised on community supervision or post-release licence, and an extensive range of services for women. We found a good standard of unpaid work being delivered, and were pleased to find that the Through the Gate provision was outstanding.

However, our inspection found matters of serious concern in the delivery of case management – a deterioration since the last inspection. The poor standard of work to protect the public led to inadequate ratings across all four of our key standards for case supervision in relation to assessment, planning, delivery of the sentence of the court, and reviewing of cases. We found a staff group that was demoralised and where high levels of sickness absence are the norm, and almost 70 per cent of staff felt that their workloads were unmanageable. Neither the vision and strategy of the CRC nor day-to-day management supervision are driving the delivery of a high-quality service, and we had particular concerns around the effectiveness of the administrative support provided by a centralised Customer Service Centre. This requires immediate improvement, and the CRC has announced that up to 60 per cent of these services will now be moved out of the service centre and into local offices.

We make five recommendations for improvement in this report, which I hope will help this CRC reach the standards which I know their well-established and committed leadership aspire to.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Staffordshire and West Midlands Community
Rehabilitation Company

Score **11/30**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Case supervision

2.1 Assessment

Inadequate



2.2 Planning

Inadequate



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.4 Reviewing

Inadequate



4.¹ CRC-specific work

4.1 Unpaid work

Good



4.2 Through the Gate

Outstanding



¹ CRC aspects of domain three work are listed within HMI Probation's Standards as 4.1 and 4.2. Those for the National Probation Service are listed as 3.1 and 3.2.

Executive summary

Overall, Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) is rated as: **'Requires improvement'**. This rating has been determined by inspecting this provider in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 10 'standards', shared between the domains. These standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvement in the quality of work with people who have offended.² Published scoring rules generate the overall provider rating.³ The findings and subsequent ratings in those three domains are described here:

1. Organisational delivery



We rated leadership and staffing as 'Requires improvement'. The senior leadership of the organisation developed clear plans to improve following the previous inspection, but these have yet to achieve the intended impact in the key areas of staff sickness and public protection work. Most administrative processes relating to casework are carried out in the Customer Service Centre in Birmingham, and Reducing Reoffending Partnership leaders have, in the last year, integrated the management of this facility with operational management, rather than as part of the corporate functions. There is a plan to integrate administration even further with local operational management. Importantly, this has the potential to improve the management of information relating to risk of harm as these processes will be handled in the localities in which the service is delivered.

We rated services and information and facilities as 'Good'. There is an impressive range of interventions, and a well-developed and implemented approach to service user participation in the delivery of interventions. The senior management team works well with contracted service providers, and their contribution to local strategic partnerships is highly valued. There are key issues around staff sickness, and the skills and knowledge of staff which have adversely affected the CRC's ability to make full use of available interventions. The experience of staff is of being target driven in a way that works to the detriment of providing a high-quality service.

We were impressed by the availability of bespoke women's services across the area, delivered by contracted, third-sector organisations and showing positive involvement of former service users. Services are provided in high-quality premises, the standard of which reflects the intention of the CRC to treat the individuals being supervised with appropriate respect as citizens. This is in keeping with the desistance-based approach of the Reducing Reoffending Partnership operating model. Information and communications technology equipment is fit for purpose and accessible by most staff and partner agencies.

² HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

³ Each of the 10 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 30, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–5 = 'Inadequate', 6–15 = 'Requires improvement', 16–25 = 'Good', 26–30 = 'Outstanding'.

Key strengths of the organisation are as follows:

- There is an experienced and knowledgeable senior leadership team, and they are active and well-respected participants in local strategic multi-agency work.
- The workforce closely reflects the local population, in terms of ethnicity.
- Interventions include a suite of high-quality accredited programmes, well-grounded rehabilitation activity requirement interventions, good access to education, training and employment services, accommodation and support, and substance misuse interventions.
- Individuals supervised by the CRC are treated like citizens accessing any other public service.

The main areas for improvement of the organisation are as follows:

- Public protection work has deteriorated since the last inspection.
- The customer service centre approach to case administration does not adequately support operational staff.
- Line management of responsible officers does not develop the skills necessary for high-quality case management.
- Staff absence due to sickness has remained at high levels since our previous inspection and has had a negative effect on service delivery.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 86 community sentence cases and 52 post-release supervision cases; we interviewed 79 of the relevant responsible officers and 14 service users themselves. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of engaging the service user and addressing issues relevant to offending and desistance. For the 111 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. The quality of work for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for the case to be judged as satisfactory.

The fact that fewer than 50 per cent of cases met all our requirements, in terms of assessment, planning and implementation, and reviewing, led to our judgements of 'Inadequate' for these elements of work. In particular, the work by responsible officers to keep other people safe was insufficient. This staff group was found to be under considerable pressure to work in a manner that achieved organisational targets at the expense of quality. We found too many cases where the responsible officer did not acknowledge, or understand, the risk to the public. Information gathering and sharing was too frequently insufficient to manage risk of harm through the processes of case management.

Staff mostly engaged well with the individuals they supervised, and there was evidence that appropriate attention was paid to issues in the individual's life that would reduce the chances of further offending.

Key strengths of case supervision are as follows:

- The use of a comprehensive assessment tool (the Offender Assessment System – layer 3) for a greater proportion of cases should, over time, improve knowledge of the caseload characteristics and provide a better basis for case supervision.
- A good range of interventions are available that can be used to develop high-quality plans.
- In most aspects of case supervision, the service provided to women is of a sufficient quality.

Areas of case supervision requiring improvement are as follows:

- Work on keeping the public safe is not at an acceptable level, particularly in the Staffordshire cluster.
- Information gathering and analysis of risk of harm-related information is insufficient.
- Levels of sickness absence in the operational staff group are not reducing.
- Management of responsible officers does not consistently focus on the development of skills.

3. CRC-specific work

A blue folder icon with the letters 'CRC' in white text inside.

Our key findings about other core activities specific to CRCs are as follows:

Unpaid work

We inspected the management of 65 unpaid work requirements, looking at assessment and planning, safety, and implementation of the court order. We also observed two induction sessions and eight work parties to examine the extent to which unpaid work was delivered in a way that supported desistance.

Although over 65 per cent of the unpaid work cases we inspected met our requirements for assessment, planning and implementation of the sentence of the court, only 58 per cent of cases were deemed to have delivered unpaid work safely. Taking into account our observations from site visits and interviews with supervisors and service users and the way in which unpaid work supported desistance through the provision of high-quality work placements, we have given this CRC's unpaid work provision an overall 'Good' rating.

The CRC's unpaid work scheme provides an appropriate range of high-quality placements, with supervising staff showing a positive approach to the work undertaken. This is generally a well-managed and well-delivered scheme.

Key strengths of unpaid work are:

- There is a good range of high-quality placements that are of value to the local community in which they operate.
- Supervising staff work in a way that is likely to contribute to a reduction in further offending, supporting individuals in their compliance with the sentence.
- Unpaid work provides appropriately sensitive working opportunities for women.

Areas for improvement of unpaid work are:

- Options to access education, training and employment opportunities while undertaking unpaid work are very limited.
- Responsible officers do not always have a working knowledge of the unpaid work scheme.
- Enforcement action is not always taken promptly.
- Unpaid work supervisors have no access to Reducing Reoffending Partnership email or information technology-based case management systems.

Through the Gate

We inspected the management of 44 cases where the CRC had delivered pre-release Through the Gate resettlement work, looking at resettlement planning, delivery of resettlement services and release coordination.

Over 80 per cent of cases met our requirements for resettlement planning, support and release coordination. That led to the overall judgement of 'Outstanding' for Through the Gate work.

The CRC was an early adopter of the enhanced Through the Gate specification. A combination of good leadership, an expanded staff group, good staff supervision, and well-trained and motivated staff has led to a marked improvement in the quality of the service provided since the last inspection. This is a service which is highly regarded by prison managers.

Key strengths of Through the Gate services are:

- The project to implement the enhanced Through the Gate service was carefully put together and delivered, with clear and effective communication materials to support the understanding of responsible officers in the community.
- Staff delivering the service have been properly trained and are appropriately supervised.
- There are enough staff and partners to do the job well.

The area for improvement in Through the Gate work was:

- Risk of harm to others needs to be effectively managed in all cases where there are identified concerns.

Recommendations

Achievement of recommendations from the previous inspection⁴

In our previous inspection report, we made seven recommendations for the CRC. During this inspection, we investigated the extent to which these recommendations have been achieved.

We recommended that the CRC should:

1. *improve the quality of assessment, planning, service delivery and reviewing to help keep actual and potential victims safe*

The CRC has made no progress on this recommendation.

The evidence from the inspection indicates that, in each of the case supervision standards, work on risk of harm has not improved.

2. *equip all staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out effective work to keep other people safe.*

The CRC has made some progress on this recommendation.

The CRC has developed and delivered training to all case managers about domestic abuse, safeguarding and the Offender Assessment System. Case audit based on HM Inspectorate of Probation standards has also been introduced, although this is not yet fully deployed. The missing part of the equation is the development of skills in the middle management and case management groups to carry out effective work to keep other people safe.

3. *improve the coordination and delivery of resettlement services to increase the likelihood of successful community reintegration for released prisoners.*

The CRC has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

Due to a combination of early adoption of enhanced Through the Gate provision, staff recruitment, training, and clear and visible leadership, this action is an area of marked improvement that has progressed from a rating of 'Inadequate' to 'Outstanding'.

