



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

**Liverpool North PDU**

The Probation Service – North West region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, June 2023

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## Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Leon Bonas, 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.

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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

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This was the first Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) inspection of services in Liverpool North since the unification of the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS) in June 2021. Despite committed staff and managers, the results of our review of casework were disappointing with three out of four standards rated as 'Inadequate'. The PDU has been rated as 'Inadequate' overall.

The PDU has a considerable way to go in order to achieve manageable workloads and to improve the quality of service delivery to positively impact people on probation and to ensure the safety of victims and the local community.

The implementation of the new unified probation model, bringing staff and office locations together from legacy arrangements took place 11 months prior to this inspection. Staff, many of whom were from the CRC and with limited experience of managing people on probation assessed as a high risk of harm, had to adopt new working practices at pace. The PDU prioritised staff engagement, and we saw a cohesive, inclusive and positive culture. Leaders were approachable and visible. Whilst this is promising, the impact of this has yet to be seen in the effective delivery of services.

We were concerned about the poor quality of the work undertaken to ensure the safety of others and the current ability of the service to protect actual and potential victims. This was underpinned by high workloads, significant staff vacancies and staff that do not yet have the full depth and breadth of experience to ensure effective work is done to manage risk.

As we found in the inspection of the Knowsley and St Helen's PDU, within the Merseyside sub-region of the Probation Service North West, practitioners had been hindered by delays in accessing full domestic abuse information from police records. This led to inadequate identification and analysis of critical harm factors, and the subsequent planning and management of risk. At the point of this inspection, there was a backlog of 1,350 domestic abuse follow-up enquires with the police awaiting response across Merseyside PDUs. The data could not be disaggregated and therefore no analysis could be undertaken to identify, prioritise or mitigate risk at a local PDU level.

Managers were skilled, knowledgeable and were providing high levels of support to many practitioners. However, in some cases, they were providing substantial direction for some practitioners, which limited their capacity to ensure that management oversight had sufficient impact to improve the quality of casework.

Whilst we are hopeful that the management structures in place will be able to drive improvements, helped by planned increases in Senior Probation Officers (SPO) and probation practitioners, a continued focus on staff learning, development and effective management oversight is needed to facilitate and monitor effective delivery.



**Justin Russell**  
Chief Inspector of Probation

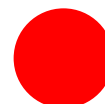
## Ratings

**Liverpool North PDU**  
Fieldwork started April 2023

Score **4/24**

**Overall rating**

**Inadequate**



### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Inadequate



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Requires improvement



### 2. Court work and case supervision

2.2 Assessment

Inadequate



2.3 Planning

Inadequate



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.5 Reviewing

Requires improvement



## Recommendations

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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.

### **Liverpool North PDU should:**

1. improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage and review risk of harm
2. ensure information relating to domestic abuse history is obtained promptly and sufficiently analysed to support the management of risk of harm to others
3. ensure information relating to child safeguarding is routinely obtained and used to ensure risks to children are understood and safety arrangements are in place
4. provide the necessary training and learning opportunities to support practitioners to apply professional curiosity
5. ensure managers are providing effective management oversight, focusing on the quality of work relating to critical offending-related factors and risk of harm
6. ensure that interventions necessary to improve desistance and reduce risk of reoffending and risk of harm are provided in all cases.

### **North West region should:**

7. ensure police information relating to domestic abuse is accessible and of sufficient quality to ensure the effective management of risk.

### **HM Prison and Probation Service should:**

8. improve the vetting timescales for the recruitment of staff
9. review contract arrangements for commissioned rehabilitation services (CRS) accommodation services to ensure that these meet the needs of people on probation.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Liverpool North PDU over the period of a week, beginning 24 April 2023. We inspected 41 cases where sentences and licences had commenced between 26 September 2022 and 2 October 2022 and 03 October 2022 and 09 October 2022. We also conducted 38 interviews with probation practitioners.

