



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Wigan PDU

The Probation Service – Greater Manchester region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2023

Contents

Foreword.....	3
Ratings.....	4
Recommendations	5
Background.....	6
1. Organisational delivery.....	7
2. Court work and case supervision	17
Annexe one – Web links.....	24

Acknowledgements

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

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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.

© Crown copyright 2023

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

This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

ISBN: 978-1-915468-51-2

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

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

Foreword

We have rated Wigan Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) as 'Requires improvement'. This overall rating masks some very positive aspects of practice within the PDU that had not yet had time to impact on case management, which we rated as inadequate against too many of our quality standards. Despite a strong focus on engaging people on probation and supporting desistance from offending, work to assess and manage risk of harm and to keep other people safe was insufficient.

The leadership of the PDU was impressive, appropriately focused and supported new developments and innovation. The PDU dealt with significant levels of domestic abuse and in response, was holding daily multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) to identify and monitor the risks to victims.

Strategic partnerships with the local authority were very strong and consistent. To their credit, partnership arrangements had remained strong despite the significant changes for probation services over the last 18 months. The strength of the working relationships had endured over the period of the pandemic, where service delivery to some key groups had been maintained. Services for women, including those who were victims of abuse, remained open and continued to deliver effective services, providing a place of safety. Arrangements with the youth offending service (YOS) to help children transition to probation were very positive and a further example of innovative practice. Most notably, the training of probation staff in childhood trauma was providing staff with a greater insight into this vulnerable group.

The PDU demonstrated a strong sense of professional integrity, making contributions to service objectives at regional and local levels. The culture and aims of the regional leadership team were being effectively translated into practice. Staff and managers understood that, due to staffing levels, not everything was possible. Instead, they made defensible and purposeful decisions to develop quality, even if this resulted in poorer performance against key process measures. This should support effective case management once the PDU is fully staffed and experienced. There are solid foundations for this service to improve over time.

The individual needs of people on probation had been clearly identified, but the experiences of people with a black, Asian or minority ethnic background needed to be better understood so that structural barriers, disproportionality and the known adverse effects of racial discrimination can be addressed.

The staff team were highly motivated and striving to do the right things at the right time with people on probation. Support to new staff had improved, with staff being able to share their experiences and bring about changes to processes.

To support the PDU in its development, it is our assessment that a more robust focus on keeping other people safe and a realigned management oversight to this aspect of work will bring about improvements quickly.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Wigan PDU

Fieldwork started March 2023

Score **7/27**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work

Requires improvement



2.2 Assessment

Inadequate



2.3 Planning

Inadequate



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.5 Reviewing

Inadequate



Recommendations

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

Wigan PDU should:

1. focus management oversight to ensure that work to keep other people and staff safe is accurately assessed and planned for, and that services are delivered to reduce risk to other people
2. continue the work to support staff development, maintain the high levels of staff motivation and enable innovation
3. improve understanding of the discrimination and inequalities faced by black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and people on probation, making sure that there is equal access to services for people on probation
4. assist people on probation to know about and use the complaints process.

Greater Manchester region should:

5. improve the quality of court work and the knowledge of sentencers of what interventions are available to reduce reoffending and manage risk of harm to others
6. provide sufficient opportunities for people on probation to start and complete unpaid work (UPW)
7. work with Wigan children's social care services to protect children from the harm caused by domestic abuse; specifically, this should include effective information sharing, joint planning and improvements to joint work to protect children from harm.

HM Prison and Probation Service should:

8. ensure regions and PDUs have the appropriate level of middle management capacity to provide enhanced oversight in recognition of the high volume of Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) trainees and newly qualified officers
9. ensure sufficient resource is in place to provide enhanced management oversight.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Wigan over the period of a week, beginning on 13 March 2023. We inspected 39 cases where sentences and licences had commenced between 15 August 2022 – 21 August 2022, and 22 August 2022 – 28 August 2022. We also conducted 24 interviews with probation practitioners.

