



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of:
North West Division
National Probation Service

HMI Probation, July 2020

Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Yvette Howson, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in this inspection. Without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of Her Majesty's 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 20 January 2020.

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Foreword

This is the first in our second round of inspections of the National Probation Service (NPS) against the new set of standards we launched in 2018. We previously inspected the North West NPS division in October 2018. The overall rating for this NPS division remains as 'Good'.

We found experienced, enthusiastic leaders, focused on providing a high-quality service. There has been an increased focus on staff engagement, wellbeing and building resilience. Although leaders have tried to mitigate the stress of high workloads, they remain high for too many probation officers (POs). Thirty per cent of POs have a workload of over 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS workload management tool.

There is a national shortage of POs, and when we last inspected the division it had a 20 per cent shortfall for all staff. We commend the division for its commitment to recruiting 153 individuals to undertake the Professional Qualification in Probation. In April 2020, the division became fully staffed for all grades, for the first time since *Transforming Rehabilitation*.

Stakeholder engagement is good. The division's approach to ensuring that it provides services that address the needs of those subject to supervision is encouraging. Effective partnership work has enabled several local co-commissioned projects to address areas linked to offending. Access to services in some rural areas is more limited.

We found that pre-sentence reports assisted judges and magistrates in deciding on the most appropriate sentence. Individuals under probation supervision were adequately involved in planning and delivering their sentences. Assessments identified and analysed offending-related factors, and sentence plans were sufficiently focused on keeping others safe. Supervision started promptly. The service provided to victims who had opted into the victim contact scheme was good.

There were shortfalls. Some elements of practice were not as good as we found in our previous inspection. Safeguarding information was not consistently requested from police and local authorities. In too many instances, supervision was not sufficiently focused on addressing factors related to offending. We encourage the division to continue to invest in staff professional development to drive improvement.

There are important areas where the division relies on the central functions provided by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice. When these functions do not work well, this has a negative impact on the division's ability to deliver a high-quality service. The national training team has insufficient resources to deliver mandatory training in child and adult safeguarding and several buildings in the division remain in a poor condition. While the governance of the Ministry of Justice's contract for centrally managed facilities has been strengthened, the priority given to repairs and the length of time taken to complete work still falls short of requirements.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

North West Division
National Probation Service

Score **16/30**

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Requires improvement



2. Case supervision

2.1 Assessment

Good



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



2.4 Reviewing

Good



3. NPS-specific work

3.1 Court reports and case allocation

Requires improvement



3.2 Statutory victim work

Good



Executive summary

Overall, North West Division National Probation Service is rated as: **‘Good’**. 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. Our fieldwork was conducted between 20 January and 14 February 2020. These standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with people who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall provider rating.² The findings and subsequent ratings in those three domains are described here.

1. Organisational delivery



We have rated North West Division National Probation Service (NPS) as ‘Good’ in relation to leadership and services, and ‘Requires improvement’ for staffing, and information and facilities. The NPS has maintained the standards for organisational delivery reported in the 2018 inspection.

The NPS in the North West is well led and has a clear strategy to protect the public and deliver a high-quality service to individuals subject to supervision. There is a collaborative approach to working with other organisations and effective liaison with stakeholders. We were pleased to see an increased emphasis on staff engagement and wellbeing, which helps support staff resilience. Offender Management in Custody was successfully implemented in October 2019.

Addressing staff shortages has been a priority for the division. At the last inspection, we found that the division had substantial staff shortages (20 per cent) overall but particularly at probation officer (PO) grade. The North West has reduced the number of vacancies in the last 12 months, which is a major achievement. It is now fully staffed for all grades. It has also recruited over 153 people as Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) practitioners who will fill future vacancies once they are qualified. There are, however, too many POs with high workloads: 32 per cent have workloads in excess of 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS national workload measurement tool. SPO workloads were also high and while there has been a national review of the excessive workload of senior probation officers (SPOs), until options from the review have been piloted, a substantial reduction in their workload seems unlikely.

Staff feel well supported by their managers, but the division needs to do more to ensure that management oversight is consistently effective and that actions are followed up. The division has commissioned training to meet the identified needs of staff. However, the NPS national training team has limited resources to deliver sufficient mandatory child and adult safeguarding training events to staff in the North West, which is a concern.

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation’s standards can be found here:

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

² 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’.

The division has an up-to-date assessment of the profile and offending-related needs of the offender population. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the provision available from both the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and co-commissioned services. Providing an appropriate range of services for a small group across a large geographical area remains a challenge. The division maintains effective relationships with other organisations, to manage the risk of harm to others.

Policies and guidance enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, supported by systems to monitor and drive improvement. Staff have a good understanding of performance in the division. Information and communications technology enables staff to plan and deliver work. There is a robust and effective process for learning from Serious Further Offences and other serious case reviews. Feedback from staff about the effectiveness of learning from reviews is positive.

In relation to health and safety, we were concerned to learn that the NPS has decided not to issue responsible officers with personal alarms for home visits. This is contrary to the practice for some CRCs, who either issue staff with personal alarms or make these available for staff to take with them on home visits. The facilities management contract, managed centrally by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), continues to be ineffective in delivering premises that are maintained to the required standard in the North West. Since our last inspection, the NPS has established a national taskforce to resolve escalated repairs and maintenance. The relative priority given to jobs and the time they take to complete, however, remain problematic. At the time of the inspection, there were 700 outstanding work orders, and 235 of these had been escalated more than once. One approved premises had been closed for 15 days, awaiting repairs to a broken boiler. As a result, 22 residents had to be relocated across the North West.

Key strengths of the organisation are as follows:

- The division is well led and there is a cohesive and motivated senior leadership team, focused on public protection.
- Senior leaders have increased their focus on staff engagement and building the resilience of staff.
- The division no longer has probation officer vacancies.
- Stakeholder engagement is good.
- The division has increased the range of services to address offending-related needs. The division has implemented a robust and effective process for learning from Serious Further Offences.

The main areas for improvement are as follows:

- Workloads for some POs are unreasonably high; almost a third have a workload of over 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS national workload measurement tool.
- The span of control for SPOs is too broad, which has an impact on the line managers' ability to supervise staff effectively. The national review of SPO responsibilities has not yet had an impact on reducing their workload.
- The NPS learning and development team does not have sufficient resources to deliver the quantity of mandatory child and adult safeguarding training events required by the North West.
- The physical condition of some premises is inadequate because of delays in carrying out maintenance and repairs.

- The national decision not to issue personal alarms to responsible officers is a retrograde step which could increase the risk of undertaking home visits.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 39 community sentence cases and 80 post-release supervision cases; interviewed 105 responsible officers and 25 service users; and 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. In the 116 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work to keep other people safe. The quality of work undertaken in relation to each element of case supervision needs to be above a specific threshold for it to be rated as satisfactory.

In the North West, fewer than 65 per cent of cases met our requirements for implementation and delivery, which means that this part of the work is assessed as 'Requires improvement'. The division has maintained a 'Good' rating for assessment, planning and reviewing, the same as reported in our 2018 inspection. Over 65 per cent of cases met our standards for these elements of work.

Practitioners identified and analysed offending-relating factors using information from a variety of sources, and, for the majority of cases we inspected, produced good-quality assessments. Individuals under supervision were sufficiently involved in completing their assessments. Diversity needs, personal circumstances and potential barriers to engagement were identified. Most aspects of planning to address the factors most likely to support desistance were assessed as good. Planning to address risk of harm to children was of sufficient quality, but there was insufficient planning to address domestic abuse.

We saw evidence of the work that has been done to address the recommendations in our divisional and thematic inspection reports. In addition, well-targeted activities have been implemented to address the recommendations in relation to case supervision made following our last inspection. These include re-issuing policies and guidance, additional training, management oversight, and audit and assurance activity. Improved practice, however, was not always evident in the cases we examined in this inspection.

The quality of implementation and delivery of the sentence was not as good as we found when we last inspected. It was also weaker than other key areas of case supervision. Sentences started promptly and effective working relationships were maintained with individuals. While there were sufficient levels of contact, the delivery of interventions most likely to address offending behaviour was insufficient. The division needs to do more to involve service users in reviews of their progress, and to make necessary adjustments to risk management plans in light of new information.

Key strengths of case supervision are as follows:

- Responsible officers establish and maintain professional working relationships with those they supervise.
- Responsible officers sufficiently identify and analyse which individuals pose a risk of harm to others, and in what circumstances.
- Planning sufficiently addresses the safeguarding of children.
- There is sufficient contact with people before they are released from custody.

Areas of case supervision requiring improvement include:

- Interventions are not consistently those most likely to address offending-related factors.
- There is insufficient offence-focused work to manage the risk of harm posed to individuals.
- There is insufficient planning to address domestic abuse.
- Insufficient necessary adjustments are made to ongoing plans of work to take account of changes in the risk of harm.

3. NPS-specific work

A blue folder icon with the letters 'NPS' written in white on it.

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

Court reports and case allocation

We examined 115 court reports that had been completed in a one-week period approximately three months before our fieldwork. Of those cases, 106 had been sentenced and allocated either to the NPS or a CRC, and we looked at the quality of the allocation process in those cases. We ensured that the ratios in relation to report type and the agency to which any resulting case was allocated matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

We found that 70 per cent of the court reports we inspected achieved our standards for our first key question on the quality of the report presented at court. For our key question on the quality and timeliness of case allocation, 46 per cent achieved our standards. Given that this fell within five percentage points of a higher rating score, the HM Inspectorate of Probation ratings panel considered other scores across the full range of questions, and on this basis used professional discretion³ to award an overall score of 'Requires Improvement' for the quality of court reports.

Court reports provided sufficient information for sentencers to decide on the most appropriate sentence. Cases were allocated promptly but we felt that information provided to organisations responsible for supervision was not good enough. The division performed very poorly when it came to requesting domestic abuse checks from the police for court reports. It also failed to ensure that, where necessary, a full and accurate risk of harm assessment was completed.

Key strengths of court reports and case allocation are:

- Service users are meaningfully involved in the completion of their reports.
- Pre-sentence reports support the court's decision-making, and proposals to the court are appropriate.
- Reports authors sufficiently consider the impact that the offence has had on the victim.

³ An element of professional discretion 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.

- Allocation to the probation provider is prompt.

Areas for improvement of court reports and case allocation are:

- Domestic abuse and safeguarding checks are not always undertaken where necessary.
- Available sources of information are not always used to inform reports.
- Responsible officers do not always ensure that a full and accurate risk of harm assessment is completed when necessary.

Statutory victim work

We inspected the management of 27 cases where there was a victim entitled to a service under the statutory victim contact scheme. In 15 cases, we looked at the contact with victims immediately following the offender being sentenced, and in 12 cases we looked at work with victims at the point of release of the offender.

We have rated the North West NPS division as 'Good' on our standard for statutory victim work. Although the proportion of cases rated as satisfactory on some of the key questions was just under the 65 per cent threshold, the HM Inspectorate of Probation ratings panel took account of other scores across the full range of questions, and used professional discretion to award an overall score of 'Good'.

