



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Warwickshire PDU

The Probation Service – West Midlands region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2022

Contents

Foreword	3
Ratings	5
Recommendations	6
Background	7
1. Organisational delivery	8
2. Court work and case supervision	24
Annexe one – Progress against previous recommendations	33
Annexe two – Staffing and workload data	36
Annexe three – Inspection data	38
Annexe four – Web links	45

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

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Foreword

This is the ninth Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) in England to be inspected using our new methodology, which was developed following the integration of Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) into a single unified service – The Probation Service. Our new methodology contains stronger links between judgments on organisational delivery, and court work and case supervision. The unification of probation services across England took place in June 2021, at a time when social restrictions were in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Case samples for this inspection were taken from those that started supervision in the community in November and December 2021.

Implementing a new delivery model while recovering from a pandemic has not been without its challenges, and the impact of this has been arguably more significant than unification. The decision by this PDU to delay the implementation of the unified model, while upskilling its workforce, has paid dividends. While there remain some issues for staff in terms of workload, sickness, and attrition, we found that there were good foundations in Warwickshire on which to build.

We were encouraged to see excellent working relationships across partnerships. The co-location of probation with other criminal justice agencies, including the police and court service, in modern 'Justice Centres' was also a positive. More could be done however, to maximise the benefits of these arrangements for frontline delivery.

Managers and staff in this PDU expressed a clear commitment to delivering a quality service, so that the people they supervise can make positive changes to their lives. Most probation practitioners understood that quality work was the priority, but this was not borne out in the casework inspected, with some staff finding it easier to focus on service delivery targets instead. The capacity to deliver high-quality work was hampered by what most staff felt were unmanageable workloads and high levels of sickness within the PDU.

We have regularly commented, in both our core and thematic inspections, on disappointing findings in relation to information exchange arrangements with police domestic abuse units and local authority children's safeguarding units. Here, we were impressed by the model that is in place which allows nominated probation practitioners direct access to police and child safeguarding systems. This was regularly utilised by court teams and at the beginning of supervision. Further work is now required to make sure use this information is also used later on, during the delivery and review of the order or licence. Plans to increase resilience in staffing of these arrangements, and to widen this facility to encompass access to adult safeguarding systems are also welcome.

In our inspection of case activity, as has been a regular feature in our previous PDU reports, management of the potential risks that might be posed by the person on probation, was the lowest scoring aspect of case management and we saw this being prioritised in too few cases. Most worrying, in only nine per cent of inspected cases did we assess that sufficient work had been completed to reduce these risks. This needs to improve.

We were pleased to see that work to address unpaid work backlogs has been progressing, with a relatively small number of people on probation awaiting the commencement of these requirements. Additionally, accredited programmes delivery was returning to pre-Covid-19 levels and work was being delivered individually where

the completion of groups had not been possible. Again though, staffing issues in this regional team has hampered the pace of delivery.

When we inspected the former CRC in the area,¹ we commented on the particularly lean model of delivery, which meant few interventions were available to support the reduction in risk and address needs for people on probation. These legacy arrangements, and staffs' understanding of commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) provision, may contribute to the continued poor performance against our implementation and delivery quality standard. The impact of this was seen in our case inspections and is supported from feedback from people on probation. Almost 71 per cent of cases we reviewed had not received the services most likely to reduce offending and support desistance. In our survey of people on probation, only 28 out of 46 respondents said that they had received services to support their needs.

While their remains work still to be done and improvements are needed, the PDU's leaders recognise they are on a journey out of both Covid-19 and unification-related factors. Warwickshire PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' and the foundations are in place to support this improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

¹ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/wwmcrc/>

Ratings

Warwickshire PDU

Score **7/27**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Inadequate



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work

Good



2.2 Assessment

Requires improvement



2.3 Planning

Inadequate



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.5 Reviewing

Inadequate



Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made a number of recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of probation services.²

Warwickshire PDU should:

1. ensure existing information sharing arrangements are utilised fully to support the overall management of risk
2. improve the quality of work to assess, plan, manage and review risk of harm
3. improve the effectiveness of management oversight and quality assurance of all casework
4. enhance understanding by probation practitioners of how CRS provision supports their work with people on probation.

West Midlands region should:

5. ensure that smarter working arrangements support the delivery of quality probation practice
6. routinely share and analyse CRS referral data to support PDU delivery and engagement
7. review the availability of reporting facilities within the Rugby area.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) should:

8. review the current arrangements for CRS providers to access probation case management systems
9. review, refer and monitor processes to promote effective information exchange between CRS providers and probation practitioners.

² Progress against previous inspection recommendations for the relevant CRC or NPS Division are included in annexe one.

Background

Warwickshire PDU is one of nine PDUs in the West Midlands probation region. The PDU was formed at the point of unification in June 2021, from the Warwickshire parts of the Warwickshire West Mercia CRC and the Solihull and Warwickshire NPS cluster.

The PDU operates from two criminal justice buildings which they share with other criminal justice agencies including Warwickshire Police, the Courts Service, the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Warwickshire County Council. Warwickshire County Council is a two-tier authority and there are five district councils. The total caseload at the time of inspection was 1,449, made up of 747 community cases, 405 licence cases and 297 custody cases. Approximately 60 per cent of cases are managed by the Nuneaton office and 40 per cent by the office in Leamington Spa.

The PDU serves the single court bench of Coventry and Warwickshire, and manages probation court services for both Coventry and Warwickshire PDUs. In response to the pandemic, all magistrates' court cases are still being dealt with in Coventry magistrates' court and all Crown Court cases in Warwick Crown Court, sitting in Leamington Spa Justice Centre. The court staff are based in the Coventry and Leamington Spa offices under 1.6 Senior Probation Officers.

There are 201 women on probation in the caseload, with higher representation in the community sentence cohort than the post-release caseload. There are 166 black, Asian and minority ethnic people on probation, with higher representation in the licence category than the community sentence caseload. Approximately seven per cent of the caseload are care experienced.

We conducted fieldwork in Warwickshire in the week beginning 27 June 2022. We inspected 32 cases where sentences and licences had commenced between November and December 2021. We also conducted interviews with 19 probation practitioners.

Following unification, staff within Warwickshire PDU largely continued to operate in their original teams until January 2022, when they were realigned into mixed teams of ex CRC and NPS staff and mixed caseloads of higher and lower risk cases. This process benefited from the fact that staff were already working in shared buildings and had done so for a number of years. Staff now work from a series of 'pods'³ supported by allocated managers and administrative staff.

Since the point of unification, HMPPS has commissioned services to be delivered locally through Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) providers to support the resettlement and rehabilitation of people on probation.

For Warwickshire PDU these include:

- personal wellbeing services provided by Ingeus
- women's services provided by Changing Lives
- accommodation services provided by YSS in conjunction with NACRO
- education, training and employment services provided by Maximus.

³ These caseload figures do not include an additional 217 custody cases currently managed by a Prison Offender Manager under Offender Management in Custody (OMIC) who will be managed within Warwickshire PDU closer to their release.

1. Organisational delivery

Across the domain two case supervision standards for planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing – the quality of work was sufficient in less than half of the cases we inspected, resulting in ratings of 'Inadequate' for each of these standards. Assessments were assessed slightly more positively, but still at a standard that 'Requires improvement'.

There are clear links between Warwickshire PDU and regional probation arrangements, with appropriate mechanisms to implement both national and regional policies. Partnership relationships across Warwickshire are a particular strength. The PDU needs to translate these positive strategic arrangements to an operational level in order to improve the quality of probation practice for the people they supervise.

The impact of Covid-19 is acknowledged, and the PDU continues to recover from the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of probation services. At the time of our inspection, The Probation Service was almost exactly one-year post-unification. It was a good opportunity for the PDU to take stock of what had been achieved in the previous 12 months and what was still left to deliver.

