



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Somerset PDU

The Probation Service - **South West region**

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2023

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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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

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

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Foreword

Our inspection of Somerset Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) highlighted several positive aspects, including impressive practice relating to engagement and supporting people on probation in their desistance from offending. Despite this, the overall quality of work to keep people safe had deficits across all five inspection quality standards which resulted in a rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Somerset PDU has a strong and well-respected head of service and well-established partnership arrangements with other organisations. Promising delivery of interventions to support engagement and desistance from offending, supported by these relationships, was found in case management. Strategic partnership arrangements were strong and consistent, with leaders in the PDU who directly influenced partners and translated the PDU's vision into operational delivery across several organisations.

The work focusing on risk of harm was disappointing. Improvement was needed in the quality of work to assess, plan, manage and review the risks posed by people on probation. Most concerning was that the assessment of risk of harm was sufficient in only 31 per cent of cases. At the pre-sentence stage, despite probation staff obtaining necessary information in relation to domestic abuse and child safeguarding risks from the police and local council, the information was not sufficiently analysed and assessed to inform the production of the court report for sentencers. This continued post-sentence, with these enquiries being completed to fulfil a process and not utilised to inform a holistic individual assessment of the person on probation.

At the time of our inspection the staff vacancy rate for the PDU was only four per cent. However, the workloads of practitioners remained unacceptably high, and there were almost as many trainee Probation Officers (POs) (17) as there were qualified members of staff (23) presenting challenges for newly qualified and more experienced staff. This meant that while the PDU may have the staff required in post, they were not yet operating at full capacity, not least because trainee staff will have restrictions on the number of cases they can manage due to their learning and development needs. Despite this, staff we met were highly motivated, committed and engaged in delivering the best possible service. The culture was inclusive across all grades of staff and morale was positive. The impact of this was seen in the good quality of work to engage with and support people on probation with their desistance needs.

Somerset PDU has strong foundations in place and leaders were able to offer assurances that the staffing position is set to improve over the next 12 months. A focus on the development of practice to identify, analyse and respond to risk of harm, including the identification of actual and potential victims, is necessary for the development of the PDU. With the appropriate priority given to this aspect of probation work, improvements should be achieved quickly.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Somerset PDU

Fieldwork started June 2023

Score **8/27**

Overall rating

Rating



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work

Inadequate



2.2 Assessment

Inadequate



2.3 Planning

Inadequate



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



2.5 Reviewing

Requires improvement



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.

Somerset PDU should:

1. improve the quality and impact of work in relation to risk of harm across court work and sentence management
2. develop practitioner's confidence and skills in the use of professional curiosity to identify, analyse, assess, plan, and respond to indicators of risk effectively
3. ensure all available information relating to safeguarding and domestic abuse is accessed and utilised, and all relevant partners are engaged in keeping children and victims safe
4. develop and implement a stronger offer to engage the voice of people on probation
5. work with Somerset children's social care services to improve information sharing, joint planning and collaborative working to protect children from the harm caused by domestic abuse.

South West region should:

6. work with Avon and Somerset Constabulary to improve the quality of police information sharing required to inform court and case management risk assessment and planning
7. support the development of the growing number of Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) and newly qualified officers expected
8. sufficiently resource court staff across Somerset to enable quality assurance processes to be fully embedded to support court staff development and improve the quality of advice provided to court
9. support the PDU to develop a consistent, structured and well-managed staff induction process for all new joiners, with timely access to relevant entry-level training, shadowing opportunities and mentoring.

HM Prison and Probation Service should:

10. ensure the national learning and development arrangements provide staff with the necessary support to understand how to effectively keep people safe
11. ensure regions and PDUs have sufficient workload capacity to undertake the required standard to protect the public.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Somerset PDU over a one-week period, beginning 12 June 2023. We inspected 42 cases where sentences and licences had commenced between 31 October 2022 and 06 November 2022 and 05 December 2022 and 11 December 2022. We also conducted 37 interviews with probation practitioners.

Prior to the unification of public and private probation service providers in June 2021, Somerset PDU was covered by Bristol, Gloucester, Somerset, Wiltshire Community Rehabilitation Company and the South West National Probation Service. Somerset PDU is now one of nine in the South West probation region. The PDU has three offices – Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil – and is serviced by three courts within the PDU, Taunton Crown Court, Taunton Deane magistrates' court, and South Somerset magistrates' court, (sitting at Yeovil).