In December 2019, the total caseload figure for the North West on the victim contact scheme database was 17,481, of which 7,383 were active (including new cases and those awaiting a response). The division operates a devolved model, with victim liaison officers based in local offices. The divisional victim lead does not have line management responsibility for all the victim liaison managers and victim liaison officers, as these sit under different heads of cluster.

Of those cases inspected, we found that victims received sufficient information about the scheme, were updated at appropriate points in the sentence and had their views taken into consideration.

Key strengths of statutory victim work are:

- Responsible officers keep victim liaison officers updated about the management of the individual being supervised.
- Victims can express concerns and contribute their views before the individual's release.

Areas of improvement for statutory victim work are:

- Too few victims are informed of what action to take in case of unwanted contact from a perpetrator.
- Less than half of the victims are referred to sources of support from other agencies or services.
- Only half of victim liaison officers are included in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) where this is appropriate.

Recommendations

Achievement of recommendations from the previous inspection⁴

In our previous inspection report, we made eight recommendations to the NPS, Ministry of Justice, HMPPS and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). During this inspection, we investigated the extent to which these recommendations have been achieved. We found that sufficient progress had been made on two recommendations, some progress on five and no progress on one.

We recommended that the NPS should:

1. *ensure that changes to risk of harm and updates are properly recorded in risk management plans*

The NPS has made some progress on this recommendation.

The division reissued national guidance to all staff regarding the use of professional judgement and what actions are required following substantial changes in service users' circumstances. A guidance document was produced, which includes learning themes from HM Inspectorate of Probation inspections, key learning themes from Serious Further Offences, information on good-quality assessments, investigative approaches, and good practice in recording and transferring cases. Learning events have been delivered across all clusters monthly since March 2019.

Risk assessment practice training materials were updated in May 2019 and relaunched. All probation officers in training (PQIPs), in addition to 156 responsible officers who were new or had an identified need, were trained. Assessment quality assurance events were delivered in all clusters to SPOs who were allocated quality assurance activity to be completed by March 2020.

Although the training activities completed since the last inspection seem well targeted, in the sample of cases we inspected, there had been no improvement in practice since our last inspection. Necessary adjustments had been made to the ongoing plans of work to take account of changes in the risk of harm in only 57 per cent of cases.

2. *put in place appropriate contingency plans (as part of risk management plans) to address identified risks, particularly in relation to domestic abuse and safeguarding*

The NPS has made some progress on this recommendation.

In addition to the actions outlined above, quality assurance of assessments included scrutiny of contingency plans to address child and adult safeguarding. We found that appropriate contingency plans had been made in 67 per cent of cases. Of those cases we inspected, however, there had been no improvement since the last inspection in the percentage we judged as sufficient.

3. *undertake domestic abuse and child safeguarding checks in a timely manner for those cases where reports are being presented at court*

The NPS has made no progress on this recommendation.

⁴ HMI Probation. (2019). *An inspection of the North West Division of the National Probation Service.*

A Crown Court stakeholder group has been established and meets regularly to improve the provision of information on domestic abuse. As a result, NPS-funded administrative posts have been created to process checks in some areas. There have also been negotiations between the division and the Crown Prosecution Service to include domestic abuse call-out information in Crown Prosecution Service bundles. Negotiations are under way with the National Police Chiefs Council, to establish timeframes for responding to requests for information. The division has provided more training on child safeguarding and domestic abuse for relevant staff. Quarterly audit and improvement activity in relation to court reports is ongoing.

The activities that took place to address this recommendation were well targeted. Our inspectors found, however, that, of the pre-sentence reports inspected, only 27 per cent of domestic abuse checks and 65 per cent of child safeguarding checks were requested. Of those cases that indicated domestic abuse may be present, less than half (48 per cent) received an enquiry. The quality of practice in undertaking safeguarding checks has deteriorated since the 2018 inspection.

4. *clarify and promote the division's approach to flexible and remote working and use information and communications technology, including accessibility of divisional mobile phones for operational use.*

The NPS has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

The division reissued HMPPS's national guidance to all staff, and developed supplementary local guidance on flexible and remote working. By July 2019, smartphones were distributed to all managers and practitioner-grade staff. The division re-issued guidance on home visits to all staff, and the divisional health and safety committee undertook checks to ensure compliance with the guidance. The division made the documents available to us, and the staff we spoke to were fully aware of the processes.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

5. *review probation recruitment policy and processes, to bring the workforce up to strength as soon as possible and develop a workforce that better reflects the diversity and gender of the community it serves*

HMPPS has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

HMPPS has redesigned its recruitment campaign material to encourage applications from black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates. Divisional training managers were provided with toolkits to support local outreach events. A new Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) selection process has been introduced.

The workforce is up to strength and there are no vacancies in the division. It would like to attract more POs from an Asian background but, in terms of ethnicity, the staff group matches the offender population in terms of its black, Asian and minority ethnic proportion. The ratio of male to female POs remains a national issue. In the North West, 77 per cent of the staff are female.

6. *review the probation operational management roles with a view to giving managers greater capacity to focus on oversight of case management through professional supervision and quality assurance*

HMPPS has made some progress on this recommendation.

A national review of the role and responsibilities of the SPO has been ongoing since 2019. Outcomes from the review are that some management oversight tasks should be incorporated within other roles, and a management coordination hub should be implemented in each division to take transactional activities away from SPOs. Additional options being explored include other ways of providing support to new probation services officers (PSOs) and those undertaking the PQiP that do not rely on SPOs' time.

The North West NPS division has implemented mentoring arrangements for PQiP learners, and the mentoring PO is allocated a workload reduction. This approach, as opposed to co-working (which has no workload management tool reduction for the PO), was implemented to allow a greater level of support for the learner's development alongside an experienced PO, reducing the burden on the SPO. It remains the case that that line management responsibility sits with the SPO within the cluster. The North West NPS division has also appointed PQiP SPOs in some clusters, above and beyond full-time equivalents to manage the PQiP demand.

The Ministry of Justice should:

7. *ensure that probation facilities are well maintained and provide a safe and enabling environment for work with offenders*

The Ministry of Justice has made some progress on this recommendation.

Long-standing under-investment in NPS premises continues to present challenges. The general state of some buildings in the North West NPS division is unsatisfactory. There has been insufficient progress in reducing the length of time taken to complete repairs. At the time of the inspection, there were 700 outstanding work orders, of which 235 had been escalated more than once.

On a positive note, one team has moved out of a portacabin into a proper building. The ambition is for the new Manchester office to be ready by the end of the 2020 calendar year. This will merge several offices. Governance of facilities and maintenance has been strengthened. The Ministry of Justice's technical team holds monthly audit review meetings, to ascertain trends in performance levels and address areas of concern across the estate.

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service should:

8. *recognise as members of staff probation staff who are based in court buildings, and allow them to use court and tribunal staff facilities*

HMCTS has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

HMCTS has responded that it will always seek to accommodate NPS staff working in support of court hearings, provided that there is sufficient capacity across the regional estate to do so. The HMCTS regional delivery director has instructed the area's cluster managers to address individual site issues as they are reported.

From the division's perspective, robust working arrangements have been established with HMCTS regarding accommodation at court. Discussions take place at all levels, including meetings between the probation divisional director and the head of crime, as well as cluster-level meetings between court SPOs and HMCTS operational managers in each area. NPS court staff in the North West that we spoke to confirmed that they have increased access to facilities in court buildings.

New recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made 10 recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of probation services.

North West NPS division should:

1. ensure that all changes to risk of harm are properly recorded in risk management plans. **This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection**
2. undertake domestic abuse and child safeguarding checks in a timely manner for those cases where reports are being presented at court. **This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection and should be addressed as a priority**
3. put in place appropriate contingency plans (as part of risk management plans) to address identified risks, particularly in relation to domestic abuse and safeguarding. **This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection and should be addressed as a priority**
4. undertake the required risk of harm assessment in all applicable cases
5. complete safeguarding checks in light of new information and follow up responses promptly
6. complete necessary adjustments to the ongoing plan of work to take account of the changes in the risk of harm.

The Ministry of Justice should:

7. ensure that probation facilities are well maintained and provide a safe and enabling environment for work with offenders. **This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection. We expect this recommendation to be addressed as a priority.**

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

8. review the decision not to issue responsible officers with personal alarms, which, in the assessment of HM Inspectorate of Probation, unnecessarily increases the risks associated with home visits
9. ensure that learning and development resources are available to deliver mandatory training in child and adult safeguarding to NPS staff. This should be urgently addressed
10. bring workloads for all staff to a reasonable level. Following the implementation of Offender Management in Custody, review the NPS resourcing model to see if it sufficiently meets the demands of the current NPS caseload.

Background

North West NPS division

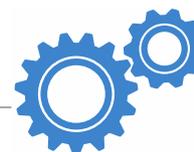
The North West NPS division is one of seven NPS divisions across England and Wales, all of which follow a standard national operating model. It comprises 11 local geographical clusters across five counties and interacts with five police forces, three CRCs and fourteen different local authority areas. These include some of the most sparsely populated rural areas in the country, as well as some of the most densely populated urban areas. The division has five functional support areas, covering performance and quality; public protection; stakeholder engagement, resettlement and psychological services; and devolution and resettlement, and the effective proposals framework. The division also has a corporate support team, which includes information and communications technology, business strategy and change, human resources, learning and development, finance, and health and safety.

The North West NPS division supervises 17,035 offenders. The division has 37 offender contact centres (probation offices), a satellite presence at four police buildings and 16 approved premises. It serves 28 courts and 16 prisons. The division has 1,689 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff. This includes 597 POs and 435 PSOs, who deliver face-to-face work with service users. There are 117 SPOs, who line-manage an average of nine staff each.

The ethnic breakdown of staff in the division reflects the service user cohort. The North West NPS division's workforce is 79 per cent white, 3.3 per cent Asian, 1.76 per cent black, 2.5 per cent mixed race, 0.4 per cent 'other' and 13 per cent not declared. The service user demographic is 86 per cent white, 4.9 per cent Asian, 1.76 per cent black, 2.6 per cent mixed race, 1.1 per cent 'other' and 3.61 per cent not declared.

For more information about this NPS division, including details of its organisational structure, please see Annexe 3 of this report.

Contextual facts



1,449	The number of individuals supervised on community sentences by the North West NPS division ⁵
5,639	The number of individuals supervised post-release by the North West NPS division ⁵
35.6%	The proportion of North West NPS division service users with a proven reoffence ⁶
37.5%	The proportion of NPS service users (England and Wales) with a proven reoffence ⁶
£77,170,688m	Total spend in the year ending 31 December 2018
£66,583,961m	Total spend in year ending 31 March 2020 ⁷

Performance against targets

77%	The proportion of individuals recorded as having successfully completed their community orders or suspended sentence orders for the North West NPS division. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 75%, against a target of 75% ⁸
100%	The proportion of pre-sentence reports completed by the NPS within the timescales set by the court. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 100%, against a target of 95% ⁹

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Offender management caseload statistics as at 30 September 2019*.

