



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

# WESTMINSTER LEGAL POLICY FORUM CONFERENCE – 5 JULY 2022

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INSPECTOR OF PROBATION

# Our vision



## High quality probation and youth offending services that change people's lives for the better

- Local inspection and rating of probation services and YOTs
- National thematic enquiries (e.g. mental health, drugs, management of sex offenders or domestic abuse perpetrators, race equality)
- Commissioned enquiries into individual Serious Further Offences (e.g. Joseph McCann, Leroy Campbell)
- Research and analysis and effective practice guides



# A TOUGH YEAR FOR PROBATION

Twin challenges of Covid recovery and delivering a major structural reform programme

Full Covid recovery still a long way off

Unification still a work in progress and not a magic bullet – staff morale, workloads, legacy cultural divisions within the service

Longstanding, pre-pandemic problems remain – staffing; management oversight; quality of supervision



## The Covid crisis and probation

Impacts on every part of the criminal justice system and the ecosystem of support services it worked with

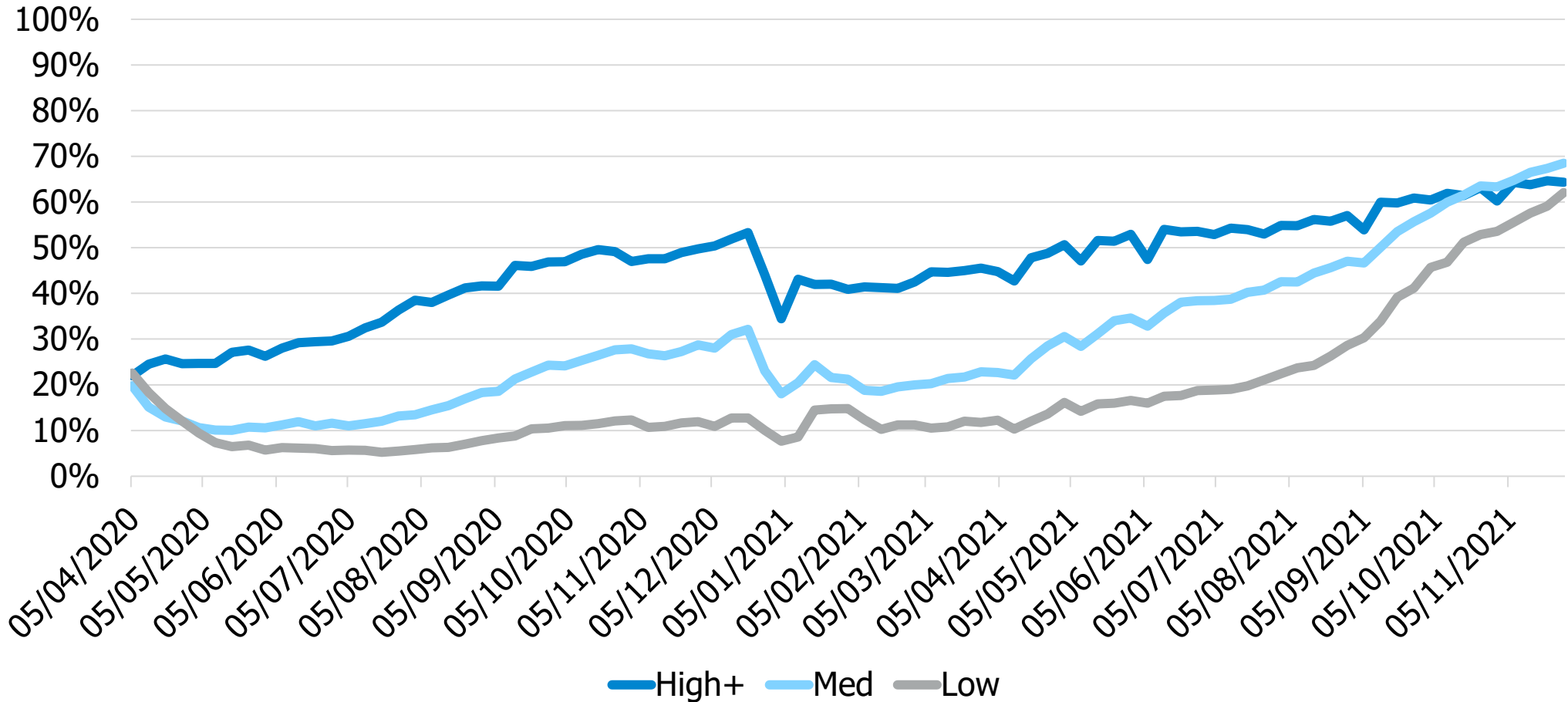
Exceptional Delivery Model from March 2020 led to unpaid work and accredited programmes and other interventions being suspended for many months

