effective practice

ep

Where we see our standards
delivered well, in practice.

HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Effective practice guide
OMiC

Based on: **Offender management in custody – pre-release.**

A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons

November 2022

Acknowledgements

This effective practice guide is based on information sourced while undertaking the thematic inspection *Offender Management in Custody – pre-release.* The inspection was led by HM Inspector Tony Kirk, supported by a team of probation and prisons inspectors, and operations, research, communications, and corporate staff. DWRM (a social enterprise "which offers a clear pathway to rehabilitation through experience-led consultancy, advocacy and administration, facilitating further and higher education in prison") undertook interviews with prisoners who shared valuable insights about their experience of Offender Management in Custody (OMiC). The manager responsible for this inspection programme is Helen Davies.

In collaboration with Tammie Burroughs, effective practice lead, Tony Kirk has identified the key principles of effective work in this area and a number of case illustrations of effective practice (where we see our standards delivered well in practice).

We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in this inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection and effective practice guide would not have been possible.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individuals' identities.

Contents

Introduction

About this guide

HM Inspectorate of Probation has a duty to identify and disseminate effective practice.[1]

We assure the quality of youth offending and probation provision and test its effectiveness. Critically, we make recommendations designed to highlight and disseminate best practice, challenge poor performance, and encourage the Probation Service to improve.

Here we provide some guiding principles for work with individuals in custody and highlight examples where we have seen our standards delivered well. It is designed to help commissioners and providers improve this area of their work with people in prison and on probation.

I am grateful to all the areas that participated in our thematic inspection, and for their additional help in producing this effective practice guide. We publish these guides to complement our reports and the standards against which we inspect youth offending and probation.

I hope this effective practice guide will be of interest to everyone working in prisons and probation services and seeking to improve their practice. We welcome feedback on this and our other guides, to ensure that they are as useful as possible to future readers.

Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Finding your way

🔧　Tools for practitioners

🔗　Useful links

Contact us

✉　We would love to hear what you think of this guide. Please find current contact details via the HM Inspectorate of Probation Effective Practice page.

---

[1] **For adult services –** Section 7 of the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)*, as amended by the *Offender Management Act (2007)*, section 12(3)(a). **For youth services** – inspection and reporting on youth offending teams is established under section 39 of the *Crime and Disorder Act (1998)*.

Background

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model was implemented by HMPPS from April 2018 with the intention of improving safety in prisons by building better relationships between staff and prisoners. The model introduced a key worker system, in which all prisoners are allocated a key worker whose responsibility is to engage, motivate, and support them through the custodial period. It is now operational in all 117 prisons in England and Wales. For contextual information, this covers:

80,659[2]   prisoners in England and Wales, as at 30 June 2022.
This represents a **rise of 3 per cent** compared with the same period in the previous year.

The OMiC model has a vision that:

> *"Everyone in prison should have the opportunity to transform their lives by using their time in custody constructively to reduce their risk of harm and reoffending, to plan their resettlement, and to improve their prospects of becoming a safe, law-abiding and valuable member of society. OMiC intends to put desistance at the centre of custodial and post-release work to reduce reoffending and promote community reintegration."*

Central aspects of the model include:

Key work

Key work is a core part of prison officers' work. The role of the key worker is to develop constructive, motivational relationships with people in prison, supporting them to make appropriate choices and giving them hope and responsibility for their own development through one-to-one key work sessions. Full-time key workers are trained to coach and support approximately six individuals through their custodial sentence and link in with other prison departments where necessary. The expectation is that most prisoners receive 45 minutes key work per week.

---

[2] HMPPS (2022). *Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022* - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

25%[3] The percentage of key work sessions delivered against the prescribed model in May 2022.

Case management

Case management relates to offender management activities undertaken in both custody and the community for people who are serving a custodial sentence. A distinguishing feature of the OMiC model is that responsibility for offender management has moved from the Probation Service team in the community to a Probation Service team working in custodial settings with individuals sentenced to longer terms (over 10 months to serve at the point of sentence).

The OMiC model introduces a dedicated role of prison offender manager (POM). The POM undertakes all relevant offender management activities, including categorisation, public protection screening, risk assessment, screening for interventions, release on temporary licence assessments, applications for home detention curfew (HDC), and handover to the community offender manager (COM).

Probation officers were moved from the community into prisons to fulfil this new role. A band 4 prison member of staff may also undertake the POM role for lower risk cases.

8,137[3] Prisoners eligible for OMiC handover during August 2021-May 2022

66%[3] The percentage of head of offender management delivery/senior probation officers in post (135.8) against the OMiC staffing target (206)

79%[3] The percentage of probation officers in post (625.8) against the OMiC staffing target (797)

82%[3] The percentage of prison offender managers in post (820.9) against the OMiC staffing target (1001)

---

[3] HMPPS. (2022). *OMiC dashboard* HMPPS, unpublished – June 2022.

HM Inspectorate of Probation's research team has developed a webpage under 'the evidence base – probation services' page on custody and resettlement. This webpage provides key findings regarding custody and resettlement, the background to OMiC, and a summary of the evidence which supports delivery and implementation.

Our joint inspection of OMiC with HM Inspectorate of Prisons is being completed in two parts. This guide focuses on the purpose of OMiC and the work undertaken with people in custody. Part two of the inspection will review the work of probation services in the community. We have included a summary of the peer research from DWRM.

We define effective practice as:

"Where we see our standards delivered well in practice, with our standards being based on established models and frameworks, and grounded in evidence, learning and experience."

The examples are drawn from evidence of effective practice identified while undertaking prison-based fieldwork for the thematic inspection in HMP Ashfield, HMYOI Aylesbury, HMP Brixton, HMP Manchester, HMP Cardiff, HMP/YOI Low Newton, HMP Lancaster Farms, and HMP Highpoint.

You can access the 'Offender management in custody – pre-release. A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons' report here.

This effective practice guide is aimed at a range of audiences; it is intended to support practitioners, middle managers, and strategic leaders to reflect on their own experiences and consider how they can apply the salient learning points in their own contexts. Therefore, please use the contents page to navigate directly to the sections pertinent to you.

Our standards: what we looked for and our expectations

For phase one of our thematic inspection, we inspected against the following standards.

Organisational delivery

In relation to leadership, we expect that:

Leadership and facilities management support and promote the effective delivery of OMiC.