⁶ Ministry of Justice. (2019) *Proven reoffending, Payment by results, January to March 2018 cohort*

⁷ At the time of the inspection, the budget for the NW division was £74,925,176. However, subsequent to this, the decision was made nationally to move responsibility for the Approved Premises from the NPS divisions to the Community Interventions directorate. This resulted in a budget reduction of £8,341,214.

⁸ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *NPS Service Level 18, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics July 2018 – September 2019, Q2*.

⁹ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *NPS Service Level 1, Community Performance Quarterly Statistics July 2018 – September 2019, Q2*.



1. Organisational delivery

NPS in the North West is well led and has a clear strategy to protect the public and deliver a high-quality service to individuals subject to supervision. There is a collaborative approach to working with other organisations, and effective liaison with stakeholders. We were pleased to see an increased emphasis on staff engagement and wellbeing since our previous inspection, which helps support staff resilience. Offender Management in Custody was implemented in October 2019.

Addressing staff shortages has been a priority for the division. At the last inspection, we found that the division had substantial staff shortages (20 per cent), particularly at PO grade. The North West has reduced the number of vacancies in the last 12 months, which is a major achievement. It is now fully staffed for all grades. It has recruited over 153 PQiP practitioners, who will fill future vacancies once they are qualified. There are, however, too many POs with high workloads: 32 per cent have workloads in excess of 110 per cent, as measured by the national workload measurement tool.

SPOs in the division are also heavily loaded. While there has been a national review of the excessive workload of SPOs, this has yet to feed through into a reduction in local management burdens. Staff feel well supported by their managers, but the division needs to do more to ensure that management oversight is consistently effective and that actions are followed up. The division has commissioned training to meet the identified needs of staff. However, the NPS national training team has limited resources to deliver sufficient mandatory child and adult safeguarding training events to staff in the North West which is a concern.

The division has an up-to-date assessment of the profile and offending-related needs of the offender population. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase of 14 new rate card elective services, in the provision available from both the CRCs and co-commissioned services. Providing an appropriate range of services across a large geographical area remains a challenge. The division maintains effective relationships with other organisations to manage the risk of harm to others.

Comprehensive policies are supported by systems to monitor and drive improvement. Staff told us that they understand the performance in the division. Information and communications technology enables staff to plan and deliver work. There is a robust and effective process for learning from Serious Further Offences and other serious case reviews. Feedback from staff we spoke to in meetings about the effectiveness of learning from reviews is positive.

In relation to health and safety, we were concerned to learn that the NPS nationally has decided not to issue responsible officers with personal alarms. This arrangement is contrary to the practice for some CRC colleagues, who either issue staff with personal alarms or make them available for staff to take with them on home visits. The facilities management contract, managed centrally by HMPPS headquarters, continues to be ineffective in delivering premises that are maintained to the required standard. Since our last inspection, the NPS has established a national taskforce to resolve escalated repairs and maintenance. The relative priority given to jobs and the time they take to complete, however, remain problematic. At the time of the inspection, there were 700 outstanding work orders, and 235 of these had been escalated more than once. One approved premises had been closed for 15 days, awaiting repairs to a broken boiler. As a result, 22 residents had to be relocated across the North West.

Strengths:

- The division is well led and there is a cohesive and motivated senior leadership team, focused on public protection.
- Senior leaders have increased their focus on staff engagement and building the resilience of staff.
- The division no longer has probation officer vacancies.
- Stakeholder engagement is good.
- The division has increased the range of services to address offending-related needs.
- The division has implemented a robust and effective process for learning from Serious Further Offences.

Areas for improvement:

- Workloads for some POs are unreasonably high: almost a third have a workload of over 110 per cent, as measured by the national workload measurement tool.
- The span of control for SPOs is too broad, which potentially has an impact on line managers' ability to supervise staff effectively. The recent national review of SPOs' responsibilities has not yet had an impact on reducing their workloads.
- The NPS learning and development team does not have sufficient resources to deliver the quantity of mandatory child and adult safeguarding training events required by the North West.
- The physical environment of some premises is inadequate because of delays in carrying out maintenance and repairs.
- The national decision not to issue personal alarms to responsible officers is a retrograde step which could increase the risk of undertaking home visits.

	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	Good

Key data

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Proportion of staff interviewed who agreed that the organisation prioritised quality ¹⁰	81%	60%

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 division is well led by an experienced, cohesive senior leadership team, focused on public protection. It has a clear vision and strategy to deliver a high-quality service for all service users. The delivery plan is closely aligned with the NPS's vision and priorities. There are nine strategic objectives in the North West, and each objective has a named lead. We saw evidence of detailed reviews of progress against each milestone, with direct plans that drive activity. To address disproportionality, there is a plan to address the issues raised in the Lammy Review, which explored discrimination against black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.¹¹ The division has an equality and diversity plan and a separate women's plan.

The division recognises that effective stakeholder engagement is of key importance to service delivery. It adheres to the national stakeholder representation requirements. In addition, senior and middle managers chair and contribute to a wide range of partnership boards. The North West has influenced partnership arrangements locally and has successfully co-commissioned a range of services. For example, it has been working with the Naloxone Project to review the number of drug-related deaths, and has carried out partnership work through integrated offender management schemes and with women's centres. Apart from sentencers, there is no formal approach to requesting or receiving feedback from other partners.

Staff continue to report that they are overloaded with information, and some find it difficult to identify the most important messages. SPOs ensure that those of most importance are discussed at team meetings.

There has been an increased focus on staff engagement since the last inspection. The senior leadership team regularly holds divisional staff telephone conferences, middle managers conferences and team meetings, to encourage a culture of constructive challenge. Staff across the division have a strong sense of a North West divisional identity, which is reinforced by visible senior managers. During our interviews with responsible officers, 60 per cent agreed that quality is prioritised in the division; this is significantly lower than in last year's inspection, which is a concern.

¹⁰ HMI Probation inspection data.

¹¹ The Lammy Review. (2017). *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.*

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

The senior leadership team reviews the divisional risk register quarterly. The register contains appropriate key risks to service delivery, which are described at a corporate, regional and operational level. Any emerging risks can be formally raised and discussed. Risks are reviewed and, when necessary, remedial action is taken. Managing the workload, skills and resilience of staff; facilities management; and bad weather plans remain a key focus.

The division has up-to-date, comprehensive local business continuity plans. These plans identify risks and a plan to mitigate each risk. Plans are monitored by the business manager and the leadership team in the cluster.

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

The E3 operating model allows for continuity of contact and is aligned with divisional plans. Each cluster has a local delivery plan. The majority of contact is face to face. Staff understand the model, which is available on EQUIP, the national knowledge management system, and is supplemented by practice guidance. Skills for Effective Engagement and Developmental Supervision (SEEDS) and the supervisory line management framework have been rolled out in the North West to support personalised approaches to working with service users. The division has introduced a reporting framework to ensure meaningful and consistent contact with service users and support an individual's compliance with supervision.

The pod model was introduced in the North West in 2018. A pod consists of a small group of POs, PSOs and administrative staff. They work collaboratively to meet local resource constraints and improve the efficient use of PSOs and administrative staff to support POs and case management. Tasks are shared within the pod, and work is deployed to PSOs and administrative staff, to deal with the dynamic and reactive nature of and NPS caseload. This model is still in place, and staff told inspectors that it supports collaborative working and increases effective and efficient communication. There was no evidence that the effectiveness of the pod model has been or will be reviewed.

Offender Management in Custody was implemented across the NPS in England in October 2019. The division completed an impact assessment for the implementation of the case management workstream. The detailed assessment specifically looked at the movement of pre-release cases, the number of probation staff to be transferred into prison, and how the number to be transferred would affect the existing resources and delivery in the community. Despite the meticulous organisation that went into implementing Offender Management in Custody, staff told inspectors that it appeared chaotic. This was because the national messages regarding staff allocation and service user cohorts changed frequently, which increased the workload of those in the division responsible for these areas of work.

Since the announcement that the offender management functions of the NPS and CRCs will be coming together in a new unified model under the NPS from 2021, senior leaders have attended briefings to keep abreast of changes. Staff feel their managers are proactive in sourcing information and provide information when they have it.

	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 ¹²	Previous year	Current year
Total staff headcount (FTE)	1,550.94	1,689.04
Total number of POs or equivalent (FTE)	582.02	596.08
Total number of PSOs or equivalent (FTE)	413.06	435.18
Vacancy rate (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total staff headcount)	9.60%	0%
Vacancy rate of PO or equivalent grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required PO posts)	20.00%	0%
Sickness absence rate (all staff)	11.24%	12.80%
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	5.97%	7.30%

Workload data	Previous year	Current year
Average caseload PO (FTE) ¹³	36.4	31.9
Average caseload PSO (FTE) ¹³	22.9	25.9
Proportion of POs (or equivalent) in this NPS division describing workload as unmanageable ¹⁴	56%	45%
Proportion of PSOs (or equivalent) in this NPS division describing workload as unmanageable ¹⁴	0%	14%

¹² All data supplied by the NPS.

¹³ Data supplied by the NPS.

¹⁴ HMI Probation inspection data.

(For the purposes of comparison, in our inspections of all NPS divisions between June 2018 and June 2019, 54 per cent of POs and 13 per cent of PSOs told inspectors that their workloads 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?

Addressing staff shortages has been a priority for the division. At the last inspection, we found that the division had substantial staff shortages (20 per cent), particularly at PO grade. The division was spending 11 per cent of its payroll budget on agency staff to fill PO and other vacancies.

The division has an effective workforce planning strategy; meetings take place regularly and are chaired by a senior leader. The staffing report provides a clear breakdown of the establishment figures. The division regularly reviews workload pressure on local delivery clusters and, where possible, moves resources to address this. Some staff have been directed to move to other locations to alleviate local shortages.

A major achievement for the division and the NPS nationally is that the North West has reduced the number of staff vacancies in the last 12 months. At the time of the inspection in January 2020, there were 17 PO vacancies. They were all filled by staff who qualified in March 2020. The division has a full complement of staff for the first time since Transforming Rehabilitation was implemented in 2015. In order to maintain sufficient numbers of POs in the future, the division currently has 153 PQiPs under training. Recruiting a large number of staff to be trained in the North West is a formidable task, requiring additional resources and commitment from the whole staff group, including practice tutor assessors and SPOs. To enable them to support and mentor trainees, experienced POs receive workload relief, and retired responsible officers have been employed.