Prior to the unification of public and private probation service providers in June 2021, Liverpool North PDU was covered by Merseyside CRC and NPS North West. It is a newly formed delivery unit, one of 13 PDUs in the North West region, and one of five in the Merseyside area. Many core services across the five PDUs within Merseyside are managed pan-division, with PDU heads of service holding responsibility for the leadership and service delivery of different functions. People on probation report to the Boundary Street office based in Liverpool Film Studios.

The PDU, alongside Liverpool South PDU, aligns with Liverpool City Council. The population of Liverpool was 484,488<sup>1</sup> with proven reoffending rates<sup>2</sup> of 27.7 per cent. This was higher than the North West regional average at 25.5 per cent.

The current Head of PDU was appointed in November 2021. At the time of inspection there were 3.4 FTE (full-time equivalent) SPO's in post, all of whom led operational teams. Two newly appointed SPOs were due to fully transition into their roles. In total, there were 52 probation practitioners based in Liverpool North, 15 of whom were trainees completing their Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP).

There was initially a delay in blending teams and cases following unification of the Probation Service in June 2021. Services remained in legacy CRC and NPS arrangements until a restructure in May 2022. Despite the realignment of staff, at the time of inspection, five per cent of existing cases still required allocating to the appropriate teams across Liverpool North and South PDUs to ensure that people on probation were reporting to their local office.

Merseyside is covered by one Police Service and a reducing reoffending board. Delivery of some services was also being undertaken sub-regionally, such as the management of teams to service courts, supervision of women and unpaid work. The Head of PDU in Liverpool North manages the pan-Liverpool Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team.

The PDU is serviced by a court outside of the area, subsequently the quality of court work was not inspected. Liverpool has two prisons, HMP Liverpool and HMP Altcourse and five approved premises across the city.

Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) are provided by: Seetec for accommodation; Maximus for employment, training and education; St Giles Wise Group for finance, benefit and debt; PSS UK for women's services; and The Growth Company for personal wellbeing.

At the time of inspection, Liverpool North PDU was categorised as being 'red' on the prioritisation framework (PF). This is national guidance produced by the Probation Service, intended to enable local PDUs to manage demand where staff capacity is low. It sets out principles for PDUs on what work must continue and which tasks should be deprioritised until capacity returns to target levels.

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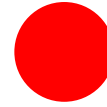
<sup>1</sup> Source: Office for National Statistics (December 2022). UK population estimates, mid-2021.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Ministry of Justice (January 2023). Proven reoffending statistics: April 2020 to March 2021.

# 1. Organisational delivery

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## 1.1. Leadership



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

Inadequate

In this inspection, three out of four domain two standards were rated 'Inadequate' which resulted in an overall 'Inadequate' rating for leadership under HM Inspectorate of Probation decision rules.

### Strengths:

- The vision and strategy of the PDU reflected local priorities, sub-regional Merseyside arrangements and the regional strategy. Staff were consulted to ensure buy-in and create a positive culture.
- The PDU head had made significant progress in blending teams and caseloads following unification to develop a consistent approach away from legacy CRC and NPS arrangements.
- Strategic partners reported positive working relationships. As an example, the PDU had engaged partners effectively in developing arrangements for the IOM and Serious Organised Crime partnerships.
- The PDU had longstanding and effective partnership arrangements with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), CRS and The Women's Alliance for the provision of services for women.
- The leadership team focused on creating a cohesive and inclusive culture and were described by staff as visible and approachable, with 14 out of 18 respondents to our staff survey saying that the culture promoted openness, constructive challenge and ideas.

### Areas for improvement:

- PDU objectives centred on improving workloads and reducing reoffending and public protection but, given the findings in the cases inspected, were not impacting on practice. Staff were aware that the PDU was seeking to prioritise quality and ensure the safety of others however, the work to ensure the safety of others was insufficient in the cases we reviewed. Leaders were therefore not delivering an effective and high-quality service.
- We found a significant backlog of 1,350 cases of police information requests across Merseyside. As a result, the level of information available to inform service delivery and keep people safe was not sufficient for staff to make informed decisions about managing domestic abuse risks. Case administrators were recruited to support the completion of these enquiries. However, pre-employment and non-police personal vetting clearance caused significant delays, with candidates waiting over six months for these checks.