4. *complete the full implementation of the operating model, to ensure that all interventions are available to individuals in every delivery unit.*

The CRC has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

The operating model is strong on the availability of interventions throughout Staffordshire and the West Midlands. There is a strong suite of accredited programmes, women's services are accessible across the CRC, Through the Gate services are being delivered to a sufficient standard, unpaid work remains good and there is well-used education, training and employment provision in all sites. Substance misuse interventions are accessible through the rehabilitation activity requirement provision and, where feasible, there is co-located substance misuse treatment access in some locations.

⁴ HMI Probation. (2018). *An inspection of Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company.*

The range of rehabilitation activity requirement programmes is impressive, with a mixture of in-house, supply chain partner and peer mentor delivery.

5. *ensure that the support provided by the customer service centre to responsible officers enables them to provide a high-quality service.*

The CRC has made no progress on this recommendation.

The Reducing Reoffending Partnership (owner of Staffordshire and West Midlands, and Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland CRCs) has created a single customer service centre (CSC) for both of these CRCs, based in Birmingham. The alignment of the management of the Staffordshire and West Midlands CSC with operational management (previously it was part of the corporate structure) was an attempt to improve the services offered by the service centre but this has not been successful.

6. *address high levels of sickness absence and staff concerns for health and safety.*

The CRC has made no progress on this recommendation.

A new harmonised staff absence policy, put in place in March 2019, embedded regular contact and support for team members to return to work. Despite this, staff sickness levels have remained high. Only a third of staff believe that their wellbeing and safety are sufficiently considered by the organisation.

7. *address (with its owners) professional staffing levels, to bring individual caseloads down to manageable levels overall.*

The CRC has made some progress on this recommendation.

Although caseloads have increased slightly, the case manager staff group has been maintained and workload is monitored through the case profile system. The data provided shows a marked reduction, over the last 18 months, in the numbers of staff working at over 100 per cent of capacity. Workload is, however, perceived as unmanageable by 69 per cent of the staff we surveyed.

New recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made five recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of probation services in Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC.

Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC should:

1. improve the quality of assessment, planning, service delivery and reviewing, to help keep actual and potential victims safe.
This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection.
2. equip all staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out effective work to keep other people safe.
This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection.
3. address high levels of sickness absence and staff concerns about health and safety.
This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection.
4. develop and implement a clear and consistent approach to the middle manager role in improving public protection practice and the overall quality of case management.
5. integrate improved administration capacity into the operational delivery teams.

Background

The Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)

The CRC covers an area that includes large, urban populations and areas of population sparsity. The population of the West Midlands is 2,916,458, of which 1,141,374 live in Birmingham. Staffordshire has a population of 875,219, of which 255,833⁵ live in Stoke-on-Trent. Black, Asian and other minority ethnic people constitute 34 per cent of the West Midlands population (47 per cent in Birmingham) and 6.4 per cent of the Staffordshire population (13.6 per cent in Stoke-on-Trent).

There are two police forces in the area covered by the CRC – West Midlands Police and Staffordshire Police. In both police forces, crime statistics indicate that total recorded crime levels are at or below the national average, and that violent and acquisitive crime levels are lower than the national average.⁶

The local authorities that make up the area in which the CRC operates include the seven metropolitan districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Staffordshire is a two-tier authority comprising a county council and the eight district authorities of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, South Staffordshire, Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands and Tamworth. Stoke-on-Trent is a separate unitary authority.

The CRC caseload is 12,694, of which 7,235 are subject to community orders or suspended sentences, 2,273 are in custody and 3,603 are subject to post-release supervision.⁷ The caseload has remained stable over the past two years.

The CRC employs 617 staff (full-time equivalent; FTE), of whom 194⁸ hold cases in the role of responsible officer. Although operating in a challenging financial environment, the CRC has sustained the number of staff working in this role.

Reducing Reoffending Partnership's CRCs

The CRC is wholly owned by the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP), itself made up of three organisations: Ingeus (a private company, owned by Advanced Personnel Management) and two charities – St Giles Trust and Change, Grow, Live. RRP also owns the neighbouring Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Rutland CRC. The two are run mostly as one organisation, with one executive committee and one Chief Executive Officer.

The operating model is common to both CRCs, and policies and practices are being harmonised, where appropriate, across them. The operating model provides each CRC with an extensive suite of interventions from a wide range of providers, with specific arrangements and interventions for female service users.

For more information about the organisational structure of this CRC, please see Annex 3 of this report.

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatasets>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2019>

⁸ Information supplied by the CRC.

Contextual facts

7,235

The number of individuals supervised on community sentences and suspended sentence orders by Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC ⁹

3,603

The number of individuals supervised post-release by Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC ¹⁰

41.5%

The proportion of Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC's service users with a proven reoffence ¹¹

41.7%

The proportion of CRC service users (England and Wales) with a proven reoffence ¹⁰

£30.55 m

Total projected income in previous financial year ¹⁰

Performance against key targets

76%

The proportion of individuals who were recorded as having successfully completed their community orders or suspended sentence orders for Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 76%, against a target of 75% ¹²

63%

The proportion of positive compliance outcomes with licences and, where applicable, post-sentence supervision periods for Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 66%, against a target of 65% ¹³

93%

The proportion of positive completions of unpaid work requirements for Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 92%, against a target of 90% ¹⁴

⁹ Ministry of Justice. (2019). Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 June 2019.

¹⁰ Figure supplied by the CRC.

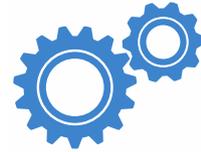
¹¹ Ministry of Justice. (2019). Proven reoffending, Payment by results, October to December 2017 cohort.

¹² Ministry of Justice. (2019). CRC Service Level 8, Community performance quarterly statistics, April 2018 – June 2019, Q1.

¹³ Ministry of Justice. (2019). CRC Assurance Metric J, Community performance quarterly statistics, April 2018 – June 2019, Q1.

¹⁴ Ministry of Justice. (2019). CRC Service Level 10, Community performance quarterly statistics, April 2018 – June 2019, Q1.

1. Organisational delivery



The CRC benefits from a well-established and knowledgeable leadership team. The reduction in funding for CRCs and the planned national reshaping of probation services is the rationale for a restructured senior leadership team, which now operates across the two CRCs owned by RRP. The reduction in income over the past three years has been between £3 and £4 million per year, equivalent to a 21 per cent reduction since 2016.

There is a clear willingness at senior management level to respond positively to previous HMI Probation recommendations, and this is expressed in a detailed action plan. Staff training and guidelines have been made available, and a new case audit approach has been implemented to review performance against HMI Probation standards. This has, as yet, not led to the progress to which the CRC aspires. The role of middle managers in developing the skills of staff has been inconsistent, and the work of responsible officers in relation to risk of harm has deteriorated since the last inspection.

The CRC has several seemingly intractable staffing issues. There is a disengaged and confused staff group, at times fearful of change and responding adversely to a performance culture that has, in the past, overridden focus on the quality of work. There are very high levels of staff absence due to sickness in some grades of operational staff, and this reinforces a perception of being overworked.

Senior leaders have attended to some of the relevant issues through an absence management strategy and renewed attention to the quality of work undertaken, but these initiatives have yet to achieve a shift in culture.

The CRC delivers an impressive range of services. There is high-quality in-house provision of accredited programmes, rehabilitation activity requirements (RARs), Through the Gate work and unpaid work. This is augmented by services commissioned and provided by supply chain partner organisations, including a well-deployed approach to the delivery of women's services.

CRC senior managers play a clear and purposeful role in a broad range of strategic partnership arrangements within a complex strategic environment. Feedback from other agencies indicates that the CRC is a highly regarded partner organisation.

The CRC benefits from well-developed information management expertise. There is a clear approach to the dissemination of information via the RRP intranet.

The buildings occupied are generally to a good standard, although some staff take issue with the open-plan layout, where service users are seen at the responsible officer's desk.

There is some evidence that the use of information and data in evaluative work, and promising initiatives, such as peer mentoring, are subject to external appraisal.

Strengths:

- There is a strong commitment to partnership working in the senior management team, including planning for the future with National Probation Service (NPS) colleagues.
- Business risks are well understood and there is a planned response to mitigate risk where this is possible.
- The profile of the staff group aligns closely with the demographic features of the area.
- The CRC provides an impressive range of services, and a sound approach to developing service user involvement with good service user inclusion in the delivery of services.
- There is a strong representation of the voluntary and community sector in the supply chain partnership.
- The estate comprises mainly high-quality buildings, with a structure of operation that seeks to reinforce positive messages to service users.

Areas for improvement:

- The operating model fails to drive the delivery of high-quality case management.
- The customer service centre (CSC) does not adequately support the work of responsible officers.
- The line manager supervision of responsible officers does not consistently support the delivery of high-quality work.
- Staff absence due to sickness has not improved since the last inspection, and is at very high levels.
- Too many staff think that the CRC does not promote a culture of learning and development.
- Access to the range of available services is inconsistent.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
1.1. Leadership		
The leadership of the organisation supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users.	Good	Requires improvement
The rating is not directly comparable with the rating from the previous inspection because of changes to our probation standards.		