The manageability of workloads is measured by the national workload measurement tool, which is accessible to all managers. The NPS measures workload rather than caseload, as the number of people subject to supervision is not indicative of the complex nature of the work undertaken. At the time of the inspection, the average caseload of POs in the North West NPS division was 31.9, and PSOs 25.9; however, 31 per cent of North West NPS division staff have a workload in excess of 110 per cent, as measured by the workload management tool. This is a reduction from 45 per cent at the time of the last inspection, which is an improvement. Of the responsible officers we interviewed, 62 per cent agreed that their workload was manageable; this included 86 per cent of PSOs and 55 per cent of POs. Clusters across the division have transferred staff to Offender Management in Custody teams in prisons. They have been replaced by newly qualified staff who require 20 per cent workload relief. As a result, community-based responsible officers told us that they have noticed only a slight decrease in their workload since the introduction of Offender Management in Custody, in spite of the recruitment of large numbers of new POs.

When we last inspected the division, case management support had been introduced. Specific tasks are delegated to PSOs and administrative staff, via the pod model, to provide workload relief for POs. The model has been successful, but due to the large numbers of who require experience of working with service users, the breadth of work available to PSOs for case management support has been limited. The nature of the workload measurement tool makes it difficult to measure PSO case management support, indicating that many PSOs are under-used. However, we found that PSOs are routinely being used in other aspects of service delivery,

including promoting rate card services across the cluster, utilising the capacity within the PSO group.

HMPPS has recognised that the workload of SPOs is too broad. This prevents them from supervising staff effectively to ensure they deliver a quality service. SPOs' time is split between monitoring casework, supervising staff, meeting performance targets, engaging with stakeholders and carrying out human resources processes. SPOs in the North West NPS division have between 1 and 18 direct reports, with an average of 8.74. We met a group of middle managers who were all managing at least 10 people.

A national review of SPOs' role and responsibilities took place 2019. The review proposed options for some current SPO tasks to be placed elsewhere, including administrative tasks being carried out in hubs; it is too early for the review to yet have had any impact on the workloads of the SPOs.

Other grades of staff, such as victim liaison officers, who may have a caseload of 300, which is very high, and whose work is not measured by a workload tool; business managers and some administrative staff told us in meetings that their workload was unmanageable. Staff who work in court stated that there were not always enough staff to complete the work required on a daily basis.

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

Of the responsible officers interviewed, almost all (96 per cent) stated that they felt they had the necessary practice skills and knowledge to supervise the individuals allocated to them. Our case supervision data, however, indicated that there were skills, knowledge or practice development needs. The practice in relation to assessment and planning to keep people safe was sufficient, but there were omissions in practice to deliver sufficient offence-focused work.

Service users are allocated to a responsible officer according to a national tiering model. A monthly report is shared with the head of cluster, to identify cases that may deviate (sometimes with legitimate reason) from the allocation guidance.

The ethnic breakdown of staff in the division reflects the service user cohort. The North West NPS division workforce demographic is 79 per cent white, 3.3 per cent Asian, 1.76 per cent black, 2.5 per cent mixed race, 0.4 per cent 'other' and 13 per cent not declared. Service users are 86 per cent white, 4.9 per cent Asian, 1.76 per cent black, 2.6 per cent mixed race, 1.1 per cent 'other' and 3.61 per cent not declared.

The division goes into communities when national recruitment campaigns are live, to encourage applications from under-represented groups, particularly from those who identify as Asian. There is a gender imbalance in the workforce nationally: 77 per cent of POs in the North West NPS division are female, and 96 per cent of service users are male. National campaigns are attempting to attract more male staff.

The division supports staff to apply for corporate talent programmes. For example, ten North West NPS division leaders have been offered a place on the Aspiring Leaders programme pilot and seven leaders have either completed or are currently participating in the Empowered Senior Leaders Programme. Line managers are responsible for identifying and developing the potential of individual staff. This process has not been formally analysed to minimise bias or disproportionality. Eight per cent of the workforce and nine per cent of SPO grades and above are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background. Worryingly, there are no figures on staff disability rates due to an inability to retrieve the information from the national database.

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

The North West NPS division has 117 SPOs. Responsible officers feel that they are invested in, and they were complimentary about the oversight provided by managers: 85 per cent reported that it was effective, met their professional development requirements and supported them to deliver good-quality services. Managers are accessible outside of formal meetings. We found that management oversight and line management supervision takes place regularly. Of the cases sampled, however, management oversight was found to be effective in only just over half (54 per cent) of the cases inspected. The broad span of responsibilities for SPOs has an impact on the time they have to supervise all the members of their team to the standard they would wish. We saw good examples of very detailed management oversight, but this was not consistent. More needs to be done to ensure that actions identified at oversight meetings are followed up.

Staff confirmed that appraisals are completed and that poor performance is identified and addressed. The senior leadership team has procedures in place to monitor this process.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

The NPS national training team is part of the HMPPS Learning and Development Unit. The team is resourced by staff seconded from NPS divisions. Its primary responsibilities are to identify the training requirements of all staff at different grades of the NPS, commission training packages to be developed and deliver professional training across the NPS.

To identify, plan and meet the learning and development needs of all staff, there is ongoing analysis of the MyLearning database. The NPS has identified role-specific mandatory training. The North West division has a learning and development committee, which supports the implementation of the current learning and development plan to maintain a skilled workforce. The committee is responsible for identifying training requirements across the division. MyLearning reports are shared with the senior leadership team before mid-year appraisals, and support line managers in identifying and addressing gaps in the completion of mandatory training.

The NPS national training team does not sufficiently meet the continuing professional development needs of all staff, particularly PO grades. We were concerned in particular about the unacceptable lack of availability of mandatory training. For example, only 58 per cent of North West NPS division staff are up to date on child safeguarding and domestic abuse training. The national training team has had substantial resourcing issues. The number of FTE staff should be 25 but there are only eight in post. This limits the number of training events available. Demand outstrips supply and waiting lists are long. Of the events available in the next six months, nearly all have waiting lists. For example, 16 staff are booked on the event in May 2020, with 19 on the waiting list. The situation is better for adult safeguarding, with 73 per cent of staff up to date.

The division has been proactive in addressing gaps in provision and has allocated a small budget to commission learning and development to meet the identified needs of staff. For example, 60 operational staff have attended offender personality disorder pathway training; 264 practitioners have attended serious further offending learning workshops; 150 PSOs attended a workshop devised by the division, entitled 'Working with lifers and those sentenced to indeterminate public protection'; and 40 practitioners have attended 'Uncomfortable Conversations' training to address unconscious bias and over-representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic

individuals in the criminal justice system. Four further events are planned in 2020. Seventy-five per cent of responsible officers said that they had access to in-service training, and the same proportion agreed that the division promotes a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

The induction of new staff takes place at cluster level. All job descriptions reflect the civil service's new approach to recruitment, which uses success profiles, rather than the competency-based approach. There are learning and development schedules for each North West NPS division role. These apply to staff moving into new roles or returning after a period of absence. This includes all mandatory training specific for the role.

We interviewed a small group of staff who worked in court. Some told us that, although they have completed in-house training on pre-sentence report writing, domestic abuse, sexual offending and risk of serious harm screening, they did not all feel confident to carry out their role in court.

The division has 435 PSOs. To support internal applicants who wish to train as POs, the division has held 'Thinking yourself into PQiP workshops'. In the last three cohorts, an average of one-third of PQiPs were internal candidates. This accounts for the higher attrition rate in the PSO staff group – up from 6.53 per cent last year to 11.23 per cent this year.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Staff are motivated, enthusiastic and committed to delivering high-quality work but, for some, their high workloads are a barrier to achieving this. The division's people strategy includes a staff engagement plan, with approximately 140 staff (ten per cent of the workforce) acting as engagement champions in their location. All clusters operate a local reward and recognition scheme, and national awards such as Butler Trust and National Probation Awards are promoted, and winners celebrated. Sixty-six per cent of staff interviewed agreed that managers recognise and reward exceptional work.

The senior leadership team has responded to the staff survey by focusing more on enhancing staff's wellbeing and resilience. In the past 12 months, several staff have given evidence at inquests. This has had a substantial impact on staff health and wellbeing. There was an average of 12.80 days per staff member lost in the last 12 months due to sickness absence, an increase from 11.24 12 months previously. The number of PO days lost was 13.45, and for PSOs was 15.11. Managers told us that there had been an increase in staff sickness rates due to mental health issues. To provide additional support and increase staff resilience, staff have had the opportunity to have group sessions with psychologists, as well as bespoke practical support to prepare and debrief. A staff support team has been established. Staff volunteer to be members, and they are given two days of training to support colleagues after a critical incident. Since October 2019, 123 support sessions were completed. Staff are also encouraged to use the employee assistance programme.

It was good to see that 93 per cent of staff agreed that, when necessary, reasonable adjustments had been put in place for them. Staff we interviewed welcomed wellbeing days in their clusters and access to wellbeing rooms for time out and reflection. Sixty-seven per cent of staff agreed that safety was a priority, and a similar proportion were positive about staff wellbeing. Operational staff have been issued with mobile phones, which was welcomed. We are concerned about the national decision not to issue responsible officers with personal alarms when carrying out home visits. This is at odds with their CRC colleagues.

	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 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 2 cases ¹⁵	All NPS divisions in year one	This NPS division in current inspection
Proportion of caseload who are female	5%	5%
Proportion of inspected cases who are black, Asian and minority ethnic	21%	6%
Proportion of inspected cases with a disability	47%	49%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified substance misuse problems	74%	71%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified domestic abuse issues	46%	55%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified child safeguarding issues	53%	50%

There is an up-to-date analysis of the profile of service users, which includes offending-related factors. The annual strategic needs assessment includes caseload profile data; desistance data from the offender assessment system (OASys), including data on accommodation, education, training and employment, and drug and alcohol use; and data on interventions and referrals. The commissioning and purchasing intentions are informed by feedback from staff and sentence users, diversity data and proposal sentencing information.

The analysis also captures the risk of harm factors. Of the 11 clusters, 59 per cent of the caseload present a high risk of harm to others. The division has completed an evaluation to understand better the profile of violent offenders. This is to ensure that

¹⁵ HMI Probation inspection data.

the current provision is used effectively to address offence-related needs, improve outcomes and protect the public.

The analysis, segmented by local delivery units, includes protected characteristics. The division's diversity and equalities leads use a range of routine data reports on diversity to analyse sentencing patterns and identify if there is any disproportionality. A priority nationally is to address the large numbers of women sentenced to short-term custody. Trauma-informed workshops were delivered to all court staff in 2019, with the aim of improving the quality of reports by enhancing awareness of specific issues that have an impact on sentencing proposals for women offenders. The division has also carried out joint work with the CRCs to increase referrals to women's services. There is a plan in place to address the issues around black, Asian and minority ethnic disproportionality raised in the Lammy Review.

Does the NPS provide the volume, range and quality of services to meet the needs of the service users?¹⁶

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Average waiting time for programmes for men who have committed sexual offences	32 weeks	17 weeks
Average waiting time for rehabilitation activity requirements (RARs)	12 weeks	8 weeks
Successful completion of programmes for men who have committed sexual offences	78.61%	72.89%
Successful completion of RARs	67.15%	68.39%

There is sufficient evidence of planning based on a comprehensive analysis of service users' needs. The division knows what is required to address the offending-related needs of their cohort. As would be expected in a large geographical area, the range of services varies across the division, depending on the providers, geography and demographics in the locality. Seventy-three per cent of responsible officers stated that they had access to an appropriate range of services.