We heard from staff across all roles and functions that they understood that their focus was on delivering quality services to people on probation, albeit they felt that this was not always possible. Staff said that the reason for the lack of quality delivery was largely a result of staffing issues. However, while this may be part of the challenge, we found that other factors were at play too. Practitioners were not routinely delivering work in a way that supported the national target operating model (TOM). They were not routinely referring people on probation to available services and were not focusing sufficiently on risk-of-harm issues, despite having a number of opportunities and the resources to do this.

Figures on the workload management tool in Warwickshire are above the regional average and this was felt by staff. We interviewed 19 probation practitioners in our domain two case assessments and 80 per cent said their workload was not manageable.

Strengths:

- The head of PDU understands the resource issues and gaps in services, and is proactively managing this through workforce planning and engagement with stakeholders.
- Leaders play a key role in local criminal justice partnerships while still maintaining a grip on their PDU.
- Co-terminus modern criminal justice buildings across the PDU are appropriately accessible.
- Teamwork is a strength; staff support each other and there is a collective commitment to provide a quality service for people on probation across all grades of staff.
- Performance and quality review meetings are regular, and their focus is comprehensive, but more attention is needed to improve the quality of work undertaken by probation practitioners.

Areas for improvement:

- Supervision is regularly provided but its effectiveness in improving quality was not evident.
- Levels of work-related sickness absence and attrition are impacting on the ability of the team to deliver the work required.
- Probation practitioners do not feel their workloads are manageable.
- There are no structured interventions currently being delivered in Warwickshire PDU.
- The views of people on probation are not used to inform service delivery.
- Demand and referral rates for people on probation accessing commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) are not fully understood in the PDU.
- Practitioners have limited understanding of CRS and what providers are contracted to deliver, and as a result, are not using them sufficiently.

1.1. Leadership



The leadership of the PDU enables delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all people on probation.

Requires improvement

In making a judgement about leadership, we take into account the answers to the three questions below, together with the results of our review of cases against the domain two standards. A key element of leadership is the ability to deliver results in practice and therefore we operate a decision rule which means that if the results for each area of our domain two case supervision standards are inadequate or requires improvement then performance against the leadership standard can only be rated inadequate or requires improvement.

For Warwickshire PDU, court work was rated as 'Good' while the assessment rating was, 'Requires improvement'. Planning, implementation and delivery and reviewing for the cases we inspected were rated 'Inadequate'. During our inspection fieldwork we spoke to many staff; all shared a commitment to delivering high-quality services for people on probation and strive to work collectively to achieve this. We saw this embedded in practice to engage with people on probation, although there is further work required, particularly in relation to keeping people safe and access to services and interventions. This has resulted in a rating of 'Requires improvement' for leadership.

Does the vision and strategy of the PDU leadership team drive effectively the delivery of high-quality services for all people on probation?

Partnership arrangements and relationships are a particular strength. The PDU head has overseen at least part of the PDU for some time and therefore unification has had little impact on these continued relationships. However, despite the PDU strengths in relation to partnerships, leadership and alignment with regional delivery plans, this does not translate effectively into frontline service delivery. This is demonstrated in the domain two ratings, which restrict the overall rating for this standard to 'Requires improvement'.

Leaders and staff had limited confidence in the helpfulness and application of the national prioritising probation framework and subsequent 'national standards lite'⁴ amendments. It was not routinely used within the PDU to prioritise work. Messages about what probation practitioners should prioritise and how, have not been fully disseminated, leading to unclear responsibilities, which was reflected in the inspected cases.

The strategic link between Warwickshire PDU and the West Midlands region was demonstrated through the West Midlands regional Reducing Reoffending and delivery Plan, which aligns with the newly launched Warwickshire Reducing Reoffending Strategy.

PDU leaders reported good working relationships with regional staff, together with a shared understanding of what activity is driven at a PDU versus regional level.

Many staff told us that the amount of information they receive can make it difficult to identify that which is essential. Some also said that there was little time or space to discuss important issues around service development and practice, given the focus on their day-to-day work.

While the number of staff who completed our survey was small (just 18 whole or partial responses) 13 of the 14 said the organisation prioritised quality and adherence to evidence in the work it undertook, 'all' or 'most of the time'. Seven of the 14 staff said that the organisation's culture promotes openness, constructive challenge, and ideas. Seven of the 14 staff in our survey said that change was not communicated and implemented effectively, yet the PDU has achieved much in the time since teams unified earlier this year.

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

Warwickshire PDU's business impact analysis and risk management plan reflects local risks and contingencies, with reviews undertaken and managed through monthly all-day management meetings. The West Midlands regional risk register is reviewed on a monthly basis and shared with Warwickshire PDU, which supports effective corporate risk management.

Following unification of probation services, the realignment of all staff teams across the PDU has been managed appropriately. The need to amalgamate staff from the legacy National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies

⁴ An agreed amendment to probation National standards to facilitate contact with people on probation.

(CRC) to form integrated teams, required significant planning and risked substantial disruption. The decision to delay this from the unification date in June 2021 to January 2022 to avoid a 'big bang' impact reflected the consideration given to this risk. This appears to have paid dividends and the shared culture and sense of one organisation across the PDU was evident. Unlike our inspection of Birmingham North East and Solihull PDU, we found no evidence that this exercise had resulted in mass reallocation of cases. Warwickshire benefited from the fact that ex CRC and NPS staff were already co-located in offices.

Innovative use of technology and data analysis, led by the local Business Manager, has supported an understanding of key business risks, including staffing and absence.

Does the PDU ensure the delivery model meets effectively the needs of all people on probation?

The primary focus of the PDU over the last 12 months has been on the transition to the unified probation model and demand management. The focus at the time of the inspection was on implementation of the national Target Operating Model (TOM) – though in the context of continued staff vacancies and relatively high sickness and attrition rates. Warwickshire PDU's priorities and delivery plans reflect the regional model and incorporate objectives oriented to meeting regional objectives, which in turn link to HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

In our User Voice survey, 21 of 46 respondents said that the views of people on probation were sought, analysed and used to review and improve the effectiveness of services. But we saw no evidence of such work being planned or findings utilised to inform organisational delivery.

Of concern, 44 per cent of cases we reviewed were not seen sufficiently often to reduce reoffending and manage desistance; 59 per cent were not seen sufficiently often to manage the risk of harm. Home visits were not routinely undertaken when it was assessed by inspectors that they were needed. We found that home visit expectations have not returned to pre-Covid-19 levels, and this needs attention. It is possible that the lack of home visits could be mitigated through visits being undertaken by other agencies, for example children's social care and the police. However, for the cases inspected in Warwickshire PDU, we found effective coordination with other agencies to minimise and manage the risk of harm was seen in only 19 per cent of cases, and in many cases, information was not being shared.

Overall, people on probation we consulted were reasonably positive about their experience of supervision, with 34 of 50 saying the office was reasonably accessible; 30 of 50 feeling safe in the office they are seen in and 30 of 50 feeling happy overall with the service they received. However, the lack of focused supervision and appropriate risk management may suit some people on probation, and it is difficult to determine how many knew what quality probation supervision was supposed to look like.

1.2. Staff



Staff are enabled to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all people on probation.

Requires improvement

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions. A key element of staffing is whether staff within the PDU are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all people on probation. For Warwickshire PDU, we have assessed this not to be the case, which has resulted in a rating for staffing of 'Requires improvement'

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

Organisational data, provided at the point when the inspection was announced on 19 April 2022, suggests that across the PDU average caseloads are 43.9 for probation officers (POs) (compared with 45.6 at the point of unification) and 48.8 for probation services officers (PSOs) (compared with 42.4 at the point of unification). However, these figures are likely to have increased since, following further staff movements and resignations. In our survey only one of the 13 respondents said that their caseload was manageable.

At the point of inspection announcement, there was a 36 per cent deficit of PSOs and a shortfall of almost 26 per cent of POs. Senior Probation Officer (SPO) numbers were at target level. While figures for administrative vacancies are not available, both managers and staff confirmed that there are a number of administrative and administrative manager vacancies across the PDU.

Managers reported that the recruitment of PSO and administrative staff is particularly challenging within the context of a buoyant job market locally, where probation salaries are not competitive. This was particularly the case for Leamington Spa. There is a regional approach to staffing, driven by the Heads of Operations. However, the PDU was not helped by regional decisions to direct staff to cover neighbouring PDUs, (in particular Coventry) when they themselves had a particular staffing challenge.