In addition to the three office locations, Somerset PDU also has three outreach offices where practitioners see people on probation across the area in Minehead, Frome and Wells in recognition of the vast geography and rurality of Somerset which spans 1,333 square miles. There is also one approved premises (Glogan House) in Bridgwater.

There have been significant changes to the local authority arrangements, bringing together four local authorities to form one unitary Somerset authority in April 2023. Somerset PDU operates within the Avon and Somerset police force area.

In comparison with other regions the PDU is well-staffed. The vacancy rate was four per cent at the time of the inspection, with most vacancies in reception and the administration staff groups. However, the workload of practitioners was the highest in the region with POs recording an average of 147 per cent of target workload and Probation Services Officers (PSOs) an average of 114 per cent on the workload measurement tool. There were 82 full-time equivalent staff and 5.8 FTE Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) reporting to the head of PDU.

The PDU manages 862 people on community or suspended sentence orders and 265¹ people who are being supervised in the community on licence and post-sentence supervision. At the time of the inspection, the PDU was rated green on the probation prioritisation framework.

Commissioned rehabilitation services (CRS) are provided by: The Nelson Trust for women, Catch 22 for personal wellbeing, and Seetec for accommodation and education, training and employment (ETE). There is a contracted accommodation provision using Regional Outcomes and Innovations Fund commissioning as part of the Somerset homelessness prevention taskforce and CFO3 commissioned ETE arrangements delivered by the Shaw Trust. Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements include four cohorts focused on Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC) including trail monitoring pilot for Avon and Somerset, 18 – 25-year-olds, high harm and domestic abuse.

¹ Not included those still serving a custodial sentence.

1. Organisational delivery

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

As a result of the domain 2 ratings, the Inspectorate's rating decision guidance would normally indicate a leadership rating of 'Inadequate'. However, for this PDU our rating has been increased to 'Requires improvement' to reflect the strong leadership we saw to support engagement and desistance, the positive culture and morale created by leaders and excellent partnership arrangements.

Strengths:

- The PDU delivery plan was aligned to the regional plan and was well understood, operationalised, and risks monitored. Engagement and desistance in the cases we inspected was strong.
- Strategic relationships were positive, particularly with statutory agencies, including the local authority. This was evidenced by an impressive homelessness prevention strategy and the governance and investment in IOM at a strategic level. Leaders directly influenced partners and translated the PDU's vision into operational delivery across several organisations.
- The PDU head had a thorough understanding of the challenges, including the improvements needed to increase the quality of work relating to risk of harm, and was working systematically to address these.
- The culture was overwhelmingly positive across staff and partners. Most staff reported an inclusive, engaging culture and feeling involved in the delivery, improvements and changes to probation services in the PDU.
- Change management was positively received. Mechanisms were in place to communicate the impact on local service delivery of new processes and escalate any issues appropriately. Staff were positive about unification and the move to a blended caseload.
- The information-sharing arrangements with Avon and Somerset Constabulary were known to present concerns relating to the quality of information shared. Leaders at both a regional and local level were aware of the issue and had an improvement plan.

Areas for improvement:

- The vision and strategy had not impacted on work to keep people safe in the cases we inspected. Concerns were identified relating to the identification of current and future victims, gathering and utilising all relevant sources of information, and contingency planning to manage risk of harm to others.
- Case allocation decisions were constrained due to pressures to manage the perceived risk of staff sickness and retention, attributed to practitioners working under prolonged periods of high workloads and pressure.

- The arrangements for taking sufficient account of the views of people on probation were underdeveloped. Whilst there are some mechanisms in place to gather feedback from people on probation, none of those interviewed in the user voice survey were aware they were able to influence service improvements. The strategy for engaging people on probation was held at a regional level and not yet fully operationalised.