- The shortfalls in police sharing domestic abuse intelligence were identified at a sub-regional level, but as this data was not disaggregated at a PDU level, we were concerned that this was not sufficiently prioritised as a local service risk, nor fully understood by managers.
- The staffing profile across protected characteristics was incomplete. Diversity data (February 2023) identified that 26 per cent of staff ethnicity was “unknown”. and 28 per cent of staff disability status was recorded as “null”. This limited the ability of the leadership team to take a strategic approach to understand and plan to meet the needs of staff across all protected characteristics.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

### Strengths:

- Despite staff shortages, and increasing numbers of new and inexperienced staff, they were highly motivated to deliver a high-quality service.
- Vacancies and workloads were actively reviewed by leaders on a weekly basis. Despite moving into red status under the prioritisation framework in December 2022, the successful recruitment and redeployment of staff meant an uplift in Probation Services Officers (PSO) and SPOs.
- The Head of the PDU had developed a staff engagement strategy and forum with representatives across all grades. Whilst workload and staffing pressures were a significant concern for staff, action was being taken. A full complement of staff was anticipated by the end of 2023, with PSOs increasing their workloads and newly qualified Probation Officers (PO) starting. A full complement of staff was anticipated by the end of the year.
- PDU leaders understood that new staff required additional support to develop the necessary skills and experiences, with dedicated SPO support in place to focus on induction training and wider development.
- The majority (95 per cent) of staff indicated that they had the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to supervise cases.
- Mandatory training was regularly undertaken, with 87 per cent of staff having completed child safeguarding training, 81 per cent of staff completed adult safeguarding training, 81 per cent of staff completed domestic abuse training and 73 per cent completed a workshop to raise awareness of Prevent 3. There were 35 PDU staff who recently attended multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) training.
- SPOs were highly knowledgeable and provided high levels of support. Of the staff surveyed, 11 out of 14 indicated that they received supervision that enhanced the quality of their work with people on probation and 10 of the 14 believed that it was sufficiently frequent.

### Areas for improvement

- The PDU began operating in 'red' status under the national prioritisation framework (PF) in December 2022, due to staffing levels falling below 60 per cent. Despite the work to ensure the safety of others being a priority, we found significant deficits in the quality of work in the inspected cases.
- The main staffing shortage was at PO grade with eight FTE vacancies at the time of our inspection. Of the staff responding to our survey, eight out of 14 believed that their workload was not manageable and 13 out of 14 indicated that staffing levels were insufficient.

- Staff sickness levels were an average of 16.2 days per annum, which was higher than the regional average of 10.5 days. Whilst we were assured that reviews of sickness were taking place, this continued to place pressure on workloads.
- Three out of five SPOs were in post at the point of inspection. Two additional SPOs had recently been promoted and were transitioning into their roles. Whilst management capacity should improve, some SPOs were providing high levels of direction for staff undertaking sentence management tasks on behalf of practitioners which distracted from their own core tasks and quality assurance. This was concerning, given that management oversight was insufficient, ineffective or absent in 68 per cent of inspected cases. One example includes where approximately 100 MAPPA level 1 reviews remained outstanding.

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### 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 services, the effective arrangements in place to develop, commission and make available relevant services and interventions have been considered against the 'Inadequate' domain 2 rating for implementation and delivery. The strengths recognised have led to the overall rating of 'Requires improvement' for services.

