



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation
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25 May 2023

To:

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cc:

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Dear Chris,

Many thanks for the cooperation we received from you and your staff during the recent review of Probation Service – Greater Manchester region.

We have now completed the inspection of the Manchester North, Tameside and Wigan Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) in your region and would like to take this opportunity to share with you our overall findings, our key observations, and areas for improvement at a regional level.

Regional observations:

At a regional level we have identified the following key strengths and areas for improvement:

Leadership

Greater Manchester Probation Service (GMPS) was formed in June 2021, as one of 12 probation regions across England and Wales. The region is overseen by yourself as the Regional Probation Director who provides strategic leadership and has responsibility for the overall commissioning and delivery of probation services in Greater Manchester. Commissioning decisions are devolved to GMPS and local services are co-commissioned with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), through pooled funding and local governance arrangements.

GMPS comprised nine Probation Delivery Units (PDUs), three of which – Manchester North, Tameside and Wigan – were inspected in conjunction with the regional review. The GMPS vision and strategy prioritised the quality of service through the regional quality improvement strategy. Clear governance arrangements were in place, including through the operational senior leadership team (SLT) and monthly operational performance and quality (OPQ) meetings. There was an appropriate focus on performance and progress against the

regional delivery plan, though the intended improvement in the quality of casework is yet to be realised.

Risks to service delivery were well understood and appropriate mitigations had been put in place. Resource management pressures were being addressed by the senior management team, and the region was on track to resolve staffing deficits by the end of the year. The operating model clearly sets out minimum levels of expected contact according to the risks and needs presented by the specific cohorts of people on probation. Effective implementation of the operating model remained a work in progress.

Key strengths:

- The vision and strategy prioritised the quality of service delivery and was well founded upon an evidenced-based approach to 'what works' for people on probation. The GMPS quality improvement strategy recognised the need for continual improvement and included clear priorities to improve case management practice to keep other people safe. The Greater Manchester Reducing Reoffending Plan 2022 – 25 recognised the importance of employment and education, access to drug and alcohol treatment, community and family connections, and engagement and compliance as of key importance for cutting crime. Seventy-seven per cent of staff who responded to our regional staff survey felt that the region prioritised quality always or most of the time.
- Risks to service delivery were well understood and responded to. Risks were reviewed weekly, and a strategic monthly meeting was held to address wider business risks, including staffing issues. The region has faced significant challenges in resource management due to staffing shortages. This was being addressed, for example through recruitment of probation service officers (PSOs) who were being deployed to bolster case management practice. Business continuity plans were in place for PDUs and for each of the regional functions.
- The GMPS operating model promoted meaningful contact with people on probation. The GMPS blended-supervision practice direction clearly set out expectations of meaningful contact, particularly at the start of the order/licence, and promoted prompt referral to planned interventions. The model encouraged personalised approaches through differing levels of minimum contact expectations to specific cohorts of people on probation, e.g. women. Unlike other regions and PDUs where the national prioritisation framework was implemented, GMPS utilised its own minimum expectation guidance. This guidance was understood by staff, providing clarity of operating arrangements. There was more work to do, however, to put the model into practice through ensuring practitioners complete personalised assessments and plans for people on probation.
- Senior leaders demonstrated integrity and a commitment to 'doing the right thing'. For example, the innovative approach to working with local stakeholders in a devolved funding context, working to the principle that decisions about service provision should be made locally. Leaders also talked to us about prioritising quality over meeting performance targets and being willing to 'take a hit' on meeting targets, by signing off work as completed only when their quality expectations had been met. Senior managers were visible and, along with senior probation officers (SPOs), engendered a positive culture, with evidence of good staff morale, notwithstanding some of the challenges faced with staff shortages and the resultant workload pressures.