1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- PDU staffing levels were planned and reviewed systematically and whilst the overall vacancy rate was four per cent, in recognition of the high workloads of staff, an increase was planned in probation practitioners.
- Staff sickness (nine days) was lower than the national average and attrition rates (11 per cent) were lower than the regional average. Team culture was strong and morale high, with staff feeling supported by colleagues and managers, which was impressive given workload challenges.
- PQiP staff were well supported by a dedicated SPO, whose workload was in line with the national guidance, and staff were receiving regular supervision, performance reviews and access to suitable learning opportunities.
- Supervision was delivered at an appropriate frequency with mechanisms for monitoring, reviewing and supporting staff performance and quality. This extended to robust processes to identify and develop staff potential.
- Managers were aware of the need to develop the knowledge, skills and experience of staff, with mitigations in place in recognition of this need. For example, specialist, experienced domestic abuse staff attended the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to support the identification of indicators of increased risk and vulnerability in relation to domestic abuse. There was a clear structure to identifying learning needs as well as sufficient face-to-face and online training available.
- Reward and recognition were routinely utilised, which was underpinned by an equality monitoring process. Staff described a positive experience of a 'New Year' thank you process that was in place across the region.
- Mechanisms to engage with staff at a local level were received well, staff felt connected and included in decisions regarding change. The PDU head was accessible and visible to staff of all grades, and there was an open and inclusive communication and constructive challenge process.

Areas for improvement:

- Workloads were high for practitioners, including court staff, with an average of 147 per cent of target levels for POs and 114 per cent for PSOs on the workload management tool.
- Whilst there were processes in place to review workloads, there were several overdue terminations and warrant cases within the caseload at the time of fieldwork, which inflated caseload numbers with inactive cases.
- The majority of staff had workload reductions allocated, and workload calculations factored in the rurality to allow travel to remote hubs. However,

some staff undertook excessive journeys to office and hub locations and felt workloads unmanageable.

- High workloads were impacting all staff, particularly middle managers and practitioners. The resourcing pressures meant the leaders decided that some middle managers would hold a small number of cases. This undermined the middle manager's ability to fully operate effectively as leaders. Managers found it difficult to focus on their lead roles and share the learning across the team due to priority being given to day-to-day operational activities and supporting staff. In addition, the quality of management oversight was found to be insufficient, ineffective or absent in 25 of 40 relevant cases in the cases we inspected.
- Whilst staff felt they had the necessary skills and experience to manage the cases inspected, there were examples of limited understanding regarding indicators of domestic abuse, wider safeguarding risks attached to domestic abuse, drugs offences, possession of weapons and dangerous driving. This was particularly evidenced in relation to the identification of risk to specific potential victims, where only 29 per cent of the cases sufficiently analysed specific concerns and in 14 of 42 cases specific risk to children was found to be insufficient.
- Although the completion of mandatory online learning was sufficient. The availability of staff to effectively engage in protected development days and other training opportunities was compromised by workloads.
- There was no structured and sufficiently planned induction programme for new case administrators and PSOs. In addition, vetting was taking up to four months from the date of appointment, impacting new staff starting.

1.3. Services



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

Good

In this inspection the range and access to services, together with well coordinated engagement and desistance-focused service delivery has resulted in an overall rating for services of 'Good'.

Strengths:

- There was a comprehensive range of services available both in-house and through CRS, CFO3, IOM and ROIF arrangements to meet the identified needs and risks of people on probation.
- In the cases we inspected the work delivered to effectively engage and support the desistance of people on probation was strong.
- Practitioners were positive about the access and range of services to meet the needs, risks (85 per cent) and support desistance (75 per cent) of the people on probation.
- Despite workload pressures, practitioners were routinely working from remote locations across Somerset to offer reporting hubs in accessible locations for people on probation. Eighty-five per cent of people on probation reported the location of their supervision appointments was within reasonable travelling distance.
- A concentrator model operated in every office across Somerset which provided access to dedicated IOM, Women aged 18-25, veterans and foreign national offenders (FNO) specialist practitioners. The operating model had been constructed in this way in recognition of the vast geography and to ensure provision of services was equally accessible.
- Priority was given to reduce waiting times for accredited programme commencements and there was an improvement evidenced for general offending behaviour programmes.
- There was a dedicated women's centre and a holistic, multi-agency approach to the management of women which included a range of key services. CRS services were delivered by The Nelson Trust and included resettlement provision in HMP Eastwood park. We saw evidence of positive services delivered and excellent partnership working.
- The range and availability of unpaid work (UPW) was positive for both group and individual placements. Projects were available specifically supporting men's mental health, 18–25-year-olds and women's provision. Completion of UPW was identified as a priority.
- The needs and diversity of people on probation were well understood, including variations across the three office locations. Information was used to inform local provision, such as engaging with the local traveller community and training for staff had been secured in response to an identified need.