#### Strengths:

- Managers and staff were generally positive about the provision of CRS and other services available. In 84 per cent of cases inspected, staff reported that they had access to an appropriate range of services to meet the needs and risks of the person on probation. This was helped by some key services being co-located within the probation office.
- Regional and local commissioning was based on segmentation data and a strategic needs analysis. The Regional Outcomes and Innovation Fund was used to commission services to support a range of factors such as neurodiversity, services for black, Asian or minority ethnic men, parenting interventions, and resettlement packs.
- The work to engage women on probation across Merseyside was particularly effective, with long-standing arrangements in place. These were supported by strong strategic partnership arrangements with the OPCC, Merseyside reducing reoffending board, and enhanced by probation staff co-located at a women's centre.
- There was no backlog of accredited programmes in the PDU. Waiting lists to access programmes were actively managed to ensure that participants were ready to participate. Our case analysis saw effective sequencing and delivery of accredited programmes, including pre- and post-programme interventions.
- The IOM team was fully staffed and co-located with the police. Where inspected cases were managed under IOM arrangements, we saw examples of the effective delivery and review of risk as part of these multi-agency arrangements. Enforcement was enhanced by effective information exchange.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Domestic abuse enquires were made in 80 per cent of cases inspected, however, the responses did not provide practitioners with sufficient detail on which to make accurate assessments to ensure the safety of others. This meant that risk management plans were not sufficient in identifying the necessary services required for protecting actual and potential victims.
- Despite child safeguarding information being requested appropriately in 73 per cent of cases where required, information received was not always analysed sufficiently. As a consequence, we were not assured that appropriate services to manage risk of harm were consistently accessed.

In our case sample, we found in only 12 out of 34 relevant cases, the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising risk of harm was sufficiently well-coordinated.

- There was a significant backlog of unpaid work placements with nearly 42 per cent of unpaid work requirements outstanding beyond 12 months. The unpaid work team were significantly over-booking (up to 150 percent of available capacity) and while this ensured an attendance rate of 67 per cent, this still required further attention.
- We saw limited use of toolkits and structured interventions used by practitioners across the cases inspected. The PDU acknowledge that the delivery of toolkits has been de-prioritised for low-to-medium individuals under the PF. It was concerning that necessary interventions were not being delivered to deliver the sentence imposed by the courts.
- Casework data indicated that key risks and needs were not consistently addressed across inspected cases. Only 44 per cent of cases inspected, demonstrated sufficient delivery of services to reduce reoffending and support desistance. Key individuals, identified to support the desistance of the person on probation, were not engaged with in 51 per cent of cases.

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## **Resettlement work**

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Work focusing on the assessment, planning and delivery of services for resettlement cases required attention in Liverpool North PDU. Resettlement cases were managed within sentence management teams.

### **Strengths:**

- Although the requirements of community orders started promptly in 64 per cent of cases we reviewed, this increased to 85 per cent of the licence cases we reviewed.
- Local services were engaged to support and sustain desistance in 77 per cent of post release supervision cases inspected, compared to only 46 per cent of community orders. There were positive examples of people being referred to mental health services, approved premises and mentoring as part of their release and resettlement from custody.
- Where practitioners had undertaken enforcement or recalled people to prison, we found that attempts were made to re-engage with them in eight out of ten relevant cases. This would have increased the likelihood of future compliance with the sentence.
- Home visits, supporting the effective management of risk, were undertaken more frequently in post-release cases than in those with community sentences.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- We found insufficient levels of contact between probation practitioners and prisoners prior to their release to the community. This was a missed opportunity to gather and analyse key information to assess the prisoner's personal circumstances, and consider the impact of these on their ability to engage when released on licence.
- Pre-release planning was a significant concern, with only one out of 13 relevant cases sufficiently addressing and prioritising critical risk of harm factors. As a result of gaps in the assessment of factors linked to risk of serious harm, appropriate plans were not in place to manage the harm posed by individuals being released from custody.
- Key resettlement, desistance needs and risk of harm factors were addressed sufficiently prior to release in fewer than half (7 out of 15) of all relevant cases inspected. This placed additional pressure on practitioner to identify and address needs after individuals were released into the community.

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## 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.