Key data

	12 months previously	Current
Proportion of staff interviewed who agreed that the organisation prioritised quality ¹⁵	29%	15%

In making a judgement about leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there an effective vision and strategy driving the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?

The vision and strategy do not drive the delivery of a high-quality service for the management of cases. The basic organisational structure, in which the majority of case administration is provided by a customer service centre (CSC) in Birmingham, has had an adverse impact on the quality of the service. One member of staff observed:

“We have no administrative support, so you have to do it all yourself. The CSC get things wrong; letters are wrong, safeguarding checks for Birmingham go to Wolverhampton. Instead of asking for their support, it feels easier to do it yourself, which detracts from a practitioner’s main duties”.

RRP has been reviewing the CSC throughout 2019 and is now delivering a programme of work to move up to 60 per cent of the work to local delivery. This includes telephony, scheduling of interventions, case transfers, and domestic abuse and safeguarding checks.

Service users are sufficiently engaged in delivering the strategy, and their feedback is gained in a variety of ways, including surveys. Similarly, leaders and staff at all levels work hard and effectively to engage with partners and key stakeholders to improve the available services, with good examples of collaboration and shared working. There was positive feedback from sentencers. The extent of staff engagement is limited, with staff indicating that their views are not heard by senior managers.

¹⁵ HMI Probation inspection data.

Governance is in place, and delivery plans are generated, but these do not result in high-quality practice, as evidenced in the results of our case inspections. Seventy-three per cent of the case managers interviewed said that the CRC does not prioritise the quality of service delivery, which is a substantial increase since the last inspection.

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

There is a clear and comprehensive business risk management approach, and senior managers understand the risks and hazards they are facing. Mitigations and controls are in place, and applied where possible, such as in the transition to the future unified offender management model, where there is good mitigation of the risks of organisational change. This is evidenced through effective collaboration with the NPS for transition planning.

There is a clearly articulated and up-to-date business continuity management approach.

Important decisions, such as the merging of senior leaders into an RRP-wide team, are communicated to staff, with reductions in establishment highlighted.

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

The operating model does not support effective contact with service users in key respects. The CSC was aligned with operations management in early 2019, to improve the administrative support to service delivery. This has not had the desired effect, and RRP is now transferring key administrative activities to field teams. The operating model focus on reoffending and desistance, strong Through the Gate and unpaid work provision has not been balanced with the need to address issues of public protection. Our inspection results demonstrate this clearly. RRP has established a public protection forum and is delivering to a work plan but this is not translating into improved public protection work.

Contact is maintained by responsible officers for the majority of cases throughout the period of supervision. In the Black Country cluster, a reporting 'hub' holds cases towards the end of a licence or order where all required interventions have been completed. This model is likely to be rolled out to the rest of the CRC as it could have a positive impact on caseloads. Of the cases inspected, 72 per cent had one responsible officer during the inspected period, demonstrating a good level of continuity.

Originally, the model required all responsible officers to work as case managers and RAR deliverers, but now only those who volunteer to deliver RARs are required to do so as the programmes team has taken greater responsibility for groupwork delivery.

The 'Every Case Essentials' documentation provides a comprehensive guideline for case managers. This is displayed in a prominent position in offices and has been communicated widely.

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

Key staffing data ¹⁶	Previous year	Current year
Total staff headcount (FTE)	No data	617
Total number of probation officers supervising cases (PP3-grade staff)	86	78
Total number of probation services officer staff supervising cases (PP1 and PP2)	116	105
Vacancy rate (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total staff headcount)	No data	3.4%
Vacancy rate for probation officer or equivalent grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required probation officer posts)	No data	2.7%
Average number of annual working days sickness (all staff)	15.4	15.87
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	No data	14.8%

¹⁶ All data supplied by the CRC.

Caseload data	Previous year	Current year
Average caseload of responsible officers (FTE) ¹⁷	64.6	70.4
Percentage of probation officer grade or equivalent staff with a caseload greater than local workload management tool target (FTE) ¹⁸	58%	0%
Percentage of probation services officer grade or equivalent staff with caseload greater than local workload management tool target (FTE) ¹⁹	28.5%	6.89%
Probation officers (or equivalent) in this CRC describing caseload as unmanageable ²⁰	79%	59%
Probation services officers (or equivalent) in this CRC describing caseload as unmanageable ²⁰	55%	74%

For the purposes of comparison, in our inspections of all CRCs between June 2018 and June 2019, 63 per cent of POs and 56 per cent of PSOs told inspectors their caseloads were unmanageable.

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

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

Caseload profile data developed in the RRP CRCs indicates that the majority of responsible officers should have a workload that matches their available time. In this light, the staff allocation should, therefore, be sufficient. It is clear, however, that in some operational clusters the workload has risen, and the staff group reduced between 2018 and 2019.

In the Staffordshire cluster, for example, average caseloads have increased from 61 to 74, and the average number of staff has reduced from 36.29 to 27.37.

Responsible officer perception is that workloads are too high to deliver high-quality services for all service users, with 69 per cent indicating that their caseload is not manageable. Critically, the levels of staff absence due to sickness has an impact on the capacity of staff to deliver services. The sickness rates for probation officers (PP3s) were reported at a rate of 14.6 days per annum in August 2019; at probation services officer grade (PP1s and PP2s), this was 23.5 days at that time. We found

¹⁷ Data supplied by the CRC.

¹⁸ Data supplied by the CRC.

¹⁹ Data supplied by the CRC.

²⁰ HMI Probation inspection data.

feelings of demoralisation, fatigue and disengagement in the responsible officer group. One staff member stated that:

“There is a lack of staff; people are off sick and we're all pulled in different directions when it comes to covering cases for others. It is not healthy”.

The middle managers have a reasonable span of control, supervising up to 12 staff. They perceive their role to be more focused on the quality of work but describe a staff group that is struggling to adjust to new working methods, particularly the need to refer cases to the greater range of interventions available.

Administrative staff are mainly based in the CSC in Birmingham. Their role is entirely transactional, with one member of staff reporting:

“When we raise concerns that staff don't understand, we are told they don't need to understand why, they just need to follow the steps”.

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

Ninety per cent of responsible officers interviewed believe that they have the skills, knowledge and ability to supervise their caseload, but only half think that they have the appropriate training and experience for the work allocated to them. And the results from our case inspections indicate that there is a skills deficit in the responsible officer group in regard to managing risk of harm.

The staff group broadly reflects the diversity of the local population in terms of ethnicity, with 39 per cent of the workforce identifying as black, Asian or another minority ethnic group. The workforce is 63 per cent female. The CRC has developed an impressive peer mentor scheme for ex-service users, based on careful selection and completion of a 13-week training course. Peer mentors deliver the Transition and Hope RAR group and unpaid work inductions. There is the possibility of progression to paid work as community support workers, and peer mentors have successfully gained work in other roles with the CRC.

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

There is mixed perception of the oversight of case management among the responsible officer group. One responsible officer stated that:

“Supervision focuses on performance. I had supervision in October and the focus was on the performance management framework for July and August. It's all about getting ISPs [initial sentence plans] completed. There is limited time for case discussion”.

Alternative views were expressed, however, including:

“We have supervision, and in team meetings we have discussion about good practice. We use peer support from colleagues. Supervision is reflective and there is case discussion”.

There is evidence that an increased focus on quality is developing through supervision arrangements, but this is not consistently the case.

There is no annual appraisal system but staff are continually monitored and rated on performance measures, and this now includes quality measures from the case audit process.

Performance measurement systems, including the absence management project, have clearly led to an increase in formal performance management processes being invoked.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Training capacity in RRP has been reduced following restructuring. In 2017, the training team had 14 staff; it currently has 6 people.

Up to 20 staff per quarter follow the training pathway for all newly appointed (probation services officer-equivalent) P1 staff members (irrespective of area of work). This consists of induction (1 day), then the first part of the foundation and development programme (using case study-based material to explore risk, and the Offender Assessment System; OASys). This was developed, in part, following the HMI Probation inspection last year. Each learner completes a development log, and after a foundation week they are appointed a mentor and line manager. An 8-week development programme follows, with some formal sessions to give opportunities to reflect on practice. The learner progresses to a vocational qualification (VQ) award for completion over the following 6 to 12 months. Completion of VQ3 leads to the higher status of P2. Probation services officers at P2+ get additional increments following completion of spousal assault risk assessment training and domestic abuse challenge training, leading to the allocation of higher risk of harm cases.

Accredited programmes staff join induction and then move to HM Prisons and Probation Service programme-specific training. Specific training is provided for community payback supervisors – including health and safety, and managing aggression.

The CRC uses the funding from the national employers' apprenticeship levy to offer Institute of Learning and Management training in leadership at levels 3 and 5 to managers employed at band 5 and above.

Performance development managers deliver specific public protection training locally to their teams. The training is broken up into four half-day events – covering domestic abuse, safeguarding, victims and OASys. All relevant staff attended this training during 2019.

Fifty-eight per cent of staff interviewed reported that access to training is insufficient, and 51 per cent said that the organisation does not promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

There was a mixture of motivation and resilience in the staff group we met. We certainly found some highly motivated and committed staff, but these attributes appeared to have diminished in too many staff.

In RRP's staff survey, less than one-third of Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC staff were positive about their engagement, and very few (11 per cent) thought that action would be taken as a consequence of the survey.

