



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

# 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services

DECEMBER 2020

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

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# 1. Key facts

## Probation population facts

The number of individuals under probation supervision at end March 2020 <sup>1</sup> : 241,350	
Community Orders	63,761 <sup>2</sup>
Suspended sentence orders	37,984
Licence	68,863
In custody	76,300

Accommodation	
Those sentenced to a community or suspended sentence, and where their accommodation circumstance was known at the start of their sentence:	
<b>94% had accommodation</b>	<b>6% were homeless</b>
Those released from custody where first night accommodation circumstance is known:	
<b>81% had accommodation</b>	<b>19% were homeless.</b> <sup>3</sup>

Education, training and employment	
Those sentenced to a community and suspended sentence – at the commencement of their sentence – who are available for work where employment circumstance is known:	
<b>43% are employed</b>	<b>56% are unemployed</b>
Those released from custody who are available for work employed within six weeks following their release (where employment circumstance is known):	
<b>12% are employed</b>	<b>88% are unemployed.</b> <sup>4</sup>

Accredited interventions	
The reduction in individuals starting accredited programmes Jan – Mar 2019 to Jan – Mar 2020:	 -6% (for those on community orders of suspended sentence orders) <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistics are for England and Wales/end of March 2020 is when inspections were stopped due to Covid-19.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2020). Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 31 March 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2020). Community performance quarterly: April to March 2020.

<sup>4</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). Exceptional Delivery Model Arrangements in Probation Services in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2020). Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2020.

<b>Reoffending rates within 12 months</b>	
For those who started a community sentences or suspended sentence starting between October and December 2018.	<b>31%</b>
For those released from a custodial sentence of less than 12 months between October and December 2018:	<b>61%</b>
For those released from a longer sentence (12 months or more):	<b>27%<sup>6</sup></b>

<b>Serious Further Offences 2019/2020</b>	
Number of serious further offence (SFO) notifications:	<b>537</b>
Number of SFO reviews conducted from the notifications:	<b>473</b>

## Inspection facts

Case inspection numbers:

	<b>2018 - 2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>
<b>Total cases inspected</b>	<b>5,945</b>	<b>2,093</b>
<b>CRC</b>		
Cases supervised by responsible officers	<b>2,474</b>	<b>1,121</b>
Unpaid work cases	<b>894</b>	<b>414</b>
Unpaid work observations by inspectors	<b>N/A</b>	<b>106</b>
TTG	<b>667</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>NPS</b>		
Case supervision	<b>834</b>	<b>119</b>
Court reports/case allocations	<b>808</b>	<b>115</b>
Statutory victim work	<b>268<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Inspections conducted</b>		
CRC inspections	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>
NPS inspections	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

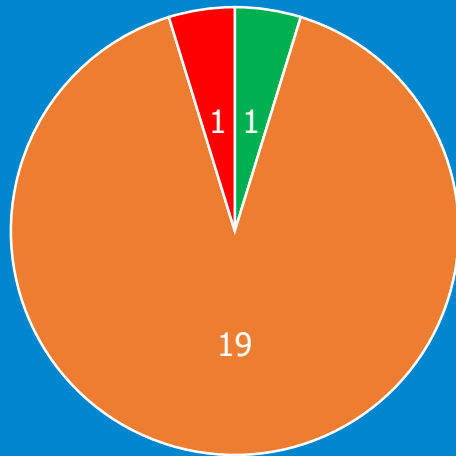
<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2020). Proven reoffending statistics: October 2018 to December 2018

<sup>7</sup> In addition to these cases, we examined a subset of our case supervision sample to look at the immediate pre-release period.

## Pie charts showing CRC and NPS overall ratings

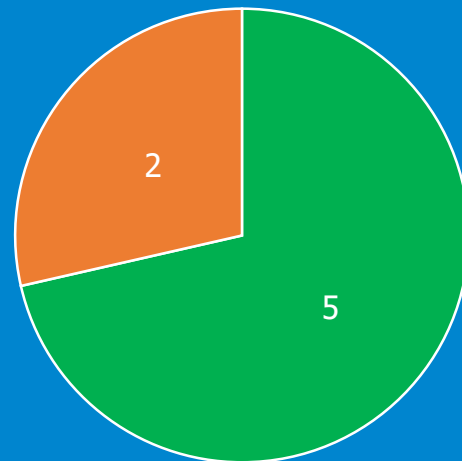
2018/2019: 21 CRCs and 7 NPS divisions 2019/2020: 9 CRCs<sup>8</sup> plus NPS NW:

Overall Ratings - CRC 2018-2019



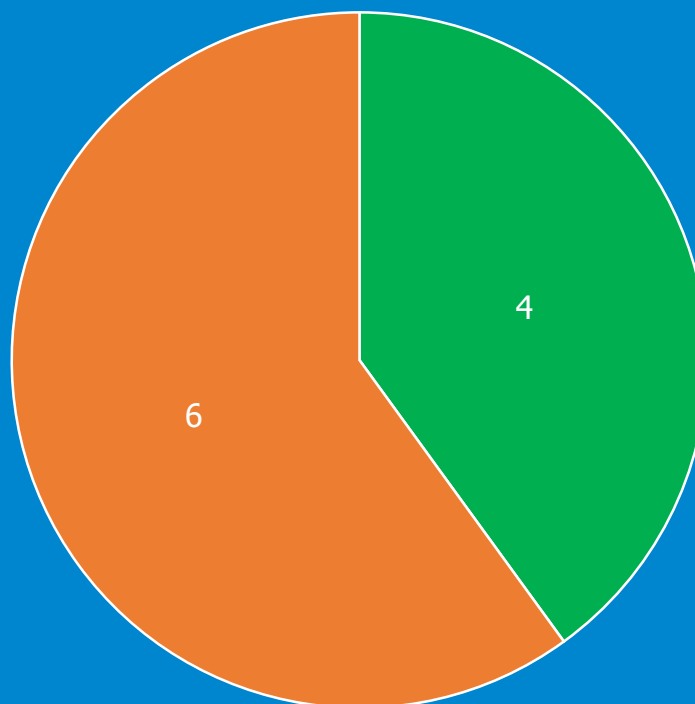
Good Requires improvement Inadequate

Overall Ratings - NPS 2018-2019



Good Requires improvement

Overall Ratings Year 2



Good Requires improvement

<sup>8</sup> Due to the inspection being interrupted by Covid-19, Hampshire and Isle of Wight CRC's inspection was incomplete and an overall rating was not given.

## 2. Chief Inspector's overview

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This has been a year of extraordinary and unexpected challenges for the probation service; of major shifts in strategic long-term direction, but also of familiar and recurring issues as well – around resources, staffing and working environments.

It is the end of an era, as *Transforming Rehabilitation* makes way for a return to public sector control, and we reflect on how the past five years have shaped, developed and challenged the probation service.

Many have welcomed the upcoming changes, but we acknowledge that for some – such as senior leaders within Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) – there is disappointment. CRCs have worked with severely hampered budgets to bring innovative and experimental operating models. This annual report recognises this positive work, as well as providing an honest take on how performance has laboured under the weight of resource constraints.

This year we have widened the scope of what we offer the probation service; not just to identify areas for improvement in individual services, but also to highlight and disseminate effective practice too, for the benefit of all service providers. Our thematic inspections of accommodation for people under probation supervision, and the quality of Serious Further Offences (SFO) reviews are evidence of how bringing together the expertise of our inspectors across England and Wales, with our research, can provide a 'big picture' perspective on key areas of probation.

A vital – although unexpected – thematic inspection this year looked at the impact of Covid-19. As detailed in this report, probation providers are to be applauded for the compassion and professionalism they have shown in changing their working methods quickly and effectively, almost overnight, in response to the pandemic. This is true for all levels of the probation system, although not without its challenges.

Once again, public protection and the effective management of risk of harm have been at the forefront of our work. They were certainly the focus of our response to the Lord Chancellor's request that we conduct a detailed review of the case of Joseph McCann, who committed a series of appalling sexual and violent offences while under probation supervision. Our two-part review does not just point out flaws and failures, but also provides learning with the aim of influencing the service for the better. The fact that the management of risk remains one of the weakest areas of performance for both the National Probation Service (NPS) and CRCs is a major concern, and one which we explore in this report.

### **Resourcing**

For more than 15 years, probation funding has been on a downward trend; government spending per person under supervision is down 40 per cent in real terms since 2003/2004 (to just £3,550 in 2018/2019) – and flaws in the recent CRC contracts mean that this is likely to be worse for medium/low-risk offenders. By March 2018, CRCs were forecasting losses of nearly £300 million on their contracts, compared with expected profits of £269 million – a gap of over £560 million. The wider effects on the entire system are clear to see; major cuts in probation officer (PO) numbers and stalled investment in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and in buildings maintenance.

We know that probation services are part of an ecosystem which is also suffering from declining investment, and, more recently, from the impact of Covid-19. They rely on many other services to provide support to the people they work with, such as community mental

health services, drug abuse treatment services, and mentoring and employment support charities.

Perhaps the biggest concern for service users has been in regard to the provision of accommodation – more than 11,000 prisoners are released into homelessness each year. The loss of ring-fenced supported housing for people on probation; changes to benefit rules; and other barriers have created a housing crisis for many supervised by the service. This must be a priority for government action going forward.

There are some welcome early signs that things may be improving – albeit from a low baseline; an additional £150 million has been invested by the government in probation in 2020/2021. We know that an extra £22 million per year for CRCs has made a real difference to Through the Gate services for released prisoners – we rate eight out of ten as ‘Outstanding’ on the quality of this work. Also, extra government money, released for emergency accommodation during the initial Covid-19 lockdown period was widely welcomed by the probation staff we interviewed.

### ***Transforming Rehabilitation***

We are now in the sixth and final year of the *Transforming Rehabilitation* reforms, given the decision by the government – in May 2019 – to end these contracts early.

It has been a bumpy road for this operating model, and the consequences of its flaws – such as the strain caused by flawed payment mechanisms – have been apparent throughout our inspections, as my predecessor recounted in her first annual report in 2017:

*‘...we see clearly that there is a two-tier and fragmented service’*

*‘...many [CRCs] have reduced staff numbers more than once... in some we find staff with exceptional workloads working long hours and still unable to deliver to the professional standards they know are right’.*

*‘... overall, not enough is being done, or done to an acceptable standard, in about half of all CRC cases we have inspected’.*

The problems did not stop there. Our early inspections also found serious setbacks in the implementation of new ICT systems. A joint thematic inspection of Through the Gate arrangements with HM Inspectorate of Prisons found: ‘...only a handful of individuals had received any real help with housing, jobs or an addiction’, and that CRCs were making ‘little material difference to the prospects of individuals upon release’. There were examples of good practice in some CRC areas, but when inspected against our new standards and ratings, 19 out of 21 were rated as ‘Requires improvement’ (2018/2019).

In her final annual report as Chief Inspector, in March 2019, my predecessor said:

*‘...it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to reduce the probation service to a set of contractual requirements’; ‘... significant flaws in the system have become increasingly apparent’; and ‘it will be virtually impossible to deal with these issues if most probation supervision continues to be provided by different organisations, under contract’.*

The government had reached a similar conclusion, announcing the early termination of the existing CRC contracts in 2018. In May 2019, it declared that it would be bringing the offender management function of the CRCs (representing most of the expenditure) back into the public sector by the end of 2020, and committed to this reform happening first in Wales from the end of 2019.

Since then, additional investment in CRCs has produced improvements. Since September 2019, we have been able to complete nine inspections leading to an overall rating. All of these services were rated as ‘Requires improvement’ in 2018/2019 – three are now rated as

'Good'. Supervision of unpaid work was also found to be generally satisfactory, with eight now rated as 'Good'.

For some services, however, things have not looked so rosy. In five areas, we have continued to find budgets being squeezed, staff under pressure and unacceptably high caseloads, and this has inevitably resulted in poorer-quality supervision. Five CRCs were rated as 'Inadequate' for the quality of their day-to-day offender management, against all our standards.

The onset of Covid-19 brought abrupt change – with some services, such as unpaid work, halted altogether and the suspension of the usual CRC targets and penalties. In the face of mounting uncertainty about the future, the government announced in June 2020 that it was abandoning its plans to continue to outsource the provision of unpaid work and accredited programmes and other interventions to 'probation delivery partners', and said that these functions would also come back into the public sector from June 2021.