Responsibility for unpaid work (UPW) supervision lies with a separate team within the region; as such and despite links at strategic level, Wigan PDU had very little control over this aspect of work. Evidence provided during the inspection showed that there were delays in starting people on UPW sessions. Although this was an improving picture, people on probation were frustrated with this. A similar situation applies to work with courts, with the overall responsibility being held by the head of a different PDU. This limited the influence that the Senior Probation Officer and Head of PDU had. Work with courts was an area for improvement. There was one combined Crown and magistrates' court in Wigan, but cases from Bolton were also listed at this court. The women's problem-solving court was based in Bolton.

Wigan PDU is coterminous with Wigan Borough Council and the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS). The PDU had excellent partnership arrangements with the local authority through the reducing reoffending partnerships. This partnership was effectively driving some positive outcomes for people on probation and commissions services based on analysed needs. Joint work to transition young people from the TYSS to probation services was positive; there were mechanisms to provide a smooth transfer based on an understanding of trauma.

Joint work with children's social care services was developing and was better at strategic than operational level. Following an Ofsted inspection¹ in May 2022, work was being undertaken to improve responses to children who were harmed by domestic abuse. Both organisations were committed to better communication and joint work.

Greater Manchester Police cover the Wigan PDU area and all the other PDUs in Greater Manchester probation region. The reoffending rate for the Wigan area was 21.8 per cent. This was in line with the other PDUs in the region. Stated reoffending rates for women were considerably lower.

Caseloads were variable across the PDU, higher than desired due to ongoing vacancies, especially for qualified Probation Officers (POs). Wigan PDU was trying to recruit eight qualified POs.

Prior to unification, both the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) were based at the Atherton office. Relationships had been maintained and developed following the significant changes to develop the new service. Probation was delivered from three main sites: a large building in Atherton in the east of the PDU's area, where support services were also based, along with some partner agencies; an office based at the Coop's building in Wigan town centre, which is a multi-agency hub where probation and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) police are co-located. Women are seen at a dedicated women's centre. Some accredited programmes are run from the neighbouring PDUs in Salford and Bolton.

¹ Ofsted inspection of Wigan local authority children's services (Wigan social care) undertaken 09 May to 20 May 2022. 50187563 (ofsted.gov.uk).

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

In this inspection, four of the five domain two standards were rated 'Inadequate', which rules out a rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. However, we identified several areas of effective management and innovation where, despite significant barriers, progress was being made, which supported a rating for leadership of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- The management and leadership within the PDU were extremely impressive. This was reinforced by the positive comments from probation practitioners, administrators and middle managers, complimenting the leadership team.
- At all levels, there was a professional integrity to do the right thing to protect the public and support people on probation, despite the challenges this PDU faced in relation to resourcing.
- Open and honest relationships between staff and managers support constructive challenge, openness and sharing of ideas. Across the PDU there was a clear sense of this being a team, with mutual learning and support.
- Partnership working had endured the significant changes to the service; partners were kept informed, and the strong links both regionally and locally provided for ongoing innovations and developments. This was a significant achievement, leading to effective relationships with most partners and stakeholders.
- There was a culture of being one PDU; the decision to establish combined teams soon after unification had supported this, alongside building on pre-existing relationships between the NPS and CRC. There was mutual respect for all roles and levels of responsibility as well as a detailed understanding of how respective roles culminate in service provision.
- Contingency plans were in place to identify and manage risks, and action plans outlined how these would be addressed. These were reported to the regional head of operations, who was knowledgeable about the culture and performance of the PDU.
- Some aspects of practice were not managed locally, such as the regional coordination of courts and UPW; however, PDU leaders established positive links with the leads for these areas of practice.
- Plans for the PDU were directed by the regional delivery plan and the reducing reoffending partnership. This allowed for a more local response while still fulfilling the regional objectives. There was a sense of regional responsibility while keeping local needs at the forefront of work.

- Obtaining the views of people on probation was a shared approach. At a regional level, plans were delayed due to recruitment difficulties. Locally a service user council had started, and it was positive to find that a former person on probation with lived experience had attended a staff meeting to share their experience and talk to staff about engagement.