- Relationships with other agencies were effective with most partners. IOM arrangements were well embedded and underpinned by strong partnership arrangements and commitment from key agencies.
- The PDU head chaired the Somerset homelessness prevention taskforce and the multi-agency commitment and priority to house people leaving prison with complex resettlement needs was impressive.
- Strategic partnerships for public protection were well established. The PDU head shared MAPPA (multi-agency public protection arrangements) Strategic Management Board chair responsibilities with police colleagues. There were arrangements in place, including regular MAPPA chairs' training, and innovative use of 'Hydra'² software to offer an immersive multi-agency training/learning opportunity designed to improve joined up working and better understand the roles and responsibilities of all MAPPA agencies.

Areas for improvement:

- Despite the availability of sufficient services, the delivery of interventions to support the safety of other people was not as strong as other areas of practice. Practice to ensure the coordination and involvement of appropriate agencies to reduce risk of harm, in particular collaboration with children's services and police regarding safeguarding and domestic abuse was insufficient.
- The frequency and type of contact set out in the planning stage was only sufficient in 64 per cent of the cases. This subsequently impacted the quality of delivery to manage risk of harm.
- Practitioners were not confident that the CRS accommodation provision was meeting the needs of people on probation and referral rates were low.
- Resilience in the Sexual Offending Behaviour Programmes team was a known risk due to vacancies and recruitment difficulties, which staff related to the current job evaluation process. The morale of staff in this team was impacted by activity to restructure the team.
- The UPW backlog was 26 per cent, which were requirements that had past the end date of the sentence and still had hours unworked.

² 'Hydra', developed by the Hydra foundation, is an immersive learning suite based within the police training school. It offers an opportunity to put into practice learning to manage situations in a safe environment. MAPPA across the Avon and Somerset area has developed a MAPPA Hydra experience

Resettlement work

There was strong practice found in the assessment, delivery of interventions and reviewing of 11 post-release cases we inspected. Work to analyse and plan sufficiently to respond to the factors linked to keeping people safe requires attention in Somerset PDU.

Strengths:

- Practice to effectively engage the person on probation and support people following their release from prison was strong. Ten out of 11 cases had appropriate contact pre-release with their community practitioner, providing some evidence that pre-release work in Somerset was working well.
- Implementation and delivery of services was overall better in the 11 custodial cases inspected than in community sentenced cases. Focus on engagement (91 per cent) and desistance (82 per cent) was assessed as a key strength, and of particular significance was the involvement of agencies in managing and minimising risk to others, which was assessed as sufficient in seven of the 11 cases inspected. Services delivered were well coordinated and focussed on strengths and desistance focussed.
- Management oversight was better for resettlement cases than community-sentenced cases, with 64 per cent of resettlement cases having sufficient management oversight.

Areas for improvement:

- In relation to the assessment of keeping people safe, sufficient focus on risk assessment was found in just four of the 11 cases inspected. This correlated with similar practices focusing on keeping people safe in the management of community sentences. The analysis of risk of harm to others, including identification of specific risks and taking account of all appropriate sources of information and past behaviour was insufficient in the cases inspected.
- Although the assessment sufficiently focused on engagement and desistance, this did not then transfer to planning. Plans to engage people on probation (64 per cent) and focus on desistance (55 per cent) for people leaving prison were not completed as sufficiently well as it was for people on probation in the community.