This includes the following expectations:

- Effective governance arrangements and delivery plans are in place to translate the OMiC vision and strategy into practice.
- The OMiC operating model encourages personalised approaches with individuals, taking account of diversity factors.
- Premises and offices enable staff to deliver a high-quality OMiC service, meeting the needs of individuals subject to OMiC.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality OMiC service, meeting the needs of individuals subject to OMiC.

In relation to staff, we expect that:

Staff within OMiC are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised, and responsive service for individuals.

This includes the following expectations:

- Staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality service for individuals subject to OMiC.
- The skills and profile of staff support the delivery of a high-quality service for individuals subject to OMiC.
- The oversight of work by prisons and probation supports high-quality OMiC delivery and professional development.
- Arrangements for learning and development are comprehensive and responsive.

In relation to services, we expect that:

A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service to individuals who receive OMiC services.

This includes the following expectations:

- There is a sufficiently comprehensive, and up-to-date, analysis of the profile of individuals subject to OMiC, which is used to deliver well-targeted services.
- The right volume, range, and quality of services are in place to meet the needs of individuals subject to OMiC.
- Relationships with providers and other agencies are established, maintained, and used effectively to deliver high-quality services to individuals subject to OMiC.
- Services are evidence led and evaluated, including reviewing the impact on diverse groups.

Case management in custody

In relation to case management in custody, we expect that:

OMiC effectively supports the individual's desistance.

This includes the following expectations:

- Assessment and planning focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance.
- Key work and case management are sufficiently well-coordinated, with a focus on supporting the individual's desistance.
- The implementation and delivery of services focus effectively on the individual's desistance.
- Reviewing focuses sufficiently on supporting the individual's desistance.
- There have been improvements in those factors most closely linked to offending, both in developing strengths and addressing needs.

OMiC effectively supports the safety of other people.

This includes the following expectations:

- Assessment, planning, and reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe.
- The implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people.
- There has been a reduction in factors most closely related to keeping other people safe.

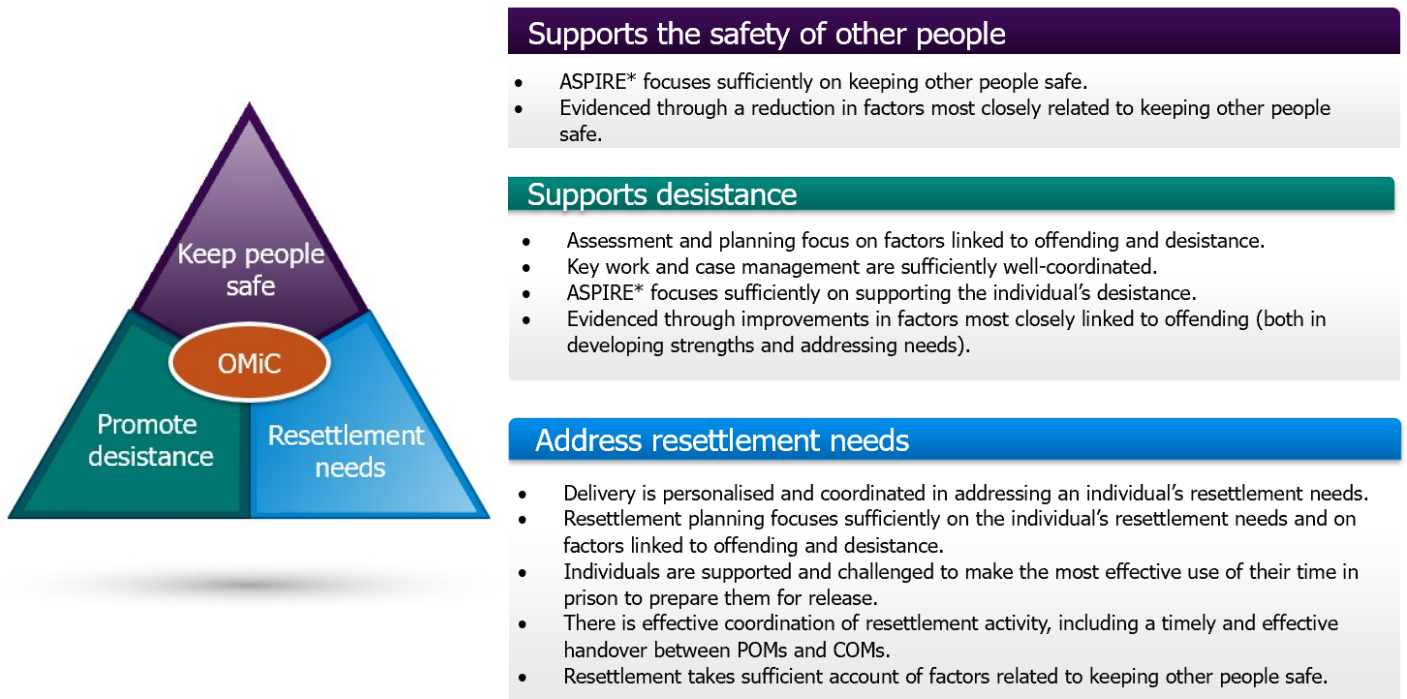*OMiC delivery is personalised and coordinated, addressing individual's resettlement needs.*

This includes the following expectations:

- Resettlement planning focuses sufficiently on the individual's resettlement needs, and on factors linked to offending and desistance.
- Individuals are supported and challenged to make the most effective use of their time in prison to best prepare them for release.

- There is effective coordination of resettlement activity, including a timely and effective handover between POMs and COMs.

- Resettlement takes sufficient account of factors related to keeping other people safe.

The case supervision standards for custody we inspected against for phase one of the OMiC inspection are summarised in the graphic below:

Supports the safety of other people
- ASPIRE* focuses sufficiently on keeping other people safe.
- Evidenced through a reduction in factors most closely related to keeping other people safe.

Supports desistance
- Assessment and planning focus on factors linked to offending and desistance.
- Key work and case management are sufficiently well-coordinated.
- ASPIRE* focuses sufficiently on supporting the individual's desistance.
- Evidenced through improvements in factors most closely linked to offending (both in developing strengths and addressing needs).

Address resettlement needs
- Delivery is personalised and coordinated in addressing an individual's resettlement needs.
- Resettlement planning focuses sufficiently on the individual's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance.
- Individuals are supported and challenged to make the most effective use of their time in prison to prepare them for release.
- There is effective coordination of resettlement activity, including a timely and effective handover between POMs and COMs.
- Resettlement takes sufficient account of factors related to keeping other people safe.