Key areas for improvement:

- Engaging people on probation (EPOP) in the vision and strategy was work in progress. A strategy, which stems from the national model, had been in place for over a year. The views of people on probation had been gathered through surveys and forums in a small number of PDUs, though an insufficient level of resource was hindering progress in this area of work. A candidate with lived experience was appointed to lead this work in May 2022, but current civil service vetting processes have not allowed their commencement in post. There appears to be an inherent contradiction in HMPPS and wider civil service recruitment policies, which was frustrating the intention to employ the most suitable candidates to take this work forward.
- Further work was required to translate the vision and strategy into high-quality case management practice. The service redesign strategy was developed and was being implemented in response to significant resource challenges. There was a clear focus on improving the quality and delivery of community orders and licences, and progress was monitored through minimum expectation guidance case audit. Audits feed into one-to-one practitioner supervision and accountability, and service delivery review meetings. Leaders described the current situation as “a game of two halves”, with the foundations for upping the quality of work having been put in place with the expectation of ongoing improvements. We found some evidence to support this view, for example, our scores for reviewing to keep other people safe had risen to 42 per cent, albeit from a low baseline of assessment sufficiently focusing on keeping other people safe of 32 per cent.
- There was a need for a more person-centred approach to supporting people on probation. The EPOP plan objectives include staff being skilled in involving people on probation in their sentence. An internal review of this plan in November 2022 found that staff training and the OASys countersigning framework to quality assess the involvement of people on probation was at an early development stage. Use of the OASys countersigning framework has now been fully rolled out within the GM region. A plan is currently being formulated to quality assure SPO countersigning practice. Aggregate data from the three PDU inspections shows that case assessment analysed an individual’s protected characteristics and the impact of these on their ability to engage with the sentence in just 51 per cent of cases. Case assessment analysed the individual’s personal circumstances and the impact of these on engagement in only two-thirds of cases.

Staff

As of January 2023, staffing levels were insufficient. The vacancy rate across the Greater Manchester region for probation officers (POs) was 24 per cent, PSOs 25 per cent, unpaid work staff 8 per cent, accredited programmes 14 per cent, and statutory victim work 25 per cent. Consequently, workloads were high for some grades of staff. The average PO caseload across the region was 38 cases and the average for PSOs was 45. POs were at an average of 137 per cent of target workloads on the workload management tool. PSOs were 12 per cent under their workload capacity.

The overall vacancy rate across Greater Manchester is 13 per cent, though this was not spread equally across all grades of staff. Recent recruitment campaigns have been successful in closing some gaps. By March 2023, PSO staffing had increased to 99 per cent against the target staffing model, compared to 75% in December 2022. In addition, many trainee probation officers have been recruited, who are currently working their way through the professional qualification in probation (PQiP) with the expectation of qualifying to

become probation officers later this year. It was anticipated that this will resolve the current probation officer shortfall by the end of the year.

There were significant variations in vacancy rates between PDUs, ranging, for example, from a 26 per cent PO vacancy rate in Wigan to 27 per cent in Manchester North and 38 per cent in Tameside. Similarly, the PSO vacancy rate in January 2023 was 22 per cent in Wigan, 37 per cent in Manchester North, and 5 per cent in Tameside. These variations reflect shortfalls in the number of staff inherited from legacy CRC probation service contracts in 2021, and the region will look to address the imbalance by allocating newly qualified PQiPs to the PDUs where there are vacancies.

Key strengths:

- The roles of regional staff were clearly defined. Regional policy on the deployment of staff was clearly orchestrated through the workforce planning board. Regional roles were clearly defined within discreet regional functions, including court work, interventions, performance and quality, and corporate operations. In our staff survey, 82 per cent of regional staff said that their role was somewhat or entirely clearly defined.
- A number of mitigations have been put in place to alleviate workload pressures, including service redesign to enable delegation of work to commissioned partnership agencies, and moving some staffing resources from regional functions, such as public protection and community integration, into PDUs. Other initiatives include promotion of the probation operational delivery (POD) model across all PDUs to encourage an integrated teamwork approach between probation practitioners, probation service officers, and case administrators.
- A learning and development strategy is in place, and staff are supported to access the training opportunities on offer. Overall completion of mandatory training stood at 60 per cent in March 2023, and the completion rate for specific subjects ranged from 31 per cent for health and safety to 81 per cent for child safeguarding. PSO and PQiP learning are appropriately prioritised, and monthly focused learning time was made available to all staff. The region had developed local arrangements for PSO training, which was over and above the national offer. In our regional staff survey, 74 per cent of staff said they had sufficient access to in-service training always or most of the time.
- Appropriate strategies are in place for engaging staff. Senior and middle managers are accessible and visible, for example through regular Regional Probation Director (RPD) office visits and the development of a GMPS intranet. Inspectors experienced staff morale as good, even with the current challenge of staffing shortages and the high workloads that had ensued. Engagement levels were monitored through the HMPPS staff survey and were responded to through a range of activity to improve engagement. Seventy-five per cent of staff were interested in their work, which was unchanged since the 2020 survey. Eighty-five per cent of staff understood how their work contributed to organisational objectives, a slight decrease from 89 per cent in 2020.
- PDUs are supported to make reasonable adjustments for staff. Twenty-eight per cent of staff in our regional staff survey required reasonable adjustments in accordance with their protected characteristics. Reasonable adjustments were made for 56 (88 per cent) of these staff members. Clear processes are in place to support reasonable adjustments being made where these are required.