Requires improvement

### Strengths:

- Quality improvement activity was supported by the regional quality governance arrangements. The PDU implemented a quality improvement plan in February 2022. This was influenced by reviews of learning from serious further offences and performance and quality information.
- Staff had monthly protected learning days. The Head of PDU delivered input based on findings from a range of audits and dip sampling of cases. Key messages were delivered to staff with opportunities to reflect on practice and share learning.
- Co-located Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub arrangements were in place, and the PDU had taken a decision to put a PSO into the hub to support timely and enhanced information sharing and analysis of risk. Our case inspections indicated that child safeguarding enquires were made when they should have been in 35 out of 41 cases inspected.
- Collaborative working arrangements were in place across the IOM team with effective information sharing taking place. We also heard of examples where staff were approaching the IOM team to bypass the lengthy delays experienced by sentence management teams in obtaining domestic abuse information.
- The PDU had a range of champions engaged in subgroups and staff support groups covering a range of protected characteristics such as neurodiversity, physical disabilities and race. There was a clear mechanism in place to share ideas and develop local policy and guidance via staff engagement.
- Appropriate action was taken by leaders to support staff and review procedures following two serious incidents at the PDU office. The User Voice survey indicated that 92 per cent of people on probation identified as feeling safe when accessing the local probation office and 11 out of 14 staff surveyed believed that sufficient attention was paid to their safety.

### Areas for improvement:

- One MAPPa audit took place during our inspection fieldwork. However, this was the first one since June 2022. The region had been awaiting the launch of a new MAPPa audit tool. Insufficient MAPPa level 2 and level 3 audit data was available at the time of inspection.
- The work of the PDU to improve quality of service delivery was not seen in the cases inspected. It was recognised by managers that gaps remained in staff skills, knowledge and experience.

- The PDU building had ramp access for people on probation with accessibility issues. However, there was no lift access in the building, which was inaccessible for staff with mobility needs, requiring staff to relocate to a different PDU.
- An Engaging People on Probation strategy was in place to review and improve the effectiveness of service delivery. Analysis was undertaken across the Merseyside sub-region, however due to the staffing pressures and workload demands in the PDU, this work had yet to influence PDU planning activity.
- The PDU had adopted the smarter working strategy, which was embedded and equitable across all grades and roles. However, staff identified that the size of the premises remained a challenge, just over half (8 out of 14) of staff reported that the premises and offices supported appropriate work and the effective engagement of people on probation.

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## Feedback from people on probation

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User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 85 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of those contacted, under half were subject to a community sentence, with the remainder on licence after being released from prison. Respondents were representative of the ethnic diversity of the caseload of the PDU, but were under representative of those with a declared disability. No female respondents were included within the cohort.

### Strengths

- Overall, 70 per cent of people on probation said they were happy about the level of support they received from the probation service.

*“I find it helpful to talk and sometimes when I am struggling it can help pick me up.”*

- Only 9 per cent of respondents reported ‘appointments’ as their biggest challenge, which was positive. People on probation felt that they were able to contact their probation practitioner when needed (85 per cent), and were able to have appointments at a time that suited them (87 per cent).

*“It’s good, she’s just flexible with my appointments. I am a carer for my father so that flexibility really helps.”*

- People on probation felt safe accessing the probation office, and felt that they were able to have private conversations with their probation practitioner (92 per cent).

### Areas for improvement

- Travel was the biggest issue for 15 per cent of respondents. A number of people on probation cited a lack of financial support and the distance travelled to appointments as being their main barrier. The PDU is undertaking work to ensure that all people on probation in Liverpool are reporting to the closest office.

*“No travel support offered, should let me attend my local office.”*

- People on probation do not always feel that their voice is heard, with less than half of those surveyed indicating that they have been asked their views about being on supervision.



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## Diversity and inclusion

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### Strengths:

- While the PDU staffing profile was incomplete, eight per cent of staff identified as being from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background, which was representative of the PDUs caseload, reported to be 4.6 per cent.
- Services for women were co-located at a female-only centre which was accessible to women on probation in Liverpool North. Assessments were clearly focused on what was required to engage women, and service delivery was appropriately flexible. Casework analysis during the inspection indicated better engagement across with women compared with men.
- Probation practitioners identified diversity characteristics of people on probation through discussions with them in 88 per cent of cases we reviewed.
- In 85 per cent of cases we reviewed, the practitioner sufficiently captured whether the person on probation had a disability.