*ASPIRE stands for 'assessment, planning, implementation and delivery and review'.

Figure 1: OMiC case supervision expectations while in custody

🔧 [You can download a printable version of Figure 1 here.](#)

🧠 Reflection questions

Thinking about OMiC work that takes place in custody, as a leader or practitioner, alone or as part of a team, consider the following reflection questions:

- What is effective in your area and what is ineffective in your area?

- How far does OMiC work in your area align with the standards and the expectations above?

- If there are any areas where these are not aligned, what actions could your area take to address this?

- Where they are aligned, how can your area ensure this practice is sustained?

Learning from people in prison

We commissioned the services of 'DWRM', Doing What Really Matters – a social enterprise "which offers a clear pathway to rehabilitation through experience-led consultancy, advocacy and administration, facilitating further and higher education in prison, to give a voice to those in the criminal justice system (CJS)".

They interviewed 72 people who were preparing for their release from prison, to gather their perspectives on the services that they had received.

We are grateful for the insights of these individuals, whose feedback we have used to inform our findings for the thematic inspection.

DWRM found three key themes summarised in their report as below:

The prisoner voice

People in prison have a voice and it needs to be heard throughout their sentence; within sentence planning, risk reduction and post release arrangements.

Creating and building identities

Most people in prison do not want to be stuck in a cycle of offending. They want help and support to emerge from prison with the ability to take an active part in society and enjoy a pro-social identity of which they can be proud.

One size does not fit all

A rigid model does not recognise the diversity of our prison population and does not allow the flexibility that is required for OMiC to be successful.

We would recommend that you read the full report; however, the section below contains a summary of the findings relating to what people in prison indicated they needed to support successful engagement, risk management and to promote desistance.

Quality of service

People in prison indicated they:

- want a straightforward process with clear expectations about the frequency of meetings with staff

- need to play an active role in their own sentences, from sentence planning to jointly deciding what is best for them

- do not want to be 'rehabilitated' to any version of their former selves but wanted to create, take on, and maintain new identities - new versions of themselves

- would like to be able to meet regularly with their key worker (who should be consistent and not taken away from their allocated key working slots for operational reasons); be able to contact their POM and see them face-to-face consistently; and to contact their COM via phone - so they can build effective working relationships

- need constancy of contact with key workers and POMs, not necessarily about frequency, but just reliability and consistency

Effective practice guide: OMiC

- balanced interactions, both highlighting and acknowledging what is positive, as well as challenging any negative behaviours (which should happen alongside staff taking the time to get the individual's versions of events and being mindful of any punishments already incurred so as not to create a feeling of more punishment and or admonishment; this should also be clearly referenced in the records, to recognise progress and reduce repetition of information)

- want to feel part of the process, so things are done 'with' as opposed, 'to' the person in prison, where possible, and explaining processes to them, where this is not

- want to be actively involved in release planning to give them a chance 'to iron out any kinks' and discuss any difficulties so that there are no feelings of resentment (residual or otherwise) or blame assigned; it would also enable a proper understanding of what the future holds for people in prison and what the expectations are

- want clarity about what provision is in place for when people leave prison.

Delivery of service

People in prison indicated:

- they would like to feel the difference between approaches when they leave one category of prison (for example a category B) and move to a lower category prison

- they wanted to be much more involved with their sentence planning so that it was something they could engage with properly

- they wanted the sentence plans to be actively reviewed; when the sentence plan was the same each time they returned to prison, they had a feeling of hopelessness

- that when staff make an effort, this is noted, appreciated, and makes a difference

- that learning how to engage with people to get things done is just as important as the practical tasks of sorting out identification documents, such as birth certificates, or setting up bank accounts.

Range of service

People in prison indicated:

- they were not aware of what services were available or how these could help, and felt they were not involved in identifying services due to the limited opportunity to input into their sentence planning

- that when matched to the right course, they often benefit from completing it

- there are often incorrect or inaccurate items on their OASys (offender assessment system) and sentence plans, which are difficult to amend, and undoubtedly would impact on motivation

- active participation is significant; many were able to map out their own needs and solutions effectively, as well as being able to look objectively at their own offending, identify at least some of the root causes, and then, appropriately state the types of protective factors which needed to be put in place to ensure no repeat offending.

Supporting desistance

People in prison indicated they:

- wanted their sentence plan to incorporate courses to help them address some of the root causes of their behaviour - for example, a course might currently focus on the act of drinking but not look at the underpinning reasons, whereas examining some of the underlying behaviours might be more effective in supporting desistance

- would benefit far more from the life skills courses they see advertised around the prison (parenting courses, cooking classes, money management, and courses to help them build soft skills), or at least in conjunction with the offending behaviour programmes

- found communication much easier in person, rather than via the application process

- need to know about release plans and any restrictions at the earliest point possible

- had a clear expectation of the support they wanted to receive; above all, it was the sense of being treated like a human being that they valued.

Keeping people safe

People in prison indicated:

- the importance of welfare checks as a core part of key work, making connections

- between previous trauma and future relationships and supervision arrangements

- they had high expectations of the structures that should be in place to enable them to understand and manage their behaviour

- they would benefit from having a private space for discussions with a key worker; often these conversations take place through the cell door, which is not conducive to talking about sensitive issues or to raising concerns.

Resettlement needs

People in prison indicated:

- they want to be given the relevant information before release

- the handover from POM to COM alongside the relationship with the person leaving prison is crucial at the transition period, which is an anxious time

- they really needed clarity on living arrangements after release and supervision appointments, as well as a clear understanding of what is required of them; they also need staff to clarify their understanding of release plans and expectations through active listening and response

- they need help with resolving issues such as housing, ID, and bank accounts; for some, 12 weeks is not long enough to resolve outstanding issues, and some are released (or transferred) without these interventions being completed, which can, for example, lead to homelessness

- they need to know who to ask or where to get help.

[link icon] DWRM shared their learning in an interview.

Read the full report from DWRM which explains their methodology, findings, in full and underpinning research which supports solutions offered.

[icon] Reflection questions

- What do you think are the root causes of these findings and how can you address these in your area and within your individual practice?

- How do you consider your practice from the perspective of a person on probation?

- What could you do differently to strengthen your approach for those in custody?

- Are there any barriers to addressing these findings in your practice? If so, what actions can you put in place to mitigate/overcome these barriers?

