



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of probation services in:
South West region
National Probation Service

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2021

Contents

Foreword	3
Ratings	5
Executive summary	6
Recommendations	13
Background	18
1. Organisational delivery	19
2. Case supervision	41
3. NPS-specific work	55
Annexe 1: Background to probation services	63
Annexe 2: Methodology	64
Annexe 3: Organisational design and map	68
Annexe 4: Inspection data	70

Acknowledgements

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

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

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

© Crown copyright 2021

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence or email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation
ISBN 978-1-914478-17-8

Published by:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

Follow us on Twitter [@hmiprobation](https://twitter.com/hmiprobation)

Foreword

This inspection of the South West National Probation Service (NPS) region is the final of our second round of inspections against the new probation inspection standards we launched in 2018. From Autumn 2021, our inspections will change to reflect the new unified probation model for delivery of probation services.

The overall rating for this NPS region is 'Good'.

We inspected the region during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, when national and regional exceptional delivery models were in operation to continue the delivery of key services safely. The region was also preparing for the transition to the new unified Probation Service, which came into effect on 26 June 2021.

We are publishing separate reports on our findings from Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, and Dorset, Devon and Cornwall divisions of the KSS CRC, which became part of the South West region at the end of June 2021.

The region has a clear strategy to reduce reoffending and protect the public, with a focus on the delivery of a high-quality service. Strategic priorities are communicated to staff and strategic partners, and the region is a key partner in the South West Reducing Reoffending Board. A good range of interventions and services is available to address offending and manage the risk of harm. Inspectors were pleased to see tailored services in place for women, and young people aged 18–25 years. We acknowledge that the region is taking steps to consider disproportionality and the regional response to diversity, which, given the findings in our thematic inspection report on race equality in probation,¹ is essential.

We note the strong focus that probation practitioners in the south-west have on engaging with people on probation, to support their compliance with interventions to reduce reoffending. Practitioners access a range of services and use them effectively to reduce reoffending and support desistance in most cases.

Leaders have increased their focus on staff engagement since our previous inspection, which has been assisted by the effective use of technology to support remote working. High-level strategies have been developed to address and respond to staff wellbeing, but implementation is not embedded completely and the positive impact on staff wellbeing not fully seen.

Our inspectors were concerned about the high caseloads that staff are currently responsible for and the impact of additional responsibilities such as peer support and covering for absent colleagues. Over three-quarters of probation officers have workloads of over 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS workload management tool, and victim liaison officers' caseloads are unreasonably high. Despite this, we saw committed and enthusiastic victim liaison officers, and we rated their work as 'Outstanding'

The increased recruitment of probation officers in training is a positive step, with 32 staff undergoing training to become qualified probation officers in the South West

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2021). *Race equality in probation services: the experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic probation service users and staff.*

region. Their retention will be critical to respond to the current high workloads and enable probation practitioners to manage the responsibilities of their role effectively.

As we highlighted in our 2019/2020 annual report,² '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'. While the NPS policy is to initiate information sharing with police domestic abuse units in cases where there is clear evidence of such risk, the Inspectorate expects this to take place in all cases, to ensure that all the relevant information is available to inform individual assessments and the appropriate risk management and sentence planning. We also expect appropriate child safeguarding checks to be conducted. In the South West region, inadequate information-exchange processes resulted in many cases being allocated without the necessary information to inform assessments to safeguard children and vulnerable adults being accessed. In too many cases, this information was not obtained following sentence. This is a key area of improvement for the NPS, to improve the focus on risk of harm in all areas of the delivery of the sentence.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

² HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2020). *Annual report: inspection of probation services (2019/2020)*.

Ratings

South West
National Probation Service

Score **16/30**

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Requires improvement



2. Case supervision

2.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



2.4 Reviewing

Requires improvement



3. NPS-specific work

3.1 Court reports and case allocation

Requires improvement



3.2 Statutory victim work

Outstanding



Executive summary

Overall, South West National Probation Service (NPS) is rated as 'Good'. The rating has been determined by inspecting this provider in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 10 'standards', shared between the domains. Our fieldwork was conducted remotely between 22 February and 19 March 2021. HM Inspectorate of Probation standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with people who have offended.³ Published scoring rules generate the overall provider rating.⁴

The last inspection of the region was conducted as an inspection of the South West South Central NPS division, which we rated as 'Good'. The division separated into two regions in April 2020, and this inspection focuses on the newly formed South West region. This is the first regional inspection of the South West region and, as such, direct data comparisons will not be drawn between the current inspection findings and those of the previous inspection, although there will be some reference to progression in the narrative. The findings and subsequent ratings in those three domains are described here.

1. Organisational delivery



The South West region comprises six geographical clusters or local delivery units (LDUs), covering: Bristol and South Gloucestershire; Somerset; Wiltshire and Gloucestershire; Devon and Torbay; Plymouth, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; and Dorset. It employs 718 staff and supervises 7,620 individuals serving prison and community sentences. It also provides victim contact services to 3,804 victims.

In the last inspection of the South West South Central NPS division in 2018, we scored leadership as 'Good'. The South West has maintained this rating for leadership since the move to two separate regions and increased its rating to 'Good' for services. The ratings for staff, and information and facilities remain as 'Requires improvement'.

The South West region has a clear vision and strategy to deliver a high-quality service to protect the public and reduce reoffending. The focus on quality is supported by the quality development team, and their work is welcomed by practitioners and managers. Individual quality development officers are attached to LDUs to provide support, guidance and training to improve quality in practice. However, the priority given to ensuring that quality practice is delivered varies among senior leaders, and the impact of quality improvement work is not seen consistently in case management. While practitioners engage well with people on

³ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

⁴ Each of the 10 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale, in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 30, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–5 = 'Inadequate'; 6–15 = 'Requires improvement'; 16–25 = 'Good'; 26–30 = 'Outstanding'.

probation and, in most cases, deliver services to reduce reoffending and support desistance, in too few cases appropriate attention is paid to keeping people safe.

Many probation practitioners consider their workloads to be too high, impacting on their ability to deliver high-quality services, particularly in Somerset, and Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. While almost all practitioners interviewed were responsible for fewer than 50 cases, factors such as the need to cover staff sickness, implementing and adapting to the Covid-19-related exceptional delivery model (EDM), and complicated administrative processes were identified as barriers to effective practice. The region has implemented a wellbeing strategy, but some staff we interviewed told inspectors that this felt tokenistic as the issue of workload is unresolved.

Senior leaders engage effectively with most key stakeholders, including Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) delivering services locally. There has been an increase in the use of services delivered by CRCs, and good relationships have been established with services locally to improve women's provision. The region is well represented on the South West Reducing Reoffending Board, which provides opportunities to improve services through shared priorities and commissioning arrangements. Services support desistance well in Plymouth, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and monitor and manage risk of harm in Dorset effectively, although this varies between the six LDUs. Overall, sufficient services are delivered to address offending and manage risk of harm.

Managers have a good understanding of performance, which is informed by data from the performance and quality team. The attention given to performance and accountability has overshadowed the focus on quality in some LDUs, and a more consistent approach to quality improvement is necessary. The routine exchange of information with police domestic violence units and children's services remains insufficient and escalation processes are not used effectively.

Key strengths of the organisation are as follows:

- the region has a clear vision and strategy, understood by and communicated to staff and stakeholders
- engagement with the South West Reducing Reoffending Board is good
- collaboration between senior leaders and CRCs in the region is supporting the transition to the new probation services
- strategic leaders have increased their focus on staff engagement in support of the transition to the new structures and are more visible to staff
- well-established performance monitoring and management processes are in place and managers understand performance locally and regionally.

The main areas for improvement are as follows:

- many probation officer (PO) workloads are high across the region, with 81 per cent having workloads of over 110 per cent, as measured by the NPS workload management tool
- the impact of the focus on quality and development is not seen consistently in practice, particularly in relation to keeping people safe
- the wellbeing strategy is not embedded fully; almost one-third of practitioners considered that insufficient attention is paid to their wellbeing

- robust information exchange arrangements are not in place with police domestic abuse units and children's services, and the impact of this can be seen in the quality of assessment to keep people safe and risk of harm work.

2. Case supervision



We inspected the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing in 28 community sentence cases and 58 post-release supervision cases, which involved interviewing 71 probation practitioners and 22 people on probation. Each of these cases was inspected for the quality of engagement with people on probation and how issues relevant to offending and desistance were addressed. In the 86 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work to keep other people safe. The quality of work undertaken in relation to each element of case supervision needs to be above a specific threshold for it to be rated as sufficient.

At the last divisional inspection, assessment was rated as 'Outstanding', planning as 'Good', and both implementation and delivery, and review as 'Requires improvement'.

In this inspection, we rated the South West region as 'Requires improvement' for assessment, 'Good' for planning, 'Good' for implementation and delivery, and 'Requires improvement' for review.

Practitioners involve people on probation in all aspects of case supervision, which is positive to see. We recognise the challenges and adaptations required to involve individuals meaningfully in their supervision during a period of restricted social contact. Practitioners have achieved this well, particularly when implementing and delivering the sentence.

Assessments identified and analysed the relevant factors associated with offending and supporting desistance, which produced well-informed plans to reduce reoffending. Assessments to keep people safe made use of information available to practitioners and involved other agencies in too few cases, which reduced the rating for assessment from the previous inspection. The delivery of interventions and services supported desistance in most cases, and the level and nature of contact promoted engagement and compliance with interventions. We saw positive use of accommodation, and education, training and employment (ETE) services. Relationships with other agencies have been particularly effective in establishing access to services for women and individuals with personality disorders.

Accredited programmes are delivered ordinarily in a group setting, and amendments were made nationally to how they would be delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic, through the alternative delivery framework (ADF). This includes the potential to deliver alternative one-to-one interventions, following an assessment of suitability. The confidence of practitioners, to deliver structured one-to-one interventions and make adaptations for remote delivery, varied and in some cases alternatives were not delivered where required. Waiting lists for programmes have increased from 110 in October 2019 to 172 in October 2020.

The frequency and nature of contact with people on probation was appropriate to keep other people safe in over three-quarters of cases, although the implementation and delivery of the sentence focused on keeping people safe in only two-thirds of

cases. Consideration was not always given to potential victims; for example, when people on probation disclosed new relationships, practitioners did not always enquire about the details of partners and children they were in contact with. In almost half of the cases inspected, plans to keep people safe were not reviewed or adjusted following a change in risk factors. Inspectors noted that consideration was not always given to taking a formal approach to multi-agency working through multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) or a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) in cases where we identified an increase in the risk of harm.

Key strengths of case supervision are as follows:

- practitioners engage people on probation well in all aspects of the sentence, particularly implementation and delivery
- probation practitioners focus on re-engaging people on probation after enforcement action or recall has been initiated
- offending-related factors are identified and analysed to inform planning to address the most critical needs
- the nature and frequency of contact arranged with most cases are appropriate to support desistance and manage risk of harm
- offending-related factors are identified, and critical factors prioritised in planning.

Areas of case supervision requiring improvement include:

- assessments are not informed routinely by domestic abuse and children's safeguarding checks in too many cases
- the key focus on keeping people safe is not consistent
- waiting lists for accredited programmes have increased and the delivery of alternative structured one-to-one interventions varies by individual practitioner
- contingency arrangements to address any potential increases in risk are not identified routinely, and in too many cases are not tailored to individuals' specific risk of harm factors
- case reviews are not informed by a professionally curious approach following changes in factors related to risk of harm and offending. As a result, necessary adaptations to plans are sometimes not made.

3. NPS-specific work

NPS

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

Court reports and case allocation

We inspected 85 court reports, looking at the quality of information provided to court. Of those cases, 83 had been sentenced and allocated either to the NPS or a CRC, and we looked at the quality of the allocation process in those cases.

Of the court reports inspected, 69 per cent achieved our standards for the first key question on the quality of the report presented at court. For the key question on the quality and timeliness of case allocation, 57 per cent achieved our standards. As the lowest of these scores drives the overall rating, this meant that performance against this standard is rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Although information on previous convictions and prosecution documents were available to court report authors, well over half of the reports we inspected did not draw on all available sources of information, including that relating to child safeguarding and domestic abuse.

Over 90 per cent of individuals appearing before the court were engaged in the preparation of court reports, and their views were considered. The advice provided to courts considered factors linked to their offending and risk of harm, and sentencers told us that the information provided in court reports was useful to inform their sentencing decisions. Court duty staff use the effective proposal framework (EPF) routinely when considering sentencing options, and proposals were appropriate in many of the reports inspected, which included the identification of requirements to meet the offending needs and risk of harm factors in the case.

Following sentence, cases are allocated promptly to the correct service (that is, the NPS or CRC), and in 86 per cent of cases the information available is transferred to the NPS or CRC to inform the case allocation to a practitioner of the appropriate grade. However, in over two-thirds of court reports, domestic abuse checks were not undertaken, and children's safeguarding checks were not made in almost half of cases where there were indicators of child protection or safeguarding concerns. This meant that this information was not available to inform the allocation decision. If not undertaken at this stage, responsibility for these checks then transfers to the receiving organisation, which results in delays in the completion of well-informed risk assessments to determine how to implement the sentence safely. In too many cases, this information was not available to the NPS or CRC to inform allocation decisions, impacting on the overall quality of case allocation, which therefore achieved a rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Key strengths of court reports and case allocation are:

- court duty officers involve individuals appearing before the court in the preparation of reports and take their views into account
- the Effective Proposal Framework is used to help ensure that report authors take into account all requirements in their proposals
- proposals made to the court are appropriate and sentencers value the advice and information in court reports to inform their decisions
- cases are allocated to the correct agency, and promptly.

Areas for improvement for court reports and case allocation are:

- domestic abuse and safeguarding checks are not always carried out where required
- available sources of information are not always used to inform reports
- the probation service receiving the case (for example, the relevant CRC) is not fully informed of the potential risks of the person on probation, so that they can start the sentence safely and promptly.

Statutory victim work

We inspected the management of 29 cases where there was a victim entitled to a service under the statutory victim contact scheme. In 13 cases, we looked at the contact with victims immediately following the individual being sentenced to custody, and in 16 cases we looked at the work with victims at the point of release of people on licence. We also looked at ongoing contact with victims who had opted into the victim contact scheme, and communication to support the safety of victims. We held meetings with the senior manager in the NPS responsible for victim services; two middle managers supervising victim contact staff; and seven victim liaison officers (VLOs).

We found that well over 80 per cent of cases met all our standards for initial contact, ongoing contact and communication, and pre-release work with victims. The region achieved a rating of 'Outstanding' for this standard.

Initial contact with victims who are eligible for statutory victim contact is personalised; it explains the victim contact scheme to them and gives enough detail to help them make an informed choice about whether they want to consent to the scheme. Victims make an important contribution to risk management. The scheme gives those individuals who have been affected directly by violent and sexual offences the opportunity to contribute their views to the management of people on probation, and relevant licence conditions were identified and put in place in 91 per cent of cases.

Although VLO attendance at MAPPA meetings was limited, there was evidence of effective information exchange with other probation practitioners, who were then able to present the views of victims in the VLO's absence. The routine attendance of VLOs in multi-agency meetings would strengthen the representation of victims in decisions to keep people safe. However, VLO caseloads are unreasonably high, and it has been necessary to prioritise the tasks they undertake, to maintain the delivery of high-quality services to victims. Despite high caseloads, VLOs have achieved this exceptionally well.