Key areas for improvement:

- Staffing levels were insufficient. The level of staff shortage varied between different grades of staff and was highest for critical frontline roles. The vacancy rate was 24 per cent for probation officers and 25 per cent for probation service officers. Other delivery areas with a shortfall of staff included 8 per cent for unpaid work, 14 per cent for accredited programmes, and 25 per cent for statutory victim work. Staff shortages were compounded by a high rate of staff sickness (12.3 days lost on average per year), and challenges with staff retention, including an 11 per cent leaving rate for probation service officers. In our regional staff survey, 89 per cent of staff felt that staffing levels were not that sufficient or not at all sufficient. Significant strides are being made to address staff shortfalls, and PSO staffing in the region had improved to 99 per cent of target levels by March 2023.
- Some workloads were high and difficult to manage. Sixty-one per cent of staff in our regional staff survey felt that their workload was not so or not at all manageable. At the time of inspection announcement, probation officers across Greater Manchester were working on average at 137 per cent of their target workload on the service's own workload management tool.
- The regional workforce did not sufficiently reflect the diversity of the local population: 75 per cent were female, compared to 10 per cent of the caseload; 13 per cent were from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, compared to 22 per cent of the caseload; and 19 per cent had a declared disability, compared to 40 per cent of the caseload. The region was seeking to address this disparity, for example through attending local events such as Manchester Carnival and Manchester Pride, and visiting local colleges to build a register of individuals interested in working for GMPS. There was some anecdotal evidence that regional induction was showing greater diversity, though this was yet to be borne out in improved staffing diversity data. Increased disclosure of protected characteristics is being encouraged to yield a more accurate picture of staff diversity.
- Ensuring equitable access to promotion opportunities was an area for further development. Nine per cent of staff at senior probation officer grade or above are from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups compared to 13 per cent of all staffing. The region was currently undertaking some initiatives to promote equitable access, including a development pathway which can lead to a talent management programme. Staff who identify as LGBT+, who had a declared disability or were from an ethnic minority group were encouraged to apply for the programme, and 37 per cent of current participants were from under-represented groups. Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff members were deployed on interview panel recruitment campaigns to help ensure staff were hired with diversity and inclusion in mind.

Services and interventions

GMPS services for people on probation were co-commissioned with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) through devolved funding arrangements, providing greater autonomy and flexibility to commission services. A range of high-quality services had been put in place through this unique provision, including Greater Manchester Integrated Rehabilitation Services (GMIRS), tier 3 community accommodation services (CAS 3), the regional outcomes innovation fund (ROIF), and a regional integrated offender management (IOM) fund.

Sentence requirements did not start promptly in almost half of cases (47 per cent). Waiting lists for accredited programmes had reduced to 16 weeks, other than for Building Better

Relationships (BBR), which had a waiting list of up to six months. People on probation were given two or three chances to start a programme which, along with the higher number of referrals for BBR, contributed to current waiting times.