I reaffirm my view that this type of structural reform is not a magic bullet for improving performance by itself. It must be backed by real extra resources. The future of the probation service depends on it being funded properly. The quality of probation supervision will not improve merely by shifting large volumes of cases from CRCs back into the NPS next year. Vacancies for POs must be filled, and staff properly trained for their new responsibilities. The positive innovations that CRCs have brought cannot be lost and the transition period must be expertly managed.

## **NPS**

Although much of the focus has been on CRC performance in recent years, the public sector NPS has also faced substantial challenges. While, in overall terms, we rated five of the seven NPS regions as 'Good' in our first round of inspections against our new standards, every region had at least two quality standards on which they were rated as 'Requires improvement'. We applied this rating to all seven in relation to our standards for staffing, and to six out of seven for the quality of information services and facilities.

Although probation services officer (PSO) numbers in the NPS have increased substantially since 2014, PO numbers remain an issue, with over 650 vacancies in September 2019 and particular issues with vacancy rates in London, the South East and East of England.

The government's commitment to increase the number of trainee POs is welcome and there are signs that it is starting to pay dividends – with the number of POs rising by almost six per cent in the year to June 2020 and the gap in vacancies closing to 483. Our reinspection of the NPS North West region in January and February 2020 showed that this is starting to make a real difference on the ground. We found that 153 new PO trainees had been recruited, and a full staffing complement after a long period below strength – although it was concerning to see that 32 per cent of officers had workloads in excess of 110 per cent of their expected levels.

Poor-quality office accommodation and approved premises have also been a real issue in the NPS, with many probation staff operating from buildings that are in disrepair, and approved premises bed spaces being lost through delays to basic repairs. In 2019, only 43 per cent of facilities management jobs were completed within the 10-day target. For example, on our return visit to the North West division, we found 700 outstanding work orders.



## **Protecting the public**

It should be concerning and disappointing to all that the weakest performance area we have seen in our inspections is the quality of work to manage risk of harm.

CRCs have invested substantially in retraining staff on the basics of risk management, but we simply have not seen this translated into better care of the cases we have inspected more recently.

On every aspect of supervision in relation to risk of serious harm (apart from initial assessment), we have continued to find that, on average, fewer than half the cases we assess in CRCs are satisfactory in relation to planning, delivery or review of actions to manage risk of harm.

Time and again, we are finding that some of the fundamental tasks of effective risk management have been missed, such as the checks that every responsible officer is supposed to run with their local police domestic abuse team at the point of initial assessment. We have found that, on average, these checks are not being done in over a third of cases. Our joint inspection with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services of Integrated Offender Management – published in February 2020 – found that these promising arrangements had been downgraded to a shadow of their past shared priority.

I do not need to spell out the potentially disastrous consequences if risk of harm is not managed properly, but the impact on victims and their families can be irreversible. It should not be the case that the only time the public hear about the probation service is when something goes wrong.

A lack of professional curiosity, incorrect classification of risk, poor information-sharing with the prisons and police, over-optimistic assessments of progress and premature relaxation of controls are things that we find again and again in the cases we look at in our local inspections. Our review of the Joseph McCann case found all these issues combined, to become a catalogue of errors – not least eight missed opportunities to revoke his indeterminate sentence for public protection licence between 2017 and 2019.

Much of our focus this year has been on the important lessons that can be learned when things go wrong in such cases. As such, I welcome the decision by the Lord Chancellor to give HM Inspectorate of Probation a role in the independent quality assurance of Serious Further Offence reviews from April 2021. We have also published an effective practice guide on undertaking these reviews, based on lessons from a national inspection of practice at the end of 2019. This is all part of our broader, renewed commitment to disseminating advice on what 'good' looks like.

## **Conclusions**

While it is not true to say that the probation service as a whole is, or was, 'in crisis', it has undoubtedly been severely tested by the *Transforming Rehabilitation* reforms and the profound impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic earlier this year, to which it responded with admirable agility and commitment.

Of the services we have been able to inspect over the past year, it has been encouraging to see signs of overall improvement in some, and the very real progress that has been made with enhanced Through the Gate services.

For others, however, things are more difficult. Committed leaders are doing their best to engage staff and improve delivery, but they are often fighting a losing battle as resources diminish. There is a real risk to delivery over the coming six months, as attention is diverted by the demands of transition to the new structures in June next year.

The new, unified national offender management model is not a cure-all. Adequate resourcing is crucial, and we cannot lose the innovation that *Transforming Rehabilitation* has unleashed in some areas. CRC leaders have enjoyed the freedoms to try new things; to move into decent office accommodation for the first time or to work out of community hubs; and to develop better case management software. There is no doubt that service users have benefited from the real commitment shown by many CRCs to listen to their views, and even give them a role as mentors, and ultimately as paid staff – an outcome any service can be proud of.

The road to recovery for probation services will be a long and winding one to traverse, with huge challenges ahead still to negotiate. But with the right resources and leadership, it can be managed successfully, and we will be providing an independent and unbiased view of that progress every step of the way.

### 3. Impact of Covid-19

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Covid-19 has had an unparalleled effect on all areas of modern society; the economic and social impact is presenting unprecedented challenges.

As with every public service, providers of probation services have had to respond to these challenges at pace, and play their part in keeping the public safe. Our thematic review examined the work of five CRCs and six NPS divisions delivering against their 'exceptional delivery models' during the period late March to July 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Probation service providers are to be applauded for their compassion and professionalism in changing their working methods quickly and effectively during this period. This is true for all levels of the probation system. Delivery models were redesigned to comply with government social distancing guidelines, while retaining a primary focus on public protection. Contact with individuals on probation supervision has largely been carried out remotely by telephone and has been commensurate with assessed levels of risk and need. We found that work to manage immediate risk of harm was generally good. Practitioners told us that the enhanced focus on effective risk management had sharpened their practice, and we noted increased participation at the virtual multi-agency meetings which replaced face-to-face case discussions. Not all staff and agencies involved in public protection and safeguarding work, however, have access to the same digital technology. This problem needs to be resolved urgently, so that all partners can engage equally.

The initial lockdown reduced the number of support services that probation relies on, including assistance with mental health, and drug and alcohol issues. We found some encouraging innovations to work with and support individuals with complex needs, but the most vulnerable experienced a deterioration in their emotional wellbeing. Service users whose personal circumstances were relatively stable before lockdown adjusted well to the new supervisory arrangements. However, others felt lonely, disconnected and anxious about their futures – remote contact by itself was insufficient to meet their needs. Immediate housing solutions were good because of effective partnership working and additional funding from the government for homelessness prevention. This temporary accommodation will need to be followed by more permanent provision, and there is now a deep concern among probation providers that the current emergency housing provision will disappear.

Most staff felt supported by their leaders and managers, had frequent contact from them and had established healthy mechanisms for peer support which created a sense of togetherness. Some organisations made hardship grants available to staff, and staff took part in virtual events to raise money for charities. Home working did not suit everyone. Those who had access to designated work spaces and wider support from family members coped well. However, others struggled with juggling home schooling, caring for vulnerable relatives, managing complex personal relationships and delivering probation services.

Overall, we were encouraged by our findings, but there are some important lessons to be learned. Probation providers will need to collaborate with others in the criminal justice system to consolidate what has worked well and to deal strategically with the large backlogs of work that have built up, including accredited programmes, enforcement and unpaid work.

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<sup>9</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). Exceptional Delivery Model Arrangements in Probation Services in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

## 4. Impact of *Transforming Rehabilitation*

### How have CRCs performed?

As part of our inspections of CRCs, since the inception of *Transforming Rehabilitation*, we have gathered evidence on areas in need of improvement, as well as identifying the innovative practices we have seen across CRCs under different ownership.

A mixed picture has developed over the past year. There are some signs of recovery year on year across the 10 CRCs inspected in 2019/2020 – three ‘Good’ ratings are proof of this – but there are still real concerns about others. Gaps are emerging between providers, so that we now have a two-tier service within CRCs. Some – like Sodexo, Management Training Corporation (MTC) and Achieving Real Change in Communities Community Interest Company (ARCC) – are improving and continuing to invest. Others – like the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP) and Interserve (Purple Futures) – are showing the continuing impact of reducing budgets.

Over the past year, we have inspected two RRP CRCs, and four owned by Interserve (Purple Futures). We rated five out of six of them as ‘Inadequate’ against our four case supervision criteria.<sup>10</sup>

More positively, we rated eight of the 10 inspected CRCs as ‘Outstanding’ on Through the Gate services. The enhanced Through the Gate services that have been enabled through the extra £22 million a year investment by the Ministry of Justice have had a notable effect. We have also continued to rate CRCs positively on their supervision of unpaid work and on the range of services they offer, and facilities for staff.

We continue to report on the innovative practice that some CRCs have invested in, such as local community hubs and a commitment to service user engagement. Many CRCs have embraced the flexibilities they have been offered by trying new ways of working. We would urge the continuation of these innovations in the new, unified arrangements to come in June 2021. There is much to learn from CRC practice.

### CRC operating models

Since the letting of CRC contracts in February 2015, there has been a reduction in the number of CRC-owning companies from eight to seven (Working Links went into administration in February 2019).

The delivery of offender management in Wales transferred to the NPS in December 2019. In England, the seven companies have continued to manage more than half of the community-based offender population. This includes those posing a low or medium risk of causing serious harm to others. In addition, they have delivered interventions to reduce reoffending; unpaid work and Through the Gate services to service users being supervised by both private and publicly owned services.

These seven companies<sup>11</sup> operate in several different ways, with delivery models of variable efficiency and merit. Elsewhere in this report, we describe the progress which some, but not all, CRCs have made in improving the quality of their services. Here, we highlight the aspects of the various CRC models which we believe show promise and should be retained under any

<sup>10</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation’s ratings table can be found at: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/ratings-tables](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/ratings-tables).

<sup>11</sup> ARCC, Interserve (Purple Futures), MTC, People Plus, Reducing Reoffending Part Sodexo Justice Services.

future probation delivery model, as well as some aspects of their operating models about which we had greater concerns.

## **What is not working as well as it could?**

### **Staffing arrangements**

The CRCs' approach to the role boundaries between practitioners and the allocation of work and responsibilities varies, determined by the owning companies' operating models. Most have seen a reduction in the number of qualified probation officers (POs) and a corresponding increase in the number of probation service officers (PSOs) over the lifetime of the CRC contracts. For example, both Interserve (Purple Futures) and RRP have had to adjust their operating models, and staffing ratios, in the light of financial constraints. People Plus, by contrast, has maintained a higher ratio of POs to PSOs in comparison with other CRCs. In the second year of our core inspection programme in 2019/2020, we noted that fewer responsible officers reported that they had been allocated cases for which they had the appropriate training and experience in those CRCs operated by Interserve (Purple Futures) and RRP, compared with those working in other CRCs. By contrast, we found that almost 90 per cent of staff felt that the cases allocated to them were the correct ones within Sodexo CRCs.

### **Administrative arrangements**

Some CRCs have adopted a centralised administrative support approach, utilising call centres, often in a different part of the country, with varying levels of success. Such arrangements bring resource efficiencies, but these come at the cost of having staff who are familiar with the local geography and available services. While centralised arrangements work reasonably well for a number of administrative functions, including breach paperwork, they are less effective for allocating cases to responsible officers at a distance; this is evident in the number of allocations that are subsequently changed. Standalone unpaid work orders<sup>12</sup> are managed centrally in some CRCs (for example, those operated by Purple Futures and others<sup>13</sup>); the customer service provided to those on these unpaid work orders through this approach tends to be poor, however, both in our view and that of many service users.

Other CRCs have retained more localised administrative arrangements, with case allocation undertaken by middle managers. This approach provides greater oversight and a better-informed process for workload management; it enables managers to influence practice, provide development opportunities for staff, and match service users to the skills of staff.

The ideal approach is perhaps to combine the efficiency of centralisation for some process-focused work (issuing appointments, for example), with local middle management input into those tasks which require considered judgement, such as case allocation.

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<sup>12</sup> Unpaid work can be either a single requirement of a community or suspended sentence order (often referred to as a standalone) or one of two or more requirements (often referred to as a multiple requirement order). For example, in those CRCs operated by Purple Futures.

<sup>13</sup> For example, in CRCs owned by MTC, People Plus, RRP and Sodexo Justice Services.