A greater focus on gaining information on the protected characteristics of victims would provide the NPS with a better understanding of the profile of victims in the South West region.

Key strengths of statutory victim work are:

- VLOs make appropriate and timely contact with victims soon after individuals are sentenced to custody
- initial contact with victims is personalised, explains clearly what victims can expect throughout the sentence and provides enough information to help them decide if they want to consent to the victim contact scheme
- referrals are made to other agencies, and victims are provided with information about the services available for additional help or support
- VLOs share relevant information with practitioners routinely, and attention is paid to victim safety when planning for release
- the views of victims are sought to inform decisions about an individual's release, and victims are supported in doing so.

Areas of improvement for statutory victim work are:

- too few victims are informed of what action to take in the event of unwanted contact from perpetrators
- less than one-third of VLOs are involved in MAPPA where this would have been appropriate
- victims are given support to make a personal statement to contribute to parole applications in too few relevant cases
- the protected characteristic profile of victims in the region is not fully understood.

Recommendations

Achievement of recommendations from the previous inspection⁵

In our previous inspection report, we made seven recommendations to the South West South Central NPS division. That division no longer exists, but recommendations were taken forward by the division and then transferred to the two successor regions. During this inspection, we reviewed the extent to which these recommendations have been achieved. We found that sufficient progress had been made on two recommendations, some progress on three and insufficient progress on one. One other recommendation is now the responsibility of a national NPS directorate as it relates to approved premises, which are no longer in the remit of the regional probation director (RPD). Four recommendations will be repeated.

An additional three recommendations were made for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) and the Ministry of Justice, which have also been reviewed.

In our previous inspection we recommended that this NPS region:

1. *reviews and actively manages workloads, to ensure an equitable and efficient distribution of work*

The region has made some progress on this recommendation.

Workforce planning is reviewed weekly through resource planning committee meetings, where decisions are made about resource allocation. This provides a responsive and consistent approach to regional decisions about resource allocation. Practitioners and managers, in some areas, have not felt the benefit of additional resources, and expressed concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the workload management tool (WMT) to inform decisions. Almost half of practitioners we interviewed (46 per cent) regard their workload as unmanageable.

There is an imbalance in the distribution of workload between probation services officers (PSOs) and POs. People on probation are allocated to a 'tier', to determine the level of resource required to manage their assessed risks and needs. In the South West region, a higher rate of lower-tier individuals are allocated to POs, rather than PSOs, compared with the national rates.

The average PO workload is above 100 per cent on the WMT in all LDUs, although highest in Dorset, and Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Further work is required to ensure that workload is distributed equitably. This may be addressed as professional qualification in probation (PQiP) learners who are currently under training in the region qualify as POs and start to take on PO caseloads.

⁵ HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2018). *An inspection of the South West South Central National Probation Service*.

2. *ensures that appropriate and effective use is made of the services provided by the CRCs*

The region has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

The use of services delivered by the CRCs was reviewed by the South West South Central NPS division in November 2019. The views of NPS practitioners and managers were gathered and analysed to understand barriers to referrals and their experience of services delivered by the CRC. The findings were shared with the CRCs, and several recommendations were made following this piece of work, including for the CRCs to consider methods to promote the services available, and for the CRCs and NPS alike to improve communication. Use of the rate card is tracked at team and individual practitioner level, and senior leaders raise any issues at LDU accountability meetings. Use of the EPF is monitored, to ensure that report authors make effective proposals and use the interventions available appropriately. There has been an increase in the use of CRC services, and we saw referrals to rehabilitation activity requirements (RARs), delivered by the CRC, in some of the cases we inspected.

3. *improves the processes for obtaining relevant information from children's services and domestic abuse units in all relevant cases*

The region has made insufficient progress on this recommendation and it will be repeated.

South West region has raised this as a national issue, as there is no national agreement in place for information exchange between probation and police domestic abuse units, resulting in differential practice between NPS regions. South West region monitors and tracks the exchange of information to review checks carried out at court, and there is an expectation that checks are carried out prior to allocation. A direct access framework has been implemented in the Gloucestershire and Devon and Cornwall police areas, which allows the NPS direct access to police information on cases they supervise. These arrangements are in place in Devon and Cornwall for community practitioners, although not for report authors completing pre-sentence reports. In Gloucestershire, these arrangements were suspended because of Covid-19 restrictions, which reduced NPS access to police premises.

Inspectors found that 67 per cent of court reports did not have a domestic abuse check completed prior to allocation, and safeguarding checks were not made in 43 per cent of cases. Too few court reports included information from the police and children's services. Escalation routes are in place for practitioners, where they are unable to gain adequate information, but they have not been fully effective.

We expect that, if checks are not carried out at the court report stage, prior to allocation, they should be undertaken at the start of the sentence, to inform initial assessments. Where domestic abuse checks had not been undertaken at court, this information was not gained to inform the initial assessment at the start of the sentence, in almost half of the cases inspected. Outstanding safeguarding checks were not carried out to inform initial assessments, following sentence, in one-third of cases.

4. *puts in place robust contingency plans to address staff shortfalls, specifically in approved premises*

This recommendation is now for the attention of the national NPS lead responsible for approved premises.

The management and oversight of approved premises has now moved to a central team and is not in the remit of RPDs to influence. This recommendation will move to the national NPS team.

5. *undertakes the required risk of harm assessments in all applicable cases*

The region has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.

This recommendation relates to the completion of risk of harm assessments pre-allocation to either the NPS or CRC. The region made offender assessment system (OASys) training more accessible for court staff, and guidance has been issued to court teams to explain when a formal risk assessment is required to accompany an allocation. There are systems in place to monitor the completion of assessments, pre-sentence, for individuals posing a medium risk of harm. Risk of harm screenings were conducted prior to the point of allocation in 95 per cent of court reports inspected. A full assessment of risk of harm was undertaken at the start of sentence in over 90 per cent of cases, although information sharing to inform quality assessments requires improvement.

6. *keeps the progress of supervision under review, involving the service user wherever possible*

The region has made some progress on this recommendation.

The cases we inspected demonstrated that practitioners were engaging people on probation in assessments, plans, delivering the sentence and reviewing their progress. Engagement with people on probation was an area of strength identified by inspectors, and there was evidence of a sufficient focus to encourage engagement and compliance in 74 per cent of cases, which was positive. However, reviewing remains an area for development, particularly to keep other people safe. Reviews focused on keeping people safe in 58 per cent of cases, and desistance in 64 per cent.

7. *ensures that risk management plans include effective contingency plans to address heightened risk of harm to others.*

The region has made some progress on this recommendation.

Progress against this recommendation has been supported by the work of the quality development team, which has delivered sentence and risk management planning workshops with a focus on contingency planning. Best practice has been cascaded and good practice examples of quality risk management plans have been identified by the region and circulated to staff.

Quality assurance benchmarking sessions have taken place for senior probation officers (SPOs) carrying out quality assurance activities to promote consistency in practice. Quality assurance guidance for parole assessment report – offender manager (PAROM) reports has been shared with managers and practitioners. The work undertaken has focused on contingency planning and its benefits to support risk management across practice interfaces, such as approved premises and prisons.

However, the activity undertaken has not yet translated into consistently improved practice, and less than two-thirds of the cases inspected had effective contingency arrangements in place.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

8. *work to resolve the difficulties in recruiting sufficient probation staff in the South West South Central division*

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has made some progress on this recommendation.

Recruitment drives have taken place and recruitment campaigns have been promoted, supported by social media to reach a wider audience. However, recruitment remains a challenge. The region has recruited 32 PQiP learners, but it takes time for them to complete their training and embed learning, to be in a position to hold a full caseload. Senior leaders anticipate that it will be some time, up to 18 months, before the benefits of increased resources are seen.

The Ministry of Justice should:

9. *review the process for prioritising and escalating concerns, set out in the facilities management contract*

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

Since the last inspection, changes have been made nationally to prioritising and escalating concerns, through the facilities and management contract. A facilities management change programme has been implemented to improve delivery and satisfaction in the facilities management contract. Feedback from NPS and CRC staff indicates that this process has improved, although further work is required, and is being undertaken nationally as part of a review of accommodation for the move to the new unified Probation Service.

10. *audit the division's facilities to make sure that they are accessible, safe and secure for staff and for individuals subject to supervision*

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

Since the last inspection, compliance audits on probation properties have been undertaken through the new facilities management contracts. To date, auditors have carried out dip-sample statutory audits of approved premises and other key sites, with a national rolling programme of 20 audits per month from 01 November 2018. This process is in addition to that carried out by Ministry of Justice Estates in-house personnel (quality, health, safety and environment managers), who use the data from audits to address any areas of concern.

While audits have taken place, action to improve accessibility has not been taken, and some premises remain a challenge for users with mobility needs. While 79 per cent of practitioners told inspectors that they felt the region paid appropriate attention to staff safety, we heard examples from staff of some concerns regarding the safety of buildings in some locations.

New recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made 13 recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of probation services. Given the move from 26 June 2021 to a new unified Probation Service, we have addressed our recommendations to the RPD with responsibility for the delivery of probation services across the south-west of England, who will also take responsibility for recommendations from the inspection of Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, and Dorset, Devon and Cornwall CRCs.

These recommendations have been repeated, in part, from the previous inspection.

Probation Service – South West region should:

1. ensure that there is an equitable and efficient distribution of work between probation practitioners across the region
2. undertake timely domestic abuse and safeguarding children checks for all relevant cases prior to allocation
3. ensure that risk management plans include effective contingency arrangements to respond to heightened risk of harm, specific to the individual's risks
4. ensure that reviews of assessments and plans are completed where necessary.

New recommendations: Probation Service – South West region:

5. develop effective mechanisms to monitor and manage the workload of practitioners not covered by the WMT, including court officers, accredited programme facilitators and VLOs
6. improve information-sharing processes with other agencies, to inform assessments, plans and reviews undertaken by probation practitioners, particularly in relation to domestic abuse
7. embed effective quality assurance arrangements to improve quality of practice, particularly in relation to risk of harm
8. reduce waiting lists for accredited programmes
9. implement the service user engagement strategy, with representation to reflect the diverse background and experience of people on probation in the region.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

10. address staff retention obstacles that exist for the Probation Service – South West region to manage staffing levels and the distribution of workloads
11. work with national police and children's services leads to establish effective information arrangements for all regions
12. collate feedback from victims and share this with probation services to inform learning, development and practice improvement
13. ensure that premises are suitable and accessible to meet the needs of individuals under supervision and staff.
14. ensure probation services record RAR days using a consistent approach.

Background

The NPS has transitioned from seven divisions – six across England and one in Wales – to a new unified Probation Service which consists of 11 regions across England and one in Wales. As a national organisation, the NPS has standardised processes and guidance on policies and practice.

In April 2020, the South West South Central NPS division started the transition into two separate regions. At the time of the inspection (February–March 2021), the South West and South Central regions were, in the most part, operating independently, although some combined functions remained, including victim liaison, public protection and training. The transition to two regions has been implemented in a phased approach, with minimal disruption noted by staff.

The South West region comprises six geographical clusters or LDUs, covering: Bristol and South Gloucestershire; Somerset; Wiltshire and Gloucestershire; Devon and Torbay; Plymouth, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; and Dorset. These areas are covered by Devon and Cornwall; Avon and Somerset; Dorset; Wiltshire; and Gloucestershire Police Forces.

The population of the region in mid-2019 was estimated at 5.6 million. Overall police recorded crime rates (excluding fraud) for the South West region are low compared with the rest of England and Wales. Levels of violence against the person are also lower, with 24.2 crimes per 1,000 population in the region, the highest being in Avon and Somerset, with 26.7 crimes per 1,000, compared with 30.1 crimes per 1,000, on average, for England and Wales.

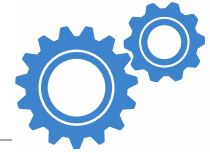
The south-west is served by two CRCs, which ceased to exist after 26 June 2021 (Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, and Devon, Dorset and Cornwall), 11 prisons, 24 courts and nine approved premises. The CRCs have also been inspected separately by HM Inspectorate of Probation in February and March 2021, respectively, and reports will be published in summer 2021.

As at October 2020, the South West region employed 718 staff and supervised 7,620 individuals serving prison and community sentences. It also provided victim contact services to 3,804 victims.

The region faced significant challenges in the 12 months preceding this inspection. In addition to the transition to the new unified Probation Service, it responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, mobilising remote working arrangements and introducing new ways of working to minimise risks to staff and people on probation. EDMs were introduced nationally and a gold, silver and bronze command structure was put in place to provide clear lines of communication from HMPPS headquarters to all areas of the country.

Eighty-one per cent of POs and 13 per cent of PSOs hold caseloads greater than the local WMT target. The region has increased the recruitment of POs through the PQiP scheme and there are currently 32 PQiP learners in the region.

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



1. Organisational delivery

The South West region has a clear, well-embedded strategic vision focused on delivering a high-quality service. The region has introduced a comprehensive quality framework, with the aim of supporting staff to understand what high-quality work looks like. Their ability to deliver this strategy in full is limited by high workloads in some areas and across some grades of staff, and the requirement to respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. The region was previously part of the South West South Central NPS division, which we last inspected in 2018.

In April 2020, shortly after national restrictions were put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the division started its phased transition into two separate regions. Direct data comparisons will not be drawn between the inspection carried out in 2018 and the current inspection, as this is the first inspection of a separate South West region, although we will make reference to a comparison of ratings in the narrative.

The region's operating model supports a personalised approach to working with people on probation. Staff vacancies and absence levels in some areas impact negatively on the delivery of high-quality work with all individuals in the region. Efforts are being made to increase recruitment, in recognition of a shortfall in qualified POs, although the benefits of this will take up to 18 months to be seen.

The region has undertaken an analysis of the services available to inform commissioning intentions, and we saw good examples of joint work to provide services for women and a commitment towards the homelessness prevention strategy. Despite the challenges of the last 12 months and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, services have been delivered to a sufficient standard to support desistance, reduce reoffending and keep people safe.

Information and communications technology (ICT) arrangements support flexible working, and the region implemented remote working when Covid-19 restrictions were introduced. Assurance systems and national performance measures are in place, although they have not yet impacted fully on practice improvement. We saw strengths in the work of the quality development team, although this work is not embedded consistently throughout the region and is diluted by a focus on performance accountability rather than quality in some LDUs.

Strengths:

- Strong partnership relationships are established with and valued by reducing reoffending partners and sentencers.
- The region has a clear vision to deliver a high-quality service to all individuals. The South West region was formed in April 2020 and the transition to regional arrangements are under way.
- The region has established management information systems, providing an understanding of the profile of the caseload to identify commissioning intentions and gaps in service delivery.
- The routine use of remote technology has meant that senior leaders have been more visible; communication with staff is good.

- Services and interventions are well established for women, and implementation of the female offender strategy is progressing well.

Areas for improvement:

- Practitioners, including POs and VLOs, have high caseloads, and the benefit of recruitment of PQiP learners has yet to be seen.
- Almost half of the probation practitioners interviewed regard their workload as unmanageable.
- Probation practitioners and managers value the role of the quality development officers, although the focus on quality is not consistent across the region.
- A management support hub has been implemented, but managers' workloads do not allow sufficient time for a focus on quality or to embed the advice of quality development officers.
- Arrangements with police domestic abuse units and children's safeguarding do not promote the routine exchange of information to produce well-informed assessments and plans to manage risk of harm.
- A consistent focus is required on developing the quality of work in relation to risk of harm.