Home based working and phone supervision as the new norm – less than 10% contacts face to face during peak lockdown

Coming out of lockdown more difficult than going in. Business as usual still not resumed in some areas; large backlogs and staff still working 50:50 office: home



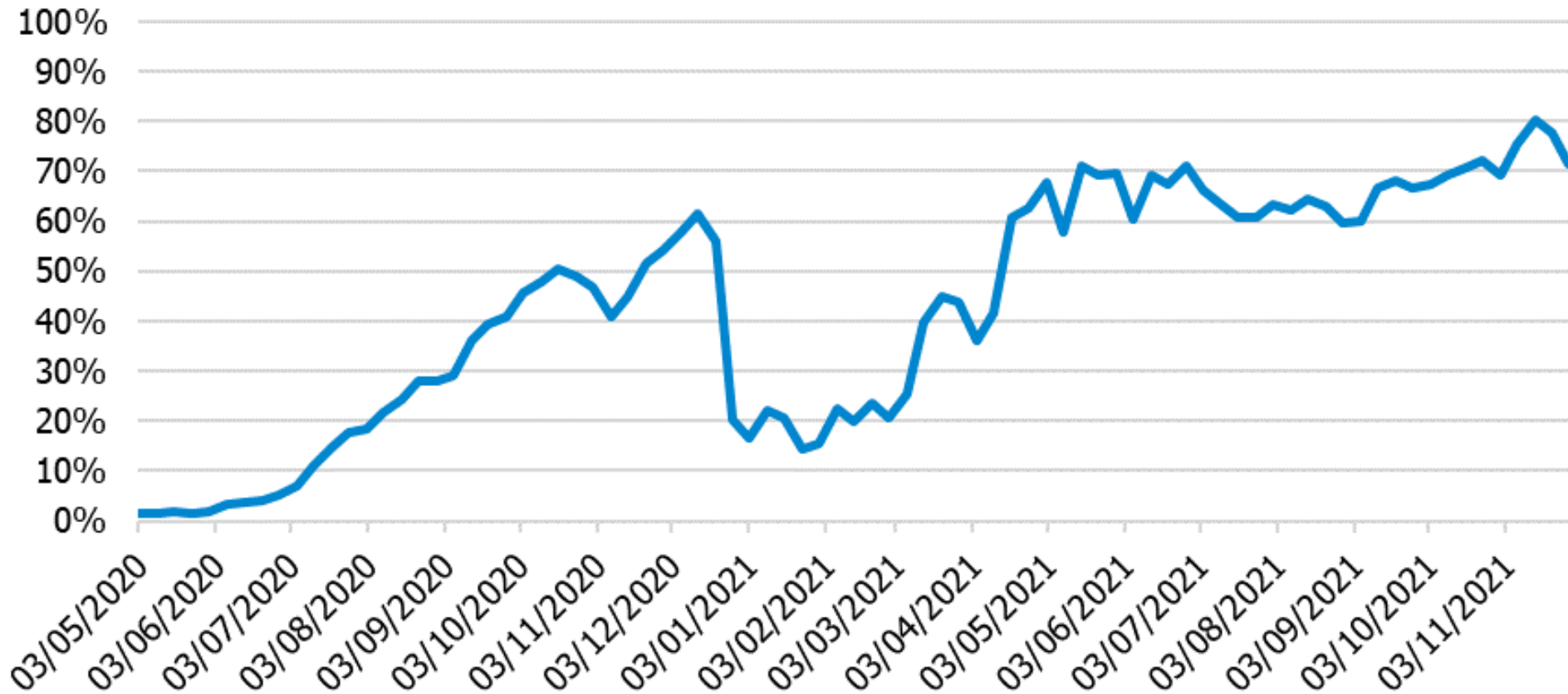
# Proportion of total contacts that were face to face, by risk of serious harm (RoSH) level