## What has worked well in CRCs?

### Community hubs

For lower-risk service users, some CRCs have looked to expand the range of locations where routine probation appointments are held to include community centres, libraries and church halls. These community hubs are embedded in CRC delivery models to varying degrees.

They are a prominent feature of the ARCC, Interserve (Purple Futures) and Seetec models, where they provide the primary venue for service user contact. Elsewhere, more traditional probation office premises are common, albeit most are modern, with open-plan features, which create a more welcoming environment – but caused us some concerns over privacy.

Not all service users can be managed safely in a hub. The need for dedicated probation offices remains relevant to manage individuals posing a higher risk of harm and to deliver some interventions. Community hubs can complement these by providing a springboard for longer-term desistance, through improving service users' sense of belonging to their community. Our inspections and research have found that community hubs are most effective when they<sup>14</sup>:

- Are accessible, reaching out to service users in their own communities (being either centrally located or with good transport links).
- Offer a welcoming and non-stigmatising environment, which service users have ideally had a hand in designing.
- Promote a positive team culture, with other agencies available to provide timely access to a wide range of services to address offending-related needs.

### Analysis tools

We have been impressed by some CRCs' approach to the analysis of their service-user data, such as via the use of the reoffending analysis tool – now known as the reoffending data tool – developed and deployed by RRP within their two CRCs, and now used elsewhere, for example in the five Interserve (Purple Futures) CRCs. This can be used to view data from a wide range of perspectives. The tool has sparked positive initiatives to identify and target specific cohorts of service users at high likelihood of reoffending, and to work with partners to address identified need.

For example, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland CRC undertook an analysis of unmet accommodation needs in Derbyshire. This underpinned the business case for the Star project in Derby, which, in partnership with YMCA and Derby Homes (a subsidiary of Derby City Council), provides men with supported accommodation on release from prison. Similarly, the Advance project in Leicester provides accommodation for those with mental health needs.

Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) CRC, owned by Seetec, also makes effective use of data about offending-related need to influence the partnership agenda and to plug gaps in service provision for both the CRC and NPS caseloads. For example, accommodation data was analysed and provided to the Police and Crime Commissioner in Surrey in 2018; this led to the joint funding of a supported housing project. Using this kind of data to influence sound commissioning decisions should be preserved within the new probation delivery model.

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<sup>14</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). *Research & Analysis Bulletin: The role of community hubs in helping to deliver probation services and support desistance.*

## Service user engagement

Many CRCs have service-user councils. These are groups often managed by the charity User Voice,<sup>15</sup> which was created and is run by people who have been in prison and on probation. They are mostly consultative forums, typically attended by the Chief Executive Officer and other managers. As such, they can have real influence in effecting change. We have seen examples, for instance, of changes to the physical environment and to methods of communication with service users. There is an improved focus on the mental health and wellbeing of service users in some areas, as a direct result of the work of the councils. In some areas, such as in Northumbria, we have seen co-financing of the service-user council by the CRC and the North East division of the NPS. This is welcome, given the impending move towards the establishment of a unified model of service delivery in June 2021.

Some CRCs have taken the need to listen to the voice of the service user to a higher level. The inclusion of current and former service users in the RRP operating model, for instance, demonstrates the real value this can add.<sup>16</sup> Service users are encouraged and supported to become peer mentors, contribute to the delivery of interventions and services (including supporting induction processes, and co-delivering non-accredited programmes) and can progress to paid employment within RRP. Where employees have "lived experience", it is celebrated and valued. Other CRCs<sup>17</sup> employ former service users, but on a smaller scale and under the radar.

## NPS performance

From July 2018 to May 2019, HM Inspectorate of Probation inspected all seven divisions of the NPS and found many areas of good practice, but also room for improvement.

Every division was rated as 'Requires improvement' against our staffing standards and six out of seven for information services and facilities. As both of these areas are particularly reliant on the support offered to local divisions by the national headquarters of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), we felt it important to look at the support and services provided to divisions by the centre. We conducted an 'eighth NPS inspection' of these central functions, which was published in January 2020.<sup>18</sup>

We did not inspect against all our standards, focusing on those areas that emerged as issues during our divisional inspections.

Although our inspection found important areas of positive NPS performance, including good leadership, increasing investment in training for new POs and in a new line management supervision framework, the potential benefits of a centralised approach to functions like facilities management had not been fully realised.

Problematic areas included: recruitment and training, with over 650 PO vacancies in the NPS in the autumn of 2019; issues with human resources processes; a lack of central support for the analysis of local offender profiles to inform the commissioning of interventions; and poor maintenance of NPS premises. Central functions were described by NPS staff as remote and overly bureaucratic, and divisional directors told us that they were often frustrated by their inability to resolve matters like facilities management, despite having overall responsibility for their division's performance.

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<sup>15</sup> User Voice – [www.uservice.org](http://www.uservice.org)

<sup>16</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2019). [Research & Analysis Bulletin: Service User Involvement in the Review and Improvement of Probation Services.](#)

<sup>17</sup> For example, Merseyside CRC (Interserve/Purple Futures).

<sup>18</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). [An Inspection of Central Functions Supporting the National Probation Service.](#)

Under-investment in NPS buildings has meant that many probation staff operate from buildings that are in disrepair, and there have been longstanding problems with the centrally led Ministry of Justice facilities management contracts. In the last year, only 43 per cent of facilities management jobs were completed within the 10-day target. We acknowledge that the situation is improving, but the time required to resolve facilities issues is still unacceptable. On returning to the NPS North West division at the beginning of 2020, for example, we found 700 outstanding work orders, of which 235 had been escalated more than once.

As part of the central services inspection, we made 24 recommendations to HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice, focusing on understanding NPS needs, staff recruitment, representation, training, workloads, service commissioning and unsatisfactory maintenance of NPS premises.



## 5. Staffing and workloads

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We reported, in our analysis of 2018/2019 inspections (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019<sup>19</sup>), that a majority of responsible officers ceased to accept that their workloads were reasonable once they held more than 50 cases. Moreover, for those responsible officers holding 50 or more cases, our inspectors judged their work as substantially worse in nine of our twelve summary judgements across the key probation work of assessment, sentence planning, delivering interventions and reviewing the case.

The quality gap in public protection activity was of particular concern.

Testimony from frontline staff shows the negative impact of high workloads on their work, as this typical survey quote underlines:

*"As a team we can just about offer an adequate service but not a good service".*

(Probation Services Officer, CRC)

We are undertaking a research project on caseloads and workloads, which was paused during the initial lockdown but has now resumed. We will publish a report in early 2021. Our research so far (see further below) supports the key finding that holding more than 50 cases is detrimental to the quality of work and thus the protection of the public (see Annexe 1, Figure 6).

### **CRCs: workload and its impact on quality**

The roles and responsibilities of responsible officers vary considerably across the CRCs. These are shaped by:

- the characteristics, offending-related needs and risk of harm profiles of service users
- practitioner skills, experience, availability and other responsibilities
- access to local core services.

The number of cases managed by each practitioner does not, therefore, fully reflect an individual's workload. For example, newly qualified POs and those still in training should have smaller (protected) caseloads to facilitate learning and oversight. Some responsible officers have smaller caseloads to reflect their additional duties. Staff with disabilities or those recovering from illness may have protected workloads. It is important that a workload management tool can take account of the availability and capability of the practitioner, the type of cases they are assigned and the work that is required to supervise the profile of their caseload appropriately. Complex cases need to be weighted within any workload management tool.

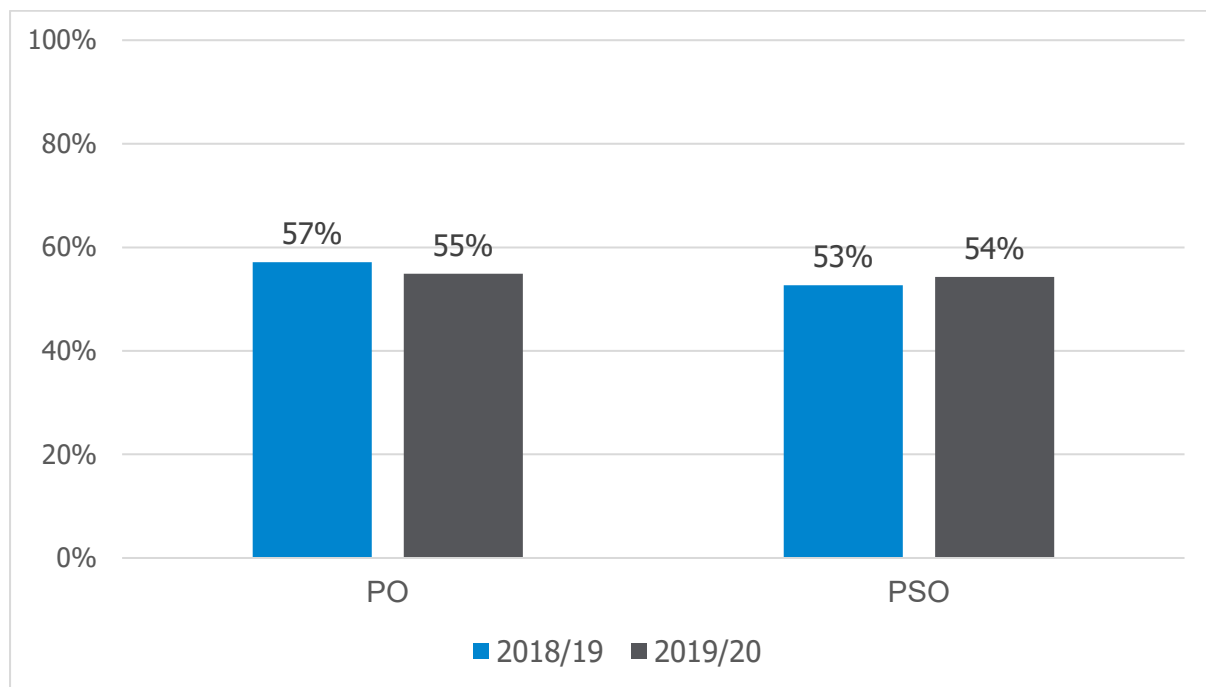
From those CRCs inspected since September 2019, only 45 per cent of responsible officers described their caseloads as manageable, with the proportion of both POs and PSOs saying their workload was unmanageable increasing since 2018/2019 (figure 1). It is concerning that 15 per cent of responsible officers reported caseloads in excess of 75. High caseloads have an impact on the quality of the work: in these circumstances, practice moves towards 'process compliance' and away from quality, leaving staff with insufficient time to reflect on their work. Traditionally, probation practice has recognised that once caseloads rise much above 40, it becomes difficult for practitioners to recall individuals and to be attentive to the

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<sup>19</sup> [2018/2019 HM Inspectorate of probation services: summary report \(HM Inspectorate of Probation 2019\)](#).

needs of the case; the focus shifts to completion of tasks, in a manner which is process-focused and with little capacity for reflection and analysis. We hope to shed more light on this issue in our upcoming research publication.

**Figure 1: Percentage of POs and PSOs with 'unmanageable' caseloads. <sup>20</sup>**



## NPS

The high rate of vacancies for frontline probation staff has been a regular theme of our NPS inspections since the *Transforming Rehabilitation* programme started in 2015.

Testimony from frontline staff shows the negative impact of high workloads on their work, as this typical survey quote underlines:

*"The work is not manageable, in the sense that you can do the basics but have no time to dig into the detail. No time for reflection or professional curiosity".*

(Probation Officer, NPS).

As part of our independent inspection of the Joseph McCann case, for example, we found that the assessment and management of his case after 2015 and until his final release from prison in the spring of 2019 demonstrated poor probation practice, undertaken within a context of high staff vacancy rates and excessive workloads for the offender managers managing the case<sup>21</sup>. McCann was managed by an unstable team in Hertfordshire NPS lacking experienced and skilled practitioners. At the beginning of 2020, across the Hertfordshire local delivery unit, vacancies for qualified offender managers remained at 20 per cent (6.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts), despite the employment of five agency offender managers. This illustrates the real risks to public safety of substantial staff shortages and insufficient training.

It was encouraging to find that progress is being made to address staff shortages as part of our latest NPS North West region inspection at the beginning of 2020. At the previous inspection, we found that the division had substantial staff shortages (20 per cent) overall

<sup>20</sup> Based on the 10 CRCs that were inspected in both 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 .