Thirty-eight per cent of responsible officers interviewed felt that attention was paid to recognising and rewarding exceptional work. Only just over one-third of CRC staff thought that appropriate attention was given to their safety (37 per cent) and wellbeing (35 per cent). There is evidence that this is a dispirited group of staff, showing clear signs of change fatigue.

RRP hosts an annual awards ceremony to celebrate staff achievement in gaining occupational qualifications, and staff are nominated for conspicuous achievement as individuals or in teams.

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

In making a judgement about services, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of service users used by the organisation, to deliver well-targeted services?

Characteristics of inspected domain two cases ²¹	All CRCs, year one	This CRC in current inspection
Proportion of caseload female	17%	18%
Proportion of inspected cases black and minority ethnic	14%	29%
Proportion of inspected cases with disability	49%	38%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified substance misuse problems	72%	70%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified domestic abuse issues	41%	36%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified child safeguarding issues	32%	30%

There is a clear capacity to capture and manage data in the RRP CRCs. The reoffending analysis tool can be used to view data from all required perspectives. Its limitation is the lack of ability to report at local level; it has proved too difficult to assemble information for the purposes of local authority or community safety partnership joint working.

²¹ HMI Probation inspection data.

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

	Current inspection
Average waiting time for Building Better Relationships (BBR) (CRC cases only)	12 weeks
Average waiting time for Thinking Skills Programme, TSP (CRC cases only)	12 weeks
Average waiting time RAR	20 weeks
Successful completion BBR (CRC cases only)	53.9%
Successful completion (TSP) (CRC cases only)	66.6%
Successful completion of RAR	47.4%

There is an impressive range of interventions provided in-house, through partner agencies and with the support of peer mentors.

A well-established and broad suite of accredited programmes includes TSP, Drink Impaired Drivers, BBR, Resolve (an intervention for violent offenders) and Building Skills for Recovery (aims to reduce offending behaviour and problematic substance misuse). The programmes team also jointly delivers a full range of non-accredited RAR interventions.

Education, training and employment (ETE) work is delivered to a high standard, with a positive rate of activity leading to settled employment, helping 3,323 service users into jobs since 2016.

There is good evidence of delivery of interventions by partner agencies and through the use of peer mentors. This is particularly the case for female service users, where distinct, gender-informed services are provided by a range of supply chain partners, including Brighter Futures; Mariposa; Springboard; and Change, Grow, Live.

Through the Gate work is delivered to a consistently high standard. Unpaid work is delivered through a range of high-quality placements.

Of the cases we inspected, only one-third to one-half of the cases had sufficient work delivered that was aimed at reducing reoffending. There were particular shortfalls in attitudes to offending; family and relationships; and drug misuse.

The range of services draws on evidence-based principles. They are organised, managed and monitored. In most cases, it is possible for service users to access interventions with less than an hour's journey, although some women on the Mariposa programme have to travel more than an hour to get to that intervention.

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

This is an area of clear strength in the CRC. One supply chain partner gave the following view, which was echoed by other organisations:

“They’ve been a really good partner to work with. They’ve allowed us to be really creative. It feels safe. They’ve been supportive. We co-deliver interventions and deliver training together. We’re separate but intertwined in the way we work”.

There was strong evidence of engagement with local strategic partners, yielding a broad range of developments, including the mental health support pilot in HMP Birmingham and the provision of a Police and Crime Commissioner-funded non-statutory domestic abuse intervention in Staffordshire.

Service user involvement

The CRC has a positive approach to service user involvement, with individuals undertaking an active role through the peer mentoring arrangements, for which a 13-week training programme is provided. This can lead to employment in a community support worker role, and this approach has led to progression into a range of operational roles for 30 staff.

The impact of the approach can be measured by the comments of peer mentors we met:

“A change in my mind-set from negative to positive”.

“I found myself again; I was lost but I’ve turned my life around”.

“Giving back to the community”.

“I’ve given myself a reason to live, because I was suicidal”.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
1.4. Information and facilities		
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	Requires improvement	Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

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

RRP policies are available in the ‘Knowledge Base’ on the organisational intranet, and detailed process guides are accessible in ‘Zing Tree’. Policies and guidelines are shared through a range of media, including newsletters, emails, visual displays, team briefings and intranet alerts. All processes are subject to regular review. These documents are readily accessible by staff, and 76 per cent of responsible officers

interviewed agreed that there is a clear policy about case recording that supports defensible decision-making.

Feedback from NPS colleagues indicates that there are greatly improved interface arrangements, with particular bespoke services developed, including access to accommodation provision and support for NPS cases. In the context of the wider review of probation services, there is strong, active engagement between NPS and Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC colleagues in constructing a path to the future service.

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

There is a good standard of premises across the CRC and these are used in an appropriate way. Sufficient interview rooms are available in all locations, and the zonal open-plan use of the premises is part of a well-thought-through strategy to engage with service users and support desistance. The CRC aspires to treat all service users as citizens, with access to interviews and services via well-furnished, open reception areas. Most individuals are interviewed in open-plan offices. This contrasts with more traditional, security-focused probation service environments, which can convey a stigmatising message of fear and mistrust. All offices have adequate access to interview rooms, to facilitate privacy where necessary. There is a comprehensive health and safety action plan, including risk assessment, monitoring, accident and incident reporting, staff training and well-established oversight through the delivery of a health and safety strategy.

Some staff indicated concerns about the safety of the working environment, stating that service users are known to have brought weapons into the building. There are no screening methods, such as metal detectors, to counter this possibility.

The services provided are delivered in what, at times, can be a difficult surrounding environment. This is illustrated by reports of a recent knifing outside the Birmingham office and a shooting on an unpaid work bus, both of which were understood to be gang related.

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

The ICT provided by the CRC meets the needs of the service, but does not support remote working by unpaid work supervisors. All partners can access information via nDelius (the NPS case management system), which is available in all the prisons and supports the delivery of Through the Gate services.

Failure to implement the Ingeus case management system (Partnership Works) has caused unanticipated risks to the business. The operating model relies on this system being implemented. Nonetheless, the well-developed management information can yield a relatively sophisticated level of analysis – for example, in the provision of equality data on staff and service users.

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

The CRC has a high-quality performance management system that is used to drive contractual performance compliance. It has the capability to drill down performance to an individual level, and it feeds the performance management of staff.

Since the last HMI Probation inspection, the CRC has adopted a quality measure in which individual responsible officers can only achieve the highest rating if their work is assessed as crossing the quality 'hurdle'. This approach is, as yet, not fully deployed.

There is some external evaluative work on peer mentoring, and there is evidence of the use of reoffending data to evaluate the effectiveness of accredited programmes.

There are systems to cascade learning when things go wrong, including serious further offence reviews, but there is no evidence that the effectiveness of this process is reviewed, and 51 per cent of staff said that the organisation does not promote a culture of learning and continuous development.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 86 community sentence cases and 52 post-release supervision cases, and interviewed 79 of the relevant responsible officers and 14 of the service users themselves. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of engagement with the service user and whether issues relevant to offending and desistance had been addressed. For the 111 cases where there were factors related to harm identified, we also inspected the work to keep other people safe. The quality of work undertaken against each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for the case to be rated as satisfactory.

The critical factors in determining this CRC's ratings for case supervision were those concerned with keeping other people safe. In each of the four standards we inspect against, work on the individual's risk of harm to others was sufficient in only a minority of cases inspected.

The CRC responded to the previous HMI Probation inspection's concerns about the quality of risk of harm management by developing and delivering training to relevant staff. RRP has also developed and implemented a case audit system that mirrors HMI Probation standards. This includes checks on whether the practice set out in the 'Every Case Essentials' guidelines has been put into practice. These initiatives require performance development managers to support responsible officers to develop the skills necessary for effective case management through effective supervision. It is this last element which has, as yet, failed to deliver the necessary skills required to achieve high-quality case management. There is evidence that, in the light of a Birmingham Improvement Plan, progress has been made in the Birmingham local delivery unit in delivering to the requirements of HMI Probation standards, but this is not yet consistently the case across all local delivery units in the CRC.

Strengths:

- Layer 3 OASys – a comprehensive assessment tool – is now more widely used.
- There is some evidence of assessments showing an improving focus on offending and desistance since the last inspection.
- Some responsible officers report a positive experience of line management supervision.
- There are clear benefits from the gender-informed approach to working with female service users.
- There is evidence of promising practice in planning work, although this is not consistent across the CRC.
- Almost all licence supervision cases were enforced in an appropriate manner, when necessary.

Areas for improvement:

- Levels of staff absence due to sickness have a marked impact on the capacity to deliver high-quality services.
- As the CRC has adopted the wider use of layer 3 OASys, we would expect to see a future consistent increase in the identification and analysis of offending-related factors.
- Information gathering to support assessment is inconsistent.
- Where caseloads have increased and staff numbers reduced, there is a worryingly low level of sufficiency in the management of risk of harm.
- Management of the risk of harm to others is inadequate across all four aspects of case management.
- Too frequently, we found cases where contact had been allowed to drift, with no meaningful work undertaken.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
2.1. Assessment		
Assessment is well informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Requires improvement	Inadequate

Our rating²² for assessment is based on the following three questions:

Comparison with Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs ²³
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?²⁴	69%	65%	68%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?²⁴	52%	57%	63%

²² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²³ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 – June 2019.