Areas for improvement:

- While we found strong leadership, the quality of the cases inspected, which commenced six months prior to the inspection, did not reflect these themes. The PDU had 21 PQiP trainees; a significant amount of time was rightly given to supporting this group of staff to manage cases. Managers were guiding staff on managing cases rather than providing the critical oversight needed. Given the relative newness of staff, time was needed for them to learn the craft of their roles.
- There was a clear intention to support people on probation with protected characteristics. However, the service was not yet well sighted on the experience of black, Asian and minority ethnic people on probation or staff, or the impact of discrimination, with no monitoring or evaluation of their experiences.
- The current culture relies on individuals raising any experiences or concerns they have encountered; systems need to be developed to support all staff to initiate open and supportive conversations about wider systemic disproportionality and discrimination. Assessment and planning should be based on already-known discrimination in the criminal justice system and then adapted to meet individual needs.
- Overall, none of the people on probation we spoke to felt that they had a say in the way the service was run and no one who took part in the in-depth interviews knew about the complaints procedure.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Wigan PDU still had significant shortfalls in staffing levels. Despite the additional pressures this brings for case management, there was a strong investment in staff training, ongoing and accessible support to staff and a strong team spirit among staff who were motivated. This led to a rating of 'Good'.

Strengths:

- Workloads and caseloads were monitored and reviewed regularly by middle managers and senior leaders. Case allocations were managed well, taking into account existing workloads. All staff worked flexibly, with appropriate decisions to allocate cases and help staff manage workloads.
- Case administrators were described by more than one grade of staff as 'the backbone' of the organisation, recognising the support they provided to support managers and frontline practitioners.
- The skills of the workforce were mixed, reflected by staff going through training, those newly qualified and others with more experience. Support for new Probation Services Officers (PSOs) had recently improved, which ensured they received the same level of training and support as PQiP trainees. There was a level of stability and experience in the staff team, providing a good environment for learning.
- New PQiP trainees were allocated a mentor from the group of established PQiP trainees, which allowed them to share their experience. New staff were encouraged to forge links and spend time embedded in partner agencies. In turn, partnership colleagues spent time in the PDU to foster a mutual understanding of each agency's roles.
- There were excellent systems in place to identify and develop staff potential across all grades. Staff were encouraged to think about career progression from an early stage, and there were regional processes for talent management.
- Staff engagement was a strength of the service. There were open and constructive relationships between teams, staff and managers. Managers were visible, had an open-door policy, and staff wellbeing was a high priority.
- Staff motivation was very high. Staff were proud to work for the PDU, and enthusiastic to learn. Staff were particularly positive about the engagement and support from the head of service and middle managers.

Areas for improvement:

- Staffing levels were improving but remained below required levels, with the main gaps in the PO role with eight vacancies (25 per cent), reception roles with one vacant post (60 per cent) and case administrator roles with five vacancies (40 per cent).

- There were 21 PQiP trainees, meaning high support was critical, in addition to the impact of long-term sickness absences and maternity leave.
- Caseloads varied, the workload management tool showing an average of 110 per cent; however, the individual figures ranged from 60 to 180 per cent, some staff describing workloads as 'difficult'.

1.3. Services



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

Requires improvement

In rating this standard, the effective arrangements, particularly in relation to the devolution arrangements in place to develop, commission and make available relevant services and interventions have been considered against the inadequate domain two ratings, which means a rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' it not possible. The strengths recognised supported a rating of 'Requires improvement' for services.

Strengths:

- People on probation benefited from a wide range of services to support desistance and risk. While commissioning was regionally led, locally most needs were provided for, informed by very positive use of the need's analysis.
- The reducing reoffending partnership was integral to the relaunch of IOM and was driving service provision. The PDU had effective links with local and regional partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayor's Office.
- There were no delays in accessing accredited programmes. Take-up rates were timely, year-to-date standing at 68 per cent. However, completion levels varied depending on the type of programme.
- The use of Greater Manchester Integrated Rehabilitative Services was improving, supported by some co-location in offices. Referrals were easy to make, and staff had access to the service's booklet so they knew what services were available. This was positive, and we did not find any confusion about services and how to use the refer and monitor system we found elsewhere. Referral data trends showed consistent levels of referrals to all services.
- Staff had received training on the use of structured interventions, and the use of these was increasing. Data was available and used to identify trends.
- The pilot of the Mental Health Requirement was positive, with 28 requirements imposed by the court, recognising the individual needs and support needed at sentencing. This led to immediate assessment and support. Staff and magistrates praised the approach, which was providing much-needed support.
- Substance misuse services attended both offices and provided services quickly. Referrals to the service were dealt with promptly to ensure the right interventions were in place for those with identified substance misuse needs.
- IOM had been refreshed, with good joint work between the police, local authority and probation. Vigilance home visits were undertaken routinely. The development of a shared case management system was an innovative development and supported timely information sharing.