<sup>21</sup> [HM Inspectorate of Probation Independent review of the case of Joseph McCann.](#)

but particularly at the PO grade. The North West has reduced the number of vacancies in the last 12 months, which is a major achievement, and it is now fully staffed for all grades. It has recruited over 153 people as Professional Qualification in Probation practitioners, who will fill future vacancies once they are qualified. (Although we still found too many POs with high workloads in the North West; 32 per cent had workloads in excess of 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS's own national workload measurement tool.)

HMPPS figures show that the situation is also improving nationally, with 3,613 FTE band 4 POs in post (as at 30 June 2020). This figure is an increase of 196 (5.7 per cent) since 30 June 2019. In addition to the band 4 POs, there were 2,546 FTE band 3 PSOs: an increase of 60 (2.4 per cent) since 30 June 2019.

The government has also made the welcome announcement that it is committed to recruit at least 1,000 more POs this year alone, although the need to train these staff will mean that they actually increase demand on experienced staff in the short term, to provide mentoring and cover for the reduced workloads of newly qualified officers. This could be further affected by CRC staff transferring into the new combined structure, who will need training to manage higher-risk cases before taking on a full caseload. The government's plan to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers over the next three years and the provision of over 10,000 new prison places is likely to increase the volume of work for the probation service going forward.

As part of our divisional and central functions inspections, we found that once staff have been recruited, there has been a lack of investment in their ongoing training and development, much of which is not of a sufficient standard to meet their needs. Newly qualified staff need more support to gain the confidence and skills to supervise the complex and high risk of harm offenders. The quality of training is not always pitched at the right level for probation practitioners and the method of delivering training is not always appropriate. Probation staff find that the e-learning is too basic, the location of some venues is too far away for some staff to travel to, and some staff are not released to complete training owing to high workloads.

The NPS national training team does not meet the continuing professional development needs of all staff sufficiently, especially at PO grade. We were particularly concerned about the unacceptable lack of availability of mandatory training. For example, only 58 per cent of NPS North West division staff were 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 were only eight in post at the time of our inspection of the NPS North West division in early 2020. This limits the number of training events available. Demand outstrips supply, and waiting lists are long.

As the responsibilities of the NPS and CRCs are combined into a new national public-sector probation service, there is an important opportunity to improve the service offered to those under probation supervision and to improve the protection of the public from dangerous offenders. These opportunities can only be realised if the failings identified over recent years are addressed. In particular, staffing levels need to increase, individual workloads need to be reduced and training needs to equip staff to carry out their roles effectively. This is likely to take a number of years to achieve and will require substantial investment in programme resources to bring the new service together, as well as resource to address staff recruitment, retention and training.

## **Role boundaries, the ratio of POs to PSOs and the impact on quality**

### **Newly recruited PSOs**

The approach to grading and allocation of work for PSOs varies and can be complex. In ARCC, MTC and Sodexo CRCs, we found a recognition of the importance of ensuring that novice PSOs complete core training and gain sufficient experience, before they are allocated complex casework.

Reduced income across all the Interserve (Purple Futures) services prompted a decision to curb expenditure through a major organisational restructure at the beginning of 2019. This new operating model, however, works on the presumption of an experienced and skilled workforce. In Hampshire and Isle of Wight CRC, the restructure failed to take sufficient account of a predictable shortage of skilled staff or the time required to recruit, train and consolidate the training of new PSO grade case managers and develop the skills of existing case managers to manage complex work, including cases involving domestic abuse. We found that the number of skilled PO grade staff had fallen by 38 per cent since our last inspection. While the number of lower-grade case managers (PSO equivalent) had risen substantially, 45 per cent were new to the service at the time of our inspection.

### **The quality of PSO and PO casework**

Given the right training and support, and when allocated the right number and risk level of cases, PSOs can do a good job of supervising low- and some medium-risk offenders. As the Hampshire and Isle of Wight CRC example shows, however, when inexperienced PSOs with large caseloads are substituted for more qualified and experienced POs, and asked to take on complex cases beyond their competence, the result can be a worrying reduction in the quality of supervision.

Our aggregated results from CRC and NPS inspections show a substantial gap between our ratings of the quality of PO and of PSO case supervision – something that should be a priority for attention as the service transitions to its new unified model in 2021.

**Table 1: Quality of work undertaken by POs versus PSOs**

Aggregate ratings for the case sample analysis						
	CRC year 1		CRC year 2		NPS years 1 and 2	
	POs	PSOs	POs	PSOs	POs	PSOs
Assessment	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Good	Good
Planning	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Good	Requires improvement
Delivery	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Good	Requires improvement
Reviewing	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

## 6. Keeping people safe

Keeping people safe is a fundamental expectation and a core objective of probation work. This is achieved by assessing and managing the risk of harm posed by individuals to the public and to both known and potential future victims.

Our focus and expectations about public protection are on any risk of harm posed, and not just the risk of serious harm<sup>22</sup>. We expect to see assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing practice that addresses all elements of risk of harm posed by the service user, not just those indicative of serious harm. Practitioners should take account of and address the potential that harmful actions and behaviour could have on others, and put plans in place and coordinate interventions to prevent serious harm from occurring.

Overall, practice to keep people safe across those CRCs inspected this year remains inadequate, with less than half of the cases we inspected being satisfactory against three out of four of the key questions we ask on risk of harm.

**Table 2: Proportion of CRC cases judged as sufficient in relation to keeping people safe**

	All CRCs 2018/2019	All CRCs 2019/2020 <sup>23</sup>
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	55%	51%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	46%	45%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	41%	43%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	44%	43%

Although practice remains concerning, a small number of CRCs have made progress from what we found in our 2018/2019 programme. Although not sufficient overall, Durham and Tees Valley; Northumbria; South Yorkshire; and Thames Valley CRCs have made tangible improvements in most areas of public protection practice, although there is clearly much more to do. Table 4 in Annexe 1 shows where this progress has been made.

In terms of case supervision quality, two tiers of CRC delivery have emerged in our second round of inspections. From those inspected so far, the CRCs owned by RRP and Interserve (Purple Futures) have not improved their standard of case supervision and, in most aspects of domain two, practice has deteriorated.

It was particularly disappointing to find a sharp decline in the quality of case supervision within the Hampshire and Isle of Wight CRC, the only CRC to be rated 'Good' in last year's round of inspections. We concluded that this decline related to a shortfall in sufficiently trained and experienced practitioners within the organisation, and more experienced staff holding excessive caseloads, which was limiting their capacity to deliver the quality of work required.

<sup>22</sup> The OASys risk assessment tool defines "serious harm" as: "an event which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be "difficult or impossible".

<sup>23</sup> Only 10 CRCs have been inspected so far in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Risk of harm level and the quality of practice to keep people safe

In our 2018 annual report, and last year’s summary of inspection findings, we highlighted the gulf that had emerged between NPS and CRC practice in relation to keeping people safe. Of all the aspects of case supervision quality, the gap between NPS and CRC performance was most pronounced in relation to this issue, with CRCs scoring up to 25 percentage points lower than the NPS on the four key questions relating to public protection.

The vast majority of NPS cases are assessed as high or very high risk of serious harm, which arguably attract a greater level of scrutiny and multi-agency management and resource. Similarly, CRCs hold the majority of cases assessed as medium and low risk of serious harm. Work to manage and reduce risk of harm should take account of all potential risks, whatever their level or degree of seriousness, and it is essential that the correct risk classification is assigned to all cases by the NPS and by CRCs. In over 300 of the cases our inspectors assessed, for example, they judged that a ‘medium’ rather than a ‘low’ risk of harm categorisation should have been assigned.

As shown by Table 3, using our inspection data from 2018/2019, high-risk cases are more likely to be judged as sufficient compared with medium- or low-risk cases, regardless of whether medium- or low-risk cases are managed by the NPS or a CRC. Going forward, with the move to a unified model of delivery, action should be taken to close this gap and ensure that an adequate standard of supervision is provided to all service users, regardless of risk level.

**Table 3: Proportion of cases judged as sufficient in the NPS and all CRCs, split by level of risk of serious harm (2018/2019):<sup>24</sup>**

	<b>NPS high risk of serious harm</b>	<b>NPS medium risk of serious harm</b>	<b>CRC medium risk of serious harm</b>	<b>CRC low risk of serious harm</b>
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	<b>78%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>55%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	<b>73%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>68%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>64%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>38%</b>

<sup>24</sup> This data is taken from our inspections of all 21 CRCs and all 7 NPS divisions in 2018/19.

## Multi-agency work to keep people safe

Probation services cannot keep the public safe by working in isolation from other agencies. Practitioners need to make use of the information and expertise of partner agencies in order to assess risk accurately, implement plans and coordinate suitable interventions.

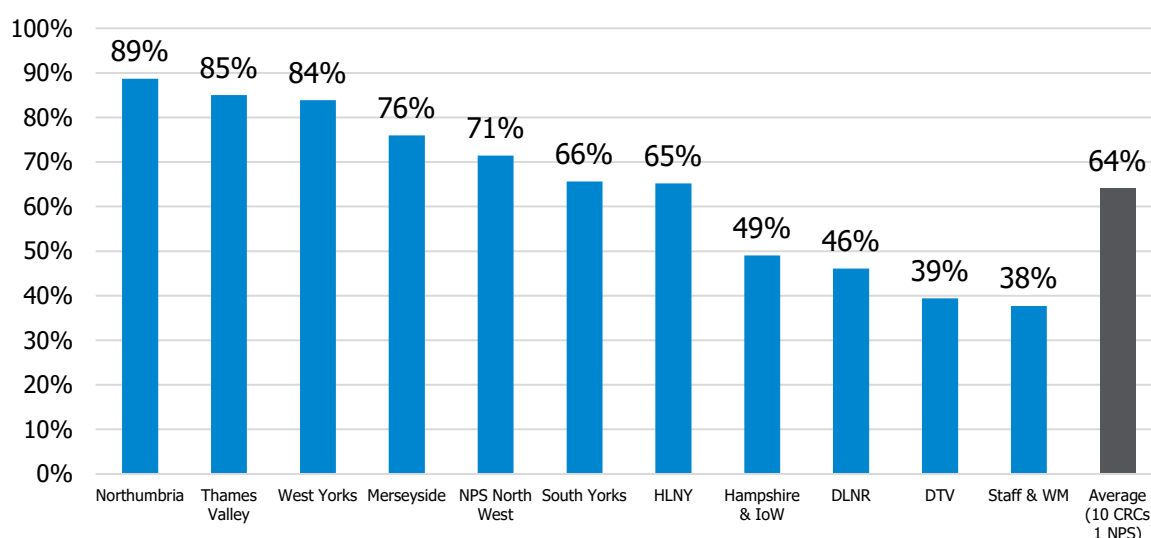
In our 2018/2019 summary of inspection findings, we highlighted the difference in the quality of multi-agency practice between the NPS and CRCs nationally. Although enhanced and reinforced by its responsibilities under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the NPS was overall more effective in exchanging information with agencies such as the police and children's social care services, to inform assessment, planning, delivery and reviewing. Multi-agency working across the CRCs was much more inconsistent and was deemed insufficient in about half of the cases we inspected.

Although we have inspected only one NPS division this year, this trend has continued in our 2019/2020 programme, with multi-agency practice to keep people safe by all CRCs inspected so far deemed to be inadequate in more than half of the cases. By comparison, the NPS North West division performed much better, as highlighted by Table 5 in Annexe 1.

It is particularly important for probation services to meet their responsibilities in safeguarding children and responding to domestic abuse. We therefore actively monitor this and seek reassurance that robust information-sharing is in place for responsible officers to receive domestic abuse callout information, and exchange intelligence with children's social care services when service users have regular contact with children.

In relation to domestic abuse callout information and safeguarding checks, our 2019/2020 inspections have highlighted some disappointing practice (as evidenced in Figure 2), which can be explained by a combination of systematic and practice-related issues in different parts of the country.

**Figure 2: By service, percentage of domestic abuse checks undertaken**



Within our inspection of Hampshire and Isle of Wight CRC, for example, we came across a number of instances where the failure to share police information had resulted in agencies missing the opportunity to manage risk effectively. It appears that this information flow had broken down, following the introduction of General Data Protection Regulation legislation and a change to the Interserve (Purple Futures) email address (to 'interservejustice.org'). Seemingly, this was regarded by the police as an insufficiently secure address through which to transmit sensitive personal data. Following our inspection, we understand that this barrier has now been removed and the police are now sharing this information.