Workloads are reviewed by leaders fortnightly. Agency staff usage is regularly reviewed, and agency staff are deployed to gaps. Substantive staff have also been redeployed, within the PDU and from other PDUs on loan. There is a monthly attendance management meeting where the Head of PDU and regional Human Resources Officer review all absences with line managers to ensure every opportunity is taken to return staff to work where possible.

Overtime was being used to cope with workload demands and was reviewed on a month-by-month basis. Views as to both the effectiveness and appropriateness of this approach were varied, and the impact on staff wellbeing needs to be considered. Its usefulness thus far must be questionable given the quality of some of the findings in our case inspections. Further, the availability of any overtime resource is finite and when it finishes there will be further challenge in improving the quality of work delivered within the current resourcing.

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

The staffing profile of the PDU in terms of staff from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background exceeds the proportion of this group in the local population and in the caseload (18 per cent of staff compared with nine per cent of people on probation).

There is no specialist women's team in the PDU. While small numbers, most women in our case sample were supervised by male officers. This was surprising given that 79 per cent of staff are female compared to 14 per cent of the caseload. While this may be appropriate, the PDU needs to assure itself that women are routinely being asked about their supervisor preference.

The short-term sentence function⁵ has recently been amalgamated within the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team which presents some challenges in terms of resources and managing people on probation with differing needs and reporting requirements. We were told that the IOM team had been performing well, and that short-term sentence cases had only recently been moved to them. Active management oversight is needed of this change to ensure that both groups of people on probation receive the appropriate attention.

Of the 13 staff who completed our survey, 10 said they were allocated cases for which they have the appropriate knowledge, skill and experience all or most of the time. In our probation practitioner interviews, 96 per cent said they had the necessary skills to manage the specific case under review. However, given our case findings, some doubt must be cast on the accuracy of these views. Probation practitioners may not all understand what is required of them when managing cases, in an environment when there are perceived conflicts about the relative priority to be given to quality and performance targets. The reality is that both can work simultaneously, but clearly teams need to be resourced and skilled appropriately in order for this to happen.

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

It appeared that staff at both probation practitioner and SPO level felt 'safer' with process-driven activity rather than working in a reflective way. Further, there was an over-reliance on SPOs to provide direction and assurance which was evident in the frequency with which probation practitioners were observed asking questions and seeking answers of SPOs in both offices, rather than taking responsibility for their own learning. Only 26 per cent of cases were assessed as having sufficient management oversight. Most worryingly were those cases where management oversight had taken place but had been ineffective in picking up pertinent issues or actions required in cases.

In our questionnaire, nine of 13 respondents said they had supervision sufficiently frequently. However, only three respondents said that they always received supervision that enhances the quality of their work with people on probation.

⁵ Within The Probation Service, a short-sentence function is to be created within each of the 12 probation regions. The role and focus of the team will be to work with those serving shorter sentences to ensure services are sustained and provided, relationships are built, and transitions are supported as effectively as possible.

A number of initiatives have been introduced into the PDU in the last year to help managers support probation practitioners to develop their practice. This includes reflective practice, SEEDS2 (skills for effective engagement development and supervision) model and SAQA (self-assessment quality assurance) framework along with the touchpoints model. However, this left staff confused as to whether supervision was focused on targets or quality and as a result, neither area received appropriate and sufficient attention.

We found some cases where work was solely being delivered by a probation practitioner undertaking the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) when a qualified officer should have been more actively involved, in co-working arrangements.

There are two PQiP SPOs working across the PDU to support learners. They have also been required to provide cover to other neighbouring PDUs. This has resulted in the SPOs managing high levels of staff undertaking the PQiP programme and a reduction in the quality of them doing so, which could further add to a process-driven culture.

62 per cent of those for whom it was applicable said they had sufficient access to pre-qualifying training routes, leaving over a third who thought such training had not sufficiently met their needs. This may in part be as a result of much of the recent training having been delivered remotely in order to meet Covid-19 requirements. The PDU needs to ensure that now Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, a wider range of face-to-face opportunities are made available to PQiP staff.

Considerable training has been rolled out across the PDU since unification. This has mostly taken the form of e-learning along with staff briefings, and some local training and mentoring. Sixty-two per cent of staff indicate that a culture of learning and continuous improvement was actively promoted in the organisation. Some staff however told us that they did not feel that online training had always been effective.

PRISM is a specific West Midlands regional innovation to ensure equality of opportunity for staff in under-represented groups, and staff in Warwickshire have participated in this initiative. In our questionnaire, 10 of 13 respondents said that staff have equal access to promotion, and one said they did not know.

The PDU had high levels of sickness at the time of the inspection which led to a focus on sickness absence procedures by staff. While we were not provided with official data, we were told by managers and staff that much of this sickness, as with rates of attrition, was at least in part influenced by work-related factors. This is of concern and is impacting on the PDU's ability to deliver quality work.

Practice deficits identified from Serious Further Offence (SFO) reviews in the West Midlands have included insufficient frequency or quality of managerial oversight, poor recording practice and insufficient evidence of professional curiosity. All consistent themes that correlate with the findings in this inspection and need both regional and local focus.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

While, in our probation practitioner survey, eight of 13 staff said that sufficient attention is paid to their safety, only six of 13 said that their wellbeing is attended to.

There was no indication from the interviews with probation practitioners during case interviews that suggested the implementation of reasonable adjustments was problematic, although data within the HM Inspectorate of Probation's probation practitioner survey suggested there may be a shortfall.

Some reasonable adjustments have been made for those staff returning to work after periods of sickness, to respond to occupational health assessments. These have regularly included sentence management staff returning to work and moving into court teams as a way of relieving some work-related stress. We have observed this practice in other PDUs. While this may be appropriate, it needs sufficient oversight to ensure that court work, one of the most visible and important areas of probation work, does not have its quality impacted by staff who understandably need additional support. Without such oversight there is a potential reputational risk for the PDU.

Staff in this PDU were clearly very reliant, possibly over reliant on their SPO managers. As mentioned, we found staff regularly seeking 'answers' to practice decisions rather than taking ownership themselves. This may be down to a lack of experience, but some spoke about a fear factor of things going wrong. Some staff felt that any focus on wellbeing was superficial and regionally led, with it not being possible to attend wellbeing sessions due to their existing workloads. There was also an expressed resentment about regional events such as 'managing your diary' being put into people's electronic diary without consultation. The reality is, within a busy workload, some might in fact benefit from this type of session them; but some largely felt insulted by the suggestion.

Only seven out of 13 members of staff in our HM Inspectorate of Probation's survey told us that exceptional work is recognised and rewarded. However, we saw evidence that the Reward and Recognition Scheme was regularly discussed and utilised.

1.3. Services



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

Inadequate

In making a judgement about services, we take into account both the answers to the following three questions and also the rating given to implementation and delivery in the domain two cases reviews. Services has been rated 'Inadequate' because the range and quality of services do not support a tailored and responsive service for all people on probation, and a majority of cases in our domain two reviews were not judged sufficient against this quality standard.

Are the right volume, range and quality of services in place to meet the needs of people on probation?

Characteristics of inspected cases⁶

Proportion of inspected cases who are female	16%
Proportion of inspected cases who are black, Asian or minority ethnic	6%
Proportion of inspected cases with a disability	63%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified drug misuse problems	47%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified alcohol misuse problems	47%
Proportion of accredited programme requirements for individuals convicted of a sexual offence that have not commenced ⁷	61%
Proportion of accredited programme requirements that have not commenced, other than for individuals convicted of a sexual offence	82%
Average waiting time before commencing a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement	Not provided
Proportion of unpaid work requirements with hours outstanding beyond 12 months	39.17%

We found that the provision and usage of local services in the area was an area of specific concern. Prior to unification, the provision of some services had been the responsibility of the former CRC – Warwickshire and West Mercia – operated by People Plus⁸. However, as highlighted in our previous report on that CRC, they had a very lean operating model and the delivery and availability of services was extremely limited. Legacy CRC arrangements meant that there were limited services available for probation practitioners from both former CRCs and the NPS to refer to. This required the PDU to establish new relationships and set up arrangements and the PDU has worked well to establish the necessary services. However, despite more services now being available, the practice of utilising them was not yet embedded.