Relationships with the CRCs are positive. Since the previous inspection, the range of services provided by the Cheshire and Greater Manchester; Merseyside; and Cumbria and Lancashire CRCs, via the rate card, has been expanded. There are 14 new rate card elective services and a range of co-commissioned services that have responded to local needs. In addition to accessing services via the rate card, the division uses local resources or bids for co-commissioning money. There were good examples of specialist projects.

In August 2018, Lancashire LDU was accredited by the National Autistic Society, following a division-wide approach to improve practice for service users with learning disability and autism. The North West NPS division has trained learning disability and autism champions in all offices. It has an NHS communication tool for identifying, and making adjustments to communication to remove barriers when working with, service users with autism or a learning disability. It has produced a toolkit for probation staff,

¹⁶ Data supplied by the NPS.

which includes guidance on undertaking assessments, interventions, and court and reception work with this group.

Blackpool has a large number of people who have hepatitis C. This cluster has worked with the NHS to promote hepatitis C screening and support individuals into treatment. Responsible officers make service users aware of the screening on offer, and the subsequent treatment. A consent form is completed before screening, which takes place at the probation office. If the service user tests positive, further testing at the hospital and assistance with setting up the treatment are arranged.

A cluster in Greater Manchester has been particularly successful at securing external partnership funding to support projects, and has a good relationship with the Mayor to address homelessness and gang crime.

Ten of the approved premises in the North West have achieved 'enabling environment' status and deliver a valuable key worker service. To support residents, there is a schedule of purposeful activities and a wide range of services available.

While an increased range of services was available to offender managers throughout the division, interventions were not consistently used to address offending-related needs and the risk of harm posed to others. In some of the cases we inspected, the sentence plan identified a suitable intervention – for example, substance misuse – but no subsequent referral was made. This omission denied offenders the opportunity to address crucial offence-related needs.

Women are supervised by specialist teams. The availability of women's centres to conduct supervision sessions has increased. There has also been joint work with the CRCs to improve and increase referrals to women's services.

Providing an appropriate range of services for a small group across a large geographical area is a challenge. The Resolve programme to address substance misuse is not always viable due to low numbers. Service users in rural areas such as Cheshire and Cumbria have difficulty accessing services. The North West NPS division is working closely with the CRCs to identify alternative provision. There is a lack of services to address mental health. The service in Bolton is seen as effective and invaluable, as it has a community psychiatric nurse based in the office.

Accredited programmes delivered by the CRCs include Building Better Relationships, the Thinking Skills Programme and Resolve. The North West NPS division delivers accredited programmes for men who have committed sexual offences. There have been 400 completions in the last year, a 76 per cent completion rate. The division is to be commended for reducing the waiting time for this programme from 32 weeks to 17 weeks. These programmes are delivered from three main offices and inspectors were concerned at the lack of local provision. For example, service users are expected to travel from Cumbria to Preston two evenings per week to access the programme. This journey takes more than two hours on public transport.

Responsible officers told us about the support they received from the team that delivers offending behaviour programmes for those who commit sexual offences.

There is also a new role, the sex offender support officer, in each cluster; these individuals work directly with the HMPPS interventions services and lead on delivering local support work for men convicted of a sexual offence.

The division analysed attrition rates for unpaid work and accredited programmes, which led to the introduction of a range of joint NPS and CRC improvement initiatives.

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

The division has maintained effective relationships with other agencies to manage risk of harm to others, including effective engagement with safeguarding boards for children and adults, and community safety partnerships. The response to requests for adult and children's safeguarding checks varies across the division. In our case sample of reports submitted to courts, domestic abuse and child safeguarding checks were not always undertaken where necessary. Cluster leads work with local partners to improve information-sharing agreements. The division is represented at five MAPPA strategic management boards, to ensure that risk of harm is prioritised. A joint memorandum of understanding with all the police forces across the North West was established, to manage individuals living in approved premises. Integrated offender management is established across the division.

Service user involvement

The NPS carries out an annual national service user survey. It shares the results with the divisions, which use them to inform improvements to service delivery. For 2018, of the 628 valid survey responses, 565 (90 per cent) were positive about the service they received in the North West. Each cluster has a sentence user forum; however, more effective approaches are being developed in the division, which include implementing a User Voice council in Cumbria and Lancashire, to obtain a more in-depth understanding of service users' experiences.

An inspector observed a forum in Rochdale, attended by 10 service users. Two POs and one PSO facilitated the group, which has been running for just over two years. The forum was initially set up by a PO, who noticed that they were answering similar questions from service users regarding anxieties and mental health. A drop-in session developed into a weekly group. There are no formal referral criteria; responsible officers inform the people they supervise about what the group can offer. Attendance at and participation in the group is voluntary, although attendance can be counted towards their licence or community order.

The attendees were well motivated and engaged. Staff were observed to have a supportive and non-judgemental approach. Participants stated that they found the sessions really positive and appreciated the help and support from other service users and the staff. There is a list of topics for the year that the group can discuss.

There is no method yet to measure the impact that the group is having. Evidence about more tangible measures, such as reducing the risk of reoffending, are mainly anecdotal. Several service users stated that the forum had kept them from being recalled or committing further offences. This intervention is a good example of innovation and responding to the local need. It also goes some way to supplementing the limited access to mental health services. The division plans to replicate this group in Bury and explore the feasibility of facilitating a women-only group.

As part of the inspection, we also spoke individually to 25 service users. On the whole, they were positive about their supervision by the division. Sixty-four per cent stated that their views were taken into account when planning and delivering their sentence. The great majority (83 per cent) told us that they received the help that they needed from the probation service. Comments from service users included:

“She gave me a course to do every week... I was meant to do it whilst in prison but cannot do groups. The RO does this with me, so I do not need to be in a group”.

“I did a course in Preston. The course itself was really quite good. I do feel that it helped. Professional, polite and knowledgeable people”.

“I always felt listened to, but my attitude to probation was I am here because you are trying to help me, so I am going to let you help me”.

When we asked what could have been improved, they said that the division should ensure that they are notified if the responsible officer gets changed. They also would like to be better informed about what licence conditions are to be in place before they are released.

Services to court

The division has ongoing engagement with sentencers, but there are fewer opportunities than previously to meet them. There are two meetings a year with judges. Meetings are held locally on a court-by-court basis. A bi-monthly newsletter produced by the division keeps sentencers up to date. HMI Probation conducted a small survey with sentencers. Overall, relationships between sentencers and the division’s staff are good, and sentencers we spoke to were satisfied with the standard of reports presented to court. Our findings concurred with those of the sentencers, with 70 per cent of the court reports we inspected achieving our standards for the quality of the report presented at court. However, they would like the division to provide more resources to complete reports on the day of sentencing, as well as more information about how interventions/services work and how successful they are in practice.

Statutory victim work

The division operates a devolved model, with victim liaison officers based in local offices. The line management responsibility for all the victim liaison managers and victim liaison officers is the heads of cluster. The functional lead for victims is responsible for ensuring that the division adheres to the Victim’s Code, the Victim Contact Scheme Manual and national policies. They also ensure that practice and service delivery are consistent across the North West, and support other heads of cluster in an advisory capacity.

In December 2019, the total caseload figure for the North West on the Victim Contact Scheme database was 17,481, of which 7,383 were active.

Following initial contact, each victim is asked to complete a satisfaction survey. In 2018/2019, the number of responses received from victims who had opted into the scheme was low, with only 64 received. The response rate is low across the NPS. Most victims gave a positive response to their experience of the start of the service. The North West NPS division achieved 97 per cent on this performance measure. In order to see if the response rate can be improved, the national victim team is piloting a way in which the satisfaction ratings can be collected with a new post-release survey. At the time of the inspection, the three-month pilot had just been completed.

	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	Requires improvement

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 quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?

EQuiP enables staff to have sufficient access to policies, guidance and processes. New national process maps and updates are communicated via the divisional director’s blog as well as divisional leads, the intranet, team and pod meetings, and line management supervision. The majority of staff we interviewed agreed that there was a clear policy on case recording. To improve staff’s understanding of national and operational guidance, the division has recently launched the iSMART tool. This communication platform is interactive and encourages staff to be more engaged with the organisation.

There is guidance to staff on the full range of services available and the suitability of service users to be referred. Details of services were clear and comprehensive. Interface arrangements between the NPS and CRCs have been established, so that most issues, such as risk escalation, enforcement and rate card provision, can be resolved quickly. Policies are reviewed nationally. Local policies are reviewed by the strategic leads.

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

The Ministry of Justice contracts out the maintenance, repair and cleaning of NPS premises. In the last inspection, we reported that several buildings in the division had a range of problems, including faulty plumbing, broken lifts, vermin infestations and a general lack of maintenance. Repairs took too long to complete, which meant that divisional staff were spending too much time chasing outstanding jobs. The escalation procedure consisted of a complicated seven-step process. HMI Probation reported on this aspect of service delivery in our report, *An inspection of central functions supporting the National Probation Service*.¹⁷ The report stated that:

‘...the historical underfunding of maintenance and replacement requirements across the NPS estate, leading to deterioration in its condition ... Insufficient precision about the priorities and timescales for resolving issues within NPS premises has resulted in business-critical jobs remaining unresolved for an unacceptably long time. In the last year across the NPS only 43 per cent of facilities management jobs were completed within the 10-day target’.

¹⁷ HMI Probation. (2020). An inspection of central functions supporting the National Probation Service.

The national governance structure for the maintenance contract has been strengthened. The facilities management continuous improvement working group was set up by HMPPS headquarters to improve provision under the facilities management contract, and to hold Ministry of Justice Estates to account. The senior leaders responsible for estates and health and safety in the division meet Ministry of Justice Estates every two months. A number of workstreams are ongoing, including the production of a facilities Management user guide for each office and approved premises to make it easier for NPS staff involved in raising and monitoring repairs. There is also a workstream looking at the loss of bed spaces from approved premises.

HMPPS has plans for major financial investment in new buildings, and this has resulted in some recent improvements. One probation team previously located in a portacabin has been relocated into a new building. An office in Liverpool has been completely refurbished. The ambition is for the new Manchester office to be ready by the end of the 2020 calendar year. Five teams will be located in one central premises. For probation staff who work in court, there has been an improvement in access to facilities in court buildings to carry out their role.

However, despite the attention paid to resolving maintenance and repair issues, the facilities management contract still does not meet the division's needs. Repairs are still taking far too long to complete. In Blackburn, two interview rooms were out of service for six months, which represents 40 per cent of the rooms available. There is a vermin infestation in the offices in Rochdale. During a site visit to a probation office, an inspector found potentially dangerous exposed electrical wires and a bucket on a desk collecting water. The electrical issue was reported in September 2019, but had still not been resolved in January 2020.