We have found a more positive picture elsewhere. In Thames Valley:

*"The CRC has a good partnership with Thames Valley Police and receives up-to-date arrest and domestic abuse callout information daily. This enables responsible officers to seek further information and consider changes in risks. There is a clear, effective process to ensure that information relating to risk of harm is received from the police and children's social care services".*

In Northumbria CRC we found:

*"...in a large majority of cases, the relevant checks with the police and with children's social care services had been undertaken, either at the court stage or later by CRC staff".*

In Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland CRC, multi-agency safeguarding hubs were in place in all the respective counties. However, although the information was available, responsible officers did not always act on it when necessary.

## Serious Further Offence reviews thematic inspection

Serious Further Offences (SFOs) are specified serious violent or sexual offences committed by individuals who are being supervised by probation services. For the victims and families involved, the consequences are devastating and often life changing. Since 2011, approximately 0.2 per cent of those on probation have been charged with an SFO. In April 2018, a revised SFO review process was introduced, aimed at providing greater transparency to victims and maintaining a local and strategic focus on learning. We decided to take a closer look at the implementation of the new SFO review arrangements at the end of 2019,<sup>25</sup> with a specific focus on: quality assurance, how learning is identified, how probation practice is improved, and the victim and family experience.

Each review must look at whether all reasonable actions were taken to manage the risk of harm posed by an individual to others, analyse why things were done in the way they were and identify what could or should have been done differently. It should also establish whether there is learning at local or national levels and clearly identify this.

We visited eight probation providers, evenly split between NPS divisions and CRCs, as well as the HMPPS SFO review team, which gives feedback on the quality of reviews and collates learning to drive improvements. We also conducted a small number of meetings with victims and family members who had received disclosures under the SFO review process, and interviewed managers from the police and children's social care services. We inspected 46 SFO reviews and the quality assurance feedback provided by the HMPPS SFO review team.

We found that the purpose of SFO reviews was not consistently understood across probation organisations, although the revised process has increased transparency to victims and family members, with access to the completed review. Reviews are often practice focused, however, and difficult to digest. Victims and family members generally viewed the process as open and honest about any failings identified in probation practice, and particularly appreciated being able to discuss the case with a senior manager.

Separate designated SFO review teams were found to be the best working model for undertaking the reviews, and the central HMPPS SFO review team quality ratings for local reviews were consistent with the judgements of our own inspection team. Reviews were strong in their analysis of probation practice but weaker in their consideration of multi-agency management. Around 30 per cent of the reviews inspected required some improvement in analysis of risk of harm factors or risk management plans. Twenty-two per cent failed to give a clear judgement on whether all reasonable steps were taken to manage the risk of serious harm, focusing much more on 'what happened' rather than 'why'.

Nationally, there is no systematic analysis of SFO review findings, with the same themes often identified during internal audits and local HM Inspectorate of Probation inspections. In addition, SFO reviews focus solely on probation practice and lack multi-agency involvement, meaning that opportunities for learning and improvement by other agencies like the police are missed. We made a number of recommendations to address these issues.

We made 15 recommendations following this thematic review (see section 3, annexe 2). Ten of our recommendations were accepted, three partly accepted and two rejected. These recommendations – largely due to be completed by April 2021 – were designed to provide both quick-time and long-term solutions to some of the concerns raised by our findings. They included that there should be independent quality assurance of a proportion of completed SFO reviews each year and we are pleased that the Secretary of State for Justice has requested that the Inspectorate provides this independent quality assurance and

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<sup>25</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). A Thematic Inspection of the Serious Further Offences (SFO) Investigation and Review Process.

benchmarking role. We are currently developing an approach that will enable us to sample a selection of SFO reviews to complement the role of the HMPPS SFO team. This will begin in April 2021 and we will publish regular updates on our findings.

### **Joseph McCann and the thematic review of probation recall culture and practice**

On 05 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Justice announced that HM Chief Inspector of Probation would carry out an independent review of the case of Joseph McCann.

The review would be in two parts. Part one focused on the supervision of Joseph McCann by the NPS and was published on 30 June 2020.<sup>26</sup> Part two reviewed the current probation culture and practice in respect of recall and was published on 10 November 2020.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Part one: Joseph McCann review**

Joseph McCann was being supervised by the NPS, following his release on licence from prison, when he committed a series of violent and sexual offences that resulted in him receiving 33 life sentences in December 2019. We examined the case and policies in detail. McCann could and should have been recalled when he was arrested for burglary in July 2017 while still on his Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP) licence. There were eight separate occasions when probation staff were aware of the possibility of revoking his licence but failed to do so. The decision not to recall was influenced by national policies and procedures, where there was a requirement to consider alternatives to recall in every case before recall could be approved. Despite the decision not to recall McCann being rescinded, the lack of management oversight and review of recall decisions led to the recall remaining unactioned.<sup>27</sup>

McCann was known to criminal justice services for many years, with information about him being held on various recording systems. The probation assessments did not include a comprehensive review of all key sources of information. The use of the police system, the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR), was not central to the assessment of McCann's potential for violent and sexual offences. Concerns recorded by the police in relation to his sexual behaviour were not identified. His behaviour in prison and historical patterns of behaviours were not analysed. Assessments for the Parole Board focused on justification for release rather than public protection. Following his release in February 2019, McCann was managed at MAPPA Level 2 but within 12 days he was moved to Level 1 management. Multi-agency management at MAPPA Level 2 was still required to manage his assessed high risk of serious harm.

McCann's interpersonal skills and ability to manipulate staff were underestimated. His behaviour and mental health in prison were perceived to improve, based on his immediate presentation, which resulted in no further mental health assessments after 2014. As a result, this key risk factor identified previously was not assessed prior to his release and he was not referred to the offender personality disorder pathway, either in prison or post-release.

The risk management plan in place at the time of release in 2019 was insufficient to manage the risk of serious harm he posed. He should have been placed in an approved premises and should not have been allowed to reside with his family. The lack of a bed for McCann's release meant that a key element of the risk management plan was not in place and he returned to wholly inappropriate accommodation.

The team in Hertfordshire NPS responsible for the management of McCann experienced high workloads, high staff turnover, exhibited poor performance and poor management oversight.

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<sup>26</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). *Independent Review of the Case of Joseph McCann*.

<sup>27</sup> [HM Inspectorate of Probation \(2020\) A thematic review of probation recall culture and practice.](#)

All of these were central factors in the poor release planning and management across different divisions under inadequate temporary case transfer arrangements. In addition, the alternatives to recall strategy and lack of management oversight of the recall decision led to McCann being released from custody automatically.

## **Part two: The thematic review of probation recall culture and practice**

The power to recall a person to prison is one of the most important decisions that probation practitioners make, and over 27,000 of these decisions were made in 2019/2020. The immediate consequences for the recalled prisoner are self-evident but the decision also has consequences for victims, potential victims and the public at large.

The serious concerns relating to recall decision-making, highlighted in the Joseph McCann review, were, thankfully, not found in this thematic review. We looked at the current culture and practice relating to recall in the period since the serious offences committed by McCann, in the spring of 2019, and inspected a sample of 50 prison licence cases that had been recalled or had warnings issued between October 2019 and February 2020. We found that probation staff are now clear that public protection is the primary concern in recall decisions, and this was reflected in the cases we reviewed.

**Recall decision-making and threshold:** Public protection and the protection of victims are central to probation service decision-making on recall. Operational staff we spoke to are clear that this is the primary focus of recall practice. Alternatives to recall are routinely considered where appropriate, but this does not compromise the focus of decision-making on public protection.

Licence warning<sup>28</sup> practice is inconsistent both between and within organisations. There are inconsistencies in the threshold, recording and delivery of warnings. This makes it difficult to identify cases where the service user has been warned and not recalled, and to operate effective quality assurance processes. In most cases where warnings have been issued, recall to prison is still the eventual outcome. This underlines the need to review practice and issue a revised licence warning process.

**Quality assurance:** Rates of recall vary both between and within organisations. This variation cannot be accounted for solely by the circumstances of the individual case. In the NPS, divisions receive information on performance on a quarterly basis. This includes the number of recalls and the reasons for them, along with the number of licence variations. There are no performance targets in relation to recall numbers, but the reports highlight local delivery units where recall rates deviate substantially from the national average. NPS divisions use this information to monitor variations. The CRCs generate information on recalls as part of their enforcement monitoring. Again, there is no performance target for the number of recalls, and organisations do not monitor any actions taken as an alternative to recall. CRCs do, however, monitor the rates of recall. For example, one CRC identified a low rate of recalls and amended its practice as a result.

**Organisational culture:** There are important differences in recall practice and culture between the CRCs and NPS divisions. Recall culture and practice are directly influenced by national policy and high-profile serious case reviews. In recent years, there was a widespread belief among operational staff that recalls should be minimised. More recently, there have been fears that responsible officers will be unfairly held responsible for any

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<sup>28</sup> Where there has been a failure to comply with the conditions set out on a licence following release from custody, a licence warning is issued to the service user, which will set out the consequences should any further non-compliance occur.

adverse consequences resulting from a failure to instigate recall. Both perceptions undermine professional decision-making, which must be at the core of the process. The current correct balance between alternatives to custody and public protection is understood by operational staff. To ensure that operational staff do not become too risk averse, there needs to be a consistent decision-making process both for recalls and decisions not to recall. The development of a professional culture depends on operational staff feeling confident that defensible, professional decisions will be supported if a serious incident involving a person under supervision does occur.

**Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) and the post-recall process:** The relationship between the central HMPPS PPCS and probation providers operates efficiently. Emergency and out-of-hours recalls are processed promptly, and the PPCS's advice on the recall threshold is viewed positively both by senior and operational managers.

Following a standard recall, responsible officers and the PPCS alike can review cases and decide to re-release a recalled prisoner under the executive release scheme. The operation of executive release is inconsistent. Responsible officers are uncertain about the operation of the process, and the number of releases varies between providers. Consideration for release should not depend on which organisation a person is supervised by. The administration and use of the process should be reviewed.

### **Integrated Offender Management (IOM)**

For the most prolific or potentially harmful offenders, effective joint work between probation, the police and other agencies, such as drug treatment services, is essential, if this frequent reoffending is to be tackled.

In 2019, HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conducted a joint thematic inspection of IOM.<sup>29</sup>

Published in February 2020, the report outlined disappointing findings, and "scant development" of IOM since the previous inspection in 2014, which came before the *Transforming Rehabilitation* probation change programme had completed. At that time, IOM was a significant element of the Home Office and Ministry of Justice strategy to prevent crime and reduce reoffending. This is less explicit now.

Our findings in 2014 were promising, although we found differing degrees of commitment to the approach among relevant agencies in the six inspected areas. We commented that IOM is a common-sense approach that feels right, but it was hindered by the absence of clear evidence of its effectiveness. It is, therefore, concerning that there has been no response to our recommendation for an evaluation of the costs and benefits of IOM at a national level. While there is some monitoring of performance in individual areas, there is no reporting mechanism for this information to be fed back to the relevant government departments, or for learning and best practice to be disseminated more widely. Regrettably, the system for measuring the impact of IOM, provided by the Home Office to police forces, has not been fully implemented, and is still in place in only 14 police force areas. A comprehensive evaluation would therefore provide much-needed direction both nationally and within local areas.

Overall, our findings in this 2019 inspection were disappointing. In many areas, IOM has lost its way and has a much lower profile than previously. The broadening of the scope of many schemes to cover high risk of harm as well as prolific offender cases has reduced the clarity of focus, and has not been accompanied by the necessary upskilling of staff to deal with the

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<sup>29</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. (2020). [A Joint Thematic Inspection of Integrated Offender Management.](#)

different challenges presented by this type of offender. Only two out of the forty-four probation staff interviewed had received any specific IOM training, and no formal training was provided to police IOM staff. Little more than half of IOM probation staff felt that their workload was manageable.

The delivery of services to the IOM cohort was also patchy. In only a third of the IOM cases reviewed did plans set out exactly what was required of the service user as a result of their inclusion in the IOM scheme. Less than half of this cohort were getting the drug or alcohol misuse services they needed.

Full co-location of police, probation and support services appears to have become a thing of the past, with only one out of the seven sites we visited having this in place. As a result, we found that delivery is rarely integrated. In some areas, the roles of police and probation services had blurred, and the police were more actively engaged in the delivery of rehabilitation work than the probation service. The separation of probation under *Transforming Rehabilitation*, reductions in police numbers and funding cuts to most services have hindered delivery. Work to protect the public, in particular, needs to be improved.