### Areas for improvement:

- In 44 per cent of inspected cases, planning did not take sufficient account of the diversity factors of the person on probation that may affect engagement and compliance.
- Not enough emphasis was placed on collecting data around staffing profiles. The staffing profile across protected characteristics was incomplete. This limited the scope of leaders to take a strategic approach to understand, and plan to meet, the needs of staff across all protected characteristics.
- The PDU has access to Crawford House, a service for black, Asian or minority ethnic men based in Liverpool South PDU. To access this service, a case would need to be transferred to another PDU and practitioner. The PDU should explore whether transfer, or reallocation, of a probation practitioner presents any barriers to people on probation accessing this service.
- More work was required to understand what, if any, disproportionality is experienced in relation to protected characteristics by people on probation such as disability, age, ethnicity, etc.
- Although a race toolkit had been developed and was available to staff, no staff we spoke to knew about it or had used it.

## 2. Court work and case supervision

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

'Not rated'

This standard was not inspected. There was no court located within Liverpool North PDU and there were no pre-sentence reports prepared within the inspected PDU.

## 2.2. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>3</sup> 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?	54%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	46%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	22%

Liverpool North PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for assessment as the lowest score out of the three key questions was 22 per cent. Concerningly, this relates to the work to keep other people safe.

### Strengths:

- Probation practitioners understood the personal circumstances and views of the person on probation, and engaged them meaningfully in their assessment in 68 per cent of inspected cases. There was some positive use of the induction process to gather relevant key information.

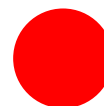
### Areas for improvement:

- Whilst domestic abuse enquiries were appropriately made in 80 per cent of cases, there were eight cases out of the 41 with no enquiries completed. The information received from initial enquiries provided a summary of call out data, but this was insufficient on which to base an analysis that ensured the safety of other people. There was a significant delay of up to 12 weeks to receive detailed intelligence in relation to domestic abuse.
- Only a quarter of assessments sufficiently identified and analysed the risk of harm to others. Assessment did not draw sufficiently on available sources of information in 61 per cent of inspected cases. This led to gaps in analysing concerns and risks in relation to actual and potential victims also in 61 per cent of cases. Even where information was available, we did not routinely find that this was sufficiently analysed, including information relating to child safeguarding.

<sup>3</sup> 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.](#)

- Fewer than half of all cases inspected, identified and analysed those factors most critical to offending. We did not routinely see the use of professional curiosity or consistent use of partner agencies to draw on and verify sources of information. Assessments were often based on unverified information and failed to consider the impact on an individual basis.
- Standalone unpaid work requirements were delivered by a regional team. Layer 1 Offender Assessment System assessments were undertaken by practitioners in these cases, however, where this indicated issues of concern in relation to risk this did not routinely lead to a full assessment.

## 2.3. Planning



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>4</sup> 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?	61%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	56%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	22%

Liverpool North PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for planning as the lowest score out of the three key questions was 22 per cent. Concerningly this relates to the work to keep other people safe.

### Strengths:

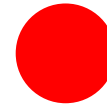
- We found some promising examples where practitioners involved individuals in planning and took sufficient account of their personal circumstances.

### Areas for improvement:

- Given the gaps in information and analysis, plans to manage the safety of others did not identify and prioritise critical harm factors in 76 per cent of cases inspected. Some of these gaps were in relation to child safeguarding and domestic abuse and meant that crucial links were not being made to the work of other agencies involved with the person on probation.
- In a reasonable majority of cases inspected, contingency arrangements were not sufficiently personalised to the risks posed by the person on probation, nor appropriately detailed so as to ensure clear actions required should risks levels change.
- Similar to assessment findings, too few cases had plans to sufficiently reflect and prioritise key offending-related factors. All too often, plans were general and did not outline how proposed interventions would be delivered.