The standard of standalone unpaid work cases was judged positively in PDU inspections. The quality of assessment activity for standalone unpaid work cases to engage people on probation and keep others safe was assessed to be of a high quality. Interventions and unpaid work functions were seen as very much a part of sentence management, and this helpful approach seemed to be paying dividends. For example, there was good use of structured interventions and toolkits to complete offence-focused work with people on probation.

Backlogs for unpaid work are not excessive. The Covid-19 unpaid work backlog has reduced by 80 per cent and most of the remaining backlog cases are awaiting Crown Court hearings. GMPS is currently delivering 125 per cent against the pre-pandemic baseline target, which was the highest rate of any probation region. Current priorities included improving quality, accessibility, and learning and development for unpaid work staff.

Community offender managers (COMs) ensured a proportionate level of contact with prisoners before release in just half of the cases where this was required. More positively, sufficient resettlement services were delivered pre-release to address accommodation needs in 18 out of 23 of cases where they were required. On a less positive note, sufficient resettlement services to address education, training, and employment (ETE) needs were delivered in five out of 15 of cases.

Key strengths:

- A range of targeted services were in place through the region's active engagement in and strong relationships with local partnerships. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Deputy Mayor in Greater Manchester ensured that services included a strong focus on supporting desistance. GMPS had a regional funding allocation through justice devolution, which it put to good use to co-commission services with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Joint programmes of work were developed through the GM adult offender partnership board, which was part of GMCA's justice and rehabilitation executive structures and chaired by the RPD. A wide variety of services were available, and more were being developed through the flexibility afforded by devolved justice arrangements which focused on being responsive to local need.
- Strategic needs analysis captured desistance factors, risk of harm profile, and diversity factors of people on probation. The analysis was led by the combined authority, which captured the needs of people on probation appropriately as part of identifying wider community needs. Probation data was combined with police and health data to inform the understanding of needs, and this has led to personal wellbeing being identified as a key area to address. Mentoring and community-based wellbeing hubs had been put in place appropriately in response to this. Co-commissioning had added value by enabling engagement with local grassroots providers and through establishing a wellbeing hub in each local authority area across the region.
- There was a good analysis of local patterns of sentencing. Monthly sentencing trends were well understood. The number of new community and custody sentences and the number of new prison releases were detailed by region and PDU. Historical trends are closely tracked and show a 20 per cent reduction in unpaid work since February 2020, and a 31 per cent reduction in programmes. Since July 2021, there

has been a 15 per cent increase in community orders, a 13 per cent increase in custody releases, and a 30 per cent increase in custody cases. Trends were analysed by court, gender, age, offence type, and ethnicity. This showed that 29 per cent of probation cases were domestic abuse perpetrators. New sentences and releases were mapped by postcode. We received positive feedback from sentencers about the professional service provided by court-based probation teams.

- The views of people on probation were captured to inform the design and delivery of GMIRS services. Revolving Doors had been commissioned to inform discussions on the development and implementation of co-commissioned services.
- Community accommodation services – tier 3 (CAS 3) – worked well in GM through close working relationships between homelessness prevention teams, local authorities, and the probation service. There were 65 accommodation units available in Greater Manchester for prison leavers and as move-on accommodation from an approved premises placement. All units were full, though further housing support was given through the 'bed every night' policy operating in GM.
- Service delivery was reviewed through well-established joint governance arrangements. Each of the providers had a contract with GMCA, which was managed through the probation service. The providers had been involved in developing the performance measures from the start, which led to providers feeling valued and included, and as one provider described, "we love the contract with GMCA".
- Services designed to address cohorts of people on probation with specific needs (women, those under 25 etc.) had been put in place through the regional outcomes innovation fund (ROIF).

Key areas for improvement:

- There was a need to improve enforcement practice. The approach to breaching a community or unpaid work order and returning the case to court following non-compliance was inconsistent. Enforcement action was not undertaken in 27 out of 70 cases where it should have been. Court leads were aware of the need to develop consistency in enforcement practice and had developed a strategy to improve the quality, timeliness, and consistency of breach practice. This was co-designed with the performance and quality team, and training for practitioners and SPOs had been put in place to clarify expectations and provide exemplars of good enforcement practice.
- Analysis of need did not pay sufficient attention to disproportionality. Data to evaluate any disproportionate access to services due to specific protected characteristics was not readily available. The region had attempted to use the performance equality monitoring tool, designed by HMPPS to help regions to undertake this work, but found that the tool does not work effectively. It is hoped this will be resolved in the next few months.
- There had been some staffing challenges. Partners were all looking for the same calibre of staff; some existing staff had left to start the PQiP programme and it had been difficult at times for providers to attract the right quality of candidates. There were ongoing concerns with the 'refer and monitor' platform, which was not always fully completed. Missing information led to referrals waiting to be updated and unable to proceed.