This is not to say that our findings during this inspection were all negative. There remain some encouraging signs about the potential for IOM to provide good-quality interventions to those individuals who most need it, and we found some effective practice continuing at some of the sites we visited. There are indications that IOM can be effective in providing close monitoring and supervision, and in achieving swift enforcement. An analysis of 268 IOM cases assessed during our routine local probation inspections over the course of 2018/2019 found that they were 10 percentage points more likely to have been adequately supervised on our key standards relating to assessment, planning, delivery and review. This further supports the case for decisions to be made about who might benefit most from this multi-agency approach.

Significant changes to probation services are pending. The new model brings opportunities to develop IOM. An increase in police numbers may create the potential for a higher profile for IOM and an increased level of cross-agency collaboration to deal with numbers of offenders likely to find their way into the system. We have made several recommendations to assist in preparing for these systemic changes (see section 3, annexe 2).

#### Areas of practice we identified as enhancing the quality of IOM delivery:

Clearly defined governance and leadership arrangements provide clarity of purpose and direction for staff, managers and partners.

Regular monitoring and analysis of service users' profiles, characteristics and needs to help determine the services required to support desistance and keep people safe.

Co-location/integration of both core (CRC, NPS, the police) and wider (substance misuse service, housing providers) IOM partners in one building enable better communication, information-sharing and accessibility of services for those supervised by IOM.

All IOM agencies involved in case review meetings/panels that have a clear purpose and structure improves the ability of IOM teams to respond to the risks/needs of service users.

The allocation of cases to suitably trained, specialist IOM staff and teams enhances confidence, relationships between agencies and the quality of case supervision.

Read our IOM effective practice guide:

[www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/effective-practice](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/effective-practice)

## 7. Reducing reoffending and meeting the needs of probation service users

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Reducing the likelihood of reoffending for people under court-ordered supervision or following conditional release from prison is a prime rationale for the existence of probation services for the public and for policymakers.

There is strong evidence that probation services can and do encourage those convicted of offences to desist from crime and to lead better, more constructive lives. Probation services make this difference by systematically assessing the needs and risks of service users, planning to address those problems with the service user, implementing the planned interventions, and reviewing and amending the plan as supervision proceeds.

Effective POs deploy a range of skills in supervision to engage and inspire service users, such as prosocial modelling, motivational interviewing, problem-solving skills and cognitive-behavioural interventions. Building a good relationship, a 'working alliance', between the officer and the service user is the foundation of effective probation work.

### What are the major needs of probation service users?

In our 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 probation inspection programmes (n=4,548 individual cases), our inspectors considered which offending-related factors each individual service user had in our sample of cases. Our 'menu' of the factors which can promote reoffending, based upon the longstanding research which underpins the Offender Assessment System (OASys) used by all probation services in England and Wales, is as follows:

- lack of or unstable accommodation
- lack of education, training and employment (ETE)
- weak family support and lack of positive relationships
- lifestyle factors (including criminal friends and associates)
- alcohol misuse
- drug misuse
- inappropriate thinking and behaviour
- inappropriate attitudes to offending.

Figure 3 shows the occurrence of these factors among the cases we examined. The most common factors related to 'thinking and behaviour' (85 per cent overall), 'lifestyle' (54 per cent overall) and 'attitudes to offending' (49 per cent overall). It is well established that distorted and antisocial thinking patterns, such as rationalisations or minimisation, are associated with a propensity to offend. Antisocial associates and friendship networks provide social support for criminal lifestyles. Poor emotional regulation – such as impulsivity, resentment or anger – are also key drivers of offending.

Drug misuse (48 per cent overall) and alcohol misuse (40 per cent overall) feature heavily for probation service users. There is a strong correlation between alcohol misuse and violent crime, with almost half of violence victims believing that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol ([Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2014](#)). Drug misuse is more associated with acquisitive crimes (such as robbery, theft or burglary) as a means of paying for illicit substances. There is a stronger correlation between offending and Class A drug misuse (especially heroin and cocaine) than for 'recreational' drugs (such as cannabis or

ecstasy). Dame Carol Black's independent review of drug misuse (2020) estimates that drug misuse costs the country around £19 billion each year, and that the vast majority (86 per cent) of these drug-related harms to society emanate from heroin and crack cocaine users.<sup>30</sup>

Accommodation – homelessness or insecure tenure, or inappropriate housing – was a problem linked to offending for one in four service users in the cases we inspected. Our inspection data may indeed underestimate the problem. The Ministry of Justice (2018) cites data from OASys, indicating that 37 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men being supervised had accommodation problems. Researchers have found that accommodation is a highly dynamic factor, with many service users changing their housing status after initial assessments. Moreover, worsening accommodation situations are highly predictive of general and violent reoffending. Conversely, stable accommodation is highly predictive of remaining crime free, especially when combined with a supportive family network.

Lack of employment, training or education (ETE) appears as an offending-related issue for only 12 per cent of our sample. This is most likely an underestimation as we exclude from our inspection samples those probation service users who are more likely to have ETE needs, such as standalone unpaid work orders where there is no other probation supervision. We focus upon more complex and higher-risk cases, who have different kinds of needs which need to be addressed first, before they can start looking for employment or training. A recent study using OASys data estimated that 62 per cent of all probation service users had an ETE need.

ETE needs are more persistent than other offending-related needs; nevertheless, research indicates that well-targeted ETE interventions, such as 'getting ready for work' courses, soft skills training, coaching and placements, can reduce the likelihood of reoffending by nine percentage points, on average.

### **How well do probation services meet those needs?**

Our inspections in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 found that, overall, probation services delivered services and interventions to tackle service users' offending-related factors in over half (55 per cent) of cases.

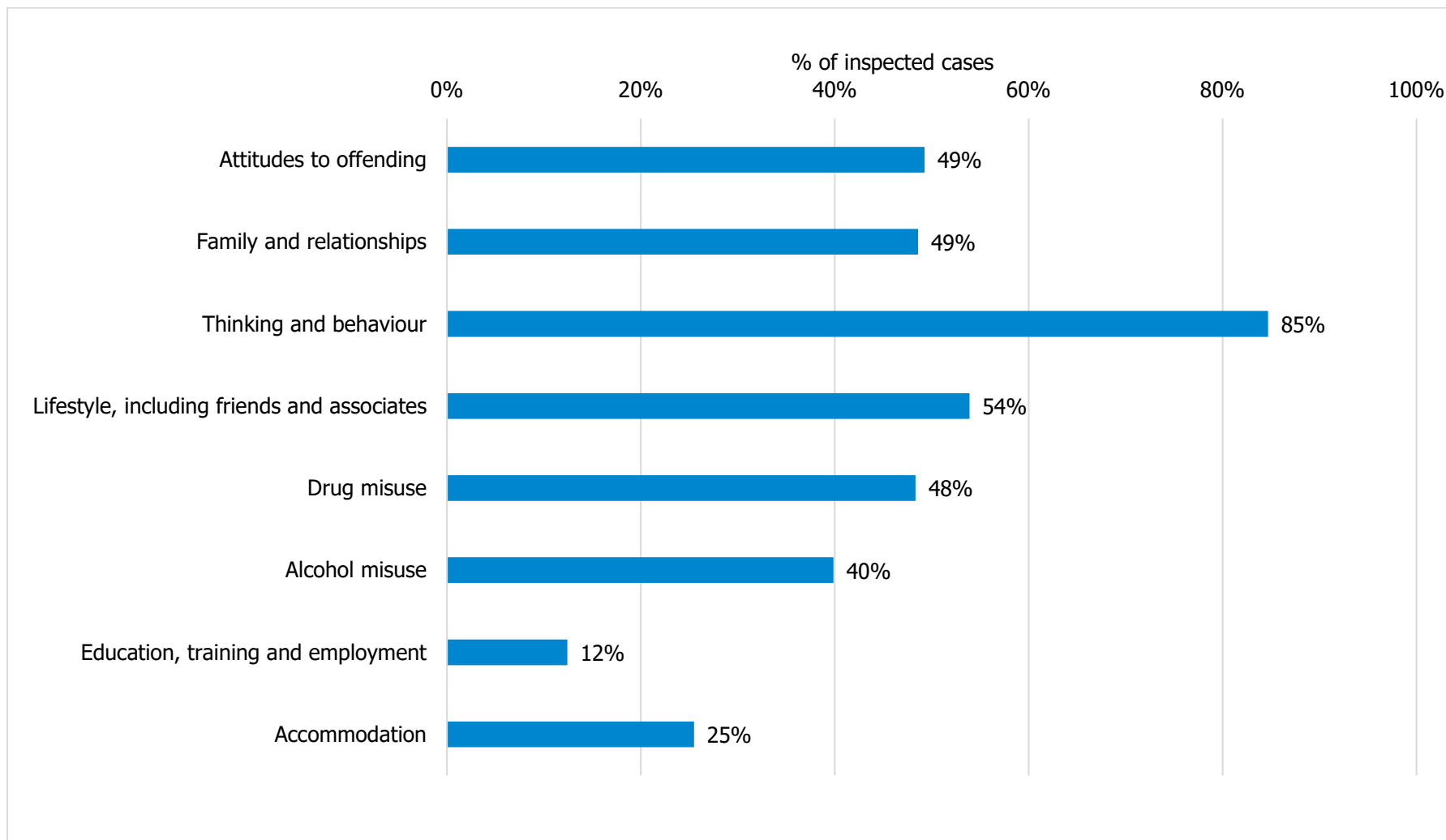
Accommodation needs were the most likely need to be met (58 per cent) but there remains a substantial gap in provision.

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<sup>30</sup> Sirdifield, C. and Brooker, C. (2020). *Academic Insights 2020/06: Maximising positive mental health outcomes for people under probation supervision*. Manchester, HMI Probation.

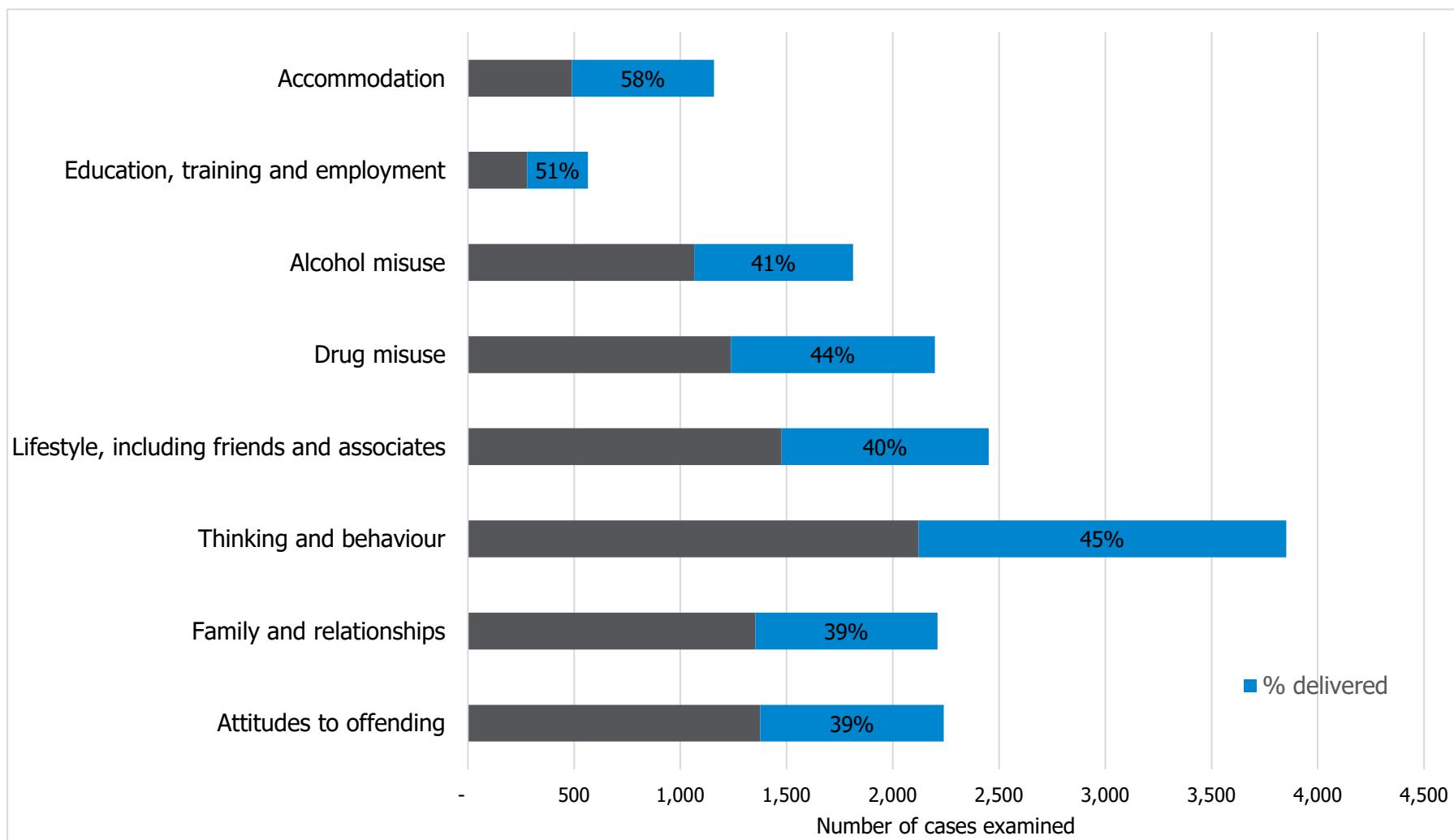


**Figure 3<sup>31</sup> Factors linked to offending identified by inspectors. Probation inspections 2018/2019 and 2019/2020**



<sup>31</sup> Figures based on 4,548 individual cases.