Current inspection

1.1. Leadership



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

Good

Key data

Current inspection

Proportion of staff interviewed who agreed that the organisation prioritised quality⁶

60%

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

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

The South West region has a clear vision and strategy, with a regional delivery plan closely aligned to the national NPS vision and priorities. Senior leaders have

⁶ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

established positive relationships with stakeholders and partners in the south-west, with whom they have shared the vision and strategy. There are links to the south-west Reducing Reoffending Board strategy priorities, particularly in relation to working with women. Regional objectives are reviewed quarterly and adjustments are made where necessary, to ensure that the service focuses on the right priorities across the region both for probation and stakeholders.

There has been an increased focus on the quality of work since our last inspection. While quality development officers have become more visible during the Covid-19 pandemic, the priority given to the quality agenda by senior leaders varies. The impact of the quality development strategy on frontline probation practice has not been consistent, and the focus on quality has been deprioritised in some areas as a result of the pandemic. We saw a differential approach to quality, which the region recognises. Case supervision findings demonstrate that engagement with people on probation is an area of strength, and the delivery of services has generally been sufficient. However, the focus on quality is yet to translate into consistent assessment and management of risk of harm to others. This is reflected in the inspection findings on case supervision, and court reports and allocation.

Of the 70 probation practitioners interviewed, only 60 per cent believed that the region prioritises quality. This is lower than the aggregate national score of 73 per cent for the first cycle of NPS inspections. However, over three-quarters of practitioners said that the region promotes and values a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

One practitioner told an inspector:

“The main priority is always going to be effective public protection. A lot of the time, while working, there are certain data targets that have to be hit and this is frustrating... I am dealing with public protection matters. I think the overall priority is quality but this gets lost within the data capture messages... there has been a loss of staff and this isn’t always taken into account in terms of workload manageability”.

A range of communication forums have been put in place and senior leaders are more visible, supported by remote technology. Daily staff bulletins were introduced at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and continue. Monthly regional director events take place via Microsoft Teams and there are quarterly all-staff events. The Let’s Talk initiative was rolled out in August 2020, following the death of George Floyd, to encourage conversations about inclusion. Some practitioners have welcomed the range and frequency of communication and feel that they are kept up to date on policy and organisational changes to assist them in their role. This is not consistent, and others spoke of being overwhelmed by the frequency and volume of communication, and that they do not always have the time to read and digest information and attend staff events.

The region has strong relationships with most stakeholders. This was seen particularly with prisons, sentencers and other partners through the Reducing Reoffending Board and homelessness prevention team. The region has influenced local service delivery and funding to attract the right services, informed by an analysis of the needs of those they supervise. Senior leaders have worked together to support the implementation of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) and jointly problem-solve issues of training and staff allocation.

The region has started to take steps to identify disproportionality. Quality assurance of court reports has been carried out, which did not identify any issues of

disproportionality. The views of people on probation were sought through semi-structured interviews, although many of those interviewed were white males. A more systematic approach to seek the views of individuals, particularly those with protected characteristics, would strengthen the work undertaken. The region has started work with agencies in the criminal justice partnership to review the experience of black, Asian and minority ethnic service users across the criminal justice journey. This is a proactive initiative which is a starting point for identifying disproportionality across the criminal justice sector.

There is a distinct regional diversity and inclusion plan, which includes a focus on women. Only four per cent of the region's caseload is female. Women's champions are in place locally and they have completed training in trauma-informed practice. Trauma-informed spaces are available in some locations through mainstream women's services venues or adaptations being made to NPS properties. The region anticipates that once CRC and NPS cases are merged into a single caseload, the proportion of women supervised by the unified Probation Service will be higher than currently seen by the NPS alone, and the benefits of a bespoke women's service will be seen by more women supervised regionally.

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

The South West region understands operational and business risks, reflected in risk registers, which are reviewed and updated regularly. Divisional risk registers were reviewed in October 2020 to identify those specific to the region. The NPS and CRC are working together to prepare for transition and acknowledge the risks to service delivery, with mitigations identified, including a joint review of processes used across the NPS and CRC to align practice-related processes.

Local business continuity plans are in place, with oversight temporarily held regionally while awaiting the appointment of the Head of Corporate Services. The region has implemented the various EDMs quickly, while also transitioning to the new regional structure. We have seen some slippage in how certain risks are managed, such as the closure of the Torquay office, where some staff felt that the contingency arrangements had not been communicated effectively.

Business continuity plans have been tested and communicated to staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. The region has adapted to the command structure and swiftly put in place new ways of working. The transition to the new model, including the separation of one division into two regions, is progressing well. The Recovery and Transition Board meets regularly to review arrangements for transition to a unified service.

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

The region has implemented the national operating model and aligned local delivery plans. Various iterations of EDMs have been implemented and shared with staff across the organisation.

Contact with people on probation has been maintained throughout the pandemic through face-to-face and telephone contacts. We have also seen EDM-compliant visits to homes, using both doorstep and remote virtual visits, carried out by practitioners individually and jointly with other agencies. The nature and level of contact arranged were sufficient to keep other people safe, reduce reoffending and support desistance in the majority of cases inspected. Compliance with the minimum

expectations of EDMs has been tracked and monitored, although a greater focus on keeping people safe across all aspects of case supervision is required.

Continuity of probation practitioner is achieved, with 95 per cent of individuals being supervised by two or fewer practitioners during their sentence. This is supported by the region's approach to the initial allocation of cases and subsequent decisions to maintain continuity where possible.

There has been significant investment (£1.3 million) in women's services, driven through the national women's strategy, supported through the Reducing Reoffending Board and funded on a one-off basis by the Ministry of Justice. In Bristol, a dedicated team has been established to work with individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 years. Practitioners working in this team have established relationships with youth offending services and are aware of the issues faced by children transferring to adult services. A more creative approach is adopted in this team, to encourage individuals' engagement through the use of sensory materials and activities to remove some of the barriers of a face-to-face direct interview style.

We saw strengths in partnership working in the work of the homelessness prevention team, the implementation of OMiC, the delivery of services for women and the use of the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway.⁷ There is a recognition that more attention is needed in relation to the region's work with black, Asian and minority ethnic people on probation, given the issues outlined in the recent HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspection report on race equality in probation.⁸

Rurality is an issue in the region, and there are challenges for some individuals to access accredited programmes and services in more remote locations. Remote methods of engagement by telephone or video call have mitigated this to a degree, although challenges remain. The region has worked collaboratively with service providers to secure access to women's centres for the females they supervise. This has resulted in accessible reporting venues in some locations, with links to mainstream provision for women.

⁷ The OPD pathway is jointly commissioned through HMPPS and NHS England, which aims to provide a pathway of psychologically informed services for complex and challenging individuals who are likely to have a severe personality disorder.

⁸ HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2021). *Race equality in probation services: the experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic probation service users and staff*.

Current inspection**1.2. Staff**

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

Requires improvement

Key staffing data⁹**Current year**

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))

718

Total number of POs or equivalent (FTE)

306

Total number of PSOs or equivalent (FTE)

175

Vacancy rate (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total staff headcount)

11.47%

Vacancy rate of PO or equivalent grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required PO posts)

5.12%

Sickness absence rate (all staff)

3.77%

Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)

7.03%

PO attrition (percentage of all POs leaving in 12-month period)

4.6%

PSO attrition (percentage of all PSOs leaving in 12-month period)

11.3%

Caseload data**Current year**

Percentage of POs with a caseload of over 110% on WMT⁹

81%

Percentage of PSOs with a caseload of over 110% on WMT⁹

13%

Proportion of POs (or equivalent) describing workload as unmanageable¹⁰

51%

⁹ Data supplied by NPS.

¹⁰ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

Proportion of PSOs (or equivalent) describing workload as unmanageable ¹¹	50%
Proportion of PQiP learners describing workload as unmanageable ¹¹	13%

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

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

The South West Region has invested in the recruitment and training of trainee POs through the PQiP scheme. The region currently holds 12 vacancies for PO grade staff, and 34 for PSOs, the latter being offset, in part, by PQiP learners. While the PQiP staff fill some gaps, there are limitations on allocation, as their caseloads are protected to provide space for their learning and development while undergoing training. Of the PQiP learners we interviewed, only 13 percent regard their workload as unmanageable.

The recruitment and training of PQiPs learners take time, and the region is yet to see the full benefits of an increase in staffing. The PQiP/PSO offset presents as a challenge in some areas where the number of trainees is high, replacing, in part, the allocation of PSO resources. POs and managers spoke positively about the recruitment of PQiP learners recognising this as a valued role and a positive investment in the future. However, practitioners and managers report that there is insufficient capacity within teams to support their learning appropriately. In some areas, practitioners do not always remain in the location they have trained in post-qualification, and therefore may not provide an additional staffing resource in the local area.

Of the probation practitioners interviewed, almost half (46 per cent) reported that workloads are not manageable. Most practitioners we spoke to, (51 out of 86 of whom were POs), reported having fewer than 50 cases, which HM Inspectorate of Probation regards as a reasonable caseload. However, practitioners cited cover for staff sickness, working across split roles and locations, remote working, administrative tasks and reduced time spent in the office as factors reducing their capacity to manage their workload effectively.

Many practitioners reported high workloads as a historical issue, which has felt increasingly less manageable during the Covid-19 pandemic. Workload is generally lower for PSO staff, with the majority of caseloads being between 51 and 90 per cent on the WMT. The majority of POs have a workload of between 101 and 120 per cent on the WMT, with a small number in some LDUs being over 161 per cent. The rollout of OMiC has impacted on some teams more than others, particularly at the PO grade. Staff have particularly felt the impact of OMiC on staffing in the Dorset LDU, as practitioners implementing OMiC in HMPs Portsmouth and The Verne have come mainly from this LDU.

Peer support provided for PQiP learners by POs is not reflected in their workloads recorded on the WMT, which adds to the feeling that workloads are not manageable.

¹¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

Some practitioners told us that they work across more than one location, which impacts on their ability to work effectively and efficiently across two teams. These nuances are not reflected in the current WMT. This has been recognised by staff and managers who use the WMT as a starting point for discussions about workloads. A new national WMT is due to be implemented in October 2021, which we will comment on during our next inspection programme.

When probation caseloads are high, there is a risk that practitioners focus on achieving quantitative targets, and that practice is driven by process at the cost of quality. This risk has been recognised by practitioners, managers and senior leaders, and we saw it borne out in some cases inspected, where activities were being undertaken at speed, achieving a timeliness target successfully but with a limited focus on quality.

SPOs reported high workloads arising from having to integrate transactional tasks, such as managing local building issues and processing human resource tasks, together with the quality agenda of overseeing high-quality service delivery in their teams. While recommendations from a national review of SPO responsibilities are in the process of being implemented, management workloads remain high. In some teams, we heard of managers undertaking practitioner tasks to alleviate pressure on the team. While this supports the immediate needs of the team, it detracts from critical aspects of the manager's role, to promote and develop quality in practice and provide effective leadership.

Spans of management control are based on FTE staffing levels, rather than looking at the needs of individual staff members, and does not reflect the developmental needs and personal circumstances of individuals. Managers should provide different levels of oversight and support, depending on individual needs. Spans of control do not take into account the total number of cases supervised by practitioners. Although 74 per cent of practitioners told inspectors that supervision by line managers enhances high-quality work, we found management oversight to be effective in less than two-thirds of cases inspected. Spans of management control are forecast to increase as the recruitment of staff continues. A management support hub has been put in place to remove some of the administrative tasks from middle managers. Some managers told inspectors that this has not reduced their workload sufficiently, and that the processes for referral can be time consuming.

VLOs have had caseloads in excess of 300 for some time. While victim contact work has been rated as outstanding, unlike for offender management teams there is no national WMT for VLOs, to monitor and trigger a review of their workload. Inspectors were concerned to hear about the excessive workloads for VLOs.

Court staff reported high caseloads, given the backlogs that have developed. In some areas, this is reflected in five-week adjournments for court reports, in comparison with the routine three-week period.

Inspectors were impressed by the commitment and dedication of practitioners, including VLOs and court staff, who have continued to deliver probation services during a period of transition and a national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. One sentencer commented on the "*remarkable sense of public duty*" of court duty staff. Practitioners and their managers highlighted the risk of burn-out and 'change fatigue', which inspectors recognise as a genuine risk.

Staff generally understand the organisation's objectives and are committed to deliver a high-quality service, reduce reoffending and protect the public. However, there is a sense of fatigue among them, as a result of high workloads, the need to adapt to

new ways of working during the pandemic, and staff sickness. There is a lack of established and experienced practitioners in some teams, many of whom are providing learning support for PQiP learners, alongside their managers, who are equally stretched.

The staff wellbeing strategy has not been embedded fully and not all are aware of what it offers. Responses varied as to the extent to which probation practitioners felt that the organisation prioritises their wellbeing. 59 per cent of those interviewed felt that it does, although there was a recognition that workloads are an issue which impacts on individual wellbeing.

There is a learning and delivery plan in place, which is informed by the MyLearning¹² database and regional staff communications. Adaptations have been made to the newly qualified officers programme, and feedback from participants has been used in designing the future content of sessions and to deliver sessions virtually. Of those we interviewed, 84 per cent of practitioners felt that they have sufficient access to training to support the delivery of a high-quality service.

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

The region reviews workforce planning on a monthly basis through the workforce planning committee. Staff declaration rates for protected characteristics are above the national target, although this data is not analysed fully to compare against the profile of people on probation. The staffing profile is largely representative of the ethnicity of the broader population of the south-west. The percentage of staff who are black, Asian and minority ethnic is 5.9 per cent, against an average for the regional population of 4.3 per cent. Of the staff in senior management positions, 9.7 per cent are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Of the staff we interviewed, 91 per cent felt that they have the skills, ability and knowledge necessary to supervise their caseload, with 88 per cent responding that they are always allocated cases for which they have the appropriate training and experience. However, our casework data indicated that there are skills, knowledge or practice development gaps that needed addressing, particularly in relation to keeping other people safe.

Recruitment drives to fill vacancies have meant that there are newly qualified and PQiP staff who are still in training, which results in differing levels of staff skills and experience. While senior managers have processes in place to ensure that the right cases are allocated to staff with the appropriate skills, some POs retain cases which are suitable for PSOs, in order to offer continuity. Other cases are held inappropriately by POs, and case management support from PSOs is underutilised. The PSO case management support role could be better utilised to deliver bespoke pieces of work on behalf of POs, while retaining continuity of contact.

The women's champions attached to the LDUs have received appropriate trauma-informed training. The region has focused on services for women, working with mainstream services to provide venues and access to resources to meet the needs of women supervised by probation services. Practitioners working with women have an awareness of services available locally, and deliver interventions using

¹² MyLearning provides learners with access to a range of informal learning to support NPS continuous professional development and effective probation practice.

principles of trauma-informed practice. However, as only just under four per cent of the region's caseload is female, numbers are too small to draw conclusions about the quality of work with this cohort.

The experience of SPOs varies, with some relatively new to post. Management training is not available for SPOs and there are delays accessing the first-line managers course. We heard of informal management peer support taking place, which SPOs regard as valuable, but formal structured management training and development is not always in place. This can leave managers feeling isolated, which is amplified by remote working. The national workforce strategy will provide direction for future development routes.

In agreement with trade unions, appraisal and performance monitoring processes have been suspended for the 2020/2021 performance year. Where a need for performance improvement is identified, this is progressed through the individual staff supervision and line management framework. If used, personal improvement plans are part of an informal process to improve the performance of an individual. As such, they are between an individual and their manager, and no other record is held regionally. Central oversight of personal improvement plans would provide a more consistent approach across teams and LDUs.