- If you anticipate any challenges in discussing resettlement plans with the person on probation, what strategies can you use to mitigate these?

- If you addressed these findings, how might that promote meaningful engagement and what would that mean for keeping other people safe and for desistance?


Leadership, implementing the model, and staffing

Example of effectiveness: leadership driving an integrated prison and probation culture at HMP Lancaster Farms

Effective OMiC implementation unites two organisations in a shared vision to protect the public, deliver the sentence of the court, and promote desistance. The prioritisation of security has meant, in some establishments, that key work was not the first concern and there were clear differences between the way prison and probation POMs worked.

Conversely, in HMP Lancaster Farms we found an integrated service; one inspector noted:

"You cannot tell which of the POMs has a prison background and which has a probation background".
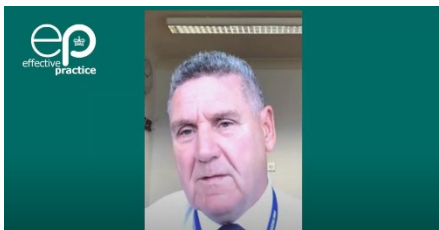
Video (YouTube, 10:52): OMiC EP Guide: Prison culture, HMP Lancaster Farms.

In this video we spoke with Governor Peter Francis to explore how he had achieved this; he explained:

"I think it's part of a wider strategy and a longer-term vision. We regularly talk about one service - the probation and prison service. In reality we have tried to foster a culture of one establishment, and I'm pleased that the inspectors couldn't tell who were

probation and who were prison service because, as far as we're concerned, there's no difference.

You know, we've set out an aim when I induct our staff into the prison, our partner agencies arrive and they come to meet me and I say that when you come through our gate, you belong to us. We look after you, we support you. And we all work together. We have one aim and that is to get the lads who live here more opportunities when they go out than they came in with. And if we foster the culture that we support one another, we recognise our cultural differences, but we actually also recognise our strengths from both our organisations and then we join them both together."

He also highlights how they have driven a culture of respect by focusing on this being a two-way process and through celebrating the successes, no matter how small:

"I think what we do is we invest an awful lot of time …. I think it is almost an expected given that our staff treat prisoners, the men in this establishment, with respect … I treat prisoners with respect. But what we're also very powerful at is we expect to be treated with respect as well."

Example of effectiveness: collaborative working across prison and probation to promote diversity and inclusion, in the South West

While undertaking the fieldwork in the South West, the inspection team were impressed with the commitment to collaborative working across prisons and probation. This commitment was exemplified in the OMiC senior leadership forum's diversity and inclusion subgroup, with equal voices across the prison and probation. This group is described as:

"An opportunity to streamline joint HMPPS work, allowing us to strategically focus on being one organisation."

The three main goals of the group are:

To identify the key diversity and inclusion objectives shared across HMPPS and ensure that a collaborative approach is taken to achieving these.

To identify innovative ways of achieving diversity and inclusion objectives, while maximising the use of lived experience and user voice ,and implement these plans as agreed by the senior leadership forum (SLF).

To ensure that staff and stakeholders are engaged with the progression of diversity and inclusion plans.

The subgroup emphasises the importance of collaboration in achieving positive outcomes for people leaving custody across the male and female estate. The membership includes the diversity and inclusion leads in the Devon and North Dorset, and Avon, South Dorset, and

Wiltshire prison groups, the regional equality manager for probation, and the probation lead for women. They meet bimonthly, with a rotating chair, and share their minutes with the senior leadership forum to ensure they track actions and progress. They also recognise accomplishments and celebrate these by communicating them across their directorates.

The group shared how vital diversity and inclusion are, advising:

"What we strive for is making sure that people's diverse backgrounds are a really important part of how we respond to them as individuals … part of this is about being flexible and agile in our approach to information we gain from forums with people in prison, those on probation, and the staff group."
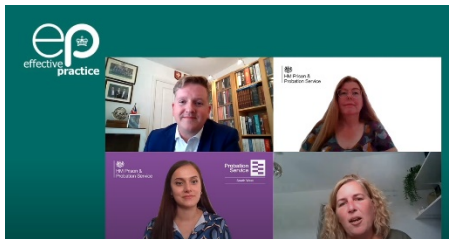
[Video (YouTube, 15:40): OMiC EP Guide: Diversity and Inclusion, HMPPS South West.](#)

In this video we spoke with Denise Norton, diversity and inclusion lead for the Devon, North Dorset Group, Bradley Read, group lead for diversity and inclusion for Avon, South Dorset, and Wiltshire, and Lois Taylor, regional equalities manager for the South West Region of Probation regarding their work on the subgroup. They highlighted how they work towards their shared goals, noting:

"The crux of the action is to start from a place of how we can achieve more together."

The group also talk through some of their achievements, for example; organising joint outreach activities to address recruitment, including attending job fairs and pride events with probation and prison representatives; building on the work in probation on transgender people to embed processes in prisons; commissioning an external organisation to engage people on probation who identify as being from a Black and Asian background regarding the work with them and extended this to those in prison, and sharing training opportunities.

The overview of [HMPPS South West SLF D&I Sub-Group](#) achievements and future ambitions can be accessed here.

Example of effectiveness: a responsive and tailored service to a marginalised group, HMP Cardiff

The vision of OMiC is to ensure that all of those in prison are given the opportunity to transform their lives, using their time constructively in custody to prepare for release. For prisoners identified as foreign national, this can be an uncertain future, with a confused picture about when they will be released, where to, and a lack of understanding as to how they can move their case forward. A 'foreign national prisoner' is anyone remanded or convicted on criminal charges who does not have an absolute legal right to remain in this country. There were 9,682 foreign nationals (2,743 remand, 6,214 sentenced, and 725 non-criminal) held in custody as at 30 June 2022, [4] representing 12 per cent of the total prison population. The most common nationalities after British nationals in prisons were

---

[4] HMPPS. (2022). *[Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)*

Albanian (14 per cent of the foreign national prison population), Polish (9 per cent), Romanian (8 per cent), Irish (7 per cent), Lithuanian (4 per cent), and Jamaican (4 per cent).