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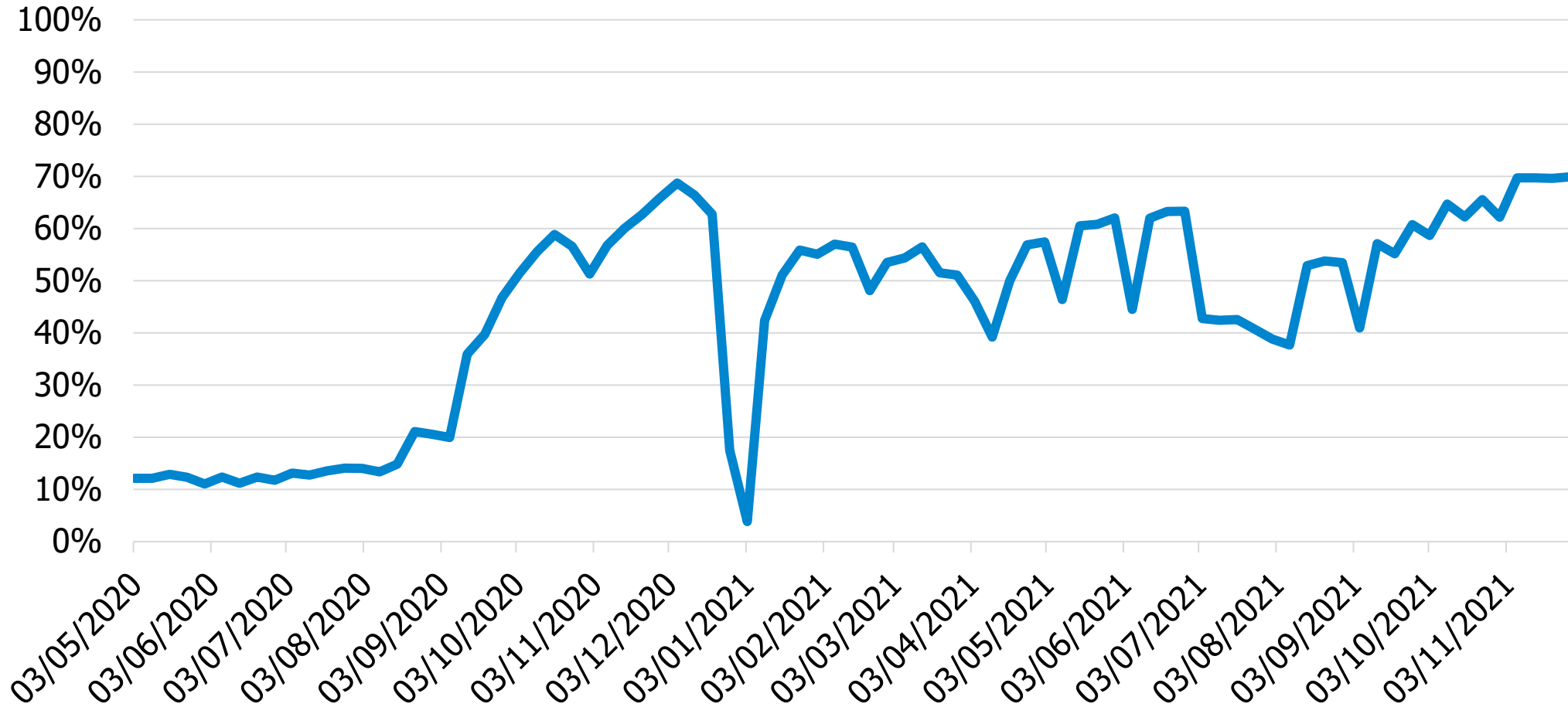
# Percentage of unpaid work delivered, compared with pre-pandemic baseline