Information and facilities

Established assurance systems and performance measures were in place to drive improvement, for example through the GM dynamic quality and effectiveness dashboard (DQED) and regional reports to the quality standards board (QSB), including six- and 12-week case management audits. The region had set minimum expectations guidance and helpfully audited cases against these expectations. Performance was well understood across the region, and appropriate action to drive improvement was taken in response to audit and inspection.

National policies and guidance were clearly implemented and communicated to PDUs and clear guidance was in place about the full range of regionally commissioned services. Regional policies and guidance were regularly reviewed, including through consultation with staff.

We found in our PDU inspections that offices were accessible to staff and people on probation, although space and access was limited in the Atherton office (Wigan PDU). A significant number of people on probation did not feel safe attending the Manchester North office. Partnership agencies were co-located in PDU offices, which promoted joint working between practitioners, partnership staff, and people on probation.

Key strengths:

- The region had a sound awareness of areas for improvement derived from external and internal audit, including the need for a sharper focus on keeping other people safe, personalisation, and the need for practitioners to respond to information received from domestic abuse and safeguarding enquiries.
- There was a good understanding of performance across the region. Staff were engaged through RPD, head of operations, and practice briefings. In the staff survey, 68 per cent of staff said that they received regular feedback on their performance, an increase from 67 per cent in 2020, and 66 per cent felt that their performance was evaluated fairly. Senior leaders placed an appropriate emphasis on achieving quality in case management delivery and did not overly focus on meeting performance targets.
- National policies and guidance were implemented through structured communication to PDUs. National policies were enhanced by regional policies which focused on quality case management delivery. For example, the regional case audit tool (RCAT) was augmented by GMPS minimum expectations guidance. Regional policies and guidance were reviewed regularly through a policy implementation tracker.
- Clear guidance was in place about the full range of regionally commissioned services. Co-commissioned services included accommodation, ETE, dependency and recovery, peer support service, women's services, and community-based wellbeing hubs. Guidance was available on the full range of services, including referral criteria, waiting times for accredited programmes, and alternatives to programmes (structured toolkits), for example through the GMIRS brochure.

Key areas for improvement:

- Inspectors found continued references to the National Probation Service in internal communications and correspondence, including email signatures. The region would do well to eliminate all such references to support reinforcement of the unified probation service culture in GMPS.

- Management oversight of case supervision also requires improvement, and the region should ensure that SPOs fully understand the standard of case management expected when auditing cases.
- Even though there have been concerted efforts to focus practice improvement on keeping other people safe, the desired upgrade in this area of work is yet to be fully realised. The region should consider working with the national team to identify the quality assurance arrangements needed to support an increasingly newly experienced workforce.

Statutory victim work

We looked at six statutory victim cases and interviewed the strategic lead for victims work in the Greater Manchester region. We reviewed these case records to look at whether initial contact with victims encourages engagement with the victim contact scheme, whether information and communication exchange supports the safety of victims, and if pre-release contact allows victims to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release.