Given this percentage of the population, the Inspectorate was interested to learn of the creation of a dedicated foreign national prison officer post at HMP Cardiff. This establishment can have up to 90 foreign national prisoners at any one time, which is 10 to 15 per cent of the population. We spoke to officer Baker, who explained how this role evolved:

> *"Foreign national prisoners that are sent to HMP Parc, come back to us on an IS91 (authority to detain). Once the release date has passed, they are held in prisons as there is a lack of space in immigration removal centres. We had nine or ten such cases in HMP Cardiff, and Chris Impey, head of offender management services, created my role to improve our response to this situation. As a result, we've reduced our detained population to one.*

> *"It was a mess when I first started, and there was unrest, as the foreign national prisoners did not know what was going on. There was no direction on how to intervene."*

Even if deportation is not mentioned in court at sentencing, the case of any foreign national prisoner is referred to Home Office Immigration Enforcement. Therefore, for sentenced prisoners, Officer Baker will liaise with the Home Officer and their POM. He stated:

> *"I assist the Home Office on their visits to the prison to support such prisoners with bail applications and establishing family addresses through their solicitor. I support initial interviews with foreign national prisoners to find out about their background, family situation, and their intentions, using the Big Word translation service when needed over the telephone. With my self-developed knowledge, I act as a go-between with all concerned."*

Example of effectiveness: quality assurance of key work at HMP Lancaster Farms

Key workers are the linchpin of OMiC, and senior leaders in HMPPS fully recognise the centrality and potential value of key working. While this potential has not yet been developed across the custodial estate, there is evidence that heads of offender management services and custody managers are trying to realise the value of this work and to connect key work with offender management as a whole.

Video (YouTube, 07:42): OMiC EP Guide: Quality Assurance of Keywork, HMP Lancaster Farms.

In this video, Frank Baker, the head of OMU services at HMP Lancaster Farms, highlights how the prison is pursing quality assurance of the key worker function. He explains that it developed a quality assurance template for key work entries to be rolled out across the establishment. Frank says it covers:

"What is a good entry, how you make that entry, how much we expect to be put into the entry and it gives you some prompts on how you would start off your key work session with the people on your caseload.

"And then that would be checked every month by your line manager, who is a residential custody manager and the key workers then get feedback [both developmental and positive]."

He further explains they have an enhanced quality check, where the reducing reoffending lead reviews six of the quality assurance template entries per month, which is then fed back into the line management structure through Frank. In reflecting on the impact, he states:

"The quality of the key work sessions is improving and staff are being upskilled with the constructive feedback and the follow-up given by the line managers."

This is significant as he recognises that:

"Every contact is seen as an opportunity [for change] by staff."

This is an important concept as every contact matters, by allowing staff to create a space to demonstrate one or more of the key principles of desistance, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Key principles for supporting desistance (taken from HM Inspectorate of Probation's research page: Desistance – general practice principles)

Lancaster Farms has had similar resource challenges to other establishments in terms of being short staffed and issues with retention, but, in spite of this, Frank notes:

"Generally at Lancaster Farms, the story of key workers is a really positive story to tell and it does have a big impact on the men. There's a lot of job satisfaction from the staff, the officers, and the management and it's bought into right across the establishment; from the senior management team right down to the staff actually

working at the coal face, so it's just a good all-round effort and a good story to tell really for Lancaster Farms."

HMP Lancaster Farms has kindly shared its <u>key work quality assurance form.</u>

Delivery of offender management in custody: The role of the prison offender manager, key worker, and community offender manager

The current OMiC model is underpinned by three roles, the key worker, prison offender manager (POM), and community offender manager (COM). In this section we discuss the importance of each role and share insights from those we met during the fieldwork.

Key worker

Under this scheme, each prison officer is meant to undertake key work with around five to six people in prison on a one-to-one basis, in addition to their other duties. The key worker scheme is intended to allow prison officers more time and flexibility to provide prisoners with the best chance of engaging in rehabilitation.

Positive examples included building relationships and checking on the progress of referrals. During the inspection, when consistent key work took place we saw good relationships developing between the individual prisoners and key workers, leading to conversations about life and progression in prison.

In HMP/YOI Low Newton, a prison for women, the quality of the key work was high, particularly with highly complex individuals. There was evidence that the POM and key worker role was helping to motivate and set goals with individual prisoners to help the women progress. Key work happened regularly and focused well on release planning and encouraging positive behaviours.

Officer Boakes at Low Newton stated they *"take great pride in delivering quality key worker sessions"* due to the support it provides people. She further states:

> *"The benefit the women have is the consistency of seeing the same member of staff on a weekly basis to which we can build trust and a rapport with the women who we see.*
>
> *"Working closely with a prisoner's POM is also key and being involved, when possible, in sentence planning and progression for the women, making sure that the prisoners have an outside connection with family if possible and how to sustain it.*
>
> *"For a new prisoner coming into HMP Low Newton for the first time it can be a scary place, and having a one-to-one key session with a member of staff can be a great support for women which provides information and an empathetic ear."*

In discussing some of the barriers to key work she explains some of the strategies they have taken to mitigate these:

"A major difficulty that we have overcome was the lack of computers to complete the report writing and a provided space; this have now been resolved as the key worker room has plenty of equipment for this to be completed and is accessible when needed."

And:

"One of the changes we have made is that a couple of members of staff at the beginning of the day will report to Oscar 1 and receive the detail of any key worker sessions that are to be completed that day; they will relieve the staff in a timely manner for that duty. This takes the pressure off not being relieved so that staff feel comfortable and able to deliver the session, give advice, and chase up any issues that may arise. I feel that 45 minutes is sufficient but can depend on the day and what has been happening with the prisoner; it can sometimes need extra time or over run."

Prison offender manager (POM)

In some of the cases we saw, POMs were going over and above their role due to gaps in work completed in the community, caused by staffing and workload pressures. Where POMs and the wider OMU staff were co-located there were improved working relationships, and staff were able to transfer skills and better cope with workload pressures.

POMs understood the central importance of the relationship with the individual prisoner. Being responsive and reliable, and communicating well, appeared to make a big difference to the individual's wellbeing. Individual prisoners responded well to staff doing what they said they would do, or to getting back to them to explain any delays.

[Video (YouTube, 05:58): OMiC EP Guide: Rachel Lowis, POM at HMP Lancaster Farms.](#)

Inspectors spoke to Rachel Lowis, a POM based at HMP Lancaster Farms, and she shared what effective practice meant to her within her role:

"Without a doubt, it is seeing the individual beyond the labels. It is working with them to discover what it is that lies behind the reasons for being here at HMP, and showing them that there is another way - of belonging, of living, and of identifying a pathway that suits them as a person, rather than seeing them as a generic, box-ticking exercise to stick on a sentence plan and leave them to it.