²⁴ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?²⁴	51%	37%	55%
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Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

Time invested in engaging with the individual increases the quality of assessment work. We expect to see, in all cases, that the responsible officer works to understand the motivation and personal circumstances of the individual being assessed, and considers their perspective in formulating an assessment. In 65 per cent of cases, we found this engagement to be of a sufficient standard.

There was evidence that responsible officers engaged positively with the individual in the process of assessing the case. When this was done well, the case generally proceeded on a sure footing.

For example, in one case it was noted that:

“The responsible officer had a satisfactory level of information about the service user’s positive engagement in interventions while in custody, and made further assessments during the induction appointment. It was evident that the responsible officer paid attention to the service user’s readiness to comply. The potential barrier to compliance because of employment was considered. The interview and the file records provided good evidence of a quick rapport developed by an experienced practitioner, whereby the service user’s views were appropriately taken on board”.

In some cases, the level of engagement was insufficient; for example:

“The service user had a learning disability (autism spectrum condition) which would have impacted on his engagement with probation but this was not explored in the assessment. Nor was there any analysis of his motivation or engagement in the assessment. A self-assessment questionnaire was completed that contributed to planning but did not really inform the assessment. For instance, the service user identified temper control as a problem but the assessment stated that there were ‘no problems’ in this area”.

CRC staff remain focused on the timely production of plans, owing to contractual requirements carrying financial penalties. This can be to the detriment of establishing the necessary rapport with individuals to create a sound basis for assessment work. In the Staffordshire, and Coventry and Solihull clusters, the work was sufficient in only a minority of cases. There is a distinct gender-informed approach for female service users and this yielded a markedly higher rate of sufficient engagement in the assessment process.

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

We found that, in a reasonable majority of cases, the strengths and protective factors in an individual’s life were identified. This would be a more positive picture had the work been consistently sufficient in the Staffordshire, and Coventry and Solihull clusters.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in the proportion of cases that have sufficient analysis of offending-related factors. The CRC has changed to the completion of a fuller assessment (layer 3 OASys) in a greater proportion of the caseload but too many of these assessments showed insufficient attention to offending-related issues, as the following case example illustrates:

Gregory had been involved in the drug trade by setting up houses to cultivate drugs. Assessment did not focus enough on the context of his offending, particularly his link to organised crime. Prior to release, Gregory's assessment had identified many areas of desistance and his motivation to change but had lacked a focus on his offending factors. While in prison, Gregory had continued to build his relationship with his family but the risks and protective factors of his contact with his children were not sufficiently identified.

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

Of critical importance to the assessment of risk of harm to others is the process of gathering, understanding and analysing information. To this end, HMI Probation expects that the NPS will initiate child safeguarding and domestic abuse checks at the point that a pre-sentence report is ordered by the court. Where these checks have not been initiated, we expect the responsible officer to undertake this work at the start of the community sentence, and for it to be actively considered during a custodial sentence.

In this CRC, there has been a marked decline in the number of assessments we deemed to be sufficiently focused on the risk of harm to others. In too many cases, we found that routine checks for child safeguarding and domestic abuse had not been undertaken, or had been initiated and not followed up, or that the available information received had not been incorporated into the assessment of the case. In 37 per cent of cases, the necessary checks for the sharing of domestic abuse information had not been undertaken. While there is evidence of the number of checks increasing, senior leaders explained the difficulties of the wider system being able to cope with an aspiration of receiving this information in 100 per cent of cases. We found a range of other reasons for these deficits, including responsible officers perceiving themselves to be overworked, evidence of staff supervision focusing on business targets, and a lack of understanding of the information on which risk of harm assessment should be based.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
2.2. Planning		
Planning is well informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Inadequate	Inadequate

Our rating²⁵ for planning is based on the following three questions:

Comparison with Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs ²⁶
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?²⁷	59%	62%	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?²⁷	56%	65%	64%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?²⁷	42%	29%	46%

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

We expect that planning should be based on the meaningful involvement of the individual in most respects, and here there was a slight improvement compared with the previous inspection. This improvement would be more marked if the work was done more consistently across the operational clusters, with the Staffordshire cluster adversely affecting the rating of this key question.

There are many examples of good practice, as this case illustrates:

“Planning with Albert focused on his sentence requirements to try to engage him in addressing his offending behaviour. Albert had shown in previous sentences that he was resistant to change and would only be supervised on his terms. He refused to

²⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁶ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 – June 2019.

²⁷ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed ‘prompts’. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory ‘yes’ response to each prompt.

engage in group work, and the responsible officer set about using rehabilitation activity requirement days to engage Albert in one-to-one supervision on the Foundations for Rehabilitation programme, with an aim to challenge his offending behaviour”.

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

Planning was focused on reducing reoffending and desistance in a reasonable majority of the cases inspected, although the Staffordshire cluster adversely affected the rating for the key question. We also found a marked difference in the quality of planning for male and female cases, with women more likely to have a sufficient focus in plans.

With effective planning, there can be a constancy of purpose in the process of supervision, as the following case shows:

“Planning with Brian focused on his alcohol use and engagement with his sentence. Shortly after release, Brian’s health had deteriorated and he was hospitalised for a severe heart condition. Planning with Brian took account of this, and appointments were arranged by his responsible officer at times and a frequency that minimised stress. Alongside this, Brian had stopped drinking due to his health issues but the responsible officer continued to engage him in alcohol awareness sessions”.

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

This key question is only answered in cases where factors related to risk of harm to others are present.

There has been no overall improvement in the extent to which planning addresses the risk of harm to others. This is a consistent outcome across clusters and irrespective of the gender of the individual service user.

There were numerous examples of poor practice in the inspected sample, demonstrating clear skill deficits among the responsible officer group as a whole in the management of risk of harm. In one case, the inspector observed:

“There is no active, evidenced risk management planning, despite concerns about gang affiliation, and access to weapons. Formal risk management planning is, in the main, a pull-through of a previous National Probation Service assessment which refers to post-sentence supervision, and an outstanding breach which is not relevant to the current position on a suspended sentence supervision order. Contingency planning does not address issues around gang affiliation, drug dealing or possible involvement with ‘county lines’ [drug trafficking as part of serious organised crime] and the need to monitor this with other agencies or staff. In interview, the responsible officer advised that she was not trained to manage such risks, and was therefore unable to generate ideas as to how such risk could be effectively contained or monitored”.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
2.3. Implementation and delivery		
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging the service user.	Inadequate	Inadequate

Our rating²⁸ for planning is based on the following three questions:

Comparison with Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs ²⁹
Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively, with a focus on engaging the service user? ³⁰	66%	75%	70%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance? ³⁰	48%	53%	52%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ³⁰	32%	35%	41%

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

The focus on engaging the individual in the implementation of the sentence was generally sufficient. The large majority of Staffordshire cluster, and Coventry and Solihull cluster cases showed that the work was based on an effective working relationship, and this had improved across the CRC since the last inspection.

In considering enforcement action, we include activity such as issuing enforcement letters or applications to vary licences, as well as formal court proceedings or applications for licence recall. Enforcements actions were mostly taken when appropriate and, importantly, almost all licence supervision cases were well enforced

²⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁹ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 – June 2019.

³⁰ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

when necessary. There is a well-balanced approach between engagement with the individual and the application of appropriate sanctions, as the following case illustrates:

“It is evident from the nDelius record and from speaking to the responsible officer during the inspection interview that she quickly developed a positive and effective working relationship with the service user.

“She continued to encourage his engagement and provided him with the opportunity to express his feelings in relation to the supervision period. There were times when he was unable to attend some appointments due to family commitments, and the responsible officer accepted his explanations as ‘reasonable absences’, using her professional judgement effectively and appropriately. Warning letters were issued appropriately when there was no acceptable reason for the service user’s non-compliance.

“The service user reoffended and received a further community sentence. There is evidence that the responsible officer discussed the offence with him and reinforced the need for compliance”.

Do the services delivered focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user’s desistance?

There has been no improvement in the delivery of services which reduce reoffending and support desistance. Of concern here is the delivery in the Staffordshire and Black Country clusters, where only a minority of cases were judged to be of sufficient quality. In a reasonable majority of female cases, the services provided were sufficient, again reflecting the benefits of delivery within a well-grounded strategy.

Too often, although some work had been undertaken, cases had been allowed to drift. This is an example of what we found too frequently:

“There is evidence of a positive service delivery of education, training and employment work, and this assisted the service user, who was keen to access employment. However, there have been no other services delivered and no interventions planned to address offending-related factors.

“The sentence plan was copied and pasted from an OASys completed in prison, and provides objectives which are specific to the prison environment and which are irrelevant within a community setting. The objectives are not current or meaningful.

“The responsible officer also recorded that the service user has not been referred to any groups within the Black Country area due to the intention to transfer him to Birmingham as soon as possible, and the case was still awaiting formal transfer some seven months after release”.

Do the services delivered focus appropriately on managing and minimising the risk of harm to others?

There has been a deterioration in the focus on managing and minimising risk of harm to others in the implementation and delivery of the sentence. Despite training and a new emphasis on the quality auditing of cases, based on HMI Probation standards, the work of responsible officers is not yet improving.