⁶ HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection data.

⁷ Data supplied by The Probation Service.

⁸ People Plus is a privately-owned organisation and was previously responsible for running the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company, delivering probation services.

We found little evidence of regular use of services to support the needs and risks of those subject to probation supervision.

Structured interventions were not being delivered in Warwickshire PDU as a result of a delay in recruiting sufficient staff to deliver them across the region. The use of workbooks to deliver interventions on an individual basis has been encouraged. However, these were not being routinely used and many probation practitioners had limited confidence in their use. Briefings had been delivered and staff were aware of them, but more needs to be understood about what it is that is preventing their use.

Commissioned rehabilitative services

In common with other areas, commissioned rehabilitation services (CRS) were commissioned across four pathways in the run up to unification. Staff were briefed on what provision was available and the referral pathways; however, the large majority were not well utilised, and processes were not yet embedded. Both probation practitioners and CRS providers talked about initial teething problems in the referral process, but these had improved over time.

Demand for CRS to support accommodation needs exceeds provision while other services were not well utilised. Probation practitioners appeared unclear about the actual YSS accommodation provision and expressed a frustration that individuals on their caseloads were not routinely able to be directly provided with accommodation. (The provision only sets out to provide advocacy and support, rather than accommodation itself.) In addition to the CRS contract the PDU has one of its own half-time PSOs working on accommodation issues, who staff viewed positively. If CRS accommodation services were adequate this internal resource might not have been required and the PSO could arguably be better utilised within sentence management.

CRS providers said that the contract did not meet the demand, so for some services it had been necessary to recruit more staff. This reflects findings in previous PDU inspection reports where we have commented on CRS contracts. In Warwickshire, we found evidence that learning from the commissioning of services under former CRC contracts with regards to volumes has not been appropriately considered in commissioning arrangements.

Referral rates for other CRS services are too low (such as women's services, education, training and employment (ETE), personal wellbeing) and the services are undersubscribed. Until the week of the inspection, the PDU was unaware of the data available in relation to CRS provision. This is an area that needs attention in order to understand demand and referral rates. The number of 'starts' was also significantly lower than referrals and this needs to be understood fully by the PDU. This may be a result of poor-quality referrals or a lack of understanding by probation practitioners about what CRS provision can reasonably provide.

As with other PDUs, there are limited opportunities across all CRS pathways under the current Refer and Monitor⁹ process to respond to those in crisis who need immediate intervention.

The use of Refer and Monitor was, as in other areas, a source of some frustration for both providers of services and probation practitioners. Both groups commented on its

⁹ Refer and Monitor is the digital platform to be used by probation practitioners and CRS providers to make referrals and share information.

lack of flexibility and the ease and speed with which pertinent, often risk-based information could be shared. Further frustration was voiced by CRS providers who no longer have access to probation case management systems, as they had done prior to unification. They cited this as a further barrier to information sharing and successful referral activity.

Women represent approximately 14 per cent of the overall caseload in Warwickshire PDU. There is a history of sound probation practice with women on probation within the Warwickshire area, which we have commented on in previous inspections. There remain positive arrangements with Willowdene Rehabilitation & Training (a rehabilitative project based in West Mercia), which was highlighted as good practice in our thematic inspection of women's services in 2016. Staff are able to refer to this provision. Women's services are provided by Changing Lives within the current CRS arrangements. There are no women-specific reporting centres routinely used by probation practitioners for women on probation.

Each CRS provider had a 'single point of contact' within Warwickshire PDU. They reported varied success in these arrangements given staff moves, and the resulting lack of stability in the point of contact role. Further, the churn of staff disrupts relationships being built with providers and meant there was constant work going into promoting what was on offer as staff changed and knowledge was lost. The PDU head meets quarterly with each of the CRS providers. CRS providers had, until our meeting with them, not attended cross-provider meetings which, they felt they may benefit from.

Local drug agency and mental health provision appeared underutilised. Staff talked about a lack of confidence in these services, despite little evidence that they were attempting to use them. Many staff commented on the loss of a local counselling service for people on probation since unification, which had been seen as an excellent provision. This counselling service was still available for IOM cases, through Police and Crime Commissioner funding. The PDU might wish to consider use of the Regional Innovation Fund to support the availability of this provision more widely.

The impact of Covid-19 on the delivery of unpaid work was still being felt, although this was improving. There were 50 people on probation with outstanding unpaid work hours to complete, where the order had been running more than 12 months. This unpaid work backlog across Warwickshire PDU was low compared to other areas in the region and more widely. As with other areas of intervention, the use of ETE provision for those on unpaid work was low, which was disappointing given the continued shortfall in delivery.

Accredited programmes and rehabilitation activity requirement activity

Managing the demand for accredited programmes during the pandemic was a challenge, with limited delivery possible. An appropriate use of the prioritisation framework ensured those unable to complete programmes in the required time were returned to probation practitioners to undertake individual work with them via toolkits. While there remained high levels of people who required a programme or an alternative to it before the end of their sentence period, this was being managed appropriately.

Data provided by the PDU shows that 27 of 44 individuals convicted of a sexual offence were still waiting to commence their accredited programme, at the point of the inspection announcement. A large majority of individuals who were subject to requirements to complete an accredited programme as part of their sentence were

also still waiting to commence the intervention. These low levels of participation are a cause of concern.

There were quarterly engagement events with the courts and sentencers. We had limited contact with sentencers during our fieldwork activity and unfortunately no sentencers responded to our survey. However, the views of the chair of the bench and one judge whom we met were very positive about the quality of work delivered in courts within the PDU's area. Given the quality of the inspected reports, and positive working arrangements across partnerships, there is nothing to suggest that these positive views are not widespread.

Are relationships with providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services to people on probation?

Senior managers are visible at a wide range of criminal justice strategic boards to support the delivery of key services across Warwickshire PDU's area. This is supported by long-standing relationships and matching geographical areas across partners. The PDU head works across partnerships and is a key player, leading on a number of strategic boards. There is always a balance to be had at PDU head level to managing external expectations while still maintaining a grip of the work of the PDU. In Warwickshire we found this done well.

Further strategic and operational meetings are held with individual CRS providers. There is perhaps an argument to integrate some of these meetings to enhance the CRS provision overall.

Resettlement

'Through the Gate' contracts were terminated at the time of the unification of probation services in June 2021. In Warwickshire, short-sentence cases had recently been allocated to staff within the IOM team, and processes had yet to be embedded. How effective this model will be, given the variance in supervision levels and access to interventions, remains to be seen.

Appropriate resettlement or desistance needs were considered in less than half the cases pre-release. An appropriate level of contact between the probation practitioner and the person on probation, in the lead up to release, happened in only eight of the 13 cases where it should have happened. However, delivery of services to reduce reoffending and support desistance were sufficient for half of all post-release cases (50 per cent), which was better than that for community cases¹⁰ (21 per cent).

Key risk-of-harm needs were only addressed in 25 per cent of the cases inspected pre-release and this reflects current difficulties in pre-release provision due to staffing challenges. This compared to just four per cent of community cases. While the involvement of other agencies in managing risk of harm was better evidenced in post-release cases, this was still insufficient and evident in only half of cases.

¹⁰ The findings relating to community and post-release cases have not been subject to a relative rate index analysis, which is test used to compare rates of incidence, we report on our findings with that caveat.

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 people on probation.	Good
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In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions. We have assessed that information and facilities sufficiently support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all people on probation and have therefore rated this as 'Good'.

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

The West Midlands Regional Quality Improvement Plan was in the early stages of implementation. The regional quality development team had just four officers from a planned complement of 13. In their absence, SPOs were picking up quality work when they are able, but this is clearly a challenge when added to an already busy role.