"It is thinking outside the box and working on that limited ability to think about the future, which is often a feature of young adults' behaviour, a tendency to live in the now, and a failure to think through the longer-term consequences of behaviour.

"It is developing those prosocial opportunities to reflect and learn from their experiences and look for ways to improve the future of the person in front of me."

Community offender manager (COM)

Responsibility for offender management is handed over to a COM during the pre-release or first parole phase. Handover should take place at 7.5 months pre-release for legacy National Probation Service (NPS) cases and at three months pre-release for legacy community rehabilitation company (CRC) cases, and, at 15 months for high-profile cases. The intention of the handover period is to allow relationships to develop between the person in prison, POM, and COM, with the support of the key worker. It is expected that public protection tasks are completed and that individuals are prepared for release by addressing their resettlement needs.

COMs are expected to liaise with the POM during this time, to ensure that information is shared and to gain a good understanding of the individual prisoner. COMs need to attend prisons to develop effective working relationships with individuals and ensure the shared management of these cases. In-person meetings were more beneficial than meetings held by video link or telephone contact.

Inspectors spoke with Kerry Guest, a COM from Worcester, who used a specific case to highlight the importance of a COM's role under OMIC:

This case, Billy, was somebody I have supervised previously on a different sentence, so I had some advantages of already knowing relevant information about him and having established a working relationship.

The current sentence is an extended determinate sentence with parole hearings, so it was important to work closely with the POM to gather information about risk and progress with the sentence plan, which was focused on completion of Kaizen.[5]

It was important to have contact with Billy and the POM at key stages in his sentence. This enabled continuity with who was working with him, and I think it helps motivation for the person in prison to feel that the COM is interested in progress and keeping in touch. This should then hopefully translate to a positive working relationship on release and ensure the person is well prepared for the expectations of a licence.

During his period in prison, I was able to support his attendance on the Kaizen group, via the sentence plan, and joined his final review meeting to provide continuity ready for follow-up work, by the POM pre-release and in the community by myself on release.

I think that it was important to see the sentence as a whole and the prison component as part of preparing for release.

Joint appointments with the POM pre-release and at key stages, such as prior to the parole hearing, were beneficial in this regard. The risk management plan was developed via a referral to MAPPA [multi-agency public protection arrangements] level 2, as the police would be managing the case on release, as well as probation, and there were potential child safeguarding concerns. The prison participated via the sharing of information.

---

[5] An accredited offender behaviour programme for adult males who are assessed as high or very high risk.

An approved premises (AP) placement was also part of the risk management plan, and the reasons for the referral and contact from AP staff was also established with Billy in plenty of time prior to release. A late change of AP placement was communicated to Billy, via POM and COM contacts, to lessen any anxiety to him that this might have caused. This might have been disruptive if there had not been some rapport established by this stage in the sentence.

Please note the case referenced here is the first case we highlight as effective practice below.

Guiding principles for POMs, key workers, and COMs working with people in custody

Establish an effective working relationship with the person in prison and the team around them - this will allow you to have a good understanding of how to manage keeping other people safe, and what protective factors are in place and how to harness these.

Involve the individual meaningfully so they are actively engaged with their sentence plan - this will ensure it is relevant for the individual and is more likely to increase compliance if it is co-created.

Be clear on expectations around progress, support the individual to sustain motivation and hope, discuss controls required but also what behaviour would result in reducing or increasing these.

Be mindful of the importance of continuity of relationship, work undertaken, treatment, and support on release.

Be aware that what may feel like a minor task for you as a practitioner could be the most significant factor for an individual who is likely to have lots of reflection time.

[You can download a poster of these guiding principles here.](#)

Effective engagement

As noted in the first principle identified above, it is vital that practitioners build effective working relationships with people. According to procedural justice theory, if people feel they are treated in a procedurally fair and just way, starting from the very first contact, they will view those in authority as more legitimate and respect them more. They are more likely to comply and engage, even when the outcomes of the decisions or processes are unfavourable or inconvenient.

There are four key principles to procedural justice, as illustrated in Figure 4 below:

VOICE

People need to have **the chance to tell their side of the story** and to feel that authority figures will listen and sincerely consider this before making a decision.

NEUTRALITY

People need to see authority figures as **neutral and principled decision-makers**, who apply rules consistently, transparently and do not base their decisions on personal opinion or bias.

RESPECT

People need to feel **respected and treated courteously** by authority figures, believe their rights are considered equal to those of others and that their issues will be taken seriously.

TRUSTWORTHY MOTIVES

People need to see authority figures as people with **trustworthy motives**, who are sincere and authentic, who listen and care and who try to do what is right for everyone involved.

Figure 4: The four principles of procedural justice (extract from HM Inspectorate of Probation's research page: **Procedural justice**)

You can read more about procedural justice on the HM Inspectorate research page. This provides an overview of the theory, a summary of the evidence available, and how it can be put into practice.

In addition, with thanks to the HMPPS Insights team for giving permission to share the following infographics related to this issue:

Procedural Justice in probation

Procedural Justice in prison

Procedural justice and five-minute interventions

Procedural justice and trauma-informed practice

Case illustrations of the guiding principles

In this section, we share illustrations of cases where we saw our standards delivered well, in practice, during the pre-release fieldwork section of the OMiC joint thematic inspection.

Example of effectiveness: developing a positive relationship

In the following example the inspector commented:

"The COM uses the information provided by the prison to adapt her communication style and engage the person in prison. There is good evidence of the POM, key worker and COM working collaboratively to support the individual to work towards achieving the sentence plan objectives.

"It was also good to see all being kept updated when there were required changes to his resettlement plan."

Case illustration: HMP Ashfield

Billy was sentenced to an extended determinate sentence for offences of a sexual nature against children, which he committed while on licence for similar offences, indicating a pattern of repeat sexual offending against young females.

Pre-release assessment: Those working with Billy recognised his high level of anxiety and, consequently, adapted their communication style. The assessment clearly identified work to address risk factors, through the relevant accredited programmes, and focused on promoting desistance factors, through education, training and employment (ETE) - illustrating a good balance.

Pre-release work: The POM supported Billy to undertake the sentence plan objectives identified. Billy completed the Kaizen programme, which is for people assessed as a high or very high risk of harm, convicted of volent or sexual offences, and the POM then conducted post-programme work to reinforce the learning.