Too many cases are managed without sufficient attention to the identification and management of risk of harm issues. In one case, we found that:

“Almost seven months into the order, police and safeguarding checks were done and revealed a history of domestic abuse. This information was recorded but nothing further was done with the information. The responsible officer agreed that home visits would have been beneficial but reported that the pressure of the caseload makes this difficult. Implementation in this case did not prioritise risk management, so did not effectively keep people safe”.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
2.4. Reviewing		
Reviewing of progress is well informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Inadequate	Inadequate

Our rating³¹ for reviewing is based on the following three questions:

Comparison with Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs ³²
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user’s compliance and engagement? ^{32 33}	No comparable data available	65%	65%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user’s desistance? ^{32 33}	No comparable data available	59%	60%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	39%	37%	44%

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

We expect all cases to be reviewed frequently and in respect of key events in the individual’s life, such as reoffending, and that these should be recorded in the appropriate format. In cases where a review of progress was undertaken, we saw

³¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

³² HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 – June 2019.

³³ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

that individuals were actively involved in this process in three-quarters of the sample; for example:

“At the point of the service user receiving a further community order, the responsible officer completed a full OASys review. She encouraged the service user to engage in this review and to provide his point of view regarding his new sentence. He is encouraged by the responsible officer to complete a further self-assessment questionnaire. There is evidence that the responsible officer takes into account some of the support he feels he requires, and relevant objectives are included within the sentence plan”.

It remains the case, however, that too few cases in the inspected sample were being reviewed. When there is no review of the individual, there is the risk that supervision can drift away from an appropriate level of contact and may lack purpose, as illustrated in the following case example:

“There is little evidence to suggest that thought has been given to the messages that the service user is receiving when there is no action taken as a result of his continued non-compliance and increasing drug misuse. As a consequence, he appears to be motivated only to do the bare minimum to prevent breach in terms of his compliance levels. The RO [responsible officer] continues with a more lenient approach to enforcement, and this is concerning, unhelpful and potentially negatively impacts on the service user’s lack of motivation to comply”.

Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?

In the majority of cases, we found that reviews, when undertaken, sufficiently supported progress towards desistance. This was particularly the case with a focus on building strengths and enhancing protective factors, as illustrated below:

“Reviewing with Jack built upon good progress in his sentence but also worked with him on relapse. During the sentence, Jack found a job, had new secure accommodation, changed his telephone number, had no contact with his victim and completed his unpaid work. Jack did commit a further offence, was resentenced, lost his job, began to get into debt and began to go back to drug use. The responsible officer spent time with Jack, reflecting on his progress but supporting him in his relapse. At the time of the inspection, Jack was now engaging with his new sentence, had begun the Building Better Relationships programme and was getting further education, training and employment support”.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

There had been a slightly reduced of focus on keeping people safe in the review process across the CRC, compared with the previous inspection, and this is well below HMI Probation’s expectations. Of concern here was the work we inspected in the Staffordshire and Black Country clusters, where very few of the cases were deemed to be of a sufficient standard.

Too few cases were reviewed adequately in relation to risk of harm. This is attributable to inadequate attention to the acquisition and use of critical information concerning, in particular, child safeguarding and domestic abuse. There was an absence of professional curiosity in too many cases. In cases where the appropriate information had been secured, this had not been considered and acted on through a revised work plan.

3. CRC-specific work³⁴

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
3.1. Unpaid work		
Unpaid work is delivered safely and effectively, engaging the service user in line with the expectations of the court.	Good	Good

Due to changes in inspection standards and methodology between the first and second rounds of CRC inspections, the rating for unpaid work is not directly comparable with the rating for the previous year.

We inspected the management of 65 unpaid work placements, looking at assessment and planning, safety, and implementation of the court order. We also observed two induction sessions and eight work parties to examine the extent to which unpaid work was delivered in a way that supported desistance.

Our rating was influenced positively by the work we observed, which led us to raise our initial judgement of 'Requires improvement' based purely on an analysis of case files, to one of 'Good'. This is a well-established unpaid work scheme, delivered by an experienced and knowledgeable staff group.

Strengths:

- There is an impressive range of high-quality groupwork placements across the area.
- Unpaid work placements are offered, based on individualised plans of work.
- There is good provision for female service users.
- There is effective communication between unpaid work staff and the responsible officer for the case.
- There is evidence that unpaid work schemes make a positive contribution to the communities in which they take place.
- Unpaid work starts promptly, and supports the compliance of individuals.

³⁴ CRC aspects of domain three work are listed in *HMI Probation's Standards* as 4.1 and 4.2.

Areas for improvement:

- Supervisors of unpaid work have limited access to RRP ICT systems.
- There is limited access to ETE as part of the sentence.
- Responsible officers do not always have sufficient knowledge of the unpaid work scheme.
- Enforcement following non-compliance is not consistently acted upon.

Unpaid work key data

	Current inspection
Average unpaid work stand-down rate in previous 12 months	1.1%
Percentage of successful completions of unpaid work requirements in previous 12 months	71.10%
Percentage of unpaid work hours completed as ETE activity in previous 12 months	0.5%

Our rating³⁵ for unpaid work is based on the following four questions, which were applied to each of the 65 cases we inspected:

	Current inspection
Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised? ³⁶	65%
Is unpaid work delivered safely? ³⁶	58%
Do arrangements for unpaid work maximise rehabilitative elements and support desistance? ³⁷	Yes – based on the evidence from observation of 2 induction sessions and 8 site visits
Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately? ³⁶	72%

³⁵ The provisional rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

³⁶ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

³⁷ The ratings panel considers the range of qualitative evidence, and decided to increase the provisional rating by one band to take account of other factors. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised?

The cases we inspected showed that assessment and planning for unpaid work failed to build on strengths and protective factors in too many cases. In a reasonable majority of the cases, however, there was a personalised approach. The following example was noted by the inspector:

“The individual had significant health issues, including being a paraplegic and thus requiring the use of a wheelchair. These needs were fully taken into account, including the requirement for appropriate toilet facilities, and a placement was identified which could accommodate these needs. The responsible officer also planned to review after the first session to ensure this was the case”.

In the main, we found a positive response to unpaid work requirements for females; for example, in one case:

“There was evidence of discussion with the service user regarding potential placements and what diversity issues they had. This involved considering what working group she would be put on as well as exercising the option to work with a female supervisor. It was clear that some thought was put into the personalised nature of the planning of unpaid work, and this seemed to set a good foundation for engagement”.

Is unpaid work delivered safely?

We found evidence of sufficient communication between unpaid work staff and responsible officers in almost all the cases we inspected. There were, however, too many examples of individuals being placed into the work situations without adequate understanding of risk issues that could affect themselves or other service users, staff or the public. In one case:

“The assessment was completed in the absence of the individual, and his offending behaviour was not fully taken into account, both in terms of the potential risks to others as well as himself. For example, although the individual does not have any previous convictions, he does have a longstanding history of drug use, and the index offence was committed to pay off his drug debts. Despite this, the individual was allocated to a group, without any information sought regarding known associates, which could place him, as well as potentially others, at risk”.

Supervisors do not have direct access to RRP ICT systems owing to the cost of providing this to more than 100 people. In making sure that unpaid work is delivered safely in all cases, this is a key deficit.

Do arrangements for unpaid work maximise rehabilitative elements and support desistance?

Our evidence from observation of inductions and unpaid work yielded a strongly positive view of the work undertaken. During observation, we gathered the views of individuals required to undertake the work, staff and beneficiaries of the schemes. All the work we observed was done in a pro-social, engaging and responsive way.

There are few opportunities for individuals to access ETE provision as part of the unpaid work requirement. CRC staff report trying to maintain projects where there are links to education providers, and this leads to some limited access to training

opportunities. We found good examples of the work itself providing the opportunity to develop work-based skills, and this was valued by those working on these schemes.

The individuals required to work were generally complimentary about the projects. One said that he *“realised he has to come but enjoys seeing how the work helps others”*. Another stated that they [service users] *“don’t feel they are being looked at like scumbags”*. One beneficiary of the scheme, an 80-year-old man, explained how being there [at the allotment] kept him going, and that the help of the unpaid work members was greatly appreciated. The manager of one charitable organisation, providing services to disadvantaged children and children with a wide range of disabilities, was clear that, without the support of unpaid work, the charity would have great difficulty in continuing to deliver its services.

The strength of this additional evidence led the ratings panel to increase the rating for unpaid work from ‘Requires improvement’ to ‘Good’.

Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately?

This was the strongest element of unpaid work in the CRC, although there were some concerns about the consistency of appropriate enforcement decisions. We found too many cases where the responsible officer’s contact with the individual had been allowed to drift, and enforcement action should have been taken more swiftly.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
3.2. Through the Gate		
Through the Gate services are personalised and coordinated, addressing the service user’s resettlement needs.	Inadequate	Outstanding

We inspected the management of 44 cases where the CRC had delivered pre-release Through the Gate resettlement work, looking at resettlement planning, delivery of resettlement services and release coordination.

The Through the Gate scheme had improved remarkably since the last inspection. The CRC was an early adopter of the enhanced Through the Gate specification. As a result, this is a well-led and well-managed scheme, which is highly regarded by prison managers.