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# Accredited programmes delivered, against pre-Covid-19 levels





## HOW HAS UNIFICATION GONE?

Transition was well managed at national and regional level in spring 2021 and idea of unification has been generally supported by NPS and CRC staff

8,500 staff, 97 buildings and almost 113,000 cases successfully transferred into the unified service from the private sector at the end of June

110 separate contracts were let to a tight timescale with external providers of accommodation, employment and personal wellbeing support and for specialist services for women

### But

Cultural divisions remain. Separation of NPS and CRC legacy staff continued well past unification date in many offices and some ex CRC staff felt like second class citizens.

Move to Civil Service has added bureaucracy and delay and feels stifling to some ex CRC managers – loss of independence and innovation

Staffing remains a major concern. Ongoing lack of clarity about target headcounts and continuing significant differences between the caseloads of practitioners

Whole new set of commissioned service contracts from July 2021 meant loss of some valued services and TTG partnerships and need for new CSR providers to get up to speed



# OUR LOCAL PROBATION INSPECTION METHODOLOGY




## Leadership and resourcing

1.1 Leadership

1.2 Staff

1.3 Services

1.4 Information and facilities



## Individual case inspections

2.1 Court work

2.2 Assessment

2.3 Planning

2.4 Implementation and delivery

2.5 Reviewing

2.6 Outcomes



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Penal Reform Solutions



# USER VOICE

*It's easier inside than outside....i was begging them not to put me back out on the street, but they said if I didn't leave the cell I would be forcefully removed*

*"My Probation Officer is my rock...her honesty and respect lifted me".*



# HMIP inspection scores since unification

	Overall rating	Score out of 27	Leadership	Staffing	Services	Information and facilities
Swansea NPT	Inadequate	4	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Gwent	Requires improvement	6	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement
West Sussex	Inadequate	4	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement
West Kent	Inadequate	1	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Essex North	Inadequate	1	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Northants	Requires improvement	9	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Requires improvement

Inadequate	Inadequate
Requires improvement	Requires improvement



## Vacancy rates

	<b>SPO</b>	<b>PO</b>	<b>PSO</b>
<b>Swansea NPT</b>	-6%	-4%	-8%
<b>Gwent</b>	-2%	-9%	11%
<b>West Sussex</b>	43%	22%	44%
<b>West Kent</b>	31%	4%	5%
<b>Essex North</b>	61%	26%	58%
<b>Northants</b>	20%	0%	28%

Lack of clarity about target headcounts and out of date target figures – and huge variation in vacancy rates between PDUs and grades. Significant attrition rates in some areas (e.g. new PSOs in Gwent)