**Figure 4 Factors linked to offending (Number of service users with need and proportion where an intervention was delivered)**



## Drug and alcohol intervention

For individuals whose offending is linked to substance misuse problems, the court has the option to make appropriate treatment part of their sentence, through a drug or alcohol treatment requirement. Too often, we have found that, where substance misuse is identified as a factor related to offending, insufficient services are delivered. Our aggregated inspection findings for the 11 inspections conducted in 2019/2020 show that sufficient services are delivered in only 42 per cent of cases where alcohol is identified as relevant, and 41 per cent where drugs are in use. Successful delivery of treatment requirements relies on good information-sharing and timely communication between probation providers and the substance misuse agencies. Too often, we find that that this is not in place, meaning that emerging risky behaviours are not assessed by responsible officers. The following case, from our inspection of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland CRC inspection is typical:

*'Alan has an entrenched offending history related to drug use. Drug rehabilitation requirement (DRR) arrangements are not seamless; the responsible officer reports having to chase for information such as drug test results, which are supplied as a summary of a month rather than in real time. He is reported to have completed his DRR successfully, but there is no information as to the work undertaken as part of this.'*

In the same CRC, a responsible officer told us:

*"Aquarius delivers alcohol treatment requirements. There is a lack of specific and structured work undertaken with service users. There are also issues with communication; they are meant to email the details of attendances to the contact centre, who are then supposed to add it to nDelius within 48 hours. I would only get notified of a failure to attend, and so if I don't hear anything, I assume they are attending. However, I often find when I check before meeting a service user that there has not been anything added for weeks".*

## Levels of disability and health need

Nearly half (47 per cent) of the service users whose cases we inspected had a disability. The nature of the disability in the overwhelmingly largest proportion of cases (77 per cent) was mental illness. We were concerned to find that only 24 service users in our sample had a mental health treatment requirement attached to their court order. We suspect that there is a large gap in care for probation service users with mental illnesses. We recently published a research briefing indicating that up to 39 per cent of probation service users could have mental health issues.<sup>32</sup>

More effort is required to assess and facilitate treatment for probation service users with mental illness and a joint thematic inspection involving all of the criminal justice inspectorates in 2021 will explore this issue and the adequacy of services in more detail. We are hopeful that the rollout of the community sentence treatment requirements protocol will begin to address the gap in provision.

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<sup>32</sup> Sirdifield, C. and Brooker, C. (2020). *Academic Insights 2020/06: Maximising positive mental health outcomes for people under probation supervision*. Manchester, HMI Probation.

Nature of the disability	Number of cases examined	Percentage of service users with a disability (Note: they may have more than one disability)
Blind or sight loss	37	2%
Deaf or hearing loss	70	3%
Mobility – for example, difficulty in walking short distances or climbing stairs	321	15%
Manual dexterity issues	15	1%
Learning disability	463	22%
Mental illness	1,622	77%
Speech impairment	16	1%
Cognitive disability	64	3%
Other impairment – for example, long-term or progressive condition, severe disfigurement	239	11%

## Through the Gate

To support positive lifestyle changes after release from prison, we expect to see Through the Gate services that are personalised and well-coordinated, addressing each service user's specific resettlement needs.

In the *Report of the Chief Inspector of Probation* (2019), we identified some improvement in the delivery of Through the Gate services. Our previous thematic inspections<sup>33</sup> had concluded that Through the Gate services were not operating as expected, in part due to under-funding:

*'CRCs were too often doing little more than signposting and form-filling. Since those inspections, CRC delivery of Through the Gate services has improved, although provision varies and still needs to get much better overall.'*<sup>34</sup>

In response to recommendations from external bodies and requests from some CRCs, HMPPS issued a more detailed set of expectations via the enhanced minimum specification for Through the Gate services, alongside investing a further £22 million per annum in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. The new guidance sets out the minimum mandated services that should be provided via resettlement pathways, with each pathway separated into three levels of service.

Since the revised service launched in April 2019, our inspections have found a much-improved picture. CRCs have increased the numbers of staff working in Through the Gate services, who largely report good-quality training, equipping them to deliver a broader range of services. Access to probation case management systems for prison-based staff has increased in many CRC areas, allowing better communication between the prison and community-based workers. Of the 10 CRCs inspected in year two, eight achieved a rating of

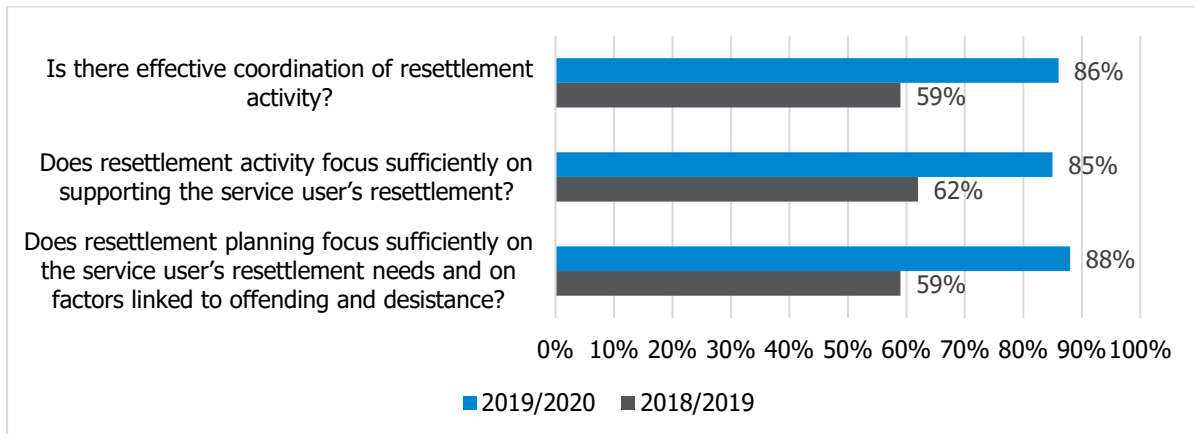
<sup>33</sup> HM Inspectorates of Probation and Prisons. (2016). *An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Short-Term Prisoners*; and HM Inspectorates of Probation and Prisons. (2017). *An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More*. Manchester: HMI Probation.

<sup>34</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2019). *Report of the Chief Inspector of Probation*.

'Outstanding' for Through the Gate services, with the two remaining areas assessed as 'Good'. In year one, we had rated Through the Gate services in four CRCs as 'Inadequate', 10 as 'Requires improvement' and seven as 'Good'. Of the CRCs we revisited in year two, all but one achieved a higher rating compared with year one.

Figure 5 provides the data from the three key questions used to assess Through the Gate services.

**Figure 5: Assessment of Through the Gate services**



We have seen numerous examples of individuals benefiting from detailed resettlement plans which are well implemented and make a real difference to their prospects on release.

**Good practice example – Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire CRC**

Alf received a 10-month custodial sentence for an offence of affray. His resettlement needs were assessed appropriately and regularly reviewed, with increased support offered in response to changes. His accommodation plans fell through during his custodial period and he received plenty of support. He was subsequently released to supported accommodation, with ongoing support of a Through the Gate mentor who assisted with education training and employment opportunities, and securing long-term, stable accommodation. A bank account was also arranged, and an appointment with the job centre after release. Resettlement planning was service user led and took into account the risks he posed to himself and others.

Our accommodation thematic inspection, however, highlighted that despite positive improvements in services, finding stable, long-term, appropriate accommodation for individuals remains a substantial challenge, and that more needs to be done:<sup>35</sup>

*'The expansion of Through the Gate services has not yet had a significant impact on the number of individuals gaining settled accommodation. The problem is worse for those being released from more distant or non-resettlement prisons, where the links with local authorities and providers in prisoners' home areas are more tenuous.'*

The aggregated findings from our 10 2019/2020 CRC inspections identify that 47 per cent of cases in our Through the Gate samples return to pre-existing accommodation on their first night after release, 5 per cent go to new permanent accommodation, 22 per cent go to new temporary accommodation and, for 27 per cent, arrangements were not clearly recorded or

<sup>35</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). Accommodation and Support for Adult Offenders in the Community and on Release from Prison in England.

they had no identified accommodation. The following extract from our inspection report on Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland CRC highlights some of the difficulties faced:

*'The Through the Gate staff are not direct housing providers but worked imaginatively to improve access to suitable accommodation. For example, local authority housing managers were invited into Nottingham prison to improve their understanding of the issues for prisoners facing release. The CRC has collaborated with the YMCA and Derby Homes (a subsidiary of Derby City Council) to establish an accommodation facility; this provides up to 13 six-month accommodation places and move-on support. In Nottingham, the city council paid the CRC to second prison navigators to guide rough sleepers pre-release towards supported accommodation. It was frustrating that, despite these efforts, it remained the case that access to stable accommodation at the point of release remained out of reach for almost half of those identified in our case sample as being in need, highlighting the lack of supply to meet demand in the community.'*

At this stage, the future of Through the Gate services is not clear; the updated target operating model for probation services describes that there will be a transition to a new resettlement model which will improve links with prisons and enhance pre-release planning, but, as of October 2020, does not provide detail of these arrangements. Our findings would suggest that this is an area of work that requires continued investment and multi-agency collaboration to provide the levels of support necessary to support desistance from offending for individuals being released from prison.

### **Inspection of accommodation and support for adult offenders**

Having somewhere safe to live that one can call home is a basic human need. Without this, it is difficult for probation services to manage individuals safely or do effective rehabilitative work. Many individuals go into prison homeless, and even more leave with nowhere to live. The enhancement of Through the Gate services has yet to make any difference to the numbers in settled accommodation. The result is that those who are released homeless are far more likely to go on to reoffend and to return to prison.

At least 22 per cent of NPS cases, by definition the highest risk individuals in the probation caseload, were released from prison without stable accommodation in 2018/2019 – equivalent to 6,515 individuals. Only 75 per cent of individuals supervised by the NPS were in settled accommodation 12 months after release.

We looked at a sample of 116 prison releases and found that, 12 months later, 17 per cent were still homeless, and a further 15 per cent remained in unsettled accommodation. For those released to settled accommodation, the percentage recalled or resentenced to custody (35 per cent) within a year was almost half that of those without such accommodation on release (63 per cent).

Responsibility for housing and homelessness sits with local authorities, and probation services have a duty to refer to them people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We found that most probation practitioners were unaware of the expectation that they should follow up referrals, and few had seen the personal housing plan produced by the local housing authority. There is currently no method for tracking referrals from probation services to local authorities, to identify how effective the process is in achieving accommodation outcomes. We found evidence of these referrals being made in only about one-third of relevant cases we looked at.

We found some positive examples of local prison release protocols that set out the responsibilities of probation providers, prisons and local authorities in implementing the duty to refer. These included initiatives by some local authorities where housing officers visited

prisons, or conducted assessments by telephone or video link, enabling housing to be organised more swiftly on release. These initiatives were by no means universal and required staff in prisons to facilitate them. The split between the NPS and CRCs has weakened local partnership working, which is under-resourced and less effective. The move to a unified probation service offers an opportunity to address this.