The PDU routinely employs a self-assessment quality tool across all probation practitioners. However, these were limited in terms of the number of cases that can be reviewed and a thematic review of learning from the findings is yet to be embedded and learning shared. The PDU's Deputy Head chairs a monthly Joint Quality Meeting and a monthly Performance Meeting. The meetings are for managers to continuously evaluate and improve services in a facilitated way. The meeting systematically incorporates a variety of information, including from Operational and System Assurance Group (OSAG¹¹), internal audits, SFOs, and safeguarding reviews. The learning is then cascaded by managers into team meetings and staff supervision; there was little evidence in our case inspections that this learning resulted in improvements in the quality of probation supervision.

The region has sought to gather further learning from people on probation, but this remains underdeveloped. A survey of people on probation was undertaken across the region at the end of 2021; however, this was yet to be fully evaluated.

Stakeholders reported being regularly and appropriately informed and it was clear from our meetings that they had a clear understanding of probation activity and challenges.

Monthly performance and quality meetings at regional level were replicated across the PDU to ensure information and data sharing through middle managers. Meetings focus on both performance targets and quality improvement. However, as previously mentioned, staff felt more able to focus on tangible targets rather than quality, although most wanted to deliver quality work.

Although some data is broken down in relation to protected characteristics at regional level, we saw no evidence that this is evaluated or utilised at PDU level.

¹¹ OSAG provides a system-wide operational audit and quality assurance service to HMPPS and Ministry of Justice stakeholders as required; monitoring and validating provider performance and assuring the delivery of contracted and public sector offender services in custody and the community.

The PDU needs to be able to utilise this data to ensure that the diverse needs of their caseload are appropriately met.

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

The pace of change has been rapid, and many staff have felt unable to keep up with some changes. Senior leaders have engaged staff in discussions regarding the introduction of new policies and procedures. While a monthly newsletter was provided in printed form for staff, in an attempt to vary methods of communication, a high level of information sharing was done via email and briefings. It is not always clear how engaged staff are; since the restrictions eased, leaders are encouraged to maximise face-to-face opportunities.

Policies are stored on the EQuIP intranet platform and all staff had easy access to them; however, some staff would benefit from better understanding how to navigate the system to promote increased usage.

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

Probation services are delivered from criminal justice centres in Leamington Spa and Nuneaton shared with police, courts and YOTs. This provision is good, and offices are accessible for both staff and people on probation. However, the obvious advantages and benefits of this environment were not always utilised to their full potential. Some probation practitioners said that they would not think to contact staff from other agencies in person, such as youth offending services, to discuss cases that had transferred between agencies. Both probation practitioners and people on probation indicated that they felt safe. Of the 13 probation practitioners who answered the question, 11 said that the premises and offices support the delivery of appropriate work and the effective engagement of people on probation.

Smarter working¹² was in place, with staff able to work up to 50 per cent of their time at home. Staff talked about seeing their cases over one to two days a week, which was not supporting appropriate levels of engagement and intervention with some people on probation (further evidenced by our inspection of casework). In our case reviews a third of cases were not enforced when we deemed that they should have been.

Previous CRC arrangements allowed for some community-based reporting in the Rugby region. This has now stopped and since unification some people on probation from rural locations have a lengthy journey to report to the Nuneaton office, with public transport limited in some areas. A rurality study has been undertaken by the PDU and we saw cases where a blended approach to supervision had been utilised with a mix of in-person and telephone reporting. Ideally, a reporting function in Rugby would support increased face-to-face meetings with people on probation in that area, although resourcing it will be difficult within current arrangements.

¹² Hybrid working arrangements where business need allows. This is an informal, non-contractual, form of flexible working that blends working from an office base and / or from home.

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

All probation practitioners have access to both an iPhone and laptop computer. In our staff survey, eight out of 13 respondents said that ICT systems enabled them to deliver work in a timely way, and to access information as required.

The facility for nominated probation practitioners to have direct access to local authority and police systems for the completion of safeguarding checks is an excellent model. While this appears routinely used at the commencement of an order or licence, there were many missed opportunities to utilise the facility throughout the later life of orders. Furthermore, there is currently little resilience in the process to account for periods of absence of these key staff.

Feedback from people on probation

In our own survey of people on probation, conducted by User Voice, we received feedback from 50 individuals, including two women. A large proportion (40 of 50) of respondents were 'white British' individuals, which is representative of the overall Warwickshire PDU caseload. Seventeen individual interviews were conducted.

Of the 46 people on probation surveyed, 28 felt happy generally with the service they receive from probation. However, seven of the 17 of people interviewed stated that nothing has been positive with their experience on probation, with 16 of 46 people surveyed also stating that they could think of 'no positives' about probation.

One respondent said of his experience of their PO:

"We don't have a relationship. He can't help me find a job or accommodation. It's just a box ticking exercise. I've turned my life around myself without any help from him."

This is particularly interesting given our own findings of a very process-driven environment. Others focused on the lack of interventions they had received, again consolidating our own findings in terms of what is being delivered to people subject to probation supervision. Of the 46 surveyed, 24 felt unsupported in regard to accessing services relevant to their personal needs:

"They've sometimes promised to get me services, but it never happens."

"No, they haven't helped me access any services. It's been more of a hindrance. Probation is set up to fail us."

Travel for many respondents was an issue, and this appeared to be focused on those in rural locations near to Rugby who, as previously mentioned, are required to travel some distance to get to the Nuneaton office. Travel was the biggest issue for seven out of 17 of those interviewed:

"Needs to be a lot closer to my home. The office is well far."

"I don't think they should be asking people to travel out of their areas. I have mates in Rugby who have to come over to this office (Nuneaton) and get pissed off that they can't be seen in their area. Why can't they do that?"

“There needs to be an office closer to where I live.”

Regionally, peer mentor coordinators were in place, but such work was still needing to be developed locally. A survey of people on probation was undertaken across the region at the end of 2021, with PDU data broken down further, although this has yet to be fully evaluated or used to inform service delivery.

Diversity and inclusion

A roadmap and action plan drives the diversity agenda at a regional level. At a PDU level it was not evident how these regional plans had been used to drive improvements or understanding. While good levels of diversity data had been collected by the PDU, how this has been used to identify any gaps in service delivery was not evident.

We often comment in our local inspections, that the staff profile across a range of protected characteristics is not representative of the people on probation who are supervised. However, in Warwickshire we found that staff ethnicity was more varied than for the caseload population. For gender, the proportion of females in the staffing population exceeded that in the caseload by some considerable margin. Staff with a disability represented just half of those with a declared disability recorded on the Warwickshire PDU caseload.

Impact assessments have been undertaken in relation to the occupation of both offices in the PDU, with the PDU head being actively involved in leading the criminal justice group responsible for the management of the Leamington office. There was a regional Promoting Inclusion staff mentoring scheme; however, it was unclear if any staff in Warwickshire PDU had accessed this opportunity. The PDU needs to embed analysis of diversity data into its priorities.

2. Court work and case supervision

We inspected 24 community sentence cases and eight post-release supervision cases. We inspected seven relevant court reports arising from those cases and rated this standard as 'good'. We also examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing in each case. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of engaging the person on probation and addressing issues relevant to offending and desistance. 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. We also inspected the outcomes achieved for people on probation and provide data on these results.

We rated assessment of the cases inspected overall as 'requires improvement'. For planning implementation and delivery, and reviewing we found that questions about the management of risk of harm and keeping other people safe were rated poorly by our inspectors. While other areas such as engaging the person on probation and supporting desistance was assessed more positively, as a result of the poor risk of harm scores overall we rated these areas of our case supervision standards as 'Inadequate'.

There is an experienced multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) coordinator in the Warwickshire Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) who is well regarded both internally and by external partners. While referral numbers into MAPPA in the PDU are relatively low, a consultancy service is provided to probation practitioners to discuss these potential referrals before the formal process is undertaken. There was a clear and embedded model for supervising level 2 and 3 MAPPA violence cases within the Integrated Offender Management model which is good practice and understood across staff groups.