Senior leaders in the division have access to a database of work orders that have been escalated twice. There were 235 of these, out of 700 outstanding work orders. Working in inadequate buildings has a negative impact on the staff who deliver frontline services.

Nine of the work orders were classed as critical to approved premises. One approved premise was closed during the inspection for two weeks due to a broken boiler. The consequences of the delayed repair meant that 23 residents had to be moved out and dispersed in premises across the North West. Relocating residents has a negative impact on them, potentially disrupting their rehabilitation. Furthermore, there are logistical difficulties for responsible officers ROs planning for those due to be released from prison because of the loss of bed space in the local area.

HMPPS has introduced a contractor to provide a mobile 'handyman' function for approved premises. Their role is to carry common spare parts and be capable of undertaking a wide range of minor repairs in a faster time. Feedback from some staff on this practical approach to getting things done has not been positive. They told us that this process ensures the issues are identified, but does not result in on-the-spot repairs being completed.

The North West NPS division has completed an up-to-date accessibility audit for all premises used to supervise offenders. They are aware that not all premises and offices are sufficiently accessible to staff and service users. When there are difficulties in accessing specific premises, managed solutions are considered on an individual basis.

Each probation office has a health and safety folder that includes safe working practices, including for NPS staff working in prisons. Inspectors saw a copy of this document, which was comprehensive. The most recent HMPPS health and safety audit found that the division was 100 per cent compliant with having safe working

procedures in place. We were concerned that a decision had been made nationally to issue victim liaison officers with personal alarms when carrying out home visits but not responsible officers. This decision is not consistent with practice for responsible officers working in CRCs. Of the staff we interviewed, 67 per cent agreed that their organisation paid attention to staff safety.

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

Information and communications technology systems support remote working where required. Staff have been issued with mobile phones, which they have welcomed. This has enhanced the ability of the workforce to access Ministry of Justice/NPS systems away from the office. The division has issued guidance on flexible working, work–life balance and remote working. The division is in the process of vetting all staff before they can be trained in using the ViSOR database, which enables probation staff to share information with the police and prisons. In the interim, administrative staff add information on behalf of responsible officers. Databases allow managers to access necessary management information.

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

Performance measures are produced nationally. There are internal processes for analysing performance and identifying and implementing improvements. The division uses management oversight, quality tools and case audits to identify, improve and maintain quality. The majority of research-based practice videos, tools and guidance come from the HMPPS national effective practice division and are also available on EQuIP. Cluster leads and SPOs promote initiatives during team and pod meetings, and during supervision. We found staff to have a good understanding of divisional performance measures and how they contribute to the overall performance of their team, cluster and division.

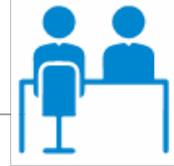
The division has made a pragmatic decision to reduce temporarily the complement of quality development officers (QDOs) for 2019 from 10 to 2.8, in order to increase practice tutor assessor provision for the expansion in PQiP recruitment and to safeguard frontline staffing. With so few QDOs, they can no longer deliver one-to-one improvement training for individuals and there has been a reduction in the volume and range of things they look at. We agree with the decision to support frontline staff; however, this potentially limits the ability of the performance unit to identify where improvements in practice are being delivered. The division has attempted to mitigate this by developing a 'lite' tool, completed by SPOs to assess improvement.

The division is to be applauded for the robust and effective process it has implemented for learning from Serious Further Offences and other serious case reviews. The Serious Further Offence and QDOs identify learning and development needs and hold training workshops to improve practice. Staff throughout the organisation spoke to us about how the thematic learning from Serious Further Offences has influenced the way that they interact with, and supervise, offenders. The innovative approach to thematic learning has been adopted by HMPPS, replicating workshops in other divisions.

The views of service users and victims are used to inform improvements in service delivery. We have seen evidence of the work that has been done to address recommendations in HM Inspectorate of Probation's divisional and thematic inspection reports to drive improvement. The senior leadership team monitors the division's progress in addressing inspection recommendations -monthly. The governance structure ensures that frontline staff are engaged in the reviews of progress through divisional communications, team meetings and supervision.

Well-targeted activities were carried out to address the recommendations made following the last inspection. These included reissuing risk management policies and guidance, additional training, management oversight, and audit and assurance activity. We saw improvement in a number of cases, but in the sample we inspected, some critical areas of case supervision had not improved. The direction of travel is promising, and there are likely to be positive outcomes for those cases supervised later than our sample. Recommendations from the operational service assurance group are monitored and reviewed by the relevant service leads.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 38 community sentence cases and 81 post-release supervision cases; interviewed 105 responsible officers and 25 service users; and 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. In the 116 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken against each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for that element of work to be rated as satisfactory.

In the North West NPS division, fewer than 65 per cent of cases met our standards in terms of implementation and delivery, which means that this part of the work is assessed as 'Requires improvement'. The division has maintained the standard of a 'Good' rating for assessment, planning and reviewing, the same as reported in our 2018 inspection. Between 65 per cent and 79 per cent of cases met our standards for these three different elements of work.

Practitioners identified and analysed offending-relating factors using information from a variety of sources, and for the majority of cases we inspected produced good quality assessments. Individuals under supervision were sufficiently involved in completing their assessments. Diversity needs, personal circumstances and potential barriers to engagement were identified. Most aspects of planning to address the factors most likely to support desistance were assessed as consistently good. Planning to address risk of harm to children was of sufficient quality, but there was insufficient planning to address domestic abuse.

We saw evidence of the work that has been done to address the recommendations in our divisional and thematic inspection reports. In addition, well-targeted activities had been implemented to address recommendations in relation to supervision made following our last inspection. These include reissuing of policies and guidance, additional training, management oversight, and audit and assurance activity; however, improved practice was not always evident in the cases we examined in this inspection.

The quality of implementation and delivery of the sentence was not as good as when we last inspected. It was also weaker than other key areas of case supervision. Sentences started promptly, and effective working relationships were maintained with individuals. While there were sufficient levels of contact, the delivery of interventions most likely to address offending behaviour was insufficient. The division needs to make adjustments to risk management plans in light of new information, and do more to involve service users in reviews of their progress and to make necessary adjustments to risk management plans in light of new information.

Strengths:

Key strengths of case supervision are as follows:

- Responsible officers have established and maintained professional working relationships with those they supervise.
- Responsible officers sufficiently identify and analyse which individuals pose a risk of harm to others and in what circumstances.
- Planning sufficiently addresses the safeguarding of children.
- There is sufficient contact with people before they are released from custody.

Areas for improvement:

- Interventions delivered are not consistently those most likely to address offending-related factors.
- There is insufficient offence-focused work to manage the risk of harm posed to individuals.
- There is insufficient planning to address domestic abuse.
- Insufficient necessary adjustments are made to the ongoing plan of work to take account of changes in the risk of harm.

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

Our rating¹⁸ for assessment is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged as satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with North West in previous inspection and all NPS divisions	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All NPS divisions ¹⁹
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user? ²⁰	83%	80%	82%

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is normally 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁹ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

²⁰ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance? ²⁰	81%	89%	82%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²⁰	76%	71%	75%

The North West NPS division has achieved an overall score of ‘Good’ for assessment; the lowest score for any of the key questions was 71 per cent, for assessment to keep other people safe. In relation to assessment focusing on factors linked to offending and desistance, there was an improvement in the score from the 2018 inspection. This was also higher than the aggregate score for all divisions achieved during the 2018 inspection programme of 82 per cent.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

In well over three-quarters of cases, service users were sufficiently involved in completing their assessment. Practitioners sought individuals’ views during the interview and also used the self-assessment questionnaire. We saw some good examples of service users’ views being referenced throughout the assessment. Diversity needs, personal circumstances and potential barriers to engagement were also identified sufficiently.

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

Responsible officers used a variety of sources, including the police, child and adult social care, and mental health services to complete good-quality assessments. The information helped practitioners identify areas requiring specific attention to support change. Identification and analysis of offending-relating factors were done well. Staff sufficiently assessed how previous behaviour was linked to present behaviour. The most prominent factors identified were problems with thinking and behaviour, lifestyle and attitudes, and relationships. Strengths and protective factors in service users’ lives, such as accommodation, employment and supportive relationships, were recognised.

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

Of the sample we inspected, 60 per cent were assessed as posing a high or very high risk of harm to others; 38 per cent were assessed as medium risk of harm; and 2 per cent were assessed as low risk of harm. Assessments appropriately identified and analysed the risk of harm to others in three-quarters of cases. For a similar proportion, the responsible officer sufficiently identified who posed a risk and the nature of the risk. There were current child safeguarding concerns in half of the sample, and appropriate liaison with children’s services took place in over two-fifths of cases (88 per cent). Of the 55 per cent of cases that had domestic abuse concerns, however, 29 per cent did not have domestic abuse checks completed.

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

Our rating²¹ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged as satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with North West in previous inspection and all NPS divisions	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All NPS divisions ²²
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user? ²³	75%	74%	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance? ²³	80%	75%	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²³	71%	66%	70%

The North West NPS division has achieved an overall rating of 'Good' for planning. Scores for engaging with service users and the focus on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance were close to achieving a rating of 'Outstanding'. Since the last inspection, the North West NPS division has focused on learning and development for staff with regard to risk management plans. The division refreshed risk assessment training materials, and has held monthly events across all clusters since March 2019. Assurance activity is ongoing and completed by SPOs.

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

We found that in 75 per cent of cases, individuals were meaningfully engaged in planning their supervision. Planning sufficiently took into account the diversity or personal circumstances of people, such as barriers to attending accredited programmes, and explored past non-compliance. The plans included an assessment of the individual's readiness and motivation to comply. Just under one-third of plans did not set out how all the requirements of the sentence would be delivered, or within what timescales.

²¹ The rating for the standard is normally 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²² HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

²³ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

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

Most aspects of planning to support desistance were consistently good. Critical areas that were linked to offending, such as substance misuse, relationships, and thinking and behaviour, were identified. Plans built on the service user's strengths and protective factors, using potential sources of support. Services most likely to support desistance, such as an offending behaviour programme, were appropriately identified in plans.

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

Of the cases in our sample, 73 were MAPPA eligible; 29 per cent were managed at Level 1 and 35 per cent were managed at Level 2. In the majority of the sample, we found evidence that plans included the right balance of both restrictive and constructive interventions, and appropriate links to other agencies. Contingency arrangements to address risk of harm were considered sufficiently in 67 per cent of the sample. Inspectors found good examples of planning to address child safeguarding in 82 per cent of the sample. However, more needs to be done to improve the quality of plans to address domestic abuse, as only 61 per cent were sufficient.

The standard of plans to address risk of harm was better for POs, at 70 per cent, than for PSOs, at 50 per cent. Planning to keep others safe was weaker for women than for men, with only one of the five cases we inspected assessed as sufficient.