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

Line managers are required to provide regular supervision of probation practitioners, to offer an opportunity for them to reflect on their practice, review cases and give space to identify and discuss developmental and welfare needs. Of the practitioners interviewed, 57 per cent had received seven or more formal supervision sessions in the last 12 months, and 74 per cent regarded supervision as effective, with a focus on enhancing and sustaining high-quality work with people on probation.

The region began the rollout of the staff supervision and line management framework, and skills for effective engagement development and supervision (SEEDS) training in January 2019. 82 per cent of managers in the South West region have received SEEDS training, although its implementation varied between LDUs before appraisals were suspended as a result of the Covid-19 EDMs. It is concerning that inspectors regarded management oversight as ineffective in over one-third of cases inspected. Examples included delayed or absent management oversight, endorsement of poor practice and a focus on targets and processes rather than quality. In some cases, we saw retrospective case entries being made into nDelius after the inspection had been announced.

A quarterly corporate induction is delivered to new staff, which focuses on practicalities, logistics and an introduction to the organisation's vision. However, there is no structured follow-on induction programme; a peer-led programme is often delivered once staff are in post.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

The tools used to capture staff learning and development do not identify needs effectively and accurately. This is recognised by the region. Staff use MyLearning to access training as part of the strategy to develop the skills of the workforce. This platform relies, in part, on individual practitioners to input information. Despite the limitations of the tool, the region has developed an action plan to understand and inform training needs and has applied it to PQiP learners currently being trained.

The delivery of face-to-face training has been interrupted by social distancing restrictions, and remote training has been used as an alternative. Many of the practitioners interviewed felt that there is sufficient access to in-house training to meet their learning and development needs, although accessing training and embedding it in practice is sometimes hampered by workload issues.

Of those interviewed, 79 per cent of probation practitioners felt that the organisation promotes an active learning culture. Staff are provided with opportunities, and are supported, to take on secondments to develop and progress. This is balanced with the operational need to resource the frontline delivery of services, which is stretched in some locations and with some grades of staff. The region is identifying what needs to be done to promote opportunities more equitably, but capacity within teams presents as a challenge to achieve this.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Probation practitioners are focused and committed to the work they do, and aware of the broad vision of the region. Workload fatigue and the burden of EDMs has led to some staff feeling disconnected from the vision and strategy. Many practitioners spoke positively of their direct line managers. However, despite improved communication and increased visibility of senior leaders, some staff felt disconnected from the organisation.

Sickness across the region is at 5.9 average working days lost per annum, against a 9.0-day target. Some LDUs have much higher levels of sickness, of between 12 and 16 days. Probation practitioners from these locations responded less positively to our survey question about whether the organisation prioritises staff wellbeing.

Wellbeing issues account for the most frequent reason for sickness in the region. A wellbeing strategy has been in place since November 2020, with a newly appointed people lead to work alongside human resources business partners to deliver this. Many practitioners are unaware of this strategy and spoke of high workloads being an issue, which they felt cannot be resolved by a wellbeing strategy while staff resources remain an issue.

Fifty-nine per cent of staff reported feeling that appropriate attention is paid to wellbeing; those feeling less positive about wellbeing said that increased home working, limited contact with colleagues and increased workloads are contributory factors. Formal structured support is available, and staff are encouraged to access this, which is positive. Of the probation practitioners interviewed, 23 per cent required occupational health-related workplace adjustments, and in 69 per cent of cases these had been made. Historically, the occupational health support required has been delayed, and a slow process. Over the last six months, improvements have been made in the services offered, although one-third continue to wait for the adjustments required.

Over three-quarters of practitioners interviewed felt that appropriate attention is paid to their safety. Some told us that they do not feel safe because of outdated, or an absence of, closed-circuit television in some locations.

There is a good use of reward and recognition initiatives, either through local schemes, the Butler Trust or HMPPS. This was not recognised by all practitioners interviewed, some of whom felt that some managers are more responsive to this than others. Of those interviewed, 57 per cent felt that reward and recognition are given by the organisation.

1.3. Services



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

Good

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

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

Characteristics of inspected domain two cases¹³	All NPS in year one¹⁴	This NPS region in current inspection
Proportion of inspected caseload who are female	5%	5%
Proportion of inspected cases who are black, Asian or minority ethnic	21%	9%
Proportion of inspected cases with a disability	47%	59%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified substance misuse problems	67%	66%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified domestic abuse issues	46%	51%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified child safeguarding issues	53%	42%

The South West region undertakes a needs analysis that breaks down the factors related to offending and desistance. The aggregated profile of people on probation is collated from assessment information, which is supplemented by local intelligence from partners and analysed to inform service delivery. Data is also captured on the

¹³ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

¹⁴ All NPS regions in 2018/2019.

individual risk of harm profiles, providing information on categories of harm, MAPPA levels, access to interventions and resource analysis.

Practitioners seek protected characteristic information routinely from people on probation, and this data is well recorded. The analysis of need, and risk of harm profiles provides data to understand and identify issues of disproportionality, which is a good start; however, this does not contribute to clear actions as part of the diversity and inclusion plan. There is some analysis of sentencing and offending patterns. However, the data is based largely on historical information, which needs to be developed further to establish a clearer picture of the regional profile.

The Shaw Trust provides advice to people on probation and encourages access to ETE. Inspectors saw this being used positively in the cases inspected, and this provision is well received by probation practitioners. Local employers attend 'check-out work' events at HMP Exeter, where they promote their organisations and encourage applications from individuals in custody.

Caseload profile data has been used to bid successfully for one-off funding to develop services for women, securing £1.3 million across the division. Regionally, this has been used to improve services for women under supervision, and to fund access to new women's centres in Plymouth and Bridgewater. The Prison Advice and Care Trust secured funding to employ a social worker at HMP Eastwood Park, to support women serving prison sentences and their families. Bespoke interventions are also available for women at high risk of recall. A pilot is planned at Bristol Magistrates' Court for agencies, including report authors, voluntary sector organisations and peer supporters, to engage with women at court. This had not been implemented when we inspected the region, but is a promising initiative and demonstrates the ongoing work and commitment of the region to respond to the specific experience of women.

Access to accommodation services has improved through the national mobilisation of homelessness prevention teams in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Inspectors saw accommodation services delivered well in many cases. This momentum and joint working can be built on in the longer term, to improve access to move-on accommodation for people on probation.

Commissioning intentions exist, based on an analysis of the profile of the previous division. There are gaps in NPS understanding of the CRC caseload profile prior to transition to the unified probation model, so the future profile of the unified service was not understood fully at the time of inspecting.

Does the region provide the volume, range and quality of services to meet the needs of the service users?¹⁵

	Current inspection
Average waiting time for sex offender treatment programmes	20.36 weeks
Average waiting time for RAR	6.22 days ¹⁶

¹⁵ Data supplied by NPS.

¹⁶ Calculated from the first recorded RAR contact, which can be delivered as a one-to-one structured intervention. RAR recording is inconsistent, which is recognised by the region.

Successful completion of sex offender treatment programmes	63.24%
Successful completion of RAR	70.12%

The region delivers accredited programmes for those convicted of sexual offences, such as Horizon, i-Horizon and New Me Strengths. It also delivers some structured interventions as part of RARs. Accredited programmes, including Building Better Relationships and the Thinking Skills Programme, are delivered by the local CRCs, along with a range of other RARs. We have been unable to provide an analysis of RAR waiting times due to the lack of a reliable and consistent method of recording this data.

The delivery of accredited programmes has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the national ADF¹⁷ was agreed and launched in September 2020. The ADF made changes to the delivery of accredited programmes, including the method of delivery (for example, a switch to remote one-to-one delivery and maximum participant numbers in face-to-face groups), to ensure that social distancing and safe practice could be achieved. In some cases, 'maps for change' has been delivered on a one-to-one basis as an alternative to accredited group work programmes to address sexual offending. Inspectors identified a varied level of confidence and knowledge among practitioners delivering this intervention, and accredited programme facilitators are available to support individuals where required.

Reduced capacity to deliver accredited programmes during the pandemic has meant that waiting lists have increased, from 110 in October 2019 to 172 in October 2020. The region has attempted to reduce waiting times and to support the delivery of appropriate alternatives. However, 24 per cent of people on probation have been waiting for a programme for over 12 months, and 59 per cent for longer than six months, which is not acceptable.

A pilot to encourage the use of community sentence treatment requirements is being run nationally at five magistrates' courts, including Plymouth. This is a promising intervention, which provides specialist support for individuals under supervision who are experiencing mental health difficulties. None of the cases inspected had this requirement in place, although this scheme is being evaluated nationally by the Department of Health and Social Care in collaboration with partners, including HMPPS.

Following the last inspection, a review was undertaken of the use of services delivered by the CRC, to understand the barriers to NPS practitioners accessing services through the rate card. As a consequence, the division worked with local CRCs to promote their services, and the take-up rate has since improved. For example, we saw examples of referrals being made to the CRC for the Respectful Relationships RAR programme, to address issues of domestic abuse.

In the cases inspected, we saw good use of accommodation services in over three-quarters of cases inspected. Homelessness prevention teams were mobilised nationally in April 2020, to provide immediate access to accommodation services for those released from custody during the pandemic. Securing appropriate long-term

¹⁷ The ADF is an accredited framework which allows all intervention services to be delivered in alternative ways.

move-on accommodation remains an issue. In 70 per cent of cases inspected, the delivery of services built on the strengths and protective factors of individuals to promote their desistance from offending.

Service delivery gaps exist, particularly in relation to substance misuse, as evidenced in the cases inspected. In only 43 per cent of relevant cases was sufficient support delivered in relation to drug use, and in only 33 per cent in relation to alcohol use. Drug and alcohol services have been affected by the Covid-19 restrictions, with some aspects of practice, such as drug and alcohol testing, ceasing. Where services were provided, we saw delays in information exchange, or progress updates not being provided routinely or followed up by practitioners.

The interventions delivered by the region are evidence based and it is recognised that effective evaluation measures are key for services delivered by other agencies. There is scope for improved treatment management of accredited programmes. Appropriate treatment management is not achieved consistently, and adaptations to the ADF have resulted in an increased number of programmes being delivered to fewer participants. This has resulted in an increase in the level of quality assurance of accredited programmes to achieve treatment management expectations.

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

The involvement of other agencies was sufficiently well coordinated to reduce reoffending and support desistance in 72 per cent of the cases inspected, and to manage and minimise the risk of harm to others in 70 per cent of cases. Practitioners we interviewed rated the effectiveness of relationships with agencies to manage risk of harm more positively than inspectors. Relationships with management of sexual offender and violent offender (MOSOVO)¹⁸ teams were used effectively in several cases to carry out joint visits to the home, exchange and share information, and make disclosures to potential victims where appropriate.

Practitioners regarded the intensive, integrated risk management services support provided by the OPD pathway, delivered in conjunction with health providers, as a valuable resource, to help them understand how to engage effectively with individuals with personality disorders. However, multi-agency forums, such as MAPPA and MARAC, are not used consistently, to provide an integrated approach to monitoring and managing the risk of harm to others.

Local services were engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond in just over two-thirds of cases. This is an important aspect of service delivery to promote and encourage long-term desistance, by identifying and putting in place support for people on probation to access beyond their involvement with probation services. We expect this to start sufficiently early, so that individuals can establish contact with other agencies, where appropriate, to build on motivation to

¹⁸ MOSOVO requires coordinated action by a number of partners and is subject to inspection and review by a number of bodies:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- HMPPS
- Independent Office for Police Conduct.

reduce reoffending and strengthen protective factors. The effectiveness of relationships with agencies to sustain desistance varies considerably between LDUs. In Devon, relationships with other agencies supported this well in 92 per cent of cases.

Involvement of people on probation

A service user involvement group was established in 2016. This set the expectation for a coordinated approach to seek the views of people on probation through focus groups, a service user council and local service user involvement activities. An inclusive and responsive approach to the engagement of individuals empowers them to shape and inform future practice and service delivery. Engagement of people on probation was a strength of practice seen in the cases inspected. However, the implementation of the service user involvement strategy has not gained momentum and is underdeveloped in practice. Focus groups with people on probation are not embedded fully and the service user council is not yet established.

The focus on women and their experience of probation is better established. Women's champions have worked with DIVAS, a group of women in Cornwall with learning disabilities and autism who promote their rights against discrimination and abuse, and for their voices to be heard. Traditional methods of face-to-face interviewing can increase the anxiety of people on probation and reduce their levels of engagement, particularly when having sensitive discussions.

Emotional regulation toolkits have been made available for women across the region, funded by the HMPPS Innovation Fund and designed, in part, by women on probation. These toolkits contain sensory materials and activities, to promote engagement through providing an alternative focus for women, during difficult and challenging conversations. The work undertaken to involve women supervised by probation services in developments concerning how and where contact takes place is a good foundation for the region to build on. More could be done to embed focus groups and the service user council fully, to coordinate the service user engagement strategy and implement this for all.

Inspectors spoke to 22 people supervised by the probation service from the sample of 86 cases we inspected. Over two-thirds felt that their views had been taken into account, in part or fully, when planning what work would be carried out during their sentence. Responses included:

"Very much so. My plan was personalised to me".

"Definitely. There was a 'two-way conversation' about my plan and my views were taken into account. They have 'touched back' on it during the sentence".

"My case manager has taken my views into account from the pre-release stage when we were planning my sentence. I feel that I have been included in my sentence plan. I feel I have been listened to and respected".

We asked individuals what could be done better, to improve their experience of probation, and they told us:

"There is a lack of information sharing between police, probation and children's services regarding child contact arrangements".

“The drug intervention was supposed to be quite intensive, but I ended up having no more than two telephone appointments with them at the start, which was disappointing as I wanted the help”.

“Honestly, my time with my probation practitioner has been brilliant and I wouldn't change anything. More information from the prison about my time there would have been very helpful. I didn't receive any information specifically that would have helped me from the prison”.

The region would benefit from implementing the service user engagement strategy, to gain the views of people on probation in a more structured and coordinated way, to contribute to service development.

Court reports and case allocation

The regional probation director (RPD) attends monthly regional magistrate leadership group meetings regularly and provides updates on both the work of probation court staff and offender management operations. More recently, updates have been provided on work during the Covid-19 pandemic and the recovery phase. The RPD also updates sentencers and court staff on the delivery of interventions and CRC provision.

During the pandemic, there has been an increase in the frequency of virtual meetings with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), the Crown Prosecution Service, the judiciary and the police, to maintain court delivery and implement changes such as the provision of the HMCTS cloud video platform and the management of enforcement activity. The regular nature of these meetings has provided the opportunity for criminal justice agencies to work together to respond to the challenges of court delivery and address problems that may occur.

Sentencers regard local leadership positively. They have regular meetings with representatives from the South West region and agencies delivering requirements of the sentence, including unpaid work and drug rehabilitation sessions. Relationships with the region are collaborative, which sentencers recognise as crucial to maintain confidence in the courts and the sentences they impose.

Probation court duty officers play a critical role in courts on a day-to-day basis. They are the first port of call for sentencers, who may require information about available interventions or need further details on topics contained in reports. We spoke to sentencers, who expressed confidence in court duty officers, commenting that they always help and respond positively to requests for additional information.

One sentencer told us:

“They [court duty staff] have a marvellous sense of public duty... There has been good representation in court and over video-link during Covid-19 – they are always ready to do stand-down reports”.