Key work sessions took place at regular intervals and were clearly linked to the overall sentence plan as there was consistent contact which focused on relevant factors, including ETE, the completion of Kaizen, and his thoughts regarding progression.

Handover: There was a timely handover as required before release, and evidence of a good relationship between POM and COM to support parole and MAPPA processes. There was evidence of regular contact between the COM and Billy to prepare him for release. The COM clearly took note of information in the assessment regarding his anxiety and adapted her communication style appropriately. She was clear regarding the need for a release to an approved premises and took time to ensure Billy understood this, the reasons why, and what this would mean for his resettlement plans. When the planned approved premises did not come to fruition, the COM involved the POM in discussions with Billy to ensure he understood why this was no longer a viable option and the location of the alternative.

Keeping other people safe: A MAPPA referral was completed prior to Billy's release; both the COM and POM contributed to the initial MAPPA level 2 meeting, which helped to shape the resettlement plan. Stringent licence conditions were put in place, including residence at an approved premises and polygraph testing. The COM liaised closely with the police, social services, victim liaison officer and MAPPA to ensure that Billy would be closely monitored on his release from custody. She also took time to ensure he understood what was expected of him.

Noted outcomes: Billy completed Kaizen; he was categorised as a category D prisoner at his last parole hearing.

Example of effectiveness: an individualised approach

In the following example, the inspector commented:

> *"The handover is timely and both extensive and impactful, and results in good pre-release work being undertaken. The COM uses specialist knowledge from her role to support effective engagement to ensure Mohammed understands the resettlement plan and what is expected of him."*

Case illustration: HMP Aylesbury

Mohammed is subject to a lengthy sentence for an offence of robbery; he has an entrenched pattern of offending behaviour which commenced in his early years.

Handover: The POM to COM handover was timely and is extensive and relevant. It triggers ongoing communication between the POM and COM, and with Mohammed.

Pre-release assessment: The assessment undertaken pre-release by the COM engages Mohammed meaningfully. They explore the reasons for his offending behaviour, and balance restrictive and constructive elements within the management of the case.

The assessment focuses on Mohammed's personal circumstances which are going to be critical to desistance, specifically being care-experienced and gang-affiliated from a young age. There is also an analysis of the risk factors which underpin his offending behaviour.

The self-assessment questionnaire is used, and there are clear links between recorded conversations and the sentence plan to ensure objectives are relevant to his personal circumstances, showing a good balance between risk management and engagement.

Pre-release work: There are clear entries on to nDelius which demonstrate the level of work undertaken, particularly around finding accommodation, as the approved premises referral was rejected. Mohammed was kept informed of what was happening at every step.

The COM has a specialist role, working with young people, and this is evidenced through her practice in terms of how she engages with Mohammed and clarifies his understanding of the resettlement plan.

Keeping other people safe: The risk management plan is comprehensive and includes contact and victim safety planning, as the assessment clearly identifies that the case is eligible for victim liaison officer (VLO) contact. There is an important mix of protective and risk factors, with an exploration of each of these contained within the risk management plan. The COM makes excellent use of information from VLO and MAPPA to ensure pre-release service delivery has a clear focus on keeping other people safe.

Noted outcomes: There are good links with POM and COM ahead of release in terms of issues with Mohammed's mental health, and the COM makes good use of commissioned rehabilitation service (CRS) providers to address this.

Example of effectiveness: working *with* people in prison

In the following example, the inspector commented:

"The licence conditions to support release are well considered in the context of information provided from the prison and through liaison with the police."

Case illustration: HMP Manchester

Darren is subject to a lengthy custodial sentence for offences related to class A drugs supply; he has previous convictions of a similar nature and was recalled on a previous licence because of offence paralleling behaviour.

Pre-release assessment: The assessment identified work to be completed during his sentence to prepare him for his eventual release.

Pre-release work: Darren completed the Thinking Skills accredited offending behaviour programme while in custody.

Handover: The POM to COM handover was timely and coordination between custody and the community has been effective. Communication between the COM, POM, and prisoner is supportive of pre-release processes, including referrals made to multi-agency interventions, such as integrated offender management (IOM). The POM and COM engaged with Darren, responded to his views regarding an effective resettlement plan, and completed the relevant referrals to support this, so he felt involved in release planning and risk management.

Sentence plan objectives are reviewed, and Darren's progress is acknowledged, both in terms of risk and addressing any areas of need.

Keeping other people safe: The assessment and release plan considers multiple sources of information, including police enquiries, liaison with the POM, programmes team, and Darren. The COM has kept Darren well informed of licence conditions, including GPS monitoring, IOM, and police referrals and accommodation. The COM also communicated with Darren's partner, and explained safeguarding procedures and the alternative accommodation plans in place.

Management oversight is effective and supportive of sharing information with partnership agencies.

Example of effectiveness: being realistic about the change process and incrementally building on developments

In the following example, the inspector commented:

"This is the first sentence that Julie has made positive progress and has built positive relationships with various professionals. She has completed a large amount of psychological work which appears to have significantly supported her understanding of herself and violent behaviour, also her perceived need to misuse substances."

Case illustration: HMP/YOI Low Newton

Julie received a custodial sentence for grievous bodily harm against a vulnerable victim known to her. This was part of an entrenched pattern, evidenced by the lengthy history of convictions.

Pre-release assessment: The assessment indicated her offending behaviour was linked to the trauma she had experienced throughout her life, both as a child and as an adult. It makes good use of the psychological case formulation completed.

As part of the pre-release plan, the COM had considered a condition to reside at an approved premises. However, given this was a significant distance from Julie's home area it was felt a placement would be detrimental to building family relationships, her emotional stability, and likely compliance.

Pre-release work: During the sentence, Julie completed a significant amount of psychological work. She undertook 20 sessions with the Believe Project, an outside organisation who helped her recognise she was not to blame for the traumatic experiences of her life. The POM recognised that Julie would require additional support and referred her to a psychologist to work with her to address her violent offending.

The POM arranged with the psychologist and key worker to attend supervision together. On attending the session, they discovered there had been a verbally aggressive incident and used the session to consider what she could have done differently. They helped Julie to explore how she could have used the skills she had been developing to address the situation in a more prosocial manner.

The team were able to support Julie to gain an improved understanding of herself, her substance use, and violent behaviour.

The POM recognised this is the first sentence that Julie has made any positive progress. She has also built good relationships with professionals, such as the key worker, family worker, psychology, and chaplaincy. This work promotes desistance and supports Julie in consolidating her learning and use of new skills in understanding why she offends and how to address problems without using violence.