Good practice example

Barak is a 48-year-old male sentenced to an 18-month suspended sentence order with a six-month drug rehabilitation requirement, 20 rehabilitation activity requirement days and a requirement to complete the Thinking Skills accredited programme. B has 43 previous convictions for a variety of offences, including violence, domestic abuse and a sexual offence against a female under the age of 12. Risk management planning was a strength in this case. There were a number of risks to consider, including sexual harm and domestic abuse, and there was a clear outline of how these risks to others would be managed. For example, the work of the police was highlighted, along with the external controls, such as the responsible officer being in place to protect an identified victim and the planned constructive interventions to manage the risks. Relationships were monitored, with B in supervision throughout. Contingency planning was broken down into what action would be taken for each risk of harm/ reoffending factor and considered changes in interventions as well as involvement of other agencies.

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

Our rating²⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged as satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with North West in previous inspection and all NPS divisions	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All NPS divisions ²⁵
Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively, with a focus on engaging the service user? ²⁶	90%	84%	87%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance? ²⁶	71%	57%	66%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ²⁶	71%	55%	65%

The North West NPS division has achieved an overall score of 'Requires improvement' for implementation and delivery. This rating has declined since the last inspection. This was due to insufficient quality of practice in delivering interventions to support desistance and to address risk of harm to others. The quality of work was weaker than other key areas of case supervision. Sentences started promptly, effective working relationships were maintained with service users, and sufficient levels of contact were in place.

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

The requirement of the sentence started promptly in 66 per cent of cases. We found cases where referrals to accredited programmes and interventions to address substance misuse had been delayed. Overall, the division maintained effective working relationships with the individuals who were supervised. Sixty-eight per cent of individuals kept the same responsible officer that they started their sentence with. Sufficient flexibility was given for people to complete their sentence. For example, changes had been made to appointment times to enable people to attend.

²⁴ The rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated by bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁵ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

²⁶ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Risks of non-compliance were identified and addressed promptly to reduce the need for enforcement. We found that necessary enforcement was appropriately actioned 68 per cent of the time, which was a decline from the last inspection. When an individual was recalled to prison or returned to court following a breach, attempts were made to re-engage with the person, to support future engagement and compliance. Contact was good for those leaving custody, which may potentially result in a smooth transition from custody to community and support compliance on licence.

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

In only 58 per cent of cases were sufficient services delivered to address factors relating to offending. Although people were seen often enough to have an impact on reducing offending and to tackle aspects of their lives that contributed to their behaviour, in some instances there was insufficient focus on offending-related work. Individual sessions included a focus on important protective factors, such as employment and accommodation. These were sometimes addressed, however, at the expense of tackling critical issues such as substance misuse. Some offending-related areas identified in the assessments and plans had not been addressed. There was evidence that local services had been engaged, but this should have been better coordinated. It was good to see that people who provided support for individuals were included in their supervision.

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

Inspectors found that there was sufficient contact to address factors related to risk of harm to others. There is still much to do to improve the protection of victims, as we found this to be sufficient in only 57 per cent of cases. Safeguarding checks were not always initiated in light of a new relationship or change in circumstances, and once checks were requested, responses were not always followed up promptly. Work with other agencies to support risk of harm was sufficiently coordinated in almost two-thirds of the sample. It was good to see that home visits were used when necessary, more than three-quarters of the time. These visits give responsible officers an opportunity to see people in their home environment, which may lead to a greater understanding of the individual.

Overall, implementation and delivery to address risk of harm to others were completed sufficiently well in 60 per cent of the cases managed by POs but in only 28 per cent of the cases managed by PSOs.

Poor practice example

Alphonso is a 24-year-old male sentenced to three months' imprisonment for breach of a restraining order. The risk management plan is detailed and sets out existing controls, the role of other services and contingency actions. However, the assessment failed to identify potential domestic abuse, and planning does not adequately address how this risk will be managed – for example, liaison with the police regarding information on domestic abuse. Efforts are made to engage the service user with services linked to desistance; however, these relate to peripheral issues rather than the key factors. In spite of a good level of contact taking place, there is no evidence of appropriate intervention being undertaken to address critical areas. When the service user begins a new relationship, there is insufficient responsiveness to this, with a lack of relevant checks undertaken in relation to the changing circumstances of the case. The case is being co-worked by the responsible officer and a PQiP officer, and it would appear that on numerous occasions there have been delays, with actions seemingly falling through the gap between the two.

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

Our rating²⁷ for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged as satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with North West in previous inspection and all NPS divisions	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All NPS divisions ²⁸
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's compliance and engagement? ²⁹	82%	75%	80%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance? ²⁹	74%	74%	74%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²⁹	66%	60%	62%

The case data from this inspection initially put the NPS in the 'Requires improvement' banding for reviewing, based on the score of 60 per cent for keeping other people safe. Given that this was within the statistical margin of error (5 percentage points) for the next ratings band, the ratings panel discussed whether professional discretion should be exercised. Taking into account the high scores for the other two key questions, they decided to increase the rating for reviewing to 'Good'.

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

We expect that, in each case, responsible officers will monitor and review individuals under their supervision, and amend their plan and actions in response to the changes in behaviour. We found that responsible officers reviewed compliance and engagement levels sufficiently and, when necessary, made adjustments. In one-third of cases, service users were not sufficiently involved in their reviews.

Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?

Necessary adjustments were made to the ongoing plan of work to take account of changes in offending-related factors in 71 per cent of the cases reviewed. It was

²⁷ The rating for the standard is normally 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁸ HMI Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

²⁹ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

positive to note that the great majority of work we inspected built on people's strengths. Where other agencies were involved, they were included in the review 81 per cent of the time, an improvement from the previous inspection.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Reviewing was weakest in relation to keeping other people safe. Inspectors found that, in 66 per cent of cases, the review identified changes in factors related to risk of harm, such as new allegations, increased substance misuse or new relationships. Insufficient necessary adjustments were made (in 48 per cent of cases) to the ongoing plan of work to take account of the changes in the risk of harm. In one-third of cases, information from other agencies was not used effectively to review the risk of harm posed to others.

3. NPS-specific work

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

We examined 115 court reports that had been completed in a one-week period approximately three months before our fieldwork. Of those cases, 106 had been sentenced and allocated either to the NPS or a CRC and we looked at the quality of allocation in those cases. We ensured that the ratios in relation to report type and the agency to which any resulting case is allocated, matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

In this division, 70 per cent of court reports we inspected achieved our standards for our first key question on the quality of the report presented at court. For our key question on the timelines of case allocation, 46 per cent achieved our standard. The HM Inspectorate of Probation ratings panel took account of other scores across the full range of questions and used professional discretion³⁰ to award an overall score of 'Requires improvement'.

Court reports provided sufficient information for sentencers to decide on the most appropriate sentence. Cases were allocated promptly but we felt that information provided to organisations responsible for supervision was not good enough. The division performed very poorly when it came to requesting domestic abuse checks from the police for court reports. It also failed to ensure that, where necessary, a full and accurate risk of harm assessment was completed.

Strengths:

- Service users are meaningfully involved in completing their reports.
- Pre-sentence reports support the court's decision-making, and proposals to the court are appropriate.
- Report authors sufficiently consider the impact that the offence has had on the victim.
- Allocation to the probation provider is prompt.

³⁰ An element of professional discretion 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.

Areas for improvement:

- Domestic abuse and child safeguarding checks are not always undertaken where necessary.
- Available sources of information are not always used to inform reports.
- Responsible officers do not always ensure that a full and accurate risk of harm assessment is completed when necessary.

Our rating³¹ for court reports and case allocation is based on two key questions:

Comparison with North West in previous inspection and all NPS divisions	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court's decision-making? ³²	75%	70%
Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate and based on sufficient information? ³²	73%	46%

Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court's decision-making?

Pre-sentence information and advice to court were good in just over two-thirds of the sample of reports we inspected. Report authors did not always use information available from relevant sources, such as prosecution information, previous convictions and previous reports from other agencies. Up-to-date convictions and prosecution papers were available in almost all cases, and service users were engaged in preparing their report. Inspectors judged that the report and advice drew sufficiently on available information in only 37 per cent of cases.

The division produced good quality reports. In almost all cases, advice to the court considered factors related to the likelihood of reoffending. The impact of the offence on the victim was considered sufficiently in 67 per cent of cases. Diversity and personal circumstances, the risk of harm to others and likelihood of reoffending were all sufficiently addressed. In most cases, the service user's motivation and readiness to change were considered. Proposals to court were appropriate. The most likely proposals were community orders, supervision, RARs or unpaid work.

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

³¹ The provisional rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

³² The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Almost all cases were allocated promptly to the correct agency. We expect the NPS to initiate domestic abuse checks with the police in all cases at the point the court requests a report. However, in only 27 per cent of cases were enquiries to the police domestic abuse unit made. A response from the police was received 76 per cent of the time. It is of particular concern that, even for those cases indicating that domestic abuse might be present, checks were made in only 48 per cent of them. We also expect the NPS to initiate enquiries to children’s services in all cases where the service user has children, is in contact with children or presents a potential risk of harm to children. Child safeguarding checks were requested in 65 per cent of the expected cases. A response from children’s services was received 81 per cent of the time.

These checks are essential to ensure that appropriate information is available to inform the assessment of risk of harm. Where these checks had not been done, inspectors judged allocation to be based on insufficient information. Overall, of the 90 cases allocated to CRCs, 14 per cent had a full and accurate risk of serious harm assessment or one was not required; in 44 per cent of cases, the assessment was incomplete or inaccurate, only because of the absence of domestic abuse and/or child safeguarding information, and in 38 per cent of cases where a full risk of serious assessment was required, the assessment was either not completed at all or incomplete for other reasons.

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

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

We examined 27 cases in which victim/s had been eligible for the statutory victim contact scheme. Of these cases, 15 of the offenders had been sentenced approximately 12 months before the inspection fieldwork, and 12 of the offenders had been released between six and seven months before the inspection fieldwork.

We have rated the North West NPS division as ‘Good’ on our standard for statutory victim work. Although the proportion of cases rated as satisfactory on some of the key question were just under the 65 per cent threshold, the HM Inspectorate of Probation ratings panel took account of other scores across the full range of questions and used professional discretion to award an overall score of ‘Good.’

In December 2019, the total caseload figure provided by the HMPPS national victim team for the North West on the victim contact scheme database was 17,481, of which 7,383 were active (including new cases and those awaiting a response).

The division operates a devolved model, with victim liaison officers based in local offices. The strategic victim lead does not have line management responsibility for the victim liaison managers and victim liaison officers, as these sit under different heads of cluster.

Of those cases we inspected, we found that victims received sufficient information about the scheme, were updated at appropriate points in the sentence and had their views taken into consideration.

Strengths:

- Responsible officers keep victim liaison officers updated about the management of the individual being supervised.
- Victims can express concerns and contribute their views before the service user is released.

Area for improvement:

- Too few victims are informed of what action to take in case of unwanted contact from a perpetrator.
- Less than half of the victims are referred to other sources of support from other agencies or services.
- Only half of victim liaison officers are included in MAPPA where this is appropriate.