Although sentencers were positive, the inspection of court reports and allocation practice demonstrated that improvements are required, particularly in relation to the exchange of critical information relating to children and potential victims of domestic abuse.

Statutory victim work

We have rated victim services as outstanding in the South West region. In a recent VLO staff survey, all VLOs who responded said that they felt challenged and enjoyed their work, and 96 per cent that they wanted to continue in their role. Staff turnover is extremely low in the victim contact team, and it has a good balance of experience. Clinical supervision is available for VLOs, and peer support is embedded to share learning. Monthly supervision with managers provides support and case discussion with VLOs, and team meetings take place twice a week. Staff in the victim contact team are motivated and committed, with a desire to 'do the right thing'. This was reflected in the cases we inspected, despite reports of high workloads. There is no mechanism to measure and determine what an acceptable caseload is for VLOs.

Arrangements with the police to establish contact with victims are good, and VLOs make contact with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure that victims are contacted soon after sentence. Timely contact was achieved in 85 per cent of the cases we looked at.

There are established relationships with victim support services, and appropriate referrals were made in 78 per cent of cases. There are challenges for some victims who require counselling support, as some services currently are offering telephone contact only, and in Plymouth bereavement services have closed. VLOs recognised this as a barrier for some victims who are either unable to access appropriate services or do not feel comfortable undertaking counselling over the telephone.

Surveys are given to victims following their initial contact with a VLO. The take-up from people on probation and victims is low and feedback is collected centrally, rather than by the region. It is recognised by the region that there is no systematic approach to collating and analysing feedback from victims to inform learning and development. This would provide an opportunity to enhance practice and build on the strengths we saw during the inspection.

Diversity and inclusion

The region has processes in place to capture protected characteristic details routinely, and self-declaration rates for these characteristics for people on probation and for staff are high. However, it is not clear that this information is being used routinely to inform service delivery. Recording of the protected characteristics of victims was not seen in the cases we inspected. The race and ethnicity of victims were not recorded in 69 per cent of cases, and a quarter of cases did not record clearly whether the victim had a disability. The routine recording of this information would assist in the analysis of disproportionality and increase understanding of the profile of victims in the region.

There is a good focus on diversity and inclusion in the cases we inspected. Initiatives such as the Bristol under-25 team, which works with children transferring from youth services, and the women's provision are positive examples of work being undertaken to provide services and interventions tailored to the individual needs of particular cohorts of people on probation.

A dedicated women's champion manager is in post to implement the divisional female offender action plan. Women's champions have been appointed and trained in each LDU. Through co-location, women's centres have been made available in some locations, including Plymouth and Gloucester. A service has been provided at HMP Eastwood Park for women released from prison. This has been co-commissioned through the South West Reducing Reoffending Board, to provide access to a church building for women on their immediate release from prison, giving

them somewhere to go while waiting for their transport. The quality and availability of provision for women are variable, and this is recognised by the region. Women make up a small proportion of the overall caseload in the region. However, the unification of probation services will increase the number of women being supervised and, it is anticipated, provide the opportunity for greater influence with partners and access to funding to shape services for women in the region.

The profile data of people on probation in the south-west has been shared with Reducing Reoffending Board partners, to identify priority needs in the region, providing a good foundation to build on to understand the experience of particular cohorts of individuals. This has assisted partners to bid for funding to address areas of need for women, individuals serving short custodial sentences, young adults and veterans.

The region has a contract in place with health partners for the delivery of the OPD pathway, which is well established in the region. The delivery of OPD services has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, albeit adapted to provide services remotely. Formulation assessments provide recommendations for practitioners concerning methods of engagement, and we have seen these used positively in some cases. Intensive, integrated risk management services are also provided for individuals leaving prison, or forensic mental healthcare services for supporting their successful transition to community living. The OPD pathway is well regarded by managers and practitioners.

Current inspection

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Requires improvement

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

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

Staff have access to policies and procedures to enable them to deliver a high-quality service. They know where to access new policies and are confident in using the national NPS online platform, EQuIP.¹⁹ Nationally collated EQuIP usage data applies to the former divisional structure, whereby the South West South Central NPS division was rated third highest user of EQuIP in November 2020, with Devon LDU featuring in the 'top 10' best performing clusters.

In addition to EQuIP, daily communications and supervisory forums are used to share policies. 'Lite Bites'²⁰ have been produced in response to the identified need for

¹⁹ EQuIP (Excellence and Quality in Processes) is a one-stop shop that includes all NPS processes and documentation.

²⁰ 'Lite Bites' are local short guidance documents, produced by the NPS South West to update practitioners on practice changes or reinforce key practice expectations.

guidance – for example, the Covid-19 risk management plan update, which was produced by the quality development team. This was sent to practitioners to provide guidance to assess and manage risk of harm in much altered circumstances. The various iterations of EDMs have been shared with staff and managers, who have implemented them locally.

A directory of services is available for practitioners to access and make referrals to local services. There has been an increase in referrals to CRC services, and the rate card includes clear eligibility and referral processes. Some practitioners commented that referral processes are cumbersome; for example, the referral process to the homelessness prevention team and to approved premises was regarded as unnecessarily complicated.

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

The region has undertaken a full review of its estate, to prepare for the transition to a unified model of probation services. A range of premises audits has been carried out, including security, building condition and accessibility. Building issues are understood, although this would be improved by a greater focus on feedback from people on probation. There is a mechanism in place to track routine maintenance outcomes.

Backlogs in maintenance needs have been considered as part of the probation reform programme planning, which has resulted in remedial work being undertaken and some properties being replaced. This is an ongoing piece of work, with almost £1 million planned for the maintenance of properties in the next three years.

Staff informed inspectors that a number of premises are not sufficiently accessible, such as those with step-only access. It was positive to see that a disability audit had been conducted. However, the national estates strategy, backlog of maintenance work and lack of funding have limited the response to address accessibility. There is no budget currently for making offices fully wheelchair accessible. These are national issues, with local implications.

The Bristol under-25s provision and women's reporting environments have been considered specifically in relation to trauma-informed practice, and this is a positive development. Champions and women on probation have undertaken a 'walk through' of offices and suggested adaptations required to offices in some locations to provide an environment supportive of women. They noted that women were under-represented in pictures used in information posters, and the region has responded to this. Trauma-informed interview rooms have been set up in some locations, providing a more comfortable environment for women attending probation appointments.

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

In response to the pandemic, ICT and smart mobile phones were rolled out swiftly, to allow staff to continue their work remotely. Access to the police Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR) system is not available for all staff, leading to complications in accessing information. This is a national issue, linked to the availability of national training for practitioners during the Covid-19 pandemic. Workarounds have been implemented and named local ViSOR administrators have been identified, who input and access information on behalf of practitioners.

Information sharing with the police and children's social care services is not well established. Information exchange with the police is not working consistently well, which has led to gaps in court reports and allocation, and in assessments in the cases inspected. Where requests for domestic abuse information were made at court, a response was not received prior to allocation to the CRC or NPS in over one-third of cases. Inspectors noted that the quality of information received from the police varied, and sufficient detail to inform a full assessment of the nature and level of risk of harm was not always provided. Prior to Covid-19, there were arrangements in Gloucestershire for the NPS to obtain police information directly through an identified administrator accessing police records, but this was suspended because of social distancing restrictions. Safeguarding checks at court were made in over half of cases where safeguarding children issues were identified by inspectors. Where requests for information were made by NPS court staff, children's services provided a response in almost all cases, and in 80 per cent of cases the response was received prior to allocation to the CRC or NPS. This response rate was positive to see, although in too many cases the request for information was not initiated by NPS court staff.

To ensure that accurate assessments of individuals under supervision are carried out, access to all relevant information is vital. Without the right mechanisms and practices to obtain information from partners and other agencies, it is difficult to ensure that the appropriate measures are in place to keep others safe and deliver the necessary interventions to address offending.

A local direct access framework has been implemented in the Devon and Cornwall police area, which allows nominated NPS administrators direct access to police information on cases supervised by the NPS. This is a positive resource which can be used to identify further offending or non-crime domestic incidents, to inform assessments and the ongoing monitoring of risk of harm. Disappointingly, however, this information is not being accessed routinely to inform assessments of risk of harm. For example, in the Plymouth, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LDU, 50 per cent of assessments were completed without accessing this information. A proposal has been made to the South West Reducing Reoffending Board to extend this provision across all police force areas in the region, which, if utilised fully, will provide better information to improve assessments, both at court and during the sentence.

The involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm was sufficiently well coordinated in 70 per cent of cases inspected. As the sentence progressed, inspectors saw examples of practitioners working with other agencies to manage the risk of harm to others – for example, MOSOVO officers, the police and children's services. However, this was inconsistent and in some cases was achieved through the persistence of individual practitioners, rather than established processes and clear routes to escalate concerns. Of those we interviewed, 90 per cent of practitioners reported effective relationships with other agencies to manage the risk of harm to others.

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

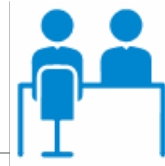
The region has well-established mechanisms to monitor performance, and performance data is discussed at monthly LDU accountability meetings. The quality development team promotes improved quality in practice, and undertakes quality assurance activity, although evidence of this activity and its impact was not seen in the particular case records inspected. LDU quality development plans have drifted since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on performance data rather

than quality. There is an opportunity to redress this balance through the work of the quality development team.

Performance measures and access to data are strong, although the strength of understanding and analysis of data to improve quality is less clear. Service improvement initiatives driven by a research strategy are not in place, and the priorities are unclear. There is a reliance on inspection and audit to identify the areas for improvement. The analysis of themes from quality assurance activities, delivered by quality development officers and managers, is underdeveloped.

Promising initiatives have been identified by the quality development and serious further offence teams which can be built upon for organisational learning; however, they are not embedded across the organisation. As a result of this, gaps exist in relation to communicating learning effectively. Learning from the last divisional inspection in 2018 has not been implemented fully, particularly in relation to keeping people safe.

2. Case supervision



We inspected 28 community sentence cases and 58 post-release supervision cases and interviewed 71 probation practitioners and 22 people on probation, during which we examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of engaging those on probation and addressing issues relevant to offending and desistance. In the 86 cases where there were factors related to risk of harm, we also inspected the work to keep other people safe. The quality of work undertaken in relation to each element of case supervision needs to be above a specific threshold for it to be rated as satisfactory.

Inspectors found that practitioners involved people on probation routinely in assessments, plans and the implementation of the sentence. Engagement is noted as an area of strength in the region, and practitioners have achieved this during a challenging period of reduced social contact, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of necessary EDMs. Assessments and plans focused sufficiently on the identification of offence-related needs and interventions required to reduce reoffending and support desistance. There was a good range of services and interventions available, although practitioners did not always access these to undertake the work planned. We recognise that accessing some services during the pandemic has been a challenge, and we saw some examples of practitioners adapting interventions and methods of delivery appropriately. The degree to which assessments focused on keeping people safe was not sufficient. In addition, more attention on keeping people safe was required in planning, the delivery of the sentence and reviewing activities.

Strengths:

- People on probation are involved meaningfully in assessments, planning, and implementation and delivery of the sentence.
- Practitioners identify routinely the most critical offending-related factors.
- Protective factors and individual strengths are used to inform balanced assessments of need.
- Planning reflects offending-related factors and prioritises those identified as most critical.
- The risk of non-compliance is identified and addressed, where appropriate, to reduce the need for enforcement action.
- Probation practitioners have a good focus on re-engaging people on probation after enforcement action or recall has been initiated.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessments to keep people safe do not draw routinely on all available sources of information and involve other agencies.
- The impact of personal circumstances and diversity on individuals' ability to engage with the sentence has not been analysed.
- Risk management contingency arrangements are not set out in plans, to reflect the individual risks in each case.
- Key people in the lives of people on probation are not engaged with, to support the effective management of risk of harm.
- The progress of individuals is not being kept under review, to ensure a focus on changing risk factors and activities required to keep people safe.

Current inspection

2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

Comparison with South West and all NPS regions	Current inspection	All regions ²²
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user? ²³	73%	82%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	76%	82%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? 23	64%	75%

Assessments considered factors such as the individual's level of motivation, readiness to comply with their sentence and their views. Strengths and protective factors were identified in many assessments, as were offending-related factors. However, they did not use all available information routinely to keep people safe.

²¹ The rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

²² HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

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

The South West region was rated as 'Requires improvement' for assessment, as the lowest score for the key questions was 64 per cent in relation to the proportion of inspected assessments which were satisfactory in relation to risk of harm (less than the two-thirds threshold required for a 'Good' rating).

Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

High-quality assessment is based on positive and active engagement of people on probation, which we found in almost three-quarters of the cases inspected. When assessments are carried out in this way, they provide a strong basis for engaging individuals with the requirements of their sentence. We saw many assessments which involved the person on probation and assessed their motivation and readiness to comply with the sentence. This practice helps to identify barriers to compliance, and effective methods to engage with the individual and to deliver interventions in a meaningful way.

Good practice example

Stuart is a 20-year-old care leaver, released from custody, for an offence of grievous bodily harm. He had been supervised by the current probation practitioner on previous sentences, who maintained contact with him while he was in prison. On release, Stuart was involved in his initial assessment, reviewed his progress on previous sentences, explored barriers to engagement and considered what had worked well for him in the past. Stuart had neurodiversity needs, and compliance with previous sentences had been poor. The probation practitioner involved Stuart in an assessment of his communication needs, which concluded that he responded well to clear communication and questions. They worked together to identify adaptations required to improve his understanding of the sentence and the work he would be required to undertake on licence.

In the majority of cases inspected, the necessary information about the individual personal circumstances and diversity needs of people on probation were recorded. However, the impact of these factors on the individual's ability to engage and comply with the sentence was not assessed routinely. In these cases, it was unclear whether additional support or alternative arrangements were required to provide more opportunities to support these individuals' compliance.

In many cases, individuals were involved meaningfully at the assessment stage and their views were sought, either through the completion of self-assessment questionnaires or in discussions detailed in case records.

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

We expect offending-related factors to be identified and analysed sufficiently, to inform assessments which seek to understand and explain the reasons why individuals have offended. Assessments should also identify the strengths and protective factors in an individual's life, to support their desistance from offending.

Offending-related factors were identified appropriately in 92 per cent of cases and analysed in almost three-quarters. The analysis of offending-related factors was more often of a sufficient standard when completed by PO practitioners. A thorough analysis of offending-related factors can lead to services and interventions being better targeted to meet individual needs. The most common factors linked to offending were thinking and behaviour, attitudes to offending, family and

relationships, and lifestyle, including friends and associates. Information from other sources, such as pre-sentence reports, previous convictions and Crown Prosecution Service documents, were used effectively to inform the assessment and identification of offending-related factors in over three-quarters of cases inspected.

In 83 per cent of cases, probation practitioners identified strengths and protective factors which the person on probation could build on during their sentence. Family and relationships, motivation to change and employment were identified as important desistance factors, and in most cases they were taken into account in the delivery of the sentence.

Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Assessments did not focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe in over one-third of the cases we inspected. To complete a thorough assessment of risk of harm, probation practitioners may need to contact other agencies, such as children's services, police domestic violence units and other local partners or providers. We expect domestic abuse checks to be undertaken in all cases, unless already initiated at court. The region has taken some steps to improve information exchange, to inform a detailed analysis of risk of harm, although its application in practice was inconsistent. In 40 per cent of cases, domestic abuse checks were not undertaken to inform a detailed assessment and analysis of risk of harm.