- Services for young adults who transition from the YOS were effective. A new protocol and the use of a concentrator model was improving knowledge and working practices with this cohort. Staff involved in transitions had undertaken joint training in trauma and taken steps to undertake a shared risk assessment.
- Almost all women attended the women's centre where services were specific to their needs, and there are positive links with Independent Domestic Violence Advocates. Probation supervision was delivered from the centre and there was a women-specific offending behaviour structured intervention. A move to new premises was imminent and will enhance the existing service.
- There was a very strong and ongoing relationship with Wigan Council, supported by the reducing reoffending board, chaired by executive officers from the council. It was a testament to these relationships that service delivery had not been affected by the pandemic or the unification.
- The series of face-to-face meetings held with all support providers had resulted in the offer of a range of training, including trauma, suicide prevention and working with people on probation with personality disorders.
- The region was progressing local bespoke reciprocal training through the network of accommodation leads as part of the workforce development plan.

Areas for improvement:

- UPW arrangements were not delivering as intended. There were problems recruiting supervisors and, although there is an improving picture regionally, for Wigan less than half of people on probation with UPW completed their hours (42 per cent). People on probation that we spoke to said that getting placements was difficult. Some cases were returned to court as hours could not be completed.
- While there were improved relationships with children's social care services at a strategic level to resolve information sharing and improve responses to children, especially those at risk due to domestic abuse, probation practitioners' experience was inconsistent at a practice level. This was an area of risk to service delivery given the required improvement judgement for social care given by Ofsted in May 2022. There were some specific criticisms of the response to domestic abuse and in response, a commitment had been made to provide a probation practitioner to the Child First Hub (multi-agency safeguarding hub).
- The relationship with the courts and sentencers had suffered by ongoing staff vacancies, both in probation and key court staff, which led to difficulties providing on-the-day reports, a source of frustration for magistrates. Sentencers' knowledge of services available to support sentencing was limited.

Resettlement work

HM Prison (HMP) Hindley is in Wigan PDU's area; however, resettlement work and cases also came from three other prisons nearby – HMP Risley (Cheshire), HMP Forrest Bank (Salford) and HMP Manchester (Manchester city centre). Women were usually released from HMP Styal in Cheshire.

Strengths:

- Positive relationships and partnership work were evident with the local prison, with systems in place to identify release dates to start pre-release planning.
- Wigan Council undertook Care Act² assessments prior to release and allowed for timely decision-making and planning.
- The reducing reoffending partnership had strong links with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, providing enhanced commissioning. Wigan Council received Case Allocation System 3 funding to provide accommodation for release and as a result, Wigan had two specialist accommodation workers who focused on the assessment of housing needs and sourcing suitable provision. This was a successful arrangement and effectively linked to wider public protection arrangements, including multi-agency public protection Arrangements and the Mayor's pledge to tackle homelessness.
- Work with people on probation due for release and on licence was of a better quality in some areas of work compared to the community cases. Understanding the individual's motivation to change and their individual circumstances was identified in almost all cases. Careful consideration had been given to the critical factors linked to reoffending for this cohort which provided a robust and detailed understanding of needs.
- Risk assessment clearly identified the exact nature of risk in all cases. Classifications were accurate and identified risks followed up with detailed and good quality contingency planning.

Areas for improvement:

- The PDU was aware that the prison to community offender manager handover was an area for improvement. This was reflected in the case assessments where sufficient pre-release contact had been undertaken in just over half of the cases. This then affected the practitioner's ability to address the key resettlement needs and risk issues before release.
- Too few enquiries were undertaken with police domestic abuse units either before release or during the community phase. We found this omission in five of the 13 relevant cases.
- Following release, service delivery and sentence management was of a similar quality to all other cases.

² Section 9 of the *Care Act 2014* informs that local authorities must: carry out an assessment of anyone who appears to have needs for care and support regardless of whether those needs are likely to be eligible.