Handover: The handover is completed late. However, once allocated the case the COM does maintain contact with Julie, through emails, letters, and a visit. There is also evidence of joint working and effective communication between the POM, COM, Julie, and commissioned rehabilitative services for accommodation and emotional well-being support.

Julie clearly feels comfortable within the relationship and queries part of the release plan with the COM, who responds in a timely manner.

Keeping other people safe: Julie successfully completed the psychological intervention, which was the first time in over 20 years.

Noted outcomes: This is the first time Julie has engaged with professionals and completed psychological work. While initially Julie had felt her actions within the offence were justified, through work conducted during her sentence she recognised her behaviour was not appropriate and had a greater awareness of the impact on her victim. There has also been a reduction in the use of physical violence and an improved emotional stability.

Example of effectiveness: professional curiosity informing keeping people safe

In the following example, the inspector commented:

"The case illustrates the importance of understanding what is in place to support keeping people safe and ensuring individuals understand the expectations of their resettlement plans. It also shows the power of effective management oversight to provide clarity regarding actions to support effective case supervision."

Case illustration: HMP Cardiff

Anton received a custodial sentence for robbery; he has a long-standing history of acquisitive offending.

Pre-release assessment: The assessment analyses the motivation to comply with the sentence and the barriers to engagement, especially in respect of addiction needs. Anton is of no fixed abode and has an overreliance on his mother, who has a restraining order against him. It identifies drug misuse as a key risk factor and considers his emotional wellbeing and how it underpins his use.

Pre-release work: At the point of allocation, the management oversight entry is clear about the milestones, roles, and responsibilities under OMiC, which gives clarity regarding the tasks which need to be completed and by when. Anton is receiving counselling in custody, drug intervention and there is evidence of practical support like GP, dentist, and arranging finances.

Key worker entries are helpful, as they look at priority areas for Anton, including housing and family support. There is a welfare element to each session but with a focus on release and resettlement.

The COM appears to be driving the quality of this work. There is evidence of a resettlement meeting, Anton was meaningfully engaged with the plan, and referrals have been made to agencies that can support him with social inclusion, referrals to housing and to drug agencies in the community.

Handover: This was timely, the COM had a good knowledge of the OMiC timescales, and this steered their approach to the work. Anton was actively involved in his pre-release planning and has regular communication with his COM, which included face-to-face visits.

Keeping other people safe: The COM identified a history of domestic abuse against partners, and noted Anton was in contact with his mother, who also has guardianship of his son. The COM illustrated a good level of professional curiosity and liaised with the court, police (regarding any call outs involving his mother and current partner, given his history), and Anton's mother and partner to ascertain if the restraining order was still valid. There was evidence of safeguarding and police liaison, which then informed the assessment and release plan, including a MAPPA screening. Planning sets out appropriate licence conditions because of the enquiries and risk assessment.

Noted outcomes: The relationship with the COM appears positive and transparent in relation to risk concerns. A noted outcome of the COM's professional curiosity has led to Anton and other professionals understanding that there is still a restraining order in place against his mother, who is his main source of support. Clarity in this area should reduce the

likelihood of a breach of licence conditions and breach of a restraining order, and support the prison to put measures in place to protect the victim.

Example of effectiveness: balancing risk and desistance

In the following example, the inspector commented:

"The assessment thoroughly considers keeping the public safe through analysis of his behaviour and compliance levels supervision, and there is a good balance between addressing risk factors and promoting desistance factors."

Case illustration: HMP Highpoint

Yousuf was convicted of an offence of robbery and assaults with intent to rob against a child. He has a lengthy history of acquisitive offending behaviour, and he is assessed as posing a high risk of harm to the public.

Pre-release assessment: Clearly identifies the main factors linked to his offending behaviour, including accommodation, ETE, thinking and behaviour, and alcohol misuse. The assessment draws on information from multiple sources, including the POM in relation to behaviour in custody and how this links to Yousuf's attitudes. It thoroughly considers keeping the public safe through analysis of current offence, previous offending behaviour, behaviour in prison, and his response to probation and prison supervision. There is an analysis of the underlying causes of his behaviour, including his experience of childhood trauma and subsequent difficult relationships with his family. The assessment identifies ADHD and analyses how this may impact on supervision, and provides some indicators related to possible personality disorder.

Pre-release work: The indicators linked to personality disorder are followed up through a referral to the offender personality disorder (OPD) pathway for psychological and behavioural support. Yousuf was referred to Switchback [a London based rehabilitation charity] for mentoring support to establish ID and a bank account pre-release, as well as a National Insurance number to enable referral to supported accommodation. He also made a self-referral to Forward Trust counselling service.

Handover: The COM excelled at engagement with Yousuf through close liaison with the POM, undertaking pre-release visits.

Keeping other people safe: The COM undertook a home visit to assess home detention curfew (HDC) suitability, alongside police and safeguarding enquiries. As a result of his assessed risk levels, he was placed in an approved premises. Licence conditions were set, which were informed by contact with the victim liaison officer, and included a referral to the integrated offender management scheme and residency. Yousuf was informed of this well ahead of his release.

Noted outcomes: Effective engagement pre-release, place secured in approved premises, move-on accommodation secured in Langley House Trust, and mentoring support provided to support resettlement.

Reflection questions

Considering the principles highlighted above, the information regarding procedural justice, and the cases above, please consider the following questions:

- How do you ensure the voice of the person in prison is evident in your assessments, plans, delivery, and reviews?

- How do you develop effective working relationships with the person in prison and the team working around them?

- Within the OMiC approach, are you clear on your responsibilities, including how and when you liaise with others working with a specific person in prison? If not, how can you address this?

- How do you take advantage of all information-gathering opportunities open to you to understand the underlying causes of someone's behaviour?

- What actions can you take to ensure that every contact you have with a person in prison leaves a positive trace to encourage thought/constructive change?

- How do you effectively communicate sentence plan expectations and the implications of engaging, or not, to people in prison?

- How do you blend keeping people safe and the desistance principles in your practice when working with people in custody?

- When reflecting on your caseload who are in custody, do you know when they are due to be released and, therefore, when there should be a heightened focus on release planning?

- When considering release plans and licence conditions for specific people in prison on your caseload, do you ever anticipate any challenges in communicating these plans? If so, what actions could help you mitigate these challenges?