Information sharing and safeguarding checks with the relevant children's social care service are expected in all cases where a person on probation has children, is in contact with children or poses a risk to children. Safeguarding checks were not undertaken in one-third of such cases. Assessments of risk of harm did not draw adequately on other sources of information and involve other agencies where required. The impact of insufficient information sharing was that other relevant assessments were not completed, such as the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment and the Risk Matrix 2000,²⁴ which can then inform plans to keep other people safe and sentence planning.

Assessments generally identified who was at risk, and the level and nature of the risk, but the absence of information from partner agencies led to gaps in assessments, particularly in relation to intimate partners, family members and children.

²⁴ Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000) is an evidence-based risk assessment tool, using static factors, for men over 18 with at least one conviction for a sexual offence.

2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating²⁵ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with South West and all NPS regions	Current inspection	All NPS regions ²⁶
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user? ²⁷	74%	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?	77%	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	66%	70%

The South West region's practice in relation to planning was rated as 'Good'. A reasonable majority of plans focused adequately on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance, and the region compared satisfactorily with other NPS areas inspected in our previous round of inspections. In many of the cases inspected, people on probation were involved in planning the work they would be required to undertake.

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?

Effective planning should involve people on probation, take their personal circumstances and motivation to change into account and be responsive to their individual needs. The plan should be agreed, understood and shared with the individual, and detail who they will be working with, when, how often and why.

Plans engaged individuals sufficiently in almost three-quarters of the cases inspected. Inspectors saw examples where planning was carried out, in part or in full, via telephone because of EDM contact restrictions. Telephone contact multiple times a week and doorstep visits were being used, to involve individuals in their sentence

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

²⁶ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

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

plans. Plans involved people on probation meaningfully and took their views into account, which informed the actions and activity.

Good practice example

Ethan completed a self-assessment questionnaire at the planning stage and his responses were taken into account in the plan. Motivational goals were used to word the objectives, which were agreed and discussed with him. It is clear that the sentence plan was done 'with him', rather than 'to him'.

Plans considered the individual's readiness and motivation to change in almost three-quarters of cases, although more attention could be paid to individual diversity needs and personal circumstances that may impact on compliance and engagement. Probation practitioners recognised the impact of individual personal circumstances in some cases, but this was not consistent. Self-assessment responses, the impact of substance misuse, and mental health and vulnerability factors were not considered routinely in all cases and the impact of lockdown restrictions was not explored fully, which was particularly relevant for those released from custody. The inclusion of these factors would have enabled planning to be tailored to the needs of individuals.

In most cases, appropriate levels of contact and frequency of reporting were set out, to implement the sentence effectively and support access to interventions.

Engagement with people on probation has been a challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic, and adjustments to reporting arrangements have been made through EDMs. As a result of restrictions on face-to-face contact, probation practitioners have needed to adapt to new ways of working and adjust their approach to engagement. We saw this being done well in many of the cases we inspected.

Robin is a 33-year-old male who was released from custody during the Covid-19 pandemic. He said:

"Things were different, when I was released, due to the pandemic. I am better with face-to-face contact but after a couple of weeks I settled into telephone contact with my probation practitioner... In my first meeting, I was told exactly what would happen, that some things would need to happen first, but then it would be up to me to identify what I wanted out of the process, how we would go about enabling me to achieve a positive future. The whole process has been incredibly helpful to me and I think the lynchpin of my recovery."

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

There was sufficient focus on offending and desistance in over three-quarters of the cases we inspected. Having identified offending-related factors at the assessment stage, practitioners included the relevant areas in planning, and in over three-quarters of cases critical areas of need were prioritised.

Planning built on the strengths and protective factors in an individual's life, and identified potential sources of support in most cases. This is an important aspect of sentence planning, to support desistance from offending beyond the completion of the sentence. Protective factors included the use of mentoring services to provide resettlement and engagement support; ETE provision; and strengthening family support networks.

Probation practitioners were familiar with interventions and services available locally, and planning identified appropriate services to reduce reoffending and support desistance in 71 per cent of cases. The 'email a prisoner' scheme gave the opportunity for practitioners to make contact prior to release and we saw the effective use of this to start planning before the end of custody. Post-release sentence planning included work to build on interventions started in prison, including substance misuse services and structured offending behaviour interventions.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Inspectors found that, in almost three-quarters of cases, risk of harm factors were addressed and the most critical factors were prioritised. The identification of constructive risk management strategies was inconsistent in plans to keep other people safe. Restrictive conditions were identified in many cases, which included additional licence conditions, reference to restraining orders, sexual harm prevention orders, sexual offender registration requirements and the use of approved premises. It was less clear from risk management plans how constructive interventions would be delivered to address internal risk factors. The link between planned work in sentence plans, including accredited programmes; mental health, housing and health support; and planned risk management activity, was not always evident.

Risk management planning made appropriate links to the work of other agencies in a reasonable number of cases. Probation practitioners identified the work of children's services, MOSOVO police, MARAC and MAPPA risk management strategies where appropriate, although this varied. A more consistent focus on this aspect of risk management planning would strengthen practice to keep other people safe. In three-quarters of the cases inspected, planning was adequate to address domestic abuse issues. Adequate planning to address child safeguarding or child protection issues was evident in over three-quarters of cases.

The region has cascaded best practice, provided examples of good contingency planning and delivered risk management workshops to improve practice in this area. The quality of contingency planning to keep other people safe was inconsistent, and effective contingency arrangements were seen in under two-thirds of cases. Where contingency plans were insufficient, we saw generalised and broad contingency arrangements that did not adequately identify the risks specific to the individual case. In some cases, it was not clear which agency would carry out the actions, and their contact details were not always recorded. Some contingency plans did not specifically identify factors or circumstances that would indicate increasing risks, or the actions required to respond to these.

Where contingency plans are clear, specific and detailed, they can assist with the prompt and planned response to indicators of increased risk of serious harm, as seen in the following example.

Good practice example

The risk management plan contained contact details for the substance misuse team, approved premises, community mental health services, police and psychologist. Licence conditions were contained within the plan and links were made to planning in custody, as well as the community, to safeguard victims. The role of other agencies was clear, including the police and children's services, and actions were linked to current and potential future risks. Contingency planning identified specific details of what would indicate increased risks to others – for example, substance misuse, changes in

accommodation and/or employment, inappropriate associates, non-compliance with the sentence, the breakdown or establishment of new intimate relationships, contact with victims and children and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. Actions to respond to increased risks were specific and identified who would be responsible for carrying them out, and in what timescales.

Current inspection

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating²⁸ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with South West and all NPS regions	Current inspection	All NPS regions ²⁹
Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively, with a focus on engaging the service user? ³⁰	90%	87%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance?	66%	66%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	67%	65%

Sentences were implemented effectively, with a strong focus on engaging with people on probation. Engagement was an area of strength in the implementation and delivery of the sentence, and practitioners used appropriately flexible approaches to encourage individuals' compliance. There has been an increased use of services provided by CRCs in the region, and a range of interventions is available to the South West region. Inspectors noted that, in some cases, Covid-19 restrictions presented as an additional challenge for accessing interventions and services. In two-thirds of cases, the delivery of services supported desistance and the safety of other people.

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

²⁹ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

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

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

Timely contact with individuals at the start of the sentence meant that requirements began at the appropriate time in many cases. Probation practitioners engaged people on probation well throughout their sentence. The EDM reporting requirements were implemented in April 2020, and practitioners had established and maintained effective working relationships using a range of methods of contact, including by telephone, remote video technology, doorstep visits and face-to-face contact where appropriate. For those on licence, contact prior to release was seen in many cases, assisted by the 'email a prisoner' scheme and telephone contact arrangements during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The region makes efforts to reduce the transfer of people on probation to another practitioner, recognising that this can interrupt the momentum of supervision. This can impact on PO caseloads, and the PSO support could be better utilised to maintain continuity of contact, while distributing work more equitably. Individuals retained the same probation practitioner in two-thirds of cases inspected, and in most other cases their supervision was transferred to another practitioner only once. From case records and discussions with probation practitioners, we found evidence of a strong focus on building effective relationships.

HM Inspectorate of Probation expects that practitioners balance a responsive approach to the circumstances of people on probation, and the appropriate and fair use of enforcement. In a large majority of cases, appropriate flexibility was offered, when necessary, to support compliance and engagement, and strengthen protective factors such as employment and access to education. Barriers to compliance were identified and responded to effectively in many cases. We came across examples of the appropriate use of doorstep visits, joint working with other agencies, including homeless outreach services, and mentor support to re-engage individuals at risk of recall.

Good practice example

Dawn is a 30-year-old female, supervised on a community order for an offence of outraging public decency. She presents with complex and challenging behaviour linked to her trauma and personality difficulties. The probation practitioner made excellent use of the OPD services for support and advice about how best to establish a positive working relationship. A real strength of this case was an approach which set clear boundaries, which were explained clearly to Dawn, while understanding her personality difficulties, with enough flexibility to allow for the occasional rearranged appointment. The practitioner has worked tirelessly to build a healthy relationship with Dawn and progress is being made in relation to her presentation at the office, which has been problematic over the years.

Where enforcement action was necessary, it was taken in many cases, and in all cases practitioners made good efforts to re-engage people on probation following their return to custody or following the court appearance for breaching their sentence.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance?

Assessments identified that the most prevalent factors linked to offending were thinking and behaviour, attitudes to offending, family and relationships, and lifestyle, including friends and associates. Sufficient services were delivered in almost two-thirds of relevant cases. Appropriate accommodation services were delivered in over three-quarters of relevant cases. Homelessness prevention teams were set up at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to provide access to accommodation for those released from prison. Practitioners valued this scheme and recognised the benefits of being able to access immediate accommodation, although some found the referral process onerous and highlighted long-term move-on accommodation as an ongoing issue. ETE services are provided by the Shaw Trust. This has continued to offer services throughout the pandemic, and inspectors saw ETE services delivered well in almost two-thirds of relevant cases. The involvement of other organisations to support desistance was well coordinated in almost three-quarters of cases.

In many cases, the level and nature of contact encouraged individuals to engage with their sentence plan, and appropriate interventions were identified to reduce reoffending and support desistance. We would expect to see attitudes to offending, and thinking and behaviour addressed through accredited programmes or structured interventions. We recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, increased remote delivery and reduced availability of accredited programmes; however, effective interventions to address these areas of need were delivered in only half of the cases inspected.

The delivery of services built on the strengths and protective factors of people on probation in 70 per cent of cases. This included arrangements for interventions, taking into account employment commitments, developing positive family relationships, and engagement to support motivation. Probation practitioners engaged with key individuals in the individual's life in just over half of the cases inspected. PSOs had a higher level of engagement with family members and individuals significant to support desistance than PO grade staff.

Good practice example

There is a good level of coordination between agencies, and Gary was referred to relevant interventions to support desistance. He started attending Alcoholics Anonymous and shared the contact details of his sponsor. The probation practitioner made contact with the OPD team, which enabled the offer of joint working and for Gary to discuss elements of the 12 Steps programme that he required support with. An overnight stay at the address of Gary's sister was approved, following contact with her, to support his close relationship with family. This allowed the practitioner to gain insight into the support offered by family and to build on this to strengthen protective factors.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

The delivery of services focusing on managing and minimising risk of harm was sufficient in two-thirds of the cases inspected. The frequency and nature of contact were appropriate in most cases. Covid-19 restrictions in place during this period meant that home visits could not be carried out. Probation practitioners carried out doorstep visits, on occasion jointly with other agencies, and liaised with other

professionals visiting people on probation at home, including the police, children's services and housing providers. In one case, the practitioner arranged a virtual call with the individual and spoke to both him and his partner. However, in one-third of cases, risks within the home were not monitored sufficiently during a period when lockdown restrictions were in place and the potential for harm within the home increased.

Where victims were eligible for statutory victim contact, we rated this work as 'Outstanding'. However, for those cases where there was no statutory requirement for victim contact, the focus on actual or potential victims was sufficient in too few cases. Of the cases where there was an insufficient focus on victims, we saw delayed responses to increased risks, and domestic abuse checks and children's services checks were not being carried out routinely to monitor ongoing risks or verify the self-reports of people on probation. Multi-agency working was not always used to provide a coordinated approach to keep other people safe, which included referrals for increased levels of MAPPA management, and into MARAC for a unified response to protect victims of domestic abuse.

Where other agencies were involved in the management of risk of harm, this was coordinated well in 70 per cent of the cases we inspected. Practitioners did not engage routinely with the other people in the lives of those on probation, to monitor and manage ongoing risks effectively. Of the cases inspected, we saw greater levels of engagement with key individuals to support risk management in cases supervised by PSOs than POs. The routine involvement of family members and significant individuals, where appropriate, enhance the ongoing monitoring and management of risks to others and assist with prompt responses, where risks are increasing.



2.4. Reviewing

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

Requires improvement

Our rating³¹ for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Comparison with South West and all NPS regions	Current inspection	All NPS regions ³²
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's compliance and engagement? ³³	74%	80%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance?	64%	74%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	58%	62%

When considering the quality of reviewing, HM Inspectorate of Probation considers formal review documents as well as evidence of ongoing review throughout the sentence, to assess progress made and adjust plans where necessary. Reviewing activity included people on probation and considered barriers to their compliance and engagement in a good majority of cases inspected. Keeping other people safe was a focus of reviewing in too few cases and this pulled our overall rating on this standard down to 'Requires improvement'.

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

Reviews were responsive to individuals' circumstances and considered barriers to their compliance and engagement in many cases. In three-quarters of relevant cases, adjustments were made where barriers were identified. Reviews of engagement were undertaken following events such as missed appointments, a change of probation practitioner, or a breach action and recall. We saw examples of reviews including other professionals working with people on probation, including approved premises staff and mentors. Adjustments made included reviewing

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

³² HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data, from inspections conducted between June 2018 and June 2019.

³³ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

appointment times, revisiting expectations explained at induction, and amendments being made to requirements of the sentence, where appropriate.

People on probation were not involved meaningfully in the review of assessments and plans in one-third of cases. When individuals are engaged in reviews, this can improve and maintain motivation, and provide an opportunity to reflect on and recognise progress made. In some cases this was taking place, but practice varied.

The following case inspection example illustrates positive engagement.

Good practice example

Joseph is a 38-year-old male who was breached for non-compliance with two concurrent community orders. He has a history of non-compliance, and on occasion his behaviour has been challenging. The probation practitioner reviewed progress with her line manager, prior to an appointment with Joseph. It was agreed, appropriately, that relationship interventions would be delivered on a one-to-one basis, informed by a review of his learning style and to promote engagement. A behaviour contract was developed to set out some ground rules for that work to continue. Joseph was involved meaningfully in the review discussion and the contract was shared with him and explained, to set clear boundaries and expectations.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance?

Having identified desistance and offending-related factors at the assessment stage, practitioners kept these under review in almost three-quarters of relevant cases. However, adjustments were made to the ongoing plan of work to reduce reoffending and support desistance in too few cases. Adjustments were not always made to planned work where individuals presented with increased substance misuse, deterioration of mental health or a change in relationship to partners or family. Delays to the expected start of an intervention, or interventions becoming unavailable were not reflected routinely in reviewing, and consideration was not always given to exploring alternative or adapted interventions. Input from other professionals working with people on probation informed reviewing in almost three-quarters of cases, and we saw input from mentor services, approved premises staff and housing support workers. The routine and timely exchange of information with drug and alcohol providers would improve the quality of reviews of offending and desistance.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

In too many cases, reviewing did not focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe. Where changes to risk of harm factors were identified, they were not reflected in reviewing in over one-third of cases.