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

Strengths:

- Monthly protected learning days were in place, with briefings delivered by quality and development officers. Most staff were confident with the toolkit provision following briefings on the material, supported by the accredited programme's staff.
- Thematic case audits were routinely completed and this information was used to address disproportionality when identified to improve practice and influence training for staff.
- Risk and needs analysis data were routinely analysed and differentiated between each local office to identify local needs. As a result, some locally commissioned services had been developed in response to diversity. For example, the PDU taking a lead role in the Homelessness Prevention Team directly resulted in increased accommodation provision for people leaving prison with complex housing needs.
- There was a variety of learning at a local level, including a range of multi-agency training for working with domestic abuse and multi-agency public protection arrangements; face-to-face and online events were available, which staff described as positive and inclusive.
- Processes were in place to share the learning following serious further offences and domestic homicide reviews. The middle managers and head of PDU were involved in local domestic homicide review arrangements.
- Management information and performance monitoring, including diversity information, were utilised well to identify areas of improvement to inform the performance improvement action plan.
- Policies and guidance were reviewed regularly, and barriers preventing effective practice were escalated and raised to the PDU head. A new Somerset MARAC probation operational delivery (POD) structure was established following an evaluation of the provision to improve access to and sharing of information.
- Overall, the working environment was well equipped and there were no concerns with access to ICT. Each office had single and group rooms that were used to deliver a range of services to people on probation. Offices were accessible to people with disabilities and had CCTV. Ninety per cent of the people on probation interviewed felt safe accessing the offices.
- Although in its infancy, the practitioner dashboard was available to staff and was used to help prioritise and track the completion of key work tasks and service-level measures. Administrators told us they were able to use the

dashboard in their POD to support practitioners to identify and prompt where key tasks, such as repeat safeguarding and police enquiries, were due.

Areas for improvement:

- Arrangements for engaging people on probation were underdeveloped locally. Although 70 per cent of those people on probation interviewed felt they had been asked their views, none of the people on probation interviewed considered their views to have shaped delivery. This was disappointing as the PDU evidenced some key changes to service delivery as a direct result of feedback from people on probation and could potentially easily improve with clear communication.
- Views of people on probation were obtained through an annual survey, suggestion boxes in each office and routinely by the accredited programmes teams; however, the regional strategy was not yet operationalised at a PDU level.
- Staff found regional learning events difficult to attend due to workloads and their experience of the style of the delivery to communicate messages. Overall, staff found it difficult to commit fully to protected learning days and training events due to high workloads.
- Plans were in place to improve access to information from key partnership agencies in relation to domestic abuse and child safeguarding, and the plans were overseen regionally. In the cases inspected, the analysis and access to sufficient sources of information in relation to risk of harm to others presented a significant barrier to sufficient risk assessment.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 83 people on probation as part of this inspection. Surveys were completed by 71 people and form the qualitative data found. There were an additional 12 in-depth interviews used for qualitative purposes only.

Strengths:

- The views of people on probation were largely in line with the case inspection findings, where quality practice to support engagement and desistance was found. Overwhelmingly, people on probation in Somerset (97 per cent) reported they had been able to access services relevant to their personal needs. And four in every five people on probation surveyed felt that probation have helped them to access services for support.

“It’s like a one-stop shop which provided support not only dealing with your offending but also helping with housing, social issues, food and another multitude of issues...”

and

“If the style could be replicated into the mainstream support services as a whole, it would be a totally different ball game. It’s basically a place where they do a bit of everything and have a really good knowledge base to be able to support.”

- Continuity of probation officer was important to those people surveyed. Positively, 71 per cent of the cases inspected had the same practitioner since the start of the order or licence.

Areas of improvement:

- There was a mixed experience of induction to a new order or licence from the people on probation interviewed. This is disappointing given strengths found in work to engage people on probation in their order or licence in the cases inspected. A high-quality, consistent induction process would underpin practitioner’s efforts to work to engage people on probation, and support good compliance, from the very start of their order or licence.

“I don’t know, I didn’t really have one. I’ve been in jail a few times. I think they just don’t bother as I know the score.”

Diversity and inclusion

Overall, there was evidence that diversity was clearly an area of priority. There were some positive practices in relation to audit activity to identify and respond to disproportionality, and practice with women was well embedded.