<sup>4</sup> 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 rating<sup>5</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?</b>	56%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?</b>	54%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>27%</b>

Liverpool North PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for implementation and delivery as the lowest score out of the three key questions was 27 per cent. Concerningly, this relates to the work to keep other people safe.

### Strengths:

- Despite workloads being high, probation practitioners were responsive to the personal circumstances of people on probation and were flexible in their approaches. Referrals were being made to commissioned services and this work was coordinated well in the reasonable majority of cases.

### Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient attention was given to protecting actual and potential victims. Home visits were not undertaken often enough. Delays sub-regionally in obtaining detailed police domestic abuse information impacted substantially on the ability of practitioners to manage the safety of others.
- Inevitably, given the limited planning to keep others safe, over half of inspected cases were insufficiently coordinated.
- Only 44 per cent of delivered services were those most likely to reduce offending and support desistance. There was limited delivery of interventions which, given the PDU's 'red' PF status, work was prioritised for those posing imminent risk of harm. This led to gaps in ensuring that people were motivated and prepared to engage with services most critical to address their offending behaviour, including drug, alcohol and mental health provisions.

<sup>5</sup> 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.](#)

## 2.5. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?</b>	68%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?</b>	59%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>49%</b>

Liverpool North PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for reviewing. Professional discretion was applied as the lowest score was within five percentage points of the rating boundary of 50 per cent between 'Inadequate' and 'Requires Improvement', and broader evidence of effective reviewing practice gathered during fieldwork week suggested a higher rating was justified.

### Strengths:

- Probation practitioners were responsive to the compliance and engagement levels of people on probation in 68 per cent of inspected cases.
- Where cases were supervised by POs, there was a significant improvement in the quality of reviews to keep other people safe. Actions were taken to rectify earlier omissions within assessment and planning, and may have been indicative of information being received following delayed responses to police enquires. The use of professional curiosity assisted with appropriate information exchange with key agencies in order to ensure the safety of others.
- Where cases were managed under IOM arrangements, we saw effective multi-agency reviews leading to an appropriate balance of engagement, delivery of interventions and enforcement.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

**Areas for improvement:**

- People on probation, and where appropriate, key individuals in their lives, were not meaningfully involved in reviewing the risk of harm to others. In 14 out of 33 cases, reviews did not include input from other agencies involved. Necessary liaison with children's services was not sufficiently robust to understand the roles of agencies involved to keep children safe.
- In just under half of all cases inspected, reviewing activity did not sufficiently identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour in order to make necessary changes to the ongoing plan of work. Where this was associated with problematic substance or alcohol misuse, these factors were not routinely monitored, nor was necessary information exchanged with relevant services.



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## 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'
<b>Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?</b>	37%

### Strengths:

- Inspectors found that in 11 out of 15 cases where formal breach or recall action should have been taken, practitioners had taken the appropriate action to address non-compliance.
- Provision of employment, training and education support was encouraging, with 15 people on probation having this identified as a factor linked to offending. Positive progress had been made in 11 of these cases.

### Areas for improvement:

- Inspectors had identified accommodation being an important factor linked to offending in 17 relevant cases but improvements only made in seven. Where accommodation was linked to risk of harm in 13 relevant cases, sufficient improvement was only made in five of those cases. Staff described gaps in CRS accommodation provision, with high waiting lists and inconsistent levels of contact with the provider.
- Despite the flexible approaches adopted by probation practitioners, there was sufficient compliance of people on probation in only 52 per cent of cases inspected.
- Despite the positive relationships between probation and local services, early outcomes indicated little progress to address factors linked to offending, both in developing strengths and addressing needs. Improvements were noted in just one third of all cases.
- Whilst in the early stages of licences and orders, there was only a 12 per cent reduction of the factors most closely related to risk of harm to others. Deficits across the quality of work to ensure the safety of others in inspected cases were not supporting improvement to this outcome at the point of inspection.

## Annexe one – Web links

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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)