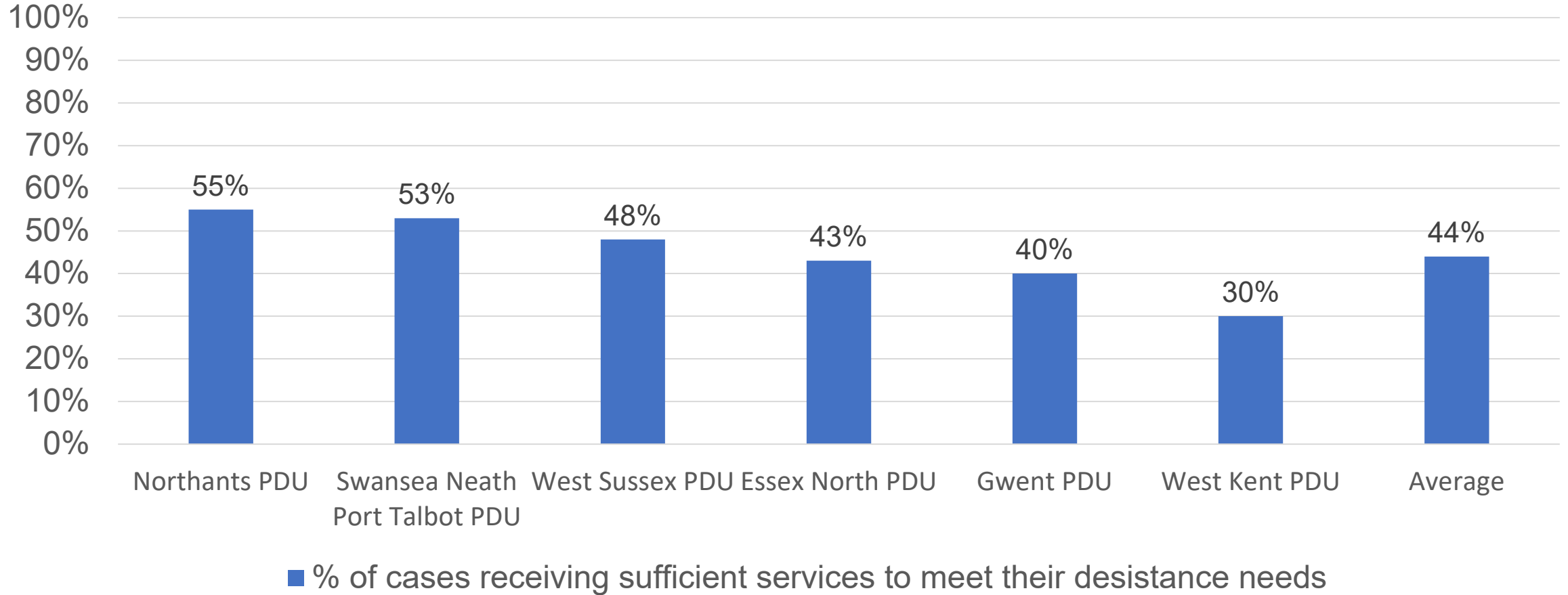
Official vacancy rates maybe understating 'true' figure – once mat leave; long term sickness; loans accounted for

Very heavily loaded SPOs – leading to poor scores for quality of supervision

Staff perceptions that staffing levels are at crisis point and that workloads are unmanageable