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

In this inspection, detailed use of data and analysis at both PDU and regional level has resulted in an overall rating for information and facilities of 'Good'.

Strengths:

- There were numerous methods in place for sharing learning and there was a shared culture of learning and review.
- A recent move to improve support and learning for PSOs had been well received by staff, who had similar learning and development opportunities as the trainee POs. These changes were made by leaders following feedback from staff and taking action to improve their experience.
- The regional leads provided some good support to the PDU to help them identify performance and areas for improvement. Data was readily available and used effectively to monitor work and performance.
- The PDU had a deliberate strategy to try and establish a balance between achieving performance targets against achieving the right quality. The risks from this were known and held by the management team. The approach allowed probation practitioners to miss some timescales if taking longer provided a better quality of work. Staff felt that they would be supported if they made mistakes, describing that it felt safe to do so and then to be able to learn from these.
- The use of daily MARAC meetings was a PDU-driven improvement in response to high levels of domestic abuse in cases and learning from previous processes that were in place, allowing for the partnership to discuss cases of concern quickly and without delay.
- Data and information were used effectively to monitor and drive service improvements. Data sets were routinely shared with managers and staff.
- IT systems, including access to Wi-Fi connections, worked well, allowing work to be undertaken without delays and outages.
- Information sharing protocols were in place and, in the main, facilitated effective and swift information sharing, including for court purposes.

Areas for improvement:

- Information was not routinely segmented to understand if people on probation with protected characteristics had equal access to services. The approach to diversity was underdeveloped and the experience of people with a black, Asian or minority ethnic background living in a predominantly white borough were not understood.
- The building at Atherton had limited space for people on probation to wait. Women had the option to report at the women's centre so that they were able to avoid potential conflict.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, contacted 66 people on probation as part of this inspection. This included a small number of women; people were aged between 21 and over 50, and just under a third of people spoken to disclosed they had a disability. Almost half of those interviewed had been on orders for between seven and 12 months. Those who identified as white made up 80 per cent of those interviewed.

- Relationships between people on probation and their officers was described as good by a third of those interviewed, people on probation saying that they could contact their officer when needed.
- Most people on probation said that they had been able to access the services they needed. Three-quarters (33/56) of those who needed support accessing services in Wigan felt that probation helped them access it. Signposting for substance misuse and mental health support was effective and well appreciated in the area. However, a few people on probation wish they could have gained access to it sooner.

“CFO hub, I was referred by my PO. I got my house through the council, moved from communal housing to my own place.”

- People on probation would like to be listened to more and have more proportionate action/punishments. None of the people on probation we interviewed felt that their views had been sought to help with service design. The PDU has just started to consult with people on probation.
- People on probation want more flexibility according to their individual needs. Many people on probation state that their mental health caused them difficulties, including anxiety when travelling or joining groups.
- Poorly understood and explained orders/licences can be a source of misunderstandings and frustration.
- People on probation should have clarity regarding the complaints process. None of those interviewed knew the process. While the induction interview and paperwork includes a leaflet about the process, further work is needed to assist people on probation to understand what to do if they want to raise issues. Only one in five people on probation interviewed said that they received an insightful induction in which they were informed of probation’s processes and the help available.
- While most people on probation felt safe accessing probation offices, the cost of travel was an issue.

“Travel is an issue. I get a bus pass home, but it costs me £4 to get here in the first place.”

“Not getting any bus fares back is an issue.”

“I suffer severe social anxiety and am forced to spend four hours a week on crowded trains.”

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- There was a strong focus on individual needs. This was part of the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity strategy and was supported by findings in case assessments. Sufficient efforts had been made to enable the individual to complete their sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances, in all but one case.
- The workforce was actively trying to recruit more men to the staff team as women are overrepresented in the workforce. The percentage of black, Asian and minority ethnic staff was higher than the community.
- Wigan borough has a 97 per cent white population. There was a large difference in terms of ethnicity profile of people on probation. For Greater Manchester, white British was 71 per cent, whereas for Wigan it stands at 89 per cent, a significant difference of 18 per cent.
- The needs of young people had been considered well, including the long-term effects of trauma and abuse. It was positive to see that both the risk and vulnerability of children and young adults were known and understood. Probation staff had been able to access training in trauma-informed practice and had an understanding of youth offending assessments and planning. Mentors assigned by the YOS continued to support young people when they transferred to probation services, providing continuity.
- Women benefited from an opt-out scheme with the women's centre. Of the 122 women open to probation at the time of the inspection, all but 18 reported to the women's centre. The reoffending rate for women was one per cent. The imminent move to a new premise will enable those with mobility and disabilities to access the service with ease.
- Service delivery for people on probation with neurodiversity issues were being developed. A quiet and low-stimulation room had been planned and will be available in the next few months.