Engagement of people on probation was the highest scoring area across assessments but was less positive in other stages of the cases inspected. Less than half of plans and reviews engaged individuals appropriately. In addition, the implementation and delivery of the plans failed to appropriately engage individuals in over half of cases. Given this lack of engagement it is no surprise that compliance was sufficient in only 56 per cent of cases.

Of the 16 cases where accommodation was linked to offending, improvements were seen in only five cases, and of the nine cases where finance, benefit and debt was linked to offending, no improvements were seen. For drug use, 15 cases were assessed as needing support with their drug misuse to prevent reoffending, yet only two cases were shown to have made any progress. Of the 32 cases we inspected, 26 of them had not been charged or convicted of a further offence and in only five cases there had been a reduction in offending. However, a reduction in factors most closely related to risk of harm was seen in too few cases, with 47 per cent showing no reduction in factors linked to risk of harm. There is some way to go to demonstrate reasonable progress across Warwickshire PDU's caseload across all outcome measures.

There are positive and effective information exchange arrangements in place across Warwickshire PDU. Initial requests are made via an email system directly to probation practitioners who have access to police and child safeguarding systems. However, despite the ease that requests can be made it was disappointing to see that court staff did not make enquiries with children's safeguarding in two of the seven inspected reports. In one of the cases where police checks were needed they

hadn't taken place. However, where requests were made the subsequent information received was reflected in reports. In addition, we saw appropriate consideration given to victim issues, offending and risk-of-harm factors. Individuals were engaged and involved in the preparation of their reports.

From the cases we reviewed, practice to keep people safe is an area that requires attention in the PDU and a crucial area for the PDU to build on.

Case supervision

Strengths:

- There are effective information exchange arrangements in place with police domestic abuse units and local authority children's safeguarding.
- Court reports were rated as good and provided good information on which sentencers could make informed decisions.
- The completion of assessments considered relevant risk and need information well and were rated more positively than the rest of case delivery.

Areas for improvement:

- Very little work is being delivered to address the risk of reoffending, support desistance or to address risk-of-harm factors.
- Much of casework delivery is process driven rather than attending to the needs of individuals
- Regular change in probation practitioners is not supporting the delivery of probation practice.
- Casework does not focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe.
- Management oversight is insufficiently focused to be effective.
- Insufficient use is made of other services, both within and out of the service.

2.1 Court work



The pre-sentence information and advice provided to court supports its decision-making.

Good

Our rating¹³ for court work is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against the key question:

¹³ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band.

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the individual, supporting the court's decision-making?	71%

While we only inspected a limited number of court reports, of those we inspected, we assessed the quality of work to be 'Good'. Of the seven reports we inspected, five were short-format reports completed without an Offender Assessment System (OASys), one was a standard report completed with an OASys and one was presented orally with a written record available.

The focus on keeping people safe was evident in court reports, and risk-of-harm factors and the impact of the offence on victims were considered in most. Individuals were involved in the preparation of the report, factors linked to offending were appropriately identified and the focus on keeping people safe translated into appropriate sentencing proposals. This provided a strong foundation for probation practitioners allocated the case post-sentence and prepares the person on probation for the start of sentence.

Court staff, including court case administrators, had a clear understanding of the importance of safeguarding enquiries to inform appropriate sentencing decisions and to ensure risk information was available at the point of allocation following sentence.

As mentioned above, Warwickshire PDU has a clear process and strong information-sharing arrangements for gathering information from the police and children's safeguarding teams. In the majority, although not all of cases, at court these were used appropriately. In 57 per cent of court reports, domestic abuse checks were undertaken either through checks completed by the report author or existing up-to-date information being already available. In a further 29 per cent of court reports we saw domestic abuse checks being undertaken prior to allocation following sentence. When domestic abuse checks were made, responses were received in all but one case. Based on the information available to inspectors we expected to see children's safeguarding enquiries undertaken in six of seven cases.

While court work was rated 'Good', Warwickshire PDU needs to ensure a continued focus on appropriately utilising and expanding the strong information-sharing processes in place. This is required for this standard to be maintained.

Good practice example

Warwickshire PDU have identified probation staff, in part funding by local police and crime commissioner arrangements, who have direct access to police and child safeguarding information. This provision really benefits and streamlines the information-gathering arrangements in this PDU.

2.2. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the person on probation.

Requires improvement

Our rating¹⁴ for assessment is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	72%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	69%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	56%

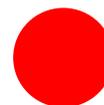
Warwickshire PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for assessment. We saw strengths in practice in relation to how people on probation were engaged in assessments, and the focus on factors linked to offending and desistance was also a strength. The lowest scoring key question related to keeping people safe, which is an area for development in the PDU.

The way in which people on probation are engaged is critical to balanced assessments, informed by an understanding of the needs of the individual and the impact of protected characteristics, and relevant personal circumstances on their ability to engage with the sentence. From the meetings we held across all grades and roles in Warwickshire PDU we were left with a sense of staff wanting to do a good job and this is reflected in the focus on engaging with people on probation in the cases we inspected.

We saw people on probation engaged in their sentence in 72 per cent of cases, and it was clear that staff understood motivation levels and diversity needs. In 66 per cent of cases strengths and protective factors were appropriately considered. However, overall, in 41 per cent of cases, assessments did not address issues of risk of harm sufficiently well, with 44 per cent not appropriately identifying those at actual or potential risk of harm. This was most concerning in those cases where it was clear to inspectors that there were people that should have been identified as presenting risk of harm to both children and adults. Probation practitioners failed to appropriately investigate information given at the assessment stage, which we often refer to as a lack of professional curiosity. When those on supervision share information that has the potential to impact on assessment of risk of harm, more needs to be done to question, verify and understand this information.

¹⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

2.3. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the person on probation.

Inadequate

Our rating¹⁵ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	56%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	75%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	38%

Sound planning following assessment is crucial to give clarity to what is required in terms of interventions and engagement throughout the period of supervision. It was therefore disappointing given relatively well-informed assessments that when it came to planning, we found Warwickshire PDU rated as 'Inadequate'. The lowest score relates to the sufficient focus in planning on keeping other people safe, with this assessed as sufficient in only 38 per cent of inspected cases. This was the weakest area in planning, with risk management plans failing to address actual and potential risk of harm sufficiently well.

In 75 per cent of cases, plans focused appropriately on factors likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance. Engaging individuals in their plans happened in fewer occasions, with 44 per cent of cases not assessed to have done this sufficiently well. This is likely to have resulted in people on probation who did not have appropriate ownership of their plan, or indeed a clear understanding of what was required of them. Without a good plan of work to be achieved it is perhaps unsurprisingly that later stages of orders were also found to be ineffective. We saw plans that were overly cumbersome, lacked any sense of sequencing of activities and were unrealistic in what could be achieved in the time available. As with much of the case supervision activity inspected, it was clear that some probation practitioners saw plans as a process-driven exercise, rather than having a real specific use to plan and drive appropriate work throughout the order.

Plans to address risk-of-harm factors were insufficient in over two thirds of inspected cases. In the absence of critical risk information in assessments, plans continued to lack the required detail and risk-related objectives to meet individual need and the appropriate management of risk. In some cases there was no risk management plan, despite current or previous offending patterns indicating that one was needed.

¹⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

Given that the management of risk and keeping people safe is key probation business, these are concerning omissions.

2.4. Implementation and delivery



High-quality well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging the person on probation. **Inadequate**

Our rating¹⁶ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	47%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	28%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	9%

Warwickshire PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for implementation and delivery of the sentence. The lowest score for the key questions relates to whether there was sufficient focus on keeping others safe. We found that this was demonstrated in just nine per cent of cases. This is the most concerning element across all of inspected case work.