Of critical importance to the delivery of the scheme has been access in prisons to nDelius since February 2019, which is the same case recording system as used by responsible officers in the community. Alongside this, there has been a substantial increase in casework staffing. Across RRP, 60 new staff have been recruited to Through the Gate work. These are mostly band three caseworkers and housing workers, and there are also two managers, four community support workers, four additional administrators and five additional roles in the supply chain.

We found sufficient practice in a large majority of cases across all aspects of Through the Gate services inspected.

Strengths:

- The use of nDelius in the prison setting is providing an essential aid to the coordination of work with community responsible officers.
- Senior leadership of the scheme is driving the development of a high-quality service.
- Staff are supervised by competent and credible resettlement unit managers.
- There are well-trained and committed resettlement teams in each of the prisons.
- Through the Gate teams are highly regarded by prison managers.

Areas for improvement:

- The wider national review of probation services has left several staff members feeling that they must reconsider their career path in the context of uncertainty over the future of Through the Gate work.
- All resettlement work should consider the risk of harm that the individual presents.

Our rating³⁸ for Through the Gate is based on the following three questions:

Comparison with previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs ³⁹
Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance?⁴⁰	58%	86%	69%
Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?⁴⁰	49%	83%	62%
Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?⁴⁰	36%	80%	59%

³⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

³⁹ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 – June 2019.

⁴⁰ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance?

This area has seen considerable improvement since the last inspection. There is an improved level of staffing because of enhanced Through the Gate funding, and new staff members are appropriately trained. The staff group report good supervision from resettlement unit managers, and the cases inspected reflect the commitment of staff to the work provided.

Among many clear improvements, it was impressive to see the marked increase in plans that identified strengths and considered ways to build on these – increasing from a minority of cases in the previous inspection to almost all the cases inspected in the current one. This is based on an excellent level of individual meaningful involvement in the planning process.

In one case, we found that the plan took careful account both of risks to children and risks to the individual; for example, in one case:

“The individual was a victim of domestic abuse. Safeguarding children concerns were identified and a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) was arranged. The service user was kept informed of these arrangements and she was offered a women's refuge placement on release, but declined as intended to return to live with her parents. It was recorded that there was a restraining order in place against her ex-partner”.

Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?

There has been a good improvement in the focus of resettlement work. Almost all cases inspected had identified strengths in the individual's life and sought to build upon these, and there was a strong and markedly improved sensitivity to individual circumstances. In one case:

“The specialist housing team was supposed to see the individual in prison, but when he missed two appointments, a resettlement worker made a special trip to the wing to engage him, and did so successfully, ensuring that he received the services he needed. Despite their efforts, he was still released homeless. Other services not initially identified on the plan ended up being delivered, as each time he was interviewed in respect of the accommodation issues, additional needs were identified and sorted out as well. These included contacting the court to sort out his fines, getting an ID letter for him, sorting a benefits appointment for him, setting up a drug treatment appointment on release, liaison with the mental health team on his behalf, signposting in respect of a helpline, and providing clothing from the Through the Gate foodbank, as well as food and toiletries from the community hub there. He received a detailed appointment plan for release which was uploaded to nDelius”.

Although a large majority of cases showed sufficient attention to risk of harm issues, there was some room for improvement, and this should be attended to with all individuals.

Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?

The use of nDelius in the prison setting has had a dramatic effect in improving the coordination of resettlement work and is the obvious, although not always possible,

solution to effective communication. It is a credit to those managing the Through the Gate scheme at a senior level that this solution was achieved.

An extensive 'Mind the Gap' briefing was delivered to responsible officers to promote the coordination of Through the Gate work, and we found good evidence of the work taken up following release into the community. That these efforts did not always appear to be successful reflects the degree of complexity inherent in many of these individuals' lives.

Annex 1: Background of probation services

Around 255,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually.⁴¹ 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.⁴²

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 that 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 18 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, with responsibility for offender management passing 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.

⁴¹ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Offender Management Caseload Statistics* as at 30 June 2019 (based on the average of total offenders supervised in the previous four quarters to the end of June. 2019).

⁴² All those sentenced, for offences committed after the implementation of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, to more than 1 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.

Annex 2: 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 CRC's Chief Executive Officer 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 79 individual responsible officers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings with groups and individuals, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 39 meetings, which included meetings with senior managers, operational partners and stakeholders, and with middle managers and frontline staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.⁴³

Domain two: case supervision

We completed case assessments over a two-week period, examining service users' files and interviewing responsible officers and service users. 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 138 cases from across all local delivery units. 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, probation officer/probation services officer cases.

⁴³ HMI Probation domain one ratings characteristics can be found here: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/Probation-Domain-One-rating-characteristics-March-18-final.pdf>

Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than 5.

Domain three: CRC work

We completed case assessments for two further samples: unpaid work and Through the Gate. As in domain two, the sample size for unpaid work is set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5). Published data is insufficient to calculate accurate margins of error for Through the Gate work, so the size of the case sample for that element of work is estimated, based on overall workload and previous inspection data.

Unpaid work

We examined 65 cases with unpaid work requirements that had begun at least three months previously. The sample included cases managed by the NPS, as well as those managed by the CRC. We ensured that the ratios in relation to gender and risk of serious harm level matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

We observed eight unpaid work projects and two unpaid work induction sessions to gather qualitative evidence.

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

- the senior manager with overall responsibility for the delivery of unpaid work
- the middle manager with responsibilities for unpaid work
- a group of supervisors of unpaid work, from a range of geographical locations.

Through the Gate

We examined 44 custodial cases in which the individual had been released on licence or post-sentence supervision from the CRC's resettlement prisons over a four-week period, shortly before the inspection fieldwork. The sample included those entitled to pre-release Through the Gate services from the CRC who were then supervised post-release by the CRC being inspected. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups:

- the senior manager in the CRC responsible for Through the Gate services
- prison governors with responsibility for resettlement
- the middle manager responsible for Through the Gate services in specific prisons
- a group of CRC resettlement workers directly responsible for preparing resettlement plans and/or meeting identified resettlement needs.

Ratings explained

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website.

Domain two and three standard ratings are based on the results of the inspection of individual cases. Ratings are at the standard level, and based on consolidated results (at key question level) of all cases inspected in the relevant domain. In CRC

inspections only, the rating for unpaid work in domain three may also be influenced by evidence from observations.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard.

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 ☆

We use case sub-samples for some of the key questions in domains two and three. For example, when judging whether planning focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed the risk of serious harm to be low. This approach is justified on the basis that we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

An element of professional judgement may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. Exceptionally, the ratings panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised where the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the rating boundary – for example, between ‘Requires improvement’ and ‘Good’ (specifically, within 5 percentage points of the boundary or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

Rating unpaid work

For the unpaid work standard, domain three case inspections provide data on key questions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.4. Analysis of that data provides an indicative rating for the unpaid work standard, aligned with banding, as above. Qualitative evidence for key question 4.1.3 is obtained from observations during the fieldwork, other written evidence provided by the CRC, and evidence obtained from relevant meetings. This qualitative evidence may be used to increase or decrease the indicative rating for unpaid work by one band. If the lead inspector believes that is justified, the proposal is put to the ratings panel, for ratification or rejection.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the ten standards will be scored on a 0-3 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (standard)
0	Inadequate
1	Requires improvement
2	Good
3	Outstanding ☆

Adding the scores for each standard together produces the overall rating on a 0-30 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (overall)
0-5	Inadequate
6-15	Requires improvement
16-25	Good
26-30	Outstanding ☆