Areas for improvement:

- The diversity policy was not effective in responding to the experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and people on probation. Whilst individual needs are identified, some of the structural barriers of living and working in a predominantly white area were not understood.
- Data was not segmented or analysed in the PDU to identify if people on probation with protected characteristics had equal access to services. Courts were not using data to identify disproportionately in sentencing.

2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work



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

Requires improvement

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?	50%

Strengths:

- We assessed six reports, four oral reports which had a written record, and two short-format reports. In all but one there were concerns about domestic abuse, so it was positive to find that enquires had been made with the police domestic abuse unit routinely. These had been responded to quickly and the information had informed reports.
- The views of people on probation had been obtained and, positively, the actual and potential needs and impact of offences on direct victims were identified in each case.
- Appropriate proposals for sentencing were made in four of the six cases; there was insufficient information to judge this in one case.

Areas for improvement:

- We expected enquiries to be made with children's social care services in the five cases where there was risk to children because of domestic abuse and safeguarding issues. It was disappointing to find that enquiries were initiated in only two cases and a response was not received in one case. These enquiries are critical to provide up-to-date information to the courts and to inform the risk management. As a result, we concluded that just a third of reports drew on all relevant information.
- Magistrates were frustrated with the inability to impose an UPW requirement. They felt that too many people on probation were allowed not to undertake UPW due to health reasons, despite no evidence at sentencing.
- Factors linked to risk of serious harm and reoffending were included in four of the six reports we assessed. In two of the six cases we judged that risk had been underestimated, where the significance of drug use had not been fully considered despite these being primary areas of risk. In one case, risk of harm had been underestimated, resulting in a proposal for sentencing that did not effectively address the safety of other people.

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?	64%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	72%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	33%

Wigan PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for assessment as the lowest score out of the three key questions was 33 per cent for keeping other people safe. Assessments to understand desistance and offending needs were of a better quality.

Strengths:

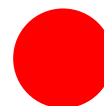
- The strongest area of assessment was in identification of what work was needed to be done to support desistance and reduce reoffending, and that the views of individuals had been obtained and responded to in almost two-thirds of cases.
- Careful consideration had been given to identify barriers to engagement and the individual's readiness to engage and comply with the requirements.

Areas for improvement:

- The assessment of risk of harm tended to focus on one area of risk and did not consider the wider factors that impacted on risk to others, including assessment of past offending, which was not routinely incorporated. The specific concerns of actual and potential victims were assessed in just half of the cases; this was a concern given the high proportion of domestic abuse cases held by the PDU.
- When safeguarding and domestic abuse enquiries were undertaken, these were not always used to understand the exact nature and imminence of risk to others. Risks to children, arising from substance misuse, domestic abuse and the chaotic nature of some individuals, were underestimated in seven cases.

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?	69%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	64%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	44%

Wigan PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for planning, as assessment planning to manage risk of harm to others was not robust enough in over half of the cases. Planning to form relationships and support compliance with the order was better.

Strengths:

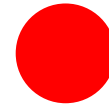
- Engaging individuals in planning was a strength, with attempts made to understand barriers to compliance. We found examples of some joint planning with mental health services to stabilise individuals, with accommodation providers and referrals being made to access accredited programmes. In some cases, planning started before release from custody.
- Planning included discussions with people on probation to identify their priorities and to make plans meaningful. This included flexibility to allow for work commitments and build on existing strengths.

Areas for improvement:

- Keeping people safe was effectively planned for in just half of the relevant cases. Planning to manage risk to children was too inconsistent and often lacked follow-up actions when risk had been identified or when risk increased.
- Contingency planning failed to identify predictable situations which could be imminent or where the likelihood had increased. This included increased substance misuse and disengagement from services. Contingency planning was much worse on the community orders. It was much more robust for licence cases.
- Planning setting out how licence conditions would be delivered was insufficient in half of the relevant cases. It was unclear what interventions would take priority or how work would be sequenced.