Several factors appear to account for the poor scores for implementation and delivery in cases inspected. It was clear in many cases that very little work had been completed. Sessions with people on probation consisted of little more than a 'check-in' and we saw little evidence of actions being taken when new information was shared, such as new relationships or further offending. There were delays in orders commencing, with no clear understanding of why this had been the case. When we inspect cases, we do more than just consider entries made on the case management system, such as discussing actions taken with the probation practitioner. However, case recording on many cases was an area of concern. Some entries included nothing, other than to record a meeting had taken place, others contained very little detail of what the meeting had included, what actions had been taken or any changes in circumstances or risk. In our interviews about the cases, probation practitioners were largely unable to describe what work had been done, and many accepted that most meetings were little more than 'check-ins'.

Given our findings under the domain one element of this inspection in relation to services, it is perhaps no surprise that we saw little use of referrals to other agencies within our case inspections. If a referral was made there was a limited follow up or

¹⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

escalation in this referral if appointments and interventions were not forthcoming. Other agencies were not utilised to support desistance where they were needed in 71 per cent of cases. In addition, the skills and services of other agencies were not employed in 72 per cent of cases to address issues related to harm.

A lack of understanding about, and the absence of delivery of, appropriate rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) days was a theme throughout many cases. Probation practitioners lacked understanding of what could and should be included as RAR day activity. There were cases too that made no reference to RAR activity despite it forming part of sentencing requirements.

We found that probation practitioners had been flexible and taken account of individual circumstances in almost three quarters of cases. While this is positive, it is in contrast with our findings that enforcement action had not been taken in over a fifth of cases where it should have been. Potentially this indicates that the level of flexibility was unhelpful in delivering the order of the court.

Home visits had not been completed in two thirds of cases, and there appeared a reluctance to undertake these visits and a lack of understanding about the value of completing them, particularly to identify risk-of-harm issues. Some of this may be as a result of arrangements in place during Covid-19 restrictions, where contact via telephone reporting was encouraged.

A third of cases (33 per cent) had been supervised by three or more probation practitioners. This is high, particularly given that it is over just a six- or seven-month period since supervision had commenced. The relationship between probation practitioner and the person on probation is critical in desistance and the reduction of risk. While managers said they avoided reallocation of cases where possible, these relationships have clearly been hampered by staff attrition and sickness rates.

2.5. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the person on probation. **Inadequate**

Our rating¹⁷ for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	44%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	44%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	25%

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

When assessing how cases are reviewed, we consider not only the formal process of completing a review of risks and needs but also the process of continuous review within the life of a case that is responsive to change in risk and need levels. Warwickshire PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for reviewing. The lowest score, as with other areas of case inspection, was in relation to the review of risk of harm.

There was limited evidence of reviewing when cases were transferred between probation practitioners and missed opportunities to take stock of new cases and identify actions required. Given that there were regular changes in probation practitioners in the inspected cases, more could have been done to enable probation practitioners to fully understand the case and to move on with the supervision and interventions required.

Inspected cases lacked focus on reviewing how supervision was keeping other people safe, with only 25 per cent of cases considering this sufficiently well. In over a half (56 per cent) of cases inspected, probation practitioners had not reviewed the engagement and compliance of individuals often enough. A similar proportion had not engaged people on probation well in reviewing their supervision. There was a lack of focus on progressing a person on probation through their sentence and ensuring appropriate oversight of behaviours linked to offending. Reviewing that sufficiently focused on supporting the individual's desistance was not evidenced in just over half of cases.

Over half of reviews failed to identify and address changes in factors relating to the risk of reoffending. Risk-of-harm factors were not reviewed appropriately in 59 per cent of cases. Where there were changes in risk, including its escalation, there was a lack of clarity about how these issues had been reviewed and addressed. Information from other agencies was not fully integrated into reviews of cases, which is a key task for those where multiple agencies are working with individuals. We found cases where risk information had been received but no action had been taken where it was needed. There was an absence of professional curiosity being applied by staff when considering this information, and an overreliance on self-report by those under supervision. Further, people on probation were not routinely involved in the review of risk-of-harm factors. Written plans to review risk of harm were not found in 53 per cent of cases where it was assessed by inspectors that they were needed. This was indicative of our case inspections overall, which demonstrated a lack of focus on risk at all stages of the case management process.

2.6. Outcomes

Early outcomes are positive, demonstrating reasonable progress for the person on probation.

Outcomes	Percentage 'Yes'
Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	22%

We do not currently rate the Outcomes standard but provide this data for information and benchmarking purposes only.

It is perhaps not surprising that we found poor outcomes for people on probation in the cases we inspected, given that little work is being undertaken to address either reoffending and, most importantly, risk. This, together with probation practitioners' poor understanding and utilisation of services under the CRS provision means that people subject to probation supervision are not managed sufficiently well.

When assessing early outcomes in cases inspected, we found inadequate progress being made. Our findings indicate some degree of engaging people on probation in some stages of the work. However, addressing factors linked to reoffending, supporting desistance, and managing the risk of serious harm are all lacking in how the PDU is supporting individuals under supervision. Contact levels with those under supervision was assessed as being insufficient in 44 per cent of cases to support desistance, and this was even worse when considering appropriate contact levels to reduce the risk of harm presented (59 per cent of cases were insufficient).

Some probation practitioners reported insufficient time to complete any meaningful work with those they supervise, and this was evident in the inspected cases. Most probation practitioners are working less than half of their week in the office, and many described seeing those they supervise over a one- or two-day period. This limited time may be influencing the delivery of individual work and provides few opportunities to really focus on interventions to address offending and risk needs. Probation practitioners reported being very busy but given what we saw in the case inspection, it is unclear what it is they are busy doing. This adds to a sense of staff needing to be clearer about what they should focus on in their work.

Of the cases we inspected, only 22 per cent were assessed as having made some improvements in those factors most closely linked to offending. This included improvements in accommodation, thinking and behaviour, and employment. However, three cases inspected were charged and four convicted of new offences since starting their order or licence. Despite the lack of interventions being delivered it was also unexpected that inspectors identified an escalation in reoffending in only 13 per cent of cases.

Annexe one – Progress against previous recommendations

HM Inspectorate of Probation has made recommendations for the previous Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and National Probation Service (NPS) divisions, arising from core and thematic inspections. Since the unification of the probation services, we have expected The Probation Service to continue to implement these recommendations. Below are our findings from the inspection of Warwickshire Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) in respect of the relevant recommendations:

Recommendation from Staffordshire & West Midlands CRC inspection report (2019):

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

Inspection findings:

In our inspected cases, many were rated as inadequate. Assessments were better but case activity appeared to deteriorate after that, with planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing all rated as 'Inadequate'. This, despite efforts at both a regional and PDU level, to improve the quality of this work. **No progress.**

Recommendation from Staffordshire & West Midlands CRC inspection report (2019):

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

Inspection findings:

Despite ten of 13 respondents in our staff survey indicating that they were allocated cases for which they have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience, this was not reflected consistently in our case reviews. This was particularly the case for keeping people safe, which was the lowest scoring element at all stages of the assessment process. **No progress.**

Recommendation from Staffordshire & West Midlands CRC inspection report (2019):

Address high levels of sickness absence and staff concerns about health and safety.

Inspection findings:

Regional data on sickness levels was not provided; however, the PDU's senior management team recognised that sick levels had been a particular problem, often as a result of work-related factors. There was nothing in this PDU to suggest any outstanding or concerning health and safety issues. **Some progress.**

Recommendation from Staffordshire & West Midlands CRC inspection report (2019):

Develop and implement a clear and consistent approach to the middle manager role in improving public protection practice and the overall quality of case management.

Inspection findings:

There is an acknowledgement by senior leaders at both a regional and PDU level that middle managers, especially senior probation officers, are under considerable pressure due to high caseloads and shortages of staff. In only 26 per cent of the cases we reviewed did we assess that sufficient management oversight was in place.

No progress.

Recommendation from Staffordshire & West Midlands CRC inspection report (2019):

Integrate improved administration capacity into the operational delivery teams.

Inspection findings:

Administrators are working in pods supporting probation practitioners; while there is a shortage of administrative staff, there is nothing to suggest that this arrangement is not supporting delivery of probation practice. **Sufficient progress.**

Recommendation from NPS Midlands Inspection Report (2018):

Take further steps to balance workloads across local delivery units and between probation officers (POs) and probation services officers (PSOs).