Reviews were not undertaken routinely in response to significant events, such as a change to relationship status, a change of address, adjustments to child contact, further offending or increased risk factors, including substance misuse. In some cases, risks were not reviewed, and adjustments were not made soon enough. Where there is a significant change to an individual's circumstances, HM Inspectorate of Probation expects practitioners to be professionally curious in meetings with people on probation and also with other professionals working with them, to inform a review of risk of harm. Of the cases inspected, where reviews were undertaken,

people on probation were involved in only half of them. Changes to relationships did not prompt an inquisitive approach routinely, to establish details of partners and children. Appropriate adjustments were made to plans to keep other people safe in just over half of cases where there was evidence of new, re-emerging or increased risk factors.

Input from other agencies was not sought routinely to provide a well-informed review of the risk of harm to children and other family members. We saw examples of cases where the assessed level of harm was reduced inappropriately, before risk management strategies had been implemented fully. In some cases, interventions to keep other people safe had not been delivered, and information had not been gained from other agencies to demonstrate that the risk had reduced. The quality of reviews would be enhanced by a routine approach to involving key people in the lives of people on probation, where appropriate. Self-reports, from people on probation can assist in assessing motivation and be a good source of information to inform a review of an individual's progress. However, there were occasions when there was an over-reliance on self-reports, without information from other sources being sought to verify and reassess risks.

3. NPS-specific work

Current inspection

3.1. Court reports and case allocation



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

Requires improvement

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

We inspected 85 court reports, completed in a one-week period approximately three months prior to our fieldwork (that is, December 2020). Of these, 83 cases had been allocated subsequently to the NPS or CRC and we looked at the quality of allocation in these cases. We also held meetings with the court leads, middle managers, NPS court officers and sentencers.

Individuals appearing before the court were involved in the preparation of their court report, with diversity factors and their motivation to change reflected in the advice provided to the court. Reports generally identified factors linked to offending and risk of harm. Previous convictions and prosecution documents were available to the practitioner to inform reports in the majority of cases. However, in almost 60 per cent of inspected cases, the information and advice presented to the court did not draw sufficiently on the available sources of information, including child safeguarding and domestic abuse information.

Cases were allocated promptly to either the CRC or NPS, but information provided to organisations responsible for supervision was not consistent. Domestic abuse and safeguarding checks were not carried out routinely to inform a full and accurate risk of harm analysis prior to the case being allocated. Domestic abuse enquiries were made by NPS court staff in only one-third of cases, and safeguarding checks in just over half, prior to allocation. Where enquiries were made, details of domestic abuse incidents were returned prior to allocation in 63 per cent of cases, and safeguarding information in 80 per cent of cases. In over one-fifth of cases, inspectors were not able to determine whether the level of risk of serious harm was appropriately assessed prior to allocation, as there was insufficient information to make that judgement. We have rated the South West region as 'Requires improvement' on our standard for court reports and allocation.

Strengths:

- Previous convictions and prosecution papers are available to inform court reports.
- Those appearing before the court are involved in the preparation of reports, and their views taken into account.

- Report authors pay attention to the individual’s diversity needs and their personal circumstances.
- Cases are allocated promptly and to the appropriate organisation.

Areas for improvement:

- Domestic abuse and safeguarding checks are not undertaken consistently.
- Available sources of information are not used routinely to inform court reports.
- Court reports do not always consider the impact of offences on victims.
- Full and accurate assessments of risk of serious harm are not completed consistently prior to the case being allocated.

Our rating³⁴ for court reports and case allocation is based on two key questions:

	Current inspection
Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court’s decision-making? ³⁵	69%
Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate and based on sufficient information? ³⁵	57%

Information and advice provided to court was sufficiently analytical and personalised in 69 per cent of the reports we inspected. Service users were involved in the preparation of their reports and consideration was given to diversity factors. Cases were allocated to the receiving organisation promptly, but there were inconsistencies in the quality of information provided. Domestic abuse and safeguarding checks had been carried out in too few cases prior to allocation.

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

The reports we inspected were completed during the period of EDMs and Covid-19 restrictions. Despite national restrictions, to minimise face-to-face contact, there was a good level of engagement with service users, who were involved meaningfully in the preparation of their report in over 90 per cent of cases. A large majority of reports provided information to the court about the service user’s motivation, readiness to change and diversity factors. In 86 per cent of court reports, sentencing proposals made to the court were appropriate.

³⁴ The provisional rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

³⁵ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed ‘prompts’. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory ‘yes’ response to each prompt.

Up-to-date previous convictions and prosecution documents were available in almost all cases, but over half of reports did not draw sufficiently on available information, including safeguarding and domestic abuse information. A timely response was not always received from the police, which meant that this information did not inform the pre-sentence decisions. Of those cases where checks were made with children's services, 80 per cent led to a response before the case was allocated. Domestic abuse checks received a response prior to allocation in under two-thirds of cases. Inspectors saw examples of reports where, despite the practitioner having access to previous convictions, there was insufficient analysis taking place. Attention to the impact of the offence on identifiable victims was inconsistent and not always included in reports. Just over three-quarters of reports provided advice which gave adequate consideration to factors related to risk of harm.

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

Almost all cases were allocated promptly and to the correct agency. We expect the NPS to complete domestic abuse checks in all cases prior to allocation decisions being made. This provides the receiving organisation with the information required to make a thorough risk assessment of the individual before their supervision starts. However, in only 33 per cent of cases were domestic abuse checks made with the police prior to allocation. It is of concern that even where the potential for domestic abuse was evident, either through current/previous behaviour or disclosure during interview, checks were undertaken in only half of those cases.

We also expect the NPS to make child safeguarding enquiries in cases where the person on probation either has children, is in contact with children or presents a potential risk of harm to children. Child safeguarding checks were made in only 57 per cent of the expected cases.

Safeguarding checks are essential to ensure that appropriate information is available to inform the assessment of risk of harm. Of the 61 cases allocated to the CRC, in 36 per cent a full and accurate risk of harm assessment had been completed or one was not required. In a quarter of cases, the assessment was incomplete or inaccurate because domestic abuse or safeguarding information was absent. In a further quarter of cases, the assessment was incomplete or inaccurate for other reasons.

The absence of domestic abuse and safeguarding checks prior to allocation means that CRCs needed to gather missing information and revise risk assessments before they could start to supervise individuals safely. The impact of this is demonstrated by the following example, which highlights the potential for delays in actions required to keep people safe:

Poor practice example

Lucas, a 49-year-old male, was sentenced to a suspended sentence order for an offence of drugs possession with intent to supply. Previous convictions included historical violence and acquisitive offending, which were not analysed fully. A full risk assessment was not completed. Domestic abuse and safeguarding checks were not carried out prior to allocation. The probation practitioner who was allocated this case undertook domestic abuse checks, which provided details of previous assaults against his partner while she was pregnant. The child subsequently was removed, following assessments carried out by children's services.

NPS practice guidance and advice for court staff relating to child safeguarding and domestic abuse checks refers to the use of professional judgement in reaching a decision on the impact that the missing information would have on the proposal being considered. This is to be balanced against the importance of avoiding undue delays in sentencing in cases where domestic abuse and child safeguarding are issues. Inspectors found no evidence that report authors had applied professional judgement in concluding that the absence of this information would not impact negatively on proposals to manage the risk of harm. While, in some cases, speedy justice can be achieved effectively, we expect appropriate information-sharing to take place in all cases, to inform sentencing.

Current inspection

Statutory victim work



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

Outstanding

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

We examined 29 cases where victims had been eligible for the statutory victim contact scheme. Of these cases, 13 people had been sentenced approximately 12 months before the inspection fieldwork and 16 had been released between six and seven months before the inspection fieldwork.

We looked at initial victim contact, information and communication exchange, and contact with victims prior to the release of people in prison. We also held meetings with regional leads responsible for victim contact and public protection, and VLOs. We have rated the South West region as 'Outstanding' on our standard for statutory victim work.

In January 2021, the victim contact team moved to the South West regional structure, as part of a phased and planned transition to the new regional arrangements. VLOs are generally attached to geographical teams, based alongside sentence management teams, which supports collaboration and teamwork. A senior operational support manager has responsibility for middle managers, who oversee the work of the VLOs.

The victim contact scheme is delivered by a team of PSOs with a range of skills and experience; some have been in post for over 20 years, while others have taken on the role within the last 12 months. The mixture of experience within the team provides a good platform for shared learning and peer support for those newer to the role. Recently appointed VLOs are required to undertake the vocational qualification level three diploma in probation studies, which is mandatory for band three PSO staff employed since 2016. Adaptations have been made to this training to include an overview of victim contact work.

Inspectors were informed that VLOs have high caseloads, with some responsible for up to 300 cases. We saw committed and dedicated staff, focused on delivering a

high-quality service to victims while managing the challenges of high caseloads. This was reflected in the high-quality work we saw in the cases inspected.

Overall, we saw positive engagement with victims. Contact was sensitive and personalised to victims, their experience and diversity factors. The level of communication between VLOs and practitioners was impressive, with a strong focus on victim safety. We saw good engagement with victims prior to the individual being released from custody, to provide them with the opportunity to contribute to and inform decisions about release plans. This was supported by effective communication between VLOs and probation practitioners to reflect the views of victims.

Strengths:

- Initial contact with victims is timely, personalised and sensitive to their circumstances, providing information to help them decide if they want to consent to the victim contact scheme.
- Communication between VLOs and probation practitioners is good and supports victim safety pre- and post-release.
- The concerns of victims are addressed, and their safety is considered when planning for the release of individuals from custody.
- VLOs are dedicated and committed to providing a high-quality service to victims, and work hard to achieve this.
- The victim contact team promotes its work through briefings to practitioners and prison staff, and has delivered joint victim-focused training with the quality development team.

Areas for improvement:

- Caseloads held by VLOs are not measured or monitored effectively.
- VLOs are involved actively in MAPPAs in too few cases.
- Informing victims of what action to take if the person on probation makes unwanted contact with them is inconsistent.
- The protected characteristics of victims are not captured routinely and accurately.

Our rating³⁶ for statutory victim work is based on three key questions:

	Current inspection
Does initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the victim contact scheme and provide information about sources of support? ³⁷	87%
Is there effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims?Error! Bookmark not defined.	90%
Does pre-release contact with the victim/s allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release?Error! Bookmark not defined.	90%

The delivery of victim contact services is an area of strength in the South West region. In some locations, VLOs are based within community supervision teams, and attend team meetings to update practitioners on the services they provide. Shadowing arrangements are in place for new staff and PQiPs learners, to observe the work of the victim contact team. The team delivers victim awareness and refresher training, in addition to joint briefings with the quality development team. While capacity has been a challenge, the team is committed and motivated to promote its work and the safety of victims across the region.

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

In 85 per cent of cases, contact was made with victims soon after sentence, which in most cases was via letter. Letters were personalised, sensitive to diversity factors and the experience of victims, and followed up appropriately to encourage their engagement. In 93 per cent of cases, initial contact provided a good level of information to help victims make an informed choice about whether to engage with the scheme. In many cases, letters were followed up with telephone contact, if there was no response received. Inspectors noted that the steps taken to engage with victims were appropriate, encouraging and supportive, while acknowledging the impact of offending on victims and the importance of responding sensitively.

While engagement with victims, on an individual level, paid good attention to diversity factors and personal circumstances, details of protected characteristics were not recorded consistently on case record systems. The collation and analysis of this data would assist the region to identify any issues of disproportionality or gaps in services, and build on the strengths we saw.

Staff recognised that Covid-19 restrictions presented as an additional barrier for some victims, as they wanted access to face-to-face counselling services. Victim support and volunteer matters are used as available sources of support, and victims were referred, or signposted, to other agencies for support in over three-quarters of

³⁶ The rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

³⁷ The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annexe 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

cases. In just under half of the cases inspected, victims were informed about the action they can take if the person on probation attempts to make unwanted contact with them. This is an area that would benefit from more focus, to reassure victims about the support available in these circumstances.

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

In all cases inspected, we saw good levels of communication between VLOs and probation practitioners. In most cases, VLOs were kept updated as the individual's sentence progressed. VLOs work hard to be visible to practitioners, and their co-location and attendance at team meetings and case discussions assisted the swift exchange of information. The increased use of remote technology has provided more opportunity for VLOs to be visible, and this has improved the timeliness and quality of information exchange. Probation practitioners receive reports from VLOs to summarise the views of victims, and these are used to inform release plans.

Arrangements are in place for newly appointed practitioners to shadow the work of VLOs, which helps those working with people on probation and those working with victims to understand each other's role. This positive practice, supported by the region, helps staff build relationships and encourages joint working, which is reflected in the strong communication and information exchange we saw in the cases inspected.

Previously, there was an expectation for the victim contact team to attend all MAPPA meetings. The current expectation is for their representation only at MAPPA meetings where there is active involvement with a victim, either through attendance or via a written report. In two-thirds of the cases inspected, the victim contact team was not represented at MAPPA level two or three meetings. High caseloads have impacted on the capacity of VLOs to contribute to multi-agency meetings, and this is recognised by the region. While the routine exchange of information between VLOs and practitioners was identified as a strength, building the capacity to involve the victim contact team in formal risk management meetings would strengthen this further.

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

Victims were given the opportunity to share their views and make representations about release in all the cases we inspected. VLOs made timely representations, on behalf of the victims, for additional licence conditions and safeguarding measures to be put in place to support their safety. In most cases, information exchange with victims was handled sensitively and their views were considered. Where victims did not want specific details to be highlighted to the person on probation – for example, address details – we saw this reflected in the wording of licence conditions, in consultation with the victim.

Of the cases we inspected, a few were released following a parole application. In less than half of these cases, victims were supported to make a personal statement to inform the decision-making of the Parole Board. A more consistent and systematic approach to this would provide a holistic approach, reflecting the views of victims, to assist Parole Board decision-making.

Inspectors found good examples of work with victims, one of which is detailed below.

Good practice example

Contact was made with two family members, related to the victim. Discussions with them were handled sensitively, and the victim liaison officer postponed contact when it fell on the anniversary of the death of the victim. A referral was made to victim support, and restorative processes were explored with the victims, with their consent. A referral was made to Restorative Solutions and they were supported and prepared for this process. The person on probation declined involvement, and victims were updated and offered ongoing support.

The views of the victims were sought early in the individual's sentence, and additional licence conditions were discussed and shared with the probation practitioner to inform planning for release.

Annexe 1: Background to probation services

Around 235,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually.³⁸ Probation services supervise individuals serving community orders, provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison (in anticipation of their release) and supervise, for a minimum of 12 months, all individuals released from prison.³⁹

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

These services were, at the time of these inspections, provided by a publicly owned NPS and 18 privately owned CRCs that provided services under contract. The NPS managed those presenting a high or very high risk of serious harm or managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. CRCs supervised most other offenders presenting a low or medium risk of harm. The NPS also advises courts on sentencing all offenders.

On 26 June 2021, the CRC contracts were terminated and all staff – CRC and NPS – came together in a single, unified public sector Probation Service responsible for the management of all offenders, regardless of their risk of harm classification.

³⁸ Ministry of Justice. Offender management caseload statistics as at 28 January 2021 (based on the average number of total offenders supervised in the previous four quarters to the end of September 2020).