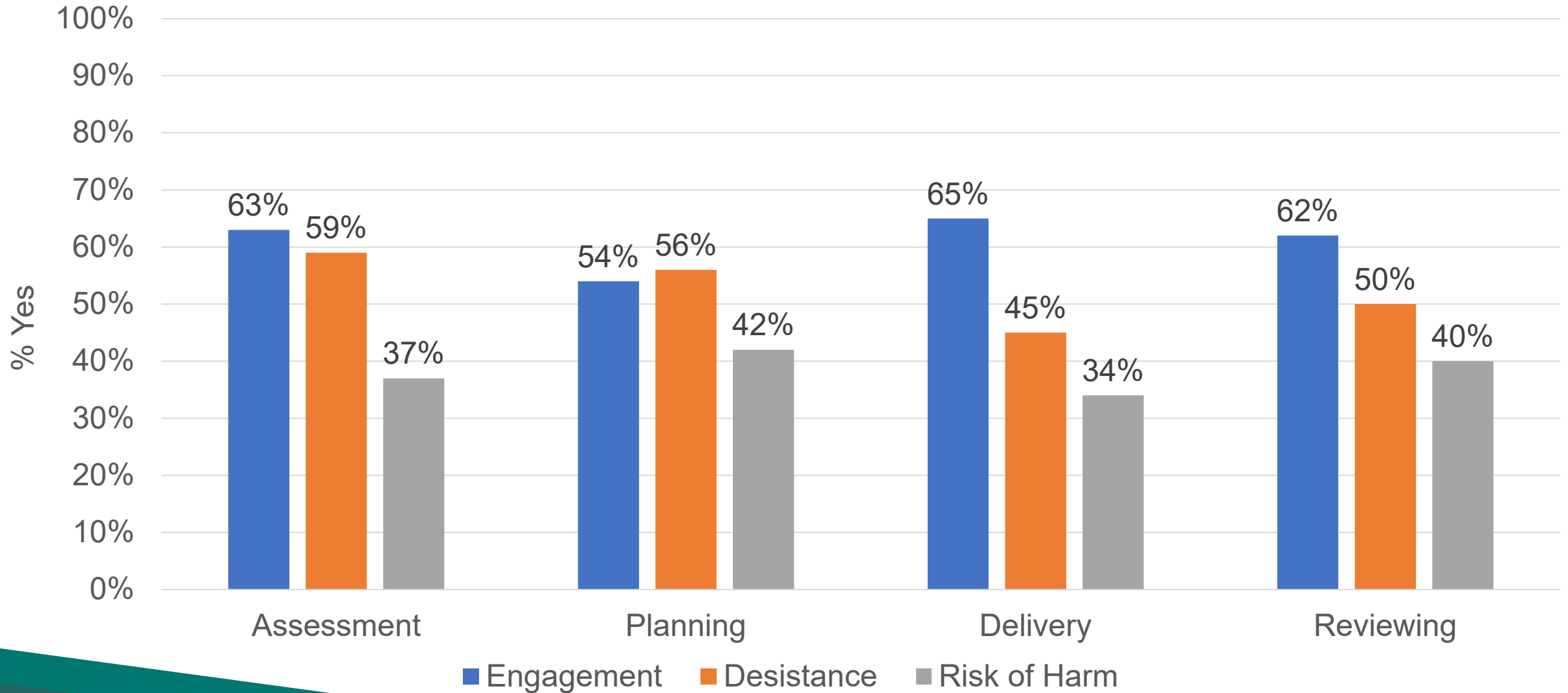


# 44% of cases receiving sufficient services to meet desistance needs





# 60% of cases inspected since unification insufficient against at least one HMIP quality standard





# Common weaknesses in risk management

Wrong assessment of risk / MAPPA level

Poor information sharing with the police and children's services

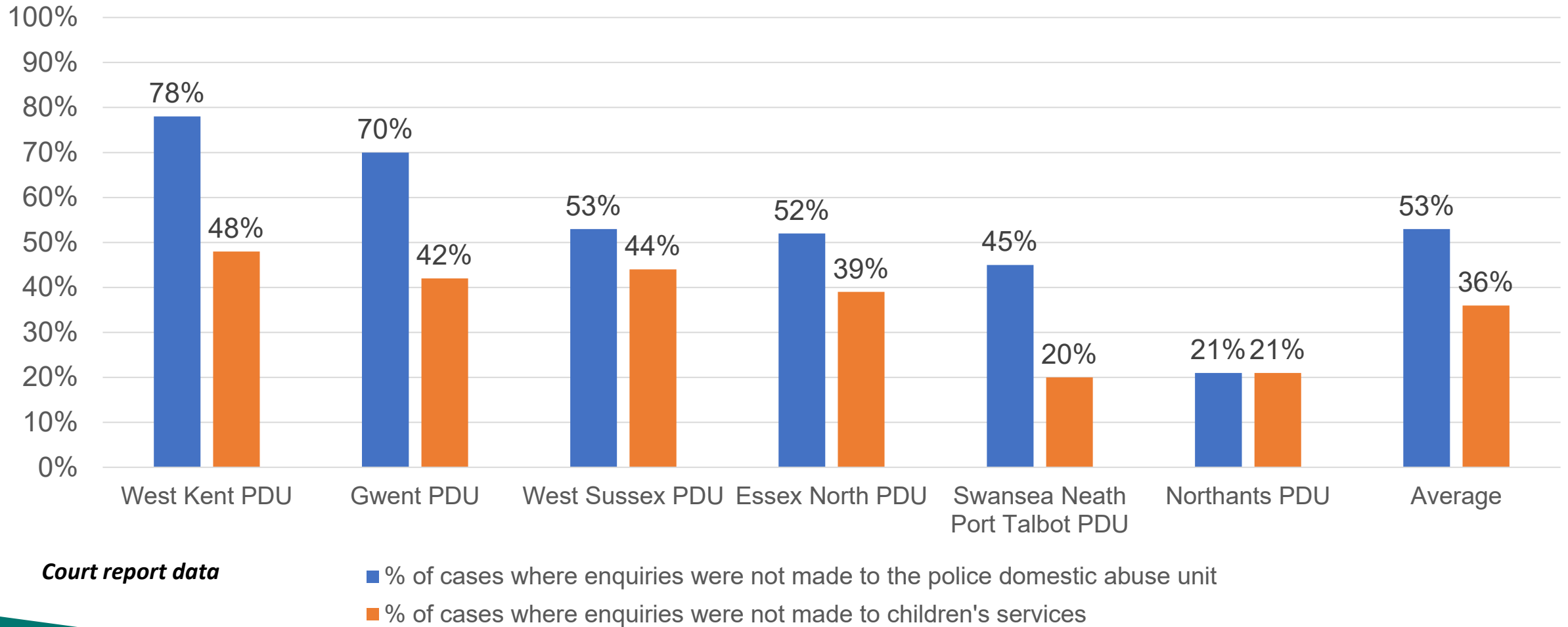
Lack of professional curiosity – over-optimistic assessment of progress under supervision. Lack of home visits

Poor management oversight

Premature relaxation of controls and failure to trigger recall



# Cases where enquiries were not made to police domestic abuse units or children's services







## FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR PROBATION

Covid – recovery from its impact may take years – backlogs; long term impacts on staff and service users

Longer term resourcing – structural changes not a magic bullet by themselves. Sustained investment essential

Staffing is critical – ongoing issues around vacancies, skills and training, particularly (but not just) in the South East

Wider 'ecosystem' – mental health and drugs services; children's social care – need investment too after impacts of austerity and Covid

Central control vs local innovation and empowerment – important not to crush local initiative and experimentation

Real transformation is a long-term commitment and unification is just the beginning of that journey



## REASONS TO BE MORE CHEERFUL?

More resources being invested after years of austerity – a decent Spending Review settlement