Key strengths:

- Initial contact with victims encouraged engagement with the victim contact scheme and provided information about sources of support in all relevant cases. Appropriate initial contact was made with the victim soon after sentence, with consideration given to the timing of such contact in two-thirds of relevant cases. The initial letter to the victim was appropriately personalised, considering the nature of the experience of the victim and any diversity issues in two-thirds of relevant cases.
- Clear information was given to the victim about what they can expect at different points in a sentence in all relevant cases. The initial letter to the victim contained sufficient information to enable them to make an informed choice about whether to participate in the scheme in all relevant cases. The victim was informed about the action they could take if the prisoner attempted to make unwanted contact with them in two-thirds of relevant cases. The victim was referred to other agencies or services or was given information about available sources of help or support in two out of three relevant cases.
- There was effective information and communication exchange to support the safety of victims in four out of five of the relevant cases. Victim liaison officers (VLOs) were involved in multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) in four out of five of relevant cases. VLOs were invited to MAPPA Level 2 and Level 3 meetings. VLOs were also involved in some professionals' meetings and with some MAPPA Level 1 case reviews. The region had put clear guidance in place to involve VLOs in public protection meetings where they are required.
- Victim liaison staff shared relevant information about the victim with probation practitioners in all relevant cases. VLOs were co-located in PDUs. Cases were allocated according to the location of the victim, and integration of VLOs into the PDUs worked well, with VLOs sitting alongside probation practitioners. Concerns of the victim were addressed, and attention was paid to their safety when planning for release in all relevant cases. Victim liaison staff were provided with appropriate and timely information about the management of the offender in four out of five of relevant cases.
- Pre-release contact with victims allowed them to make appropriate contributions to the conditions of release in all relevant cases. The victim was given the opportunity to contribute their views to inform decisions about the offender's release in a timely

way and was supported in doing so in four out of five of relevant cases. Views expressed by the victim were treated appropriately and in accordance with the victim contact scheme in all relevant cases. No contact licence conditions were used in all relevant cases.

Key areas for improvement:

- There was a clear record of the protected characteristics of victims in only 50 per cent of the cases inspected.

Learning from Serious Further Offence investigations

There was a clear commitment to achieve high standards in respect of Serious Further Offence (SFO) reviews. The sharing of learning with other teams in GMPS was embedded. However, these efforts had recently been hampered by staffing issues, with the SFO team experiencing absences and vacancies, which had impacted on both the timeliness and quality of their SFO work. Further, the team was relatively inexperienced and had therefore been learning their roles and embedding ways of working in the past 12 months.

Twenty-one SFO reviews were completed in the inspection reporting period, seven of which were quality assured by the HM Inspectorate of Probation SFO team. Of the total number of reviews, two were rated outstanding, 10 were rated good, and nine as requires improvement. Of the seven reviewed by the Inspectorate team, six received a good rating and one required improvement.

It was noted the region had achieved several good reviews, particularly those which have been quality assured by HM Inspectorate of Probation. There was clearly the ability to produce high-quality reviews, and the region had strategies in place to build on this and monitor outcomes. They were committed to attending training and using the support of both the central HMPPS team and HMI Probation to make progress.

Leaders had sought to demystify the SFO process to manage staff anxiety about it. For example, a video by the SFO reviewers had been delivered to staff in practice improvement meetings. It had also been shared with senior leaders and middle managers. The focus and emphasis of SFO review was on it being a developmental exercise, with SFO review being delivered through a supportive, transparent, and organisational learning approach.

Appropriate references were made to the Bendall¹ and McSweeney² cases within PSO and PQiP training to highlight key learning from those reviews. There was a strong focus on professional curiosity within training, and it was acknowledged that leaders needed to constantly maintain this message and the centrality of keeping other people safe at the forefront of probation practice.

The relative inexperience of SPOs may impact on learning, as the vast majority in GMPS have been qualified for less than five years. In response, an SPO leadership development programme was being created for implementation over the coming year.

It was clear the team are supportive of each other and have strong leadership, which will support them in achieving their outcomes.

¹ [Independent Serious Further Offence review of Damien Bendall \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/independent-serious-further-offence-review-of-damien-bendall/)

² [Independent Serious Further Offence review of Jordan McSweeney \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/independent-serious-further-offence-review-of-jordan-mcsweeney/)

Summary

In our PDU inspections, we rated Manchester North as 'Requires improvement', Tameside as 'Requires improvement', and Wigan as 'Requires improvement'.

We found that leadership teams across the PDUs were impressive and there was positive morale among highly motivated probation practitioners. Staff shortages, including a senior probation officer vacancy rate of 47 per cent in Tameside PDU, high workloads, and a predominance of inexperienced staff hindered delivery of the intended quality of case management in the inspected PDUs.