Inspection findings:

Organisational data provided suggests that across the PDU average caseloads are 43.9 for POs (compared with 45.6 at the point of unification) and 48.8 for PSOs (compared with 42.4 at the point of unification). Given this it is likely that POs are holding cases that normally would be managed by a PSO. However, these figures are likely to have increased following further staff movements and resignations. In our survey only one of the 13 respondents said that their caseload was manageable. At the point of inspection announcement, there was a 36 per cent deficit of PSOs and a shortfall of almost 26 per cent of POs. Again, this is likely to have increased as we were told of further staff resignations and movements throughout the inspection period. **No progress.**

Recommendation from NPS Midlands Inspection Report (2018):

Should ensure that interventions provided to offenders are used consistently across the division.

Inspection findings:

The provision of accredited programmes to both those convicted of a sexual and non-sexual offence are appropriate and have largely recovered from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Use of commissioned rehabilitation services (CRS) is inconsistent and usage is not sufficiently understood. Structured interventions are not delivered as yet in this PDU. **No progress.**

Recommendation from NPS Midlands Inspection Report (2018):

Ensure that risk management plans are reviewed in response to changes in risk of harm.

Inspection findings:

From a review of our cases, a disappointing number of risk management plans were reviewed sufficiently comprehensively or frequently to meet the needs of the individual case. **No progress.**

Recommendation from NPS Midlands Inspection Report (2018):

Ensure that initial contact with individuals who have been affected by specified crimes encourages their engagement with the victim contact scheme.

Inspection findings:

In all but one case reviewed where it was required, we saw evidence of appropriate contact by victim contact officers. **Some progress.**

Recommendation from NPS Midlands Inspection Report (2018):

The Ministry of Justice should ensure that probation facilities are well maintained and provide a safe environment for work with offenders.

Inspection findings:

The two modern co-terminus buildings in Warwickshire are fit for purpose and provide opportunities for strong-cross agency working, although this is not always utilised to its fullest. **Sufficient progress.**

Annexe two – Staffing and workload data

Data in this section is largely provided by The Probation Service. We cannot confirm its reliability, although where possible it has been verified using internal workforce planning information.

Key staffing data¹⁸

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent) (FTE))	108
Total number of senior probation officers (SPOs)	10
Total number of probation officers (POs) (FTE)	36
Total number of probation services officers (PSOs) (FTE)	31
Vacancy rate (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total staff headcount)	2%
Vacancy rate of SPO grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required SPO posts)	0%
Vacancy rate of PO grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required PO posts)	26%
Vacancy rate of PSO grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required PSO posts)	36%
Sickness absence rate (average days lost in previous 12 months for all staff)	Not provided
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	18%
Staff attrition SPO grade only (percentage of all SPO-grade staff leaving in 12-month period)	Not provided
Staff attrition PO grade only (percentage of all PO-grade staff leaving in 12-month period)	Not provided
Staff attrition PSO grade only (percentage of all PSO-grade staff leaving in 12-month period)	Not provided

¹⁸ Data supplied by The Probation Service.

Caseload and workload data¹⁸

Average caseload per PO (FTE)	43.9
Average caseload per PSO (FTE)	48.8
Workload management tool (WMT) average per PO	121
WMT average per PSO	99

Inspection workload data¹⁹

Proportion of POs (or equivalent) in this PDU describing workload as unmanageable	80%
Proportion of PSOs (or equivalent) in this PDU describing workload as unmanageable	90%

¹⁹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's inspection data.

Annexe three – Inspection data

In this section, questions marked * do not apply in unpaid work only cases, and questions marked ** do not apply in every case. Only the positive answers are reported in these tables, which do not include cases where the question is not applicable.

2.1 Court work	% "Yes"
Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the individual, supporting the court's decision-making?	
Does the information and advice draw sufficiently on available sources of information including child safeguarding and domestic abuse information?	57%
Is the individual meaningfully involved in the preparation of the report, and are their views considered?	100%
Does the advice consider factors related to the likelihood of reoffending?	100%
Does the advice consider factors related to risk of harm? **	71%
Does the advice consider the individual's motivation and readiness to change?	100%
Does the advice consider the individual's diversity and personal circumstances?	100%
Does the advice consider the impact of the offence on known or identifiable victims?	86%
Is an appropriate proposal made to court? **	100%
Is there a sufficient record of the advice given, and the reasons for it?	100%

Questions marked ** do not apply in every case. Only positive answers are reported in this data.

2.2. Assessment	% "Yes"
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	
Does assessment analyse the motivation and readiness of the person on probation to engage and comply with the sentence?	75%
Does assessment analyse the protected characteristics of the individual and consider the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery?	53%
Does assessment analyse the personal circumstances of the individual, and consider the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery?	78%
Is the person on probation meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	72%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	
Does assessment identify and analyse offending-related factors?	72%
Does assessment identify the strengths and protective factors of the person on probation? **	66%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	66%
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?	47%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	56%
Does assessment analyse any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims? **	53%

2.3. Planning	% "Yes"
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	
Is the person on probation meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	72%
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity factors of the individual which may affect engagement and compliance? **	50%
Does planning take sufficient account of the personal circumstances of the individual which may affect engagement and compliance? **	69%
Does planning take sufficient account of the readiness and motivation of the person on probation to change which may affect engagement and compliance?	66%
Does planning set out how all the requirements of the sentence or licence/post-sentence supervision will be delivered within the available timescales?	63%
Does planning set a level, pattern and type of contact sufficient to engage the individual and to support the effectiveness of specific interventions?	59%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	
Does planning sufficiently reflect offending-related factors and prioritise those which are most critical? *	74%
Does planning build on the individual's strengths and protective factors, utilising potential sources of support? **	58%
Does planning set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	77%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does planning sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those which are most critical? **	47%
Does planning set out the necessary constructive and/or restrictive interventions to manage the risk of harm? **	47%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the person on probation and any multi-agency plans? **	38%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified? **	34%

2.4 Implementation and delivery	% "Yes"
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	31%
Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the person on probation, taking into account their diversity needs?	53%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the individual to complete their sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	72%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions? **	44%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate? **	45%
Are sufficient efforts made to re-engage the individual after enforcement actions or recall? **	41%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	
Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	29%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the individual's strengths and enhance protective factors? **	31%
Is the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services sufficiently well-coordinated? * **	13%
Are key individuals in the life of the person on probation engaged where appropriate to support their desistance? * **	13%
Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	34%
Are local services engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond? * **	28%
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? **	34%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims? **	19%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated? * **	19%
Are key individuals in the life of the person on probation engaged where appropriate to support the effective management of risk of harm? * **	19%
Are home visits undertaken where necessary to support the effective management of risk of harm? * **	25%

Prompts relevant to post-custody cases only:	
Post-custody cases only: Did the community offender manager ensure a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner before release?	25%
Post-custody cases only: Did the community offender manager address the key resettlement or desistance needs before release?	20%
Post-custody cases only: Did the community offender manager address key risk of harm needs before release?	17%

2.5 Reviewing	% "Yes"
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	
Does reviewing consider compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work? **	47%
Is the person on probation meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement?	47%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of actions to implement the sentence? **	41%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting 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? *	47%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building on the strengths and enhancing the protective factors of the person on probation? **	38%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the person on probation? **	38%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the progress towards desistance? **	31%

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? **	22%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm? **	34%
Is the person on probation (and, where appropriate, are key individuals in their life) meaningfully involved in reviewing the risk of harm? * **	31%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the management of the risk of harm? **	34%

2.6 Outcomes	% "Yes"
Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	
Have there been improvements in those factors most closely linked to offending both in developing strengths and addressing needs?	10%
Has there been a reduction in factors most closely related to risk of harm to others? **	3%
Has there been a reduction in offending?	16%

Annexe four – Web links

Further information about the methodology used to conduct this inspection is available on our website, using the following link:

[Our work \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectors.gov.uk)

A glossary of terms used in this report is available on our website, using the following link:

[Glossary \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectors.gov.uk)