Strengths:

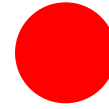
- The leadership team had a deliberate, strategic and informed approach to meeting the diverse needs of people on probation, evidenced across both domain 1 and 2 case inspection. The diversity and personal circumstances of people on probation was sufficiently considered in 96 per cent of court reports and similar priority was found across all aspects of case management. The delivery plan set out how the needs of a wide range of people on probation would be met, and practice relating to supporting engagement and desistance in relation to protected characteristics, personal circumstances and diversity was consistently strong.
- An equality impact assessment was completed in relation to the Taunton office relocation, and we found no evidence of any negative impact in relation to this move.
- Attempts were made to systematically identify disproportionality and improve practice across different groups of people on probation, using audit tools to complete thematic audits on people identified as Black, Asian and minority ethnic, women and FNO groups specifically to identify issues of disproportionality and learning.
- UPW placements were sought with a view to increasing inclusivity. Placements were operating for men with mental health issues, 18–25s and women. UPW had also recently employed two additional female supervisors with a view to increasing women’s UPW provision.
- Women’s service provision was embedded well in the PDU, and case-level data showed that case management practices followed the same trends for engagement and desistance as they did for the male caseload.

Areas for improvement:

- We did not find any links with national networks such as Racial Inclusion and Striving for Equality, and there was no equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging forum operating within the PDU.
- The PDU had useful data in relation to the profile and needs of the cohort and, whilst we saw some positive practice, there was potential to develop this further across all the protected characteristics. There was a concentrator model in place for 18–25-year-olds; however we did not find any bespoke services in place for this group, apart from an UPW placement.

2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work



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

Inadequate

Our rating³ for court work is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against the key question:

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?	43%

Strengths:

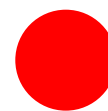
- Domestic abuse (20 of 23) and child safeguarding (19 of 22) enquiries were conducted in the reports inspected, with a response received in nearly all cases pre-sentence (19 police enquiries and 18 children's services).
- Court work involved the individual meaningfully, had an excellent analysis of motivation and readiness to change, and considered the diversity and personal circumstances of the individual. The advice was personalised and considered factors related to the likelihood of reoffending.

Areas for improvement:

- Although enquiries were received in almost all reports, the information and advice within the court report, including in relation to child safeguarding and domestic abuse, did not draw sufficiently on the available information. The information received from other agencies should be sufficiently analysed at the pre-sentence stage to make clear that a safe sentencing proposal has been made. In the absence of this, as found in the reports inspected, there were concerns about how the information was being utilised.
- In 14 of 21 cases, the information and advice to court regarding risk to children was sometimes known and not included in the court report analysis and assessment of risk.
- In other cases, there was a limited response received from children's services and no follow-up to obtain more detailed information where this information would have been relevant to the report.

³ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

2.2. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁴ 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?	79%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	71%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	31%

Strengths:

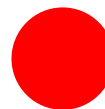
- Most assessments meaningfully involved the person on probation (74 per cent). Analysis of protected characteristics, personal circumstances and the motivation and readiness to engage was completed well.
- Factors linked to offending were analysed sufficiently in 74 per cent of cases and assessments considered the strengths and protective factors of the person on probation in most cases. The focus on supporting engagement and desistance is a consistent thread through the case inspection process which underpins the strengths in planning and delivery of services to reduce reoffending.

Areas for improvement:

- Domestic abuse (10 of 42 cases) and safeguarding (18 of 39 relevant cases) enquiries were not completed in too many cases. In addition, where enquiries were made, the information obtained was of insufficient quality or required further exploration with no follow-up completed by the practitioner. There was a lack of professional curiosity regarding the information obtained in many cases.
- Over half of the cases inspected did not sufficiently identify and analyse the risk of harm to others. This was significant in seven cases where the classification of risk of serious harm was not considered reasonable.
- There were too many cases (30 of 42 cases) where the safety of victims and potential victims was being missed.

⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

2.3. Planning



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁵ 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?	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	43%

Strengths:

- There was significant focus on planning to support engagement and desistance. 81 per cent of the cases inspected considered the personal circumstances and three quarters of cases considered the diversity of the person on probation. In addition, over two thirds of the inspected cases meaningfully involved the person on Probation in their plan.
- In just over two-thirds of the cases inspected (67 per cent) probation practitioners prioritised the most important factors linked to supporting a reduction in offending and were strengths-based (62 per cent). Subsequently, most plans (69 per cent) identified appropriate agencies to support the needs of the person on probation.