Staffing numbers increasing – 1500 PQUIPS recruited in 2021/22 and a commitment to 1500 more in 2022/23

Additional investment in unpaid work and accredited programme staff

Staff returning to the office and to face to face contact with people on probation and to business as usual delivery

Moving on from a focus on structural reform and Covid to a focus on quality and a single focus of “delivering excellent probation services”

None of this will translate into overnight improvement to the quality of probation supervision but given time and sustained focus and investment I hope to start to see improvements by this time next year



## WHEN IT ALL GOES RIGHT...HIDDEN HEROES

*"They are working for me. They have stopped me from wanting to throw myself off the pier and killing myself. My life was in such a mess because of the heroin and it finally took me to prison and this. But since getting my probation worker who has worked so hard in building me up again and helping me find myself. I couldn't have asked for anything more really. She's the only person who has taken the time to really get to know me and it's been a pleasure to work with her."*

*"My Probation Officer is my rock...her honesty and respect lifted me".*

*"When I got out in November my officer was brilliant. She arranged for me to stay in a bed and breakfast hotel for women because of my past. I was homeless, I'd just lost my parents, I felt isolated, afraid and very vulnerable but she has helped me to access so many services that will help with my mental health problems and personal wellbeing, along with helping me out with housing as well. She has got all the agencies involved. She has been so helpful."*