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. **Inadequate**

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?	54%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	51%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	41%

Wigan PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' as the implementation and delivery of services to keep people safe were inconsistent. Though the PDU and partners were developing and implementing services, some were not reflected in our case sample.

Strengths:

- The PDU was able to provide evidence of service delivery which was better than the scores above demonstrate. Examples include the use of MARAC, implementation of IOM and service provision to registered sex offenders. Appropriate levels of contact and frequent home visits were positive aspects of practice.
- Probation practitioners focused on developing relationships with people on probation and arranging supervision in a flexible way to enable people to attend. Appointments were frequent enough to monitor risk of harm in the majority of cases.

Areas for improvement:

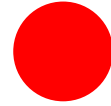
- Service delivery started too late in over half of cases, including for those released from custody. There was no single cause of delays, other than UPW, where difficulties in recruiting supervisors had resulted in significant delays.
- Insufficient attention was paid to the safety of actual and potential victims in just under half of the relevant cases where there was not enough effective joint work to manage and reduce risk to others. In particular, there was a lack of coordinated actions after significant changes in circumstances with the perpetrators of domestic abuse. Changes, including moving in with new

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.](#)

partners, breakdown of relationships and increases in aggravating factors such as drug and alcohol use and decline in mental health, did not result in prompt review or changes in risk management.

- There were a number of factors leading to delays in enforcement action, including confusion about how to complete breach paperwork accurately and problems in listing breaches at court. While we found good efforts to re-engage people on probation to improve compliance, the PDU needs to be able to take swift breach action when needed to manage risks to other people.

2.5. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

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?	64%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	54%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	31%

Wigan PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for reviewing. While engaging people on probation is a consistent thread of sentence management, reviewing of work to keep other people safe did not receive the same level of attention.

Strengths:

- Positive reviews of compliance and engagement led to changes to planning to secure future engagement. Reviews were based on progress and compliance.

Areas for improvement:

- There was too little meaningful engagement of individuals to inform the direction of sentence management, and there were missed opportunities to build on existing strengths or newly acquired skills and knowledge.
- Two-thirds of cases failed to identify changes of risk of harm or use information held by other agencies. This information, if gathered and analysed, should have led to changes in risk management. Where other agencies were involved, there was a tendency to accept information rather than request more detail about the nature of interventions and progress.
- If the person on probation was disengaging, there was a lack of work to review how this impacted risk management plans, as illustrated:
"There was no coordination of the alcohol treatment requirement or contact with mental health team to review progress. Requests for additional support around desistance factors were made by the individual but does not trigger a review or re-sequencing of the sentence plan objectives."
- Formal management oversight was not always effective. Despite providing support to practitioners, agreed actions were not always followed up. We judged management oversight to be effective in just under half of the cases assessed.

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.

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?	33%

Strengths:

- Compliance levels were high with 27 of 38 cases assessed as having sufficiently complied with their order or licence. This was a positive finding given the workloads of staff, but it reflects work undertaken at the start of orders to engage people on probation.
- Careful consideration was given to stabilising people's mental health. This was a key problem identified via our survey of people on probation. In several cases, services had been provided directly and probation practitioners had supported the development of better mental health.
- Accommodation for people on probation on IOM was a strength; recent data showed that 70 per cent of this cohort obtained a suitable place to live. We saw some examples in our case sample and confirmation by people on probation who completed our survey.

Areas for improvement:

- Progress to address issues linked to reoffending and developing strengths was only seen in a quarter of cases assessed.
- We found very little positive impact on the factors most closely linked to risk of harm. This was unsurprising given the deficits of risk of harm work identified. We found a reduction in the significant factors linked to risk of harm in just seven of the 35 relevant cases.
- Too little progress had been made in education, training and employment and in factors linked to domestic abuse. Early indications show that in the cases in the sample, four people had a reduction in offending, three had increased, there had been no change in 23 and progress was unclear in six.

Annexe one – Web links

Full data from this inspection and further information about the methodology used to conduct this inspection is available [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://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)