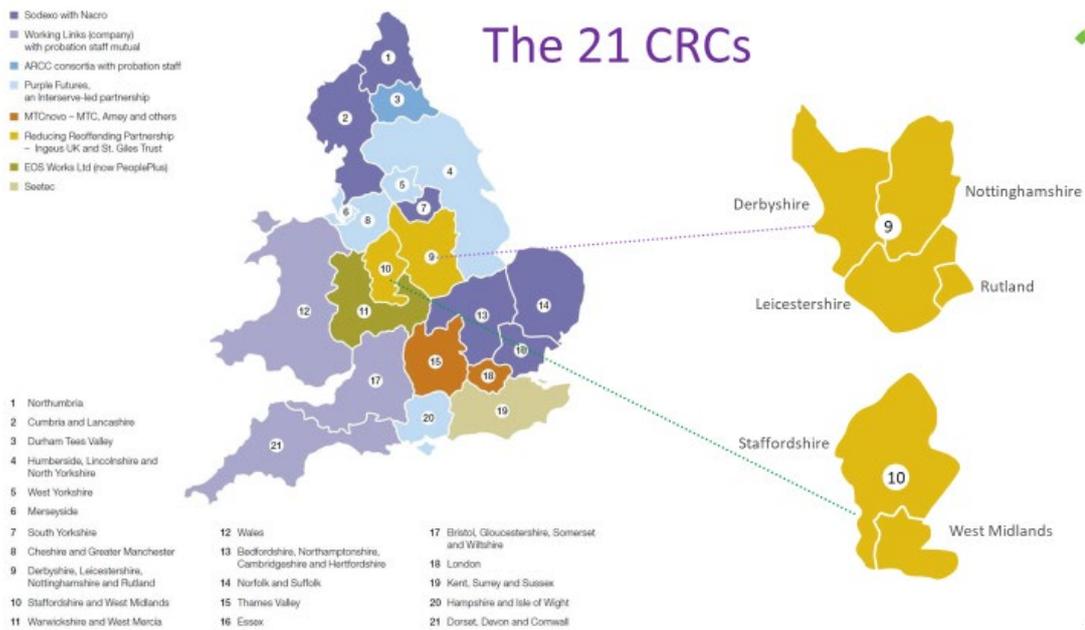
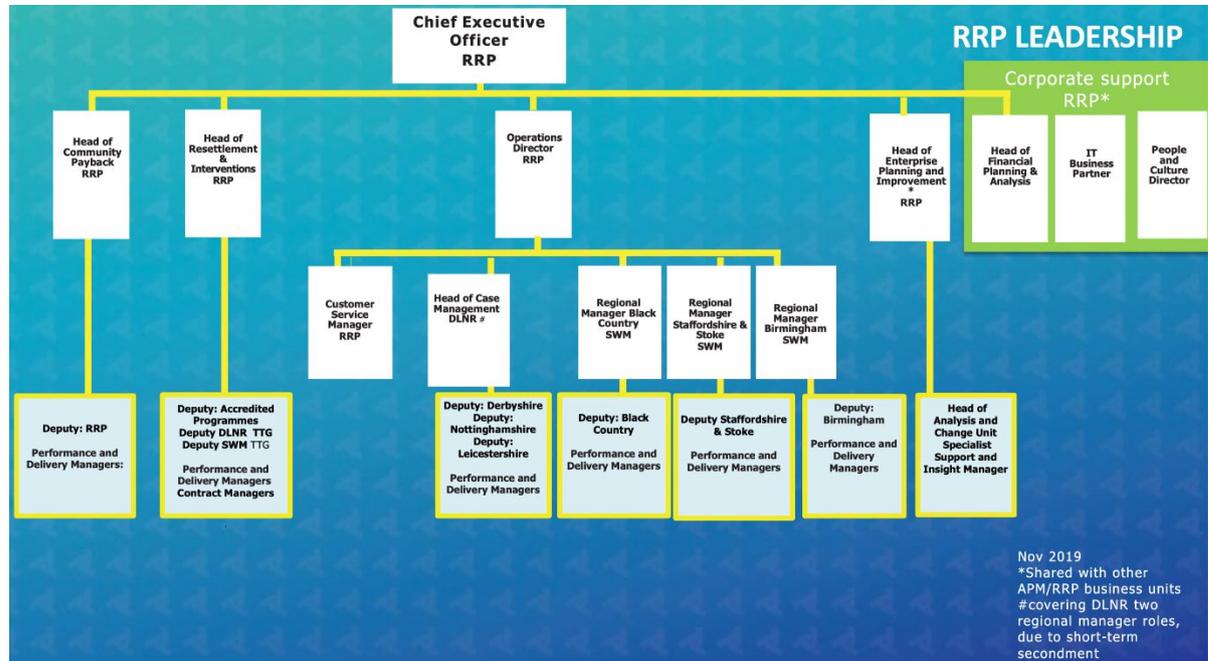
We do not include any weightings in the scoring rules. The rationale for this is that all parts of the standards framework are strongly linked to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, and we have restricted ourselves to those that are most essential. Our view is that providers need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours in any undesirable ways. Furthermore, the underpinning evidence supports including all standards/key questions in the rating, rather than weighting individual elements.

Comparative data

Where HM Inspectorate of Probation has comparative data, our internal data analysis calculates whether any changes are statistically significant or not (using the Z-score test, with a significance level of 0.1). We do not publish that level of detail, but where inspectors are referring to changes in data that meet this significance test, they will use the word 'significant'. They use different words to describe other changes in data, which do not meet the significance test.

Annex 3: Organisational design and map

Information supplied by Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC.



Annex 4: Inspection data⁴⁴

The answers to the key questions that determine the ratings for each standard are underpinned by answers to more detailed ‘prompts’. These tables illustrate the proportions of the case sample with a satisfactory ‘yes’ response to the prompt questions. It should be noted that there is no mechanistic connection between the proportion of prompt questions answered positively, and the overall score at the key question level. The ‘total’ does not necessarily equal the ‘sum of the parts’. The summary judgement is the overall finding made by the inspector, having taken consideration of the answers to all the prompts, weighing up the relative impact of the strengths and weaknesses.

Where we have changed the standard, key question or prompt since the previous round of inspections, no comparative data is available.

2.1. Assessment	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?		
Does assessment analyse the service user’s motivation and readiness to engage and comply with the sentence?	64%	60%
Does assessment analyse the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, and consider the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	44%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	65%	68%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?		
Does assessment identify and analyse offending-related factors?	45%	38%
Does assessment identify the service user’s strengths and protective factors? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	73%

⁴⁴ HMI Probation case inspection data.

⁴⁵ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	49%	47%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the risk of harm to others?		
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	22%
Does assessment analyse any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	29%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	22%
Were domestic abuse checks undertaken? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	38%
Did child safeguarding information sharing take place in cases where required? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	44%

2.2. Planning	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?		
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	49%	53%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, which may affect engagement and compliance? ⁴⁶	No comparable data available	61%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's readiness and motivation to change, which may affect engagement and compliance?	58%	62%

⁴⁶ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Does planning set out how all the requirements of the sentence or licence/post-sentence supervision will be delivered within the available timescales?	63%	63%
Does planning set a level, pattern and type of contact sufficient to engage the service user and to support the effectiveness of specific interventions?	48%	56%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?		
Does planning sufficiently reflect offending-related factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	60%	64%
Does planning build on the service user's strengths and protective factors, utilising potential sources of support? ⁴⁶	No comparable data available	60%
Does planning set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	54%	67%
Does planning address appropriately factors associated with the risk of harm to others?		
Does planning sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	50%	41%
Does planning set out the necessary constructive and/or restrictive interventions to manage the risk of harm?	41%	48%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the service user and any multi-agency plans? ⁴⁶	No comparable data available	36%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	27%	28%

2.3. Implementation and delivery	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately, with a focus on engaging the service user?		
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	75%	68%

Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the service user?	68%	75%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the service user to complete the sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	84%	80%
Post-custody cases only: Was there a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner before release?	41%	42%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?	74%	70%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	77%
Are sufficient efforts made to re-engage the service user after enforcement actions or recall?	75%	76%
Do the services delivered focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?		
Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	54%	48%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance protective factors? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	62%
Is the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services sufficiently well coordinated? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	54%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support their desistance? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	46%
Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance? ⁴⁷	41%	43%

⁴⁷ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Are local services engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	54%
Do the services delivered focus appropriately on managing and minimising the risk of harm to others?		
Is the level and nature of contact offered sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	54%	45%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	27%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well coordinated? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	34%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support the effective management of risk of harm? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	36%
Are home visits undertaken, where necessary, to support the effective management of risk of harm? ⁴⁷	No comparable data available	30%

2.4. Reviewing	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does reviewing effectively support the service user's compliance and engagement?		
In cases where it is needed, does reviewing consider compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	72%
In cases where it was needed, were any necessary adjustments made to the ongoing plan of work to take account of compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	61%

⁴⁸ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Is the service user meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	49%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of actions to implement the sentence? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	63%
Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?		
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	44%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the service user's strengths and enhancing protective factors? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	72%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the service user? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	57%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the progress towards desistance? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	56%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?		
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	32%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the service user's risk of harm? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	48%
Is the service user (and, where appropriate, key individuals in the service user's life) meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm?	24%	29%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the management of the service user's risk of harm? ⁴⁸	No comparable data available	45%

4.1 Unpaid work	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised?		
Does assessment consider the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, and the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with unpaid work? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	62%
Does unpaid work build upon a service user's strengths and enhance their protective factors? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	56%
Is the allocated work suitable, taking account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	65%
Is unpaid work delivered safely?		
Does the delivery of unpaid work take account of risk of harm to other service users, staff or the public? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	62%
Does unpaid work consider issues relating to the health and safety or potential vulnerability of the service user? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	61%
Where the responsible officer is engaged in other activity/work with the service user, does regular communication take place? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	89%
Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately?		
Does unpaid work start promptly and happen regularly? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	65%

⁴⁹ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Do arrangements for unpaid work encourage the service user's engagement and compliance with the order? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	74%
Are professional judgements made in relation to decisions about missed appointments? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	81%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate? ⁴⁹	No comparable data available	58%

4.2 Through the Gate	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance?		
Is there a clear and timely plan for how the service user's resettlement needs will be addressed?	73%	86%
Does the plan draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	42%	84%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning their resettlement, and are their views considered?	80%	91%
Does the resettlement plan identify the service user's strengths and protective factors, and consider ways to build upon these?	38%	87%
Does the plan take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?	65%	82%
Does the resettlement plan take account of factors related to risk of harm? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	70%
Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?		
Are resettlement services delivered in line with the service user's resettlement needs, prioritising those which are most critical? ⁵⁰	No comparable	No comparable

⁵⁰ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

	data available	data available
Wherever possible, do resettlement services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance their protective factors? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	85%
Does resettlement activity take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	81%
Does resettlement activity take sufficient account of any factors related to risk of harm? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	78%
Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?		
Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity with other services being delivered in the prison? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	78%
Is there effective communication with the responsible officer in the community, prior to and at the point of release?	40%	83%
Do resettlement services support effective handover to local services in the community? ⁵⁰	No comparable data available	75%



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