



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

**East Berkshire PDU**

The Probation Service – South Central region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2023

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## Foreword

In East Berkshire Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) we found a worrying picture. The quality of case management was assessed as insufficient to deliver sentences and keep people safe. As a result, the PDU was rated as 'Inadequate' overall.

Geographical challenges impacted the PDU's ability to recruit staff to fill its vacancies and efforts to stabilise the workforce were undermined by the significant number of people leaving the organisation in search of better pay and a manageable workload. Leaders and staff were committed to improving quality but were struggling to maintain their resilience. Staff demonstrated a positive team spirit and valued the support provided by their colleagues and managers but felt disheartened by the high attrition rate.

Leaders were focused on staff welfare and attempted to reduce pressure on frontline practitioners by adopting a prioritisation model. However, the principles of this approach were not being fully adhered to. This meant the frequency and quality of contact with people on probation capable of causing harm to others was not sufficient to address their risks.

Although we saw some evidence of positive joint working with partner agencies and some innovative services delivered by commissioned providers, we were concerned about the lack of effective liaison and information-sharing with police and children's social care to safeguard children and potential victims of domestic abuse.

It was positive to hear from people on probation that a forum was created in the PDU where they could share ideas for improving the quality of service delivery. This initiative had support from leaders and staff, and forum members were proud of the value they were adding.

A culture of learning and development for staff was promoted within the PDU through the introduction of protected development days, which practitioners found useful. We also heard about process improvements made in response to learning from serious further offence reviews.

However, these efforts are not currently resulting in sufficient delivery of services. If the PDU are unable to retain staff, they will continue to face challenges in achieving the necessary quality of delivery. While the PDU will undoubtedly be disappointed by our findings, it is hoped that by shining a light on the situation in East Berkshire through our inspection, the PDU will be afforded much-needed regional and national support to address this area's longstanding issues in relation to recruitment and retention.



**Justin Russell**  
Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

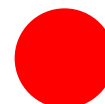
### East Berkshire PDU

Fieldwork started June 2023

Score **3/24**

#### Overall rating

**Inadequate**



#### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Inadequate



1.2 Staff

Inadequate



1.3 Services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



#### 2. Court work and case supervision

2.2 Assessment

Inadequate



2.3 Planning

Inadequate



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.5 Reviewing

Inadequate



## 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.

### **East Berkshire PDU should:**

1. improve the quality of casework to keep people safe
2. review the effectiveness of their concentrator model
3. liaise with the police and children's social care teams to resolve the issues relating to the quality and timeliness of responses to domestic abuse and safeguarding enquiries
4. increase the use of interventions and services to support the desistance of people on probation
5. ensure that people on probation requiring support to address substance misuse issues are promptly referred to the relevant treatment agency
6. ensure all probation practitioners are aware of the diversity and inclusion toolkit and know how to use it.

### **South Central region should:**

7. ensure sufficient attention is paid to managers' welfare and professional development
8. work with NHS England to improve the capacity of mental health treatment requirement provision to meet demand and improve timeliness of intervention.

### **HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) should:**

9. improve the incentives offer for staff to increase retention rates
10. ensure that senior probation officers (SPOs) have sufficient capacity and resources to improve the quality and effectiveness of management oversight, particularly in relation to cases assessed as high risk of serious harm, and where there are domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns
11. ensure there are mechanisms for assessing people on probation's literacy and numeracy skills at the start of their sentence.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in East Berkshire over the period of a week, beginning 05 June 2023. We inspected 41 cases where sentences and licences commenced between 31 October to 06 November and 14 November to 20 November 2022. We also conducted 37 interviews with probation practitioners.

Before the unification of public and private probation service providers in June 2021, East Berkshire PDU's area was covered by the Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company and the South West and South Central Division of the National Probation Service. It is now one of seven PDUs in the South Central region of the Probation Service. It operates from two delivery sites located in Slough and Bracknell.

East Berkshire PDU covers three local authorities, which differ considerably in geographical size and in the demography of the population. Slough is the smallest and most densely populated and is the most ethnically diverse borough outside of London, with people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups accounting for 58 per cent of the population.

In comparison, the boroughs of Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead cover much larger areas and are home to a smaller number of residents, the majority of whom identify as white British (86 per cent in Bracknell Forest and 80 per cent in Windsor and Maidenhead).

Slough has seven neighbourhoods among the top 20 per cent most deprived in England. It has a younger population than its neighbouring East Berkshire boroughs, and there are a greater number of people who are unemployed and living in social housing. Additionally, there are a high number of households living in temporary accommodation.

The county has three courts: East Berkshire Magistrates' Court in Slough, Reading Magistrates' Court, and Reading Crown Court. HM Prison (HMP) Bullingdon is the closest male prison and HMP Bronzefield is the closest female prison. The local police force is Thames Valley Police.

At the time of our fieldwork, the PDU employed 61.76 full-time equivalent staff, the majority of whom were female (81 per cent). The PDU's caseload of 1,659 comprised 753 people subject to community and suspended sentence orders, 530 people on post-release licences, and 376 people in prison.

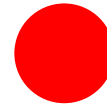
Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) providers deliver interventions across the following pathways: Ingeus for accommodation, education, training and employment (ETE), and finance, benefit and debt; Catch 22 for personal wellbeing; and Advance for women's services. Alcohol and drug treatment services are provided by Turning Point, Cranstoun, and Change, Grow, Live operating as New Hope.

At the time of this inspection, East Berkshire PDU was categorised as being 'amber' on the Probation Service's prioritisation framework. This is a national approach to prioritising sentence management activity which enables PDUs to manage demand when staff capacity is low. It sets out principles for PDUs on what work must continue and which tasks should be paused until capacity returns to target levels.

# 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

While there were some efforts to deliver local plans, insufficient strategic oversight of the quality of work being delivered, particularly in relation to public protection, contributed to the rating of 'Inadequate'.

### Strengths:

- The vision and strategy of the PDU was to deliver a high-quality service for people on probation, victims and partners. The delivery plan mirrored the overarching priorities of the regional plan, and progress was monitored through local and regional performance and accountability meetings.
- The leadership team was actively engaged in a number of strategic partnerships and safeguarding boards.
- Innovative approaches were introduced in response to learning from quality assurance activities, such as the 'concentrator' model, which intended to increase probation practitioners' knowledge and skills in specialist areas.
- Identifiable business risks were managed through a central regional risk register and PDU business continuity plans were in place for a range of potential adverse situations.
- Monthly workforce planning meetings were utilised to monitor and anticipate resourcing issues. These