PDUs had developed strong strategic partnerships and have capitalised on the opportunities afforded by devolved justice arrangements to put in place a comprehensive range of services to meet the needs of people on probation. Community accommodation services, local wellbeing hubs, integrated offender management (IOM), and co-location of partnership agencies in PDUs are strong examples of joint working to support desistance and reduce reoffending. The Deputy Mayor and senior members of the judiciary held probation services in high regard.

It is imperative that the region supports PDUs to build on these strong foundations by improving work to keep other people safe. This includes improving assessment of risk, risk management planning, and delivery of case management through a supportive authority lens. Reliable domestic abuse and safeguarding information-sharing arrangements were in place, though the intelligence gleaned was often not acted upon sufficiently well.

Our recommendations from the inspected PDUs are set out in Annexe one. I look forward to receiving your regional action plan in due course, outlining the implementation of our recommendations. I wish you and all your staff well in undertaking this work.

Yours sincerely,

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

Justin Russell

Chief Inspector of Probation

Annexe one – Recommendations

Manchester North PDU

The PDU should:

1. improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage, and review risk of harm and to improve desistance, ensuring that all available information is accessed and utilised, all relevant partners are engaged, and all outstanding training needs related to these areas are addressed
2. ensure consideration is given to the safety of victims when delivering interventions in all instances where required
3. ensure that appropriate activity is always undertaken following domestic abuse or safeguarding enquiries to ensure that risks are followed up and managed appropriately
4. review the efficacy of work with people on probation both before leaving custody and upon release, including the efficacy and availability of services for this cohort
5. ensure managers and staff are clear on expectations regarding the effective management of sickness.

Greater Manchester Region should:

6. consider a more flexible approach to achieving service level targets, if appropriate and defensible, to ensure high-quality work is always undertaken
7. consider the use of the Regional Outcomes Intervention Fund to tackle the gaps identified locally regarding mental health provision for people on probation
8. review arrangements to ensure people on probation from all PDUs feel safe when visiting the Redfern Building, and that their views are incorporated into organisational planning when appropriate
9. continue to monitor workforce development planning and work with HM Prison and Probation Service to ensure the PDU has sufficient staffing capacity to undertake high-quality work.

Tameside PDU

The PDU should:

1. ensure interventions and services available locally are utilised to deliver appropriate services to support desistance and risk of harm
2. improve contingency planning for risk of harm management to ensure that protection of victims is prioritised
3. increase middle management capacity to ensure sufficient resource is in place to provide enhanced management oversight
4. provide practitioners with the knowledge and experience necessary to ensure sufficient analysis can take place to improve the quality of work to keep people safe

5. ensure that diversity information is assessed and analysed to support the desistance of the person on probation.

Greater Manchester Region should:

6. ensure there are effective arrangements in place for the PDU to deliver a quality service while qualified probation officer vacancies remain
7. ensure that probation service officers have sufficient training to adequately assess, plan, and deliver interventions that address the risk of harm to others
8. reduce waiting times for accredited programmes, particularly Building Better Relationships.

HM Prison and Probation Service should:

9. ensure probation delivery units and probation regions are sufficiently resourced with the right staff to protect the public
10. provide all practitioners and managers with the necessary training and learning to ensure that work to protect the public can be carried out effectively.

Wigan PDU

The PDU should:

1. focus management oversight to ensure that work to keep other people and staff safe is accurately assessed, 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 sentencers' knowledge 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
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.

Annexe two – PDU ratings

Set out below are the ratings of the PDUs in this region. More detail about the reasons for the ratings is available in the PDU reports, which are published on our website:

[HMI Probation - Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmi-probation/)

Manchester North Fieldwork started February 2023	Score	10/24
Overall rating	Requires improvement	
1. Organisational delivery		
1.1 Leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2 Staff	Good	
1.3 Services	Good	
1.4 Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court work and case supervision		
2.2 Assessment	Inadequate	
2.3 Planning	Requires improvement	
2.4 Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.5 Reviewing	Requires improvement	

Tameside 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



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