³⁹ All those sentenced, for offences committed after the implementation of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, to more than one day and less than 24 months in custody, are supervised in the community for 12 months post-release. Others serving longer custodial sentences may have longer total periods of supervision on licence.

Annexe 2: Methodology

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

Due to government restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, we conducted the fieldwork for these inspections entirely remotely, primarily using video links through Microsoft Teams.

Domain one: organisational delivery

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

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we interviewed 71 individual probation practitioners, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings with groups and individuals, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 29 meetings, which included meetings with senior managers, operational partners and stakeholders, and with middle managers and frontline staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.⁴⁰

Domain two: case supervision

We completed case assessments over a two-week period, between 22 February and 05 March 2021, examining the case files pertaining to those on probation and interviewing probation practitioners and individuals on probation. The cases selected were those of individuals who had been under community supervision for approximately six to seven months, during the period of Covid-19 restrictions and iterations of EDMs (either through a community sentence or following release from custody). This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely

⁴⁰ HM Inspectorate of Probation domain one ratings characteristics can be found here: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/06/Probation-Domain-1-RaG-1.pdf>

involved in the case also took place. The inspection was conducted remotely, due to Covid-19 restrictions.

We examined 86 cases from across all LDUs. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, type of disposal and risk of serious harm level matched those in the eligible population.

All case sample dates fall later than the original lockdown/EDM period (27 July – 28 August 2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was considered in all inspected cases. This was considered at the ratings panel, which concluded that the rating of cases had not been impacted by the pandemic.

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

Domain three: NPS-specific work

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

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

Court reports and case allocation

We examined 85 court reports that had been completed in a one-week period (7–11 December 2020) approximately three months before our fieldwork. Of those cases, 83 had been sentenced and allocated either to the NPS or a CRC. We ensured that the ratios in relation to report type and the agency to which any resulting case was allocated matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

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

- the senior manager with overall responsibility for the delivery of court work
- middle managers with responsibilities for the delivery of court work
- a group of sentencers
- a group of court duty staff.

Statutory victim work

We examined 29 cases in which victim/s had been eligible for the statutory victim contact scheme. Of these cases, 13 of the individuals under supervision had been sentenced approximately 12 months before the inspection fieldwork (24 February – 20 March 2020), and 16 had been released between six and seven months before the inspection fieldwork (27 July – 28 August 2020).

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups:

- the senior managers with overall responsibility for victim work
- a group of VLOs.

Ratings explained

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/06/Probation-Domain-1-RaG-1.pdf>.

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

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

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

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

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

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the 10 standards will be scored on a 0-3 scale as listed in the following table.

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

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

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

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

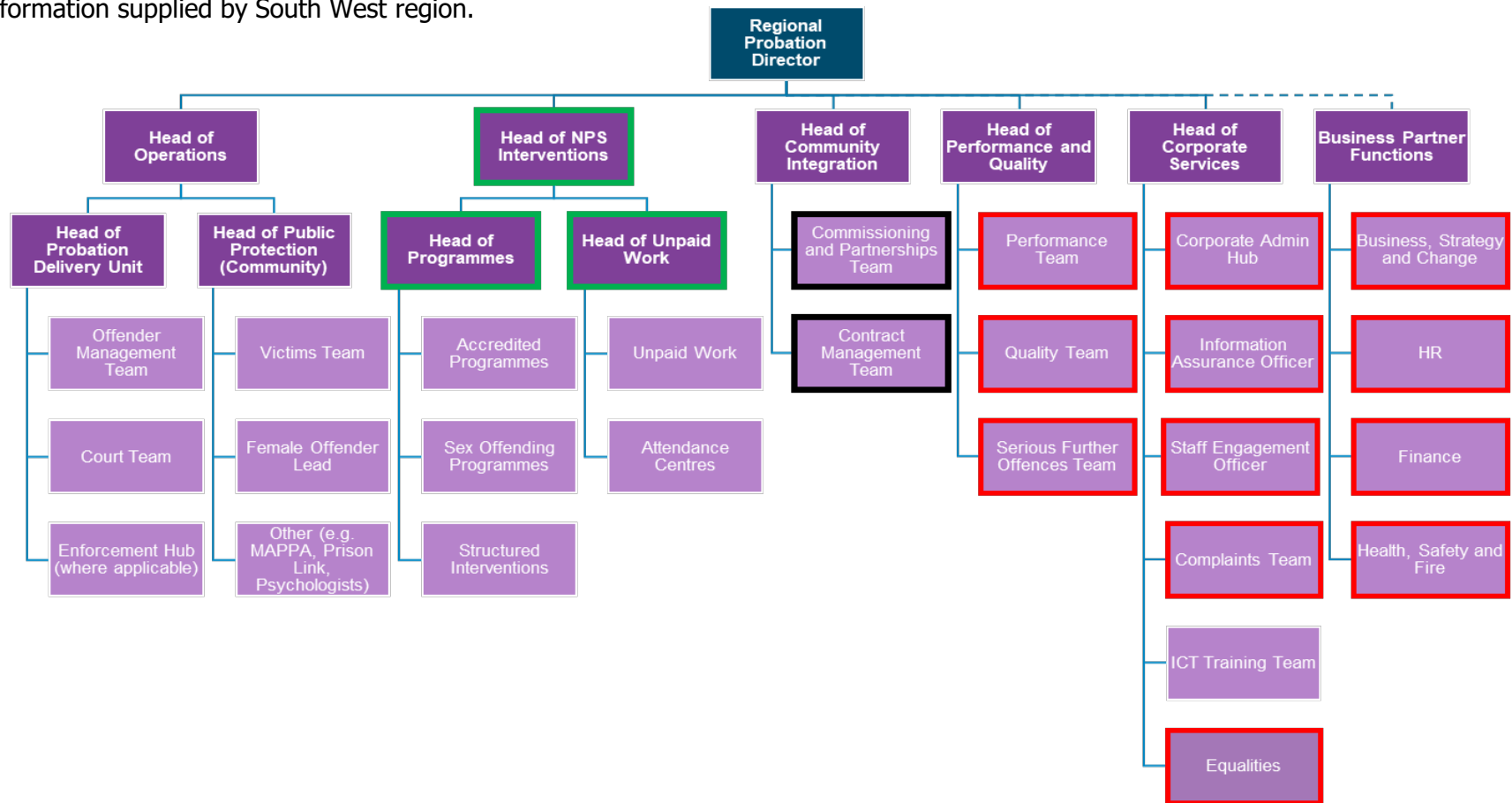
Comparative data

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

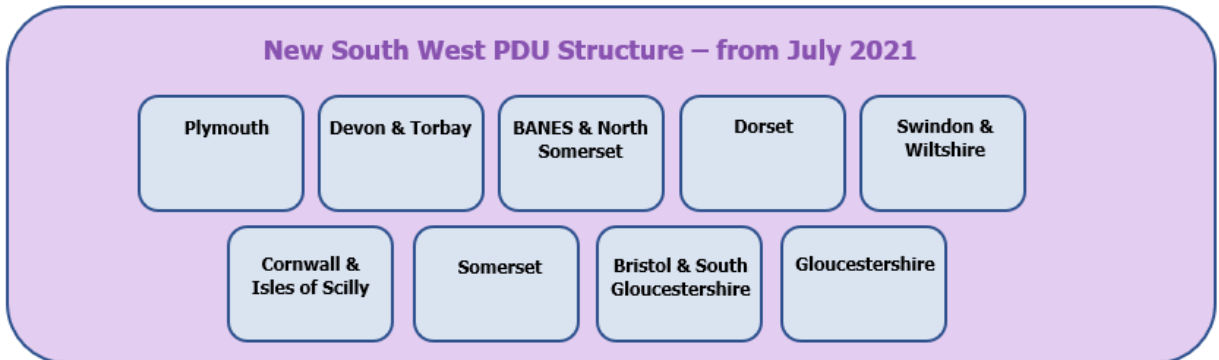
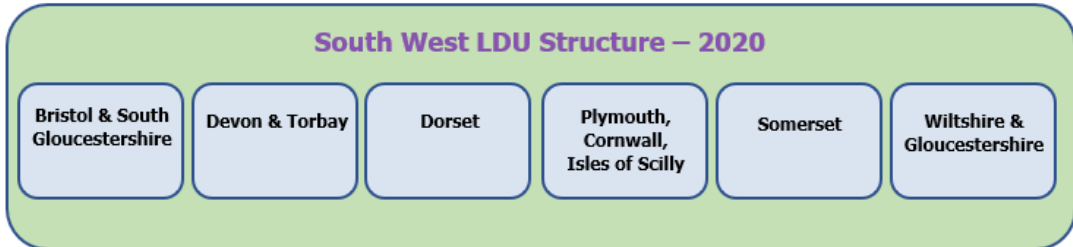
Annexe 3: Organisational design and map

Revised End-State Regional Organisational Structure

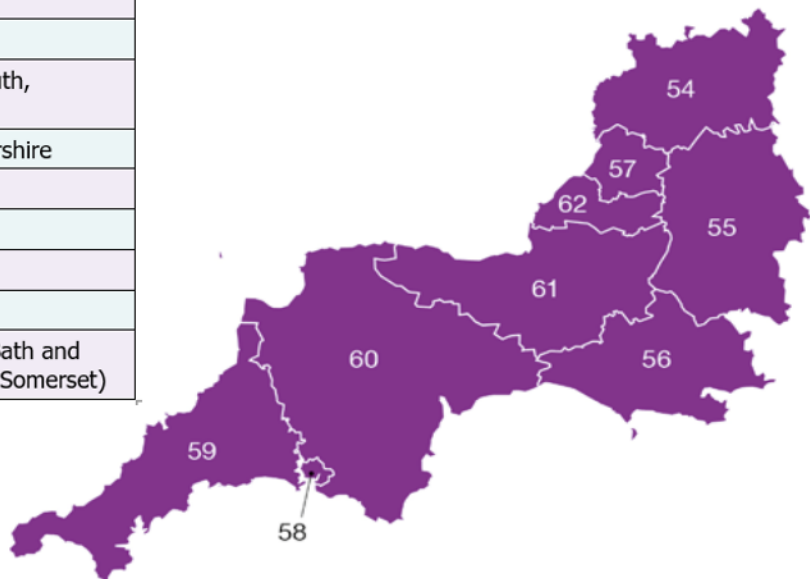
Information supplied by South West region.



NPS South West LDU & PDU Structures



G – South West
54. Gloucestershire
55. Swindon and Wiltshire
56. Dorset (includes Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole)
57. Bristol and South Gloucestershire
58. Plymouth
59. Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
60. Devon and Torbay
61. Somerset
62. Bath and North Somerset (Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset)



Annexe 4: Inspection data⁴¹

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

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

2.1. Assessment	
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	Current inspection
Does assessment analyse the service user's motivation and readiness to engage and comply with the sentence?	77%
Does assessment analyse the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, and consider the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery?	50%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	76%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	
Does assessment identify and analyse offending-related factors?	71%
Does assessment identify the service user's strengths and protective factors?	83%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	76%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	70%

⁴¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

Does assessment analyse any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	72%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	64%
Were domestic abuse checks undertaken?	60%
Did child safeguarding information-sharing take place in cases where required? ⁴²	67%

2.2. Planning

Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	Current inspection
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	69%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, which may affect engagement and compliance?	69%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's readiness and motivation to change, which may affect engagement and compliance?	73%
Does planning set out how all the requirements of the sentence or licence/post-sentence supervision will be delivered within the available timescales?	71%
Does planning set a level, pattern and type of contact sufficient to engage the service user and to support the effectiveness of specific interventions?	84%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?	
Does planning sufficiently reflect offending-related factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	77%
Does planning build on the service user's strengths and protective factors, utilising potential sources of support?	73%
Does planning set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	71%

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

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does planning sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	73%
Does planning set out the necessary constructive and/or restrictive interventions to manage the risk of harm?	67%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the service user and any multi-agency plans?	73%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	62%

2.3. Implementation and delivery

Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately, with a focus on engaging the service user?	Current inspection
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	76%
Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the service user?	92%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the service user to complete the sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	93%
Post-custody cases only: Was there a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner before release?	76%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?	92%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	83%
Are sufficient efforts made to re-engage the service user after enforcement actions or recall?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance?	
Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	62%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance protective factors?	70%

Is the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services sufficiently well-coordinated?	72%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support their desistance?	54%
Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	77%
Are local services engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond?	68%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	
Is the level and nature of contact offered sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	79%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims?	59%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	70%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	59%
Are home visits undertaken, where necessary, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	65%

2.4. Reviewing

Does reviewing effectively support the service user's compliance and engagement?	Current inspection
In cases where it is needed, does reviewing consider compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	82%
In cases where it was needed, were any necessary adjustments made to the ongoing plan of work to take account of compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	75%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement?	64%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of actions to implement the sentence?	77%

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance?	
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work?	52%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the service user's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	63%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the service user?	73%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the progress towards desistance?	74%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work?	40%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the service user's risk of harm?	64%
Is the service user (and, where appropriate, key individuals in the service user's life) meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm?	50%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the management of the service user's risk of harm?	68%

3.1 Court reports and case allocation

Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the service user, supporting the court's decision-making?	Current inspection
Does the information and advice draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including child safeguarding and domestic abuse information? ⁴³	41%
Is there evidence that the service user is meaningfully involved in the preparation of the report, and are their views considered?	91%
Does the advice consider factors related to the likelihood of reoffending?	86%

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

Does the advice consider factors related to risk of harm?	78%
Does the advice consider the service user's motivation and readiness to change?	82%
Does the advice consider the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?	82%
Does the advice consider the impact of the offences on known /identifiable victims?	67%
Is an appropriate proposal made to court? ⁴⁴	86%
Is there a sufficient record of the advice given, and the reasons for it?	93%
Is the allocation of the case prompt, accurate and based on sufficient information?	
Is there a sufficient record of the assessment and advice to the court, for the purposes of allocation and the communication of relevant information to the organisation responsible for supervision?	86%
Is the case allocated promptly to the correct agency? ⁴⁴	99%
Where necessary, has a full and accurate risk of serious harm assessment been completed prior to allocation?	36%

3.2 Statutory victim work

Does the initial contact with the victim/s encourage engagement with the Victim Contact Scheme and provide information about sources of support?	Current inspection
Is appropriate initial contact made soon after sentence, with consideration given to the timing of such contact?	85%
Are the initial letters appropriately personalised, considering the nature of the experience of the victim/s and any diversity issues?	85%
Is clear information given to victims about what they can expect at different points in a sentence?	89%
Do the initial letters contain sufficient information to enable the victim/s to make an informed choice about whether to participate in the scheme?	93%

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

Are victims informed about the action they can take if the prisoner attempts to make unwanted contact with them?	48%
Are victim/s referred to other agencies or services, or given information about available sources of help or support?	78%
Is there effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims?	
Are victim liaison staff involved in MAPPA where appropriate?	30%
Do victim liaison staff share relevant information with the offender manager?	100%
Are the concerns of the victim/s addressed and is attention paid to their safety when planning for release?	91%
Are victim liaison staff provided with appropriate and timely information about the management of the service user?	92%
Does pre-release contact with the victim/s allow them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release?	
Are the victims given the opportunity to contribute their views to inform decisions about the service user's release in a timely way and supported in doing so?	100%
Are views expressed by victims treated appropriately and in accordance with the victim contact scheme?	92%
Are victims supported in making a victim personal statement in parole applications?	40%