Areas for improvement:

- Contingency plans to respond to potential factors indicating an escalating risk of harm to others were insufficient in a concerning number of cases (64 per cent). And only half of the plans included appropriate restrictive or constructive measures to keep people safe.
- Within planning, practitioners did not make links to the work of other agencies involved with the person on probation and any multi-agency plans in 18 of 39 cases. There was a theme of a lack of co-ordination with children's services and the police regarding plans to manage risk of safeguarding and domestic abuse. This parallels with the assessment findings in relation to the limited follow-up of domestic abuse and safeguarding checks and is a thread throughout the case assessment requiring attention.

⁵ 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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

2.4. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁶ 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?	74%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	74%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	48%*

Somerset PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for implementation and delivery. Professional discretion was applied in line with inspection rules and guidance recognising the strengths in delivery across a range of services.

Strengths:

- Work with other agencies to support a reduction in reoffending was well coordinated. This included Catch 22 personal wellbeing, The Nelson Trust, the community mental health team and local authority homelessness provision. Toolkits to support delivery of Rehabilitation Activity Requirement days were delivered. Most, but not all, of the practitioners we spoke to described confidence in using the toolkits.
- Many of the cases inspected involved complex needs requiring the support of multiple services. The sequencing of those interventions most likely to reduce offending was done well in 64 per cent of cases. Consideration of personal circumstances and flexibility to effectively support people on probation to engage in the interventions delivered was well managed.

Areas for improvement:

- Practice relating to the protection of current and actual victims was sufficient in just 36 per cent of cases inspected and is a consistent thread throughout the entire case inspection requiring improvement.
- Contact with social care when there were safeguarding concerns was limited, and only a quarter of cases (five of 20) were sufficiently coordinated where

⁶ 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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

there were child safeguarding concerns. Similarly, in relation to domestic abuse, there was also limited joined up working with key agencies to manage current domestic abuse concerns. Overall, the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm to others was sufficient in only 43 per cent of cases.

2.5. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁷ 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?	81%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	74%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	52%

Strengths:

- Practitioners involved the individuals in reviewing their process and engagement in the majority of cases (79 per cent), and in 24 of 32 relevant cases the compliance and engagement levels, including work to identify any barriers to support ongoing compliance, was deemed to be sufficient.
- There were examples of reviewing activity that was responsive to changes in the needs of the person on probation, for example increased reporting and referral to relevant agencies in response to declining mental health or increased alcohol and drug use.

Areas for improvement:

- The work to identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm, including the necessary adjustments required to the ongoing work, was insufficient in 16 of 34 relevant cases.
- Similar to all other areas of the case inspection, reviews were informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm in only 19 of 34 relevant cases.
- Written reviews to formally record the management of risk of harm to others were not completed in half of the relevant cases (17 of 33). This was a missed opportunity to be responsive to information indicating escalating risk and sufficiently analyse and plan to respond to the changed circumstances. There are examples of limited professional curiosity to identify and explore factors indicating risk in the cases inspected.

⁷ 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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

2.6. Outcomes

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

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

Outcomes	Percentage 'Yes'
Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	55%

Strengths:

- A reduction or no change in offending was found in 72 per cent of cases. There were examples of people on probation with multiple complex needs relating to homelessness, alcohol use and mental health where significant progress has been achieved in a relatively short time frame.
- There were improvements achieved in the strengths and protective factors of people on probation. Increased motivation to change was promising, with improvements achieved in over two thirds (15 of 22) of relevant cases.
- Compliance levels were high, with 71 per cent of cases assessed as having sufficient compliance since the start of the order or licence. There was positive progress achieved with the completion of UPW hours, and examples of cases where UPW hours had been fully completed within six months of the start of the order.

Areas for improvement:

- Not enough work was undertaken to address the factors most closely related to risk of harm to others. This was unsurprising given the deficits in the risk of harm work identified. We found a reduction in the factors linked to risk of harm in just nine of the 36 relevant cases.
- Whilst compliance was identified as a strength, where there was a need to take appropriate enforcement action, this was not done in one-third of relevant cases. Furthermore, there were examples in six cases where formal breach or recall action was deemed necessary but did not take place. This was more prevalent in community or suspended sentence orders, although concerningly, there was one licence case where this applied.

Annexe one – Web links

Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection [on our website](#).

A glossary of terms used in this report is available on our website using the following link: [Glossary \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/glossary)