There is currently no cross-government approach to housing offenders, which is needed to set accommodation in the context of a broader strategy to reduce reoffending. It is encouraging that HMPPS has recently established a directorate to develop strategic work on accommodation, and we look forward to seeing improvements in service delivery.

## Increasing the voice of service users

In September 2019, the Inspectorate published its first service user engagement strategy. Our strategy is simple and contains three strategic objectives:

1. Seek advice from (ex-)service users on our developing inspection methodology.
2. Increase the involvement of service users in inspectorate activity.
3. Be a truly inclusive employer by opening our recruitment campaigns to those who have been through the criminal justice system themselves.

While the engagement of service users by providers is a key element of our inspection standards framework, we recognised that there was a gap in our own approach to involving service users in the work of the Inspectorate. We sought to change this in the second year of our core inspections (2019/2020), by speaking to service user councils in the majority of inspected services where they were operating. For the cases chosen for more detailed assessment of each service, we also offered every service user the opportunity to speak to an inspector about their experience of probation supervision. Although the take-up rate for this was relatively low, it generated data from 130 service users, which helped inform our judgements about their cases.

Good examples of our engagement with service users during inspection are reported in the Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire CRC report:<sup>36</sup>

*'We spoke to 18 individuals whose cases we inspected. Most said that their responsible officer asked about things relevant to their offending, and that their views were considered when planning what would be done during their order or licence. All said that they had received the help they needed to keep out of trouble. One service user told us: "Everyone there is great, spot on". And another: "I can't big them up enough".'*

'We also met with four service users in the Selby office. The views reported to us were largely positive. One said that she felt able to be honest with her responsible officer about how she was feeling but that there was no support for dealing with mental health issues. Another described the service he had received as *"brilliant"*, though he felt that support from probation would not be forthcoming. Another described his case manager as:

*"Respectful, willing to be flexible [appointments arranged around his work commitments], understanding, sympathetic, a good listener, motivating and interested in my life not just me as a criminal".'*

We have learnt what works well and what does not with this approach, and have sought further advice from service users and others to develop a multi-method approach to securing service user feedback in future that should generate higher response rates and more data, and directly feed into our inspection judgements. We will pilot and introduce this new

<sup>36</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). *Inspection of Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire CRC.*

approach as part of our future inspection programme, following the unification of the probation service.

We have, however, had substantial success in securing service user feedback as part of our national thematic inspections. We partnered with the organisation Empowering People: Inspiring Change (EP:IC) on our accommodation thematic inspection, and welcomed ex-service users as part of the inspection team for the first time. Through our EP:IC colleagues, we were able to talk to 75 current service users. EP:IC colleagues built the requisite trust, in a way that only those who have shared experiences can, to elicit the experience of homelessness from the individuals they spoke to. This meant that the evidence and report content were fully informed by the feedback from those in receipt of probation services, and their experiences were brought alive, as illustrated by the quotes below:

*"It really helps when you can see that someone cares. It makes you want to help yourself".*

*"It's not only the accommodation, you need the support around the accommodation".*

*"Hadn't heard of Through the Gate, was released onto the street, scared and vulnerable, got a tent. Came out on a Friday, so was homeless all weekend until the council opened on the Monday".*

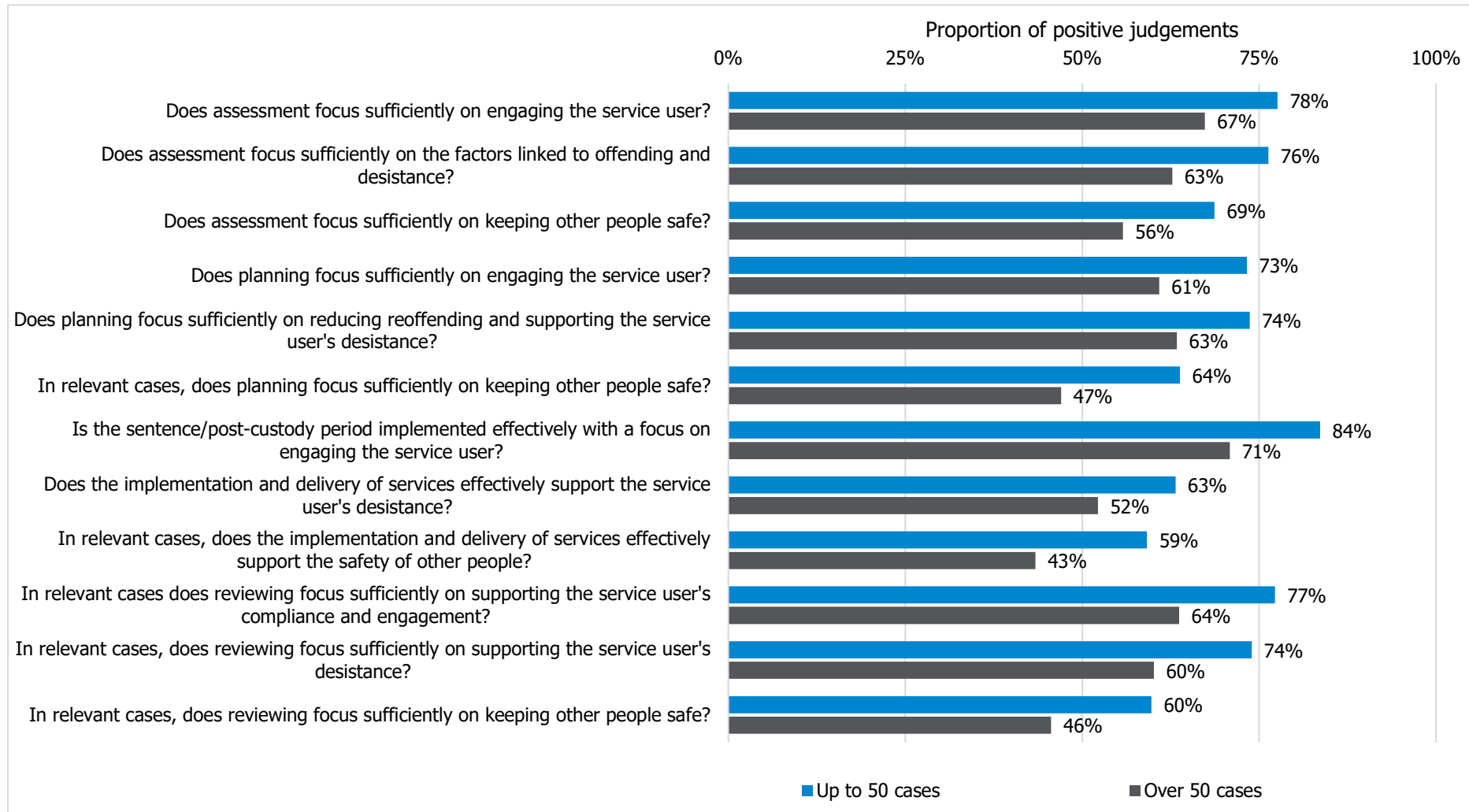
*"I thought I would be excited about leaving prison, but I wasn't, just blank. I didn't have anywhere to go".*

We are building on the benefits of this approach. We have worked with EP:IC on subsequent thematic inspections, and will continue to work in partnership with service user organisations as a core part of our inspections. We are also employing our own service user engagement lead, to develop and embed further this new way of working.



## Annexe 1 – Supplementary data.

**Figure 6: Work quality by number of cases managed by responsible officer.**



HM Inspectorate of Probation (2019). *2018/2019 inspections of probation services: summary report*. Manchester.

**Table 4: Proportion of cases judged as sufficient within Durham and Tees Valley, Northumbria, South Yorkshire and Thames Valley CRCs:**

	DTV Year 1	DTV Year 2	N'bria Year 1	N'bria Year 2	SY Year 1	SY Year 2	TV Year 1	TV Year 2
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	47%	53% ▲	54%	58% ▲	48%	67% ▲	68%	70% ▲
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	36%	55% ▲	45%	51% ▲	46%	59% ▲	57%	61% ▲
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	42%	53% ▲	41%	56% ▲	45%	60% ▲	34%	47% ▲
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	33%	54% ▲	38%	48% ▲	56%	59% ▲	44%	42% ▼

**Table 5: The quality of multi-agency practice to keep people safe**

	CRCs 2019-2020	NPS NW 2019-2020
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	38%	66%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the service user and any multi-agency plans?	49%	85%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	46%	63%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the service user's risk of harm?	48%	66%

## Annexe 2: Impact of HM Inspectorate of Probation inspections

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### **Section 1**

#### Community Rehabilitation Companies: Year 1 Recommendations

We made 194 recommendations to CRCs (or to HMPPS or Ministry of Justice) in our 2018/19 Probation inspections of the 21 CRCs.

The main themes of the recommendations in year one to improve CRC performance were:

- Improve risk management and public protection procedures
- Improve staff skills in evidence-based offender supervision
- Increase the breadth and availability of rehabilitation opportunities and interventions
- Increase the amount and quality of management oversight
- Improve work in key aspects of case management including assessment, planning and reviewing
- Improvement to the quality of some premises, facilities and ICT
- Ensure that PO and PSO workloads are manageable

#### Progress on our recommendations to CRCs

We reviewed progress on the year one recommendation in the 10 CRCs inspected in year two and found that the following progress had been made in relation to their 59 year one recommendations:

- There was sufficient progress on 18 (31 per cent)
- There was some progress on 28 (47 per cent )
- There was no progress on 13 (22 per cent )

Of some concern is the areas where no progress had been made:

- Risk management and public protection (5 recommendations)
- Workloads (2 recommendations)
- Facilities for staff (2 recommendations)
- Service user involvement
- Staff skills
- Sickness absence management

### **Section 2: CRC and NPS Recommendations**

#### **CRC Year 2 Recommendations**

As part of the 10 CRCs inspections in Year two, we made an additional 66 recommendations, the main themes of these being:

- Improve risk management and public protection procedures
- Improve staff skills in evidence-based offender supervision
- Increase the breadth and availability of rehabilitation opportunities and interventions
- Increase the amount and quality of management oversight

- Improve the management of unpaid work through better opportunities for placements, training for participants and risk management.

### **NPS recommendations**

We made 107 recommendations to the 7 NPS Divisions (or to HMPPS or Ministry of Justice ) in our Year one Probation inspections.

The main two recommendations emerging from NPS reports were:

- Improve risk management and public protection procedures
- Improve the quality of premises, facilities and ICT. The poor state of NPS buildings was of particular concern.

Other recommendations related to:

- Ensuring that PO and PSO workloads are manageable
- Ensuring that Divisions recruit sufficient staff
- Staff skills in evidence-based offender supervision
- Ensuring that child safeguarding and domestic abuse checks are made
- The breadth and availability of rehabilitation opportunities and interventions and properly utilising CRCs
- Ensuring that court reports are comprehensive and court teams sufficiently staffed
- Better ensuring that Divisions address equality and disproportionality issues
- Better use and recognition of Victim Liaison Officers

### **Section 3: Thematic inspection recommendations**

#### **An inspection of accommodation and support for adult offenders in the community and on release from prison**

In our thematic inspection on accommodation we made 11 recommendations (2 for the Ministry of Justice and 9 for HMPPS). Both Ministry of Justice and 6 of the 9 HMPPS recommendations were fully agreed and the other 3 recommendations were partially agreed. Details of all actions and timescales are available in the HMPPS action plan at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accomodation-hmip-action-plan>

#### **A thematic inspection of the SFO investigation and review process**

In relation to our thematic inspection of SFO process we made 15 recommendations (2 for the Ministry of Justice and 13 for HMPPS). Both Ministry of Justice and 8 HMPPS recommendations were agreed, 3 were partially agreed and 2 were not agreed. Details of all actions and timescales are available in the HMPPS action plan at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-further-offences-sfo-investigation-and-review-process>

#### **A joint thematic inspection of Integrated Offender Management (IOM)**

In relation to our thematic inspection of IOM we made 11 recommendations for a range of organisations including the Ministry of Justice , HMPPS, Police and Crime Commissioners and the leaders of police national probation and CRC organisations. Ten of the 11 recommendations have been agreed and the other recommendation has been partially agreed by the Ministry of Justice and Home Office. Details of all actions taken and future timescales had not been made available online, by HMPPS, at the time of writing.