Our rating³³ for statutory victim work is based on three key questions:

	Current inspection
Does initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the victim contact scheme and provide information about sources of support? ³⁴	64%
Is there effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims? ³⁴	100%
Does pre-release contact with the victim/s allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release? ³⁴	92%

The case data from this inspection initially rated the NPS as 'Requires improvement' for statutory victim work. This was based on the score of 64 per cent for initial contact with the victim/s, encouraging engagement with the victim contact scheme, and providing information about sources of support. The ratings panel took into account the high scores for the other two key questions and the fact that this score was within the five-percentage point margin of error for the higher rating band, to exercise professional discretion to increase the rating for statutory victim work to 'Good'.

³³ The rating for the standard is normally 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

³⁴ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

Does initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the victim contact scheme and provide information about sources of support?

Depending on the victim's preference, the main method of communication with victims was by letter. Seventy-one per cent of victims received contact soon after sentence, and three-quarters of these letters were appropriately personalised. More than two-thirds were provided with clear information about what could be expected at various points in the sentence and relevant information about the criminal justice processes. Fewer than half of victims were referred to other agencies or services, and even fewer (21 per cent) were informed about what action to take if a perpetrator attempted to make unwanted contact.

Is there effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims?

In every case, we found good communication between victim liaison officers and responsible officers. Victim liaison officers were based in the same offices as responsible officers, which supported effective communication. Opportunities for responsible officers to shadow victim liaison officers have enhanced their understanding of the service offered to victims. In addition, the division has recently completed 'think victim' briefings, which were held at middle manager and cluster staff development events. The briefings have received positive feedback from participants. More needs to be done to include victim liaison officers in multi-agency meetings. Only half of liaison officers were appropriately involved in MAPPA for cases that were managed at Levels 2 or 3. Inclusion in these meeting gives the victim liaison officers an opportunity to communicate the concerns of the victim and play an effective role in planning release.

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

Overall, victims were able to contribute their views before the service user was released. Views expressed were treated appropriately. We found that victims were supported in making a personal victim statement before the release of an offender from prison.

Annexe 1: Background to probation services

Around 255,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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

These services are currently provided by a publicly owned National Probation Service 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.

³⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Offender management caseload statistics as at 30 September 2019* (based on the average number of total offenders supervised in the previous four quarters to the end of September 2019).

³⁶ 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.

Annexe 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 NPS divisional director delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we interviewed 105 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 33 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.³⁷

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

³⁷ 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>

Domain three: NPS work

We completed case assessments for two further samples: court reports and case allocation, and statutory victim work. As in domain two, the sample size for court reports and case allocation is set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five).

Published data is insufficient to calculate accurate margins of error for statutory victim work, so the size of the case sample for that element of work is estimated, based on overall workload and previous inspection data.

Court reports and case allocation

We examined 115 court reports that had been completed in a one-week period approximately three months before our fieldwork. Of those cases, 106 had been sentenced and allocated either to the NPS or a CRC. We ensured that the ratios in relation to report type and the agency to which any resulting case is allocated matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

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 court work
- a group of SPOs with responsibility for the delivery of court work
- a group of court duty staff.

Statutory victim work

We examined 27 cases in which victim/s had been eligible for the statutory victim contact scheme. Of these cases, 15 of the offenders had been sentenced approximately 12 months before the inspection fieldwork, and 12 of the offenders had been released between six and seven months before the inspection fieldwork.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups:

- the senior manager with overall responsibility for the delivery of court work
- a group of victim liaison managers
- a group of victim liaison officers.

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.

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 discretion 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 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.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the 10 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 we have 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 that do not meet the significance test.

Annexe 3: Organisational design and map

Information supplied by North West NPS.

Clusters	Salford & Trafford	Manchester	Tameside & Stockport	Cheshire	Knowsley, St Helens & Wirral	Liverpool & Sefton	Bury, Rochdale & Oldham	Bolton & Wigan	South East Lancashire	North West Lancashire	Cumbria
Functional Leads	Extremism	Compliance Project Service User Engagement	Sex Offenders, Circles	Pathway PSO Leads	Victims & Restorative Justice		Pending allocation – new to role	Compliance Project Service User Engagement	Drugs & Alcohol	Safeguarding Children	Diversity & Equality
	Serious Organised Crime		IOM, Polygraph Testing	Housing & ETE					Health & Safety	Domestic abuse & MARAC	Foreign Nationals
	Modern Slavery		Workforce Planning	Business Planning Team					Offender Deaths		Hate Crime
	MTRU (MAPPA Tact Resource Unit)								Offender Health		Women
											Youth to adult
											Veterans

Clusters	Stakeholder engagement	Head of public protection	Resettle & Psychology Services	Performance & Quality	Devolution & Resettlement Effective Proposals Framework (EPF)
Functional Leads	Strategic Lead for NW Courts	Risk & Serious Offending	Psychology Services	Information & Data	Prisons
	Enforcement hub	Serious Further Offences	Personality Disorder	Complaints	Parole Board Forum
	Community/Group Supervision	Approved Premises	Mental Health	Inspections	Resettlement
	Staff Engagement & Wellbeing	MAAPA	Suicide Prevention	FFU	OMiC
	Staff Events	ViSOR	Safeguarding Adults	Divisional EPF 2	Effective Licence Management
	National Lead EPF 1		Offender Health		GM Devolution
					Commissioning Money

Annexe 4: Inspection data³⁸

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		
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does assessment analyse the service user’s motivation and readiness to engage and comply with the sentence?	84%	80%
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?	No comparable data available	55%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	80%	81%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?		
Does assessment identify and analyse offending-related factors?	81%	83%
Does assessment identify the service user’s strengths and protective factors?	93%	96%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	82%	83%

³⁸ HMI Probation inspection data.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?		
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	75%	72%
Does assessment analyse any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims? ³⁹	No comparable data available	71%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	No comparable data available	66%
Were domestic abuse checks undertaken? ^{40 41}	No comparable data available	71%
Did child safeguarding information sharing take place in cases where required? ^{42 43}	No comparable data available	88%

2.2. Planning

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	66%	69%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, which may affect engagement and compliance?	79%	79%

³⁹ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

⁴⁰ Expected in all cases.

⁴¹ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

⁴² Expected in all cases where the service user has children, is in contact with children or presents a potential risk of harm to children.

⁴³ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's readiness and motivation to change, which may affect engagement and compliance?	84%	86%
Does planning set out how all the requirements of the sentence or licence/post-sentence supervision will be delivered within the available timescales?	77%	69%
Does planning set a level, pattern and type of contact sufficient to engage the service user and to support the effectiveness of specific interventions?	88%	80%
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?	82%	79%
Does planning build on the service user's strengths and protective factors, utilising potential sources of support?	No comparable data available	83%
Does planning set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	83%	78%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?		
Does planning sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	74%	74%
Does planning set out the necessary constructive and/or restrictive interventions to manage the risk of harm?	83%	77%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the service user and any multi-agency plans?	80%	85%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	71%	67%

2.3. Implementation and delivery

Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately, with a focus on engaging the service user?	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	87%	66%

Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the service user?	96%	94%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the service user to complete the sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	95%	96%
Post-custody cases only: Was there a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner before release?	87%	76%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?	84%	82%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	84%	68%
Are sufficient efforts made to re-engage the service user after enforcement actions or recall?	98%	91%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support 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?	69%	58%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance protective factors?	89%	78%
Is the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services sufficiently well coordinated?	85%	66%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support their desistance?	87%	76%
Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	77%	62%
Are local services engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond?	No comparable data available	73%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?		
Is the level and nature of contact offered sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	85%	71%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims?	71%	57%

Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well- coordinated?	76%	63%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	84%	68%
Are home visits undertaken, where necessary, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	80%	77%

2.4. Reviewing

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's compliance and engagement?	Previous inspection	Current inspection
In cases where it is needed, does reviewing consider compliance and engagement levels, and any relevant barriers?	88%	80%
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?	76%	75%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement?	70%	66%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of actions to implement the sentence?	78%	68%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's 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?	65%	65%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the service user's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	86%	89%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the service user?	79%	81%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the progress towards desistance?	74%	73%

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?	50%	49%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the service user's risk of harm?	68%	66%
Is the service user (and, where appropriate, key individuals in the service user's life) meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm?	63%	69%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the management of the service user's risk of harm?	No comparable data available	68%

3.1 Court reports and case allocation

Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court's decision-making?	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Does the information and advice draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including child safeguarding and domestic abuse information? ⁴⁴	No comparable data available	37%
Is there evidence that the service user is meaningfully involved in the preparation of the report, and are their views considered?	94%	96%
Is there evidence that the advice to court considered factors related to the likelihood of reoffending?	86%	94%
Is there evidence that the advice to court considered factors related to risk of harm?	No comparable data available	73%
Is there evidence that the advice to court considered the service user's motivation and readiness to change?	85%	82%

⁴⁴ Comparable data between the previous and current inspection is not available. This is due to a methodological change.

Is there evidence that the advice to court considered the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?	90%	89%
Is there evidence that the advice to court considered the impact of the offences on known/identifiable victims?	No comparable data available	67%
Is an appropriate proposal made to court? ⁴⁵	No comparable data available	84%
Is there a sufficient record of the advice given, and the reasons for it?	88%	89%
Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate, and based on sufficient information?		
Is there a sufficient record of the assessment and advice to the court, for the purposes of allocation and the communication of relevant information to the organisation responsible for supervision?	80%	77%
Is the case allocated promptly to the correct agency? ⁴⁶	No comparable data available	95%
Where necessary, has a full and accurate risk of serious harm assessment been completed prior to allocation?	No comparable data available	18%

3.2 Statutory victim work

Does the initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the Victim Contact Scheme and provide information about sources of support?	Current inspection
Is appropriate initial contact made soon after sentence, with consideration given to the timing of such contact?	71%
Are the initial letters appropriately personalised, considering the nature of the experience of the victim/s and any diversity issues?	75%

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

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

Is clear information given to victims about what they can expect at different points in a sentence?	67%
Do the initial letters contain sufficient information to enable the victim/s to make an informed choice about whether to participate in the scheme?	75%
Are victims informed about the action they can take if the prisoner attempts to make unwanted contact with them?	21%
Are victim/s referred to other agencies or services, or given information about available sources of help or support?	46%
Is there effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims?	
Are victim liaison staff involved in MAPPA where appropriate?	50%
Do victim liaison staff share relevant information with the responsible officer?	100%
Are the concerns of the victim/s addressed and is attention paid to their safety when planning for release?	100%
Are victim liaison staff provided with appropriate and timely information about the management of the service user?	100%
Does pre-release contact with the victim/s allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release?	
Are the victims given the opportunity to contribute their views to inform decisions about the service user's release in a timely way and supported in doing so?	92%
Are views expressed by victims treated appropriately and in accordance with the victim contact scheme?	100%
Are victims supported in making a victim personal statement in parole applications?	100%



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1 Bridge Street West
Civil Justice Centre
Manchester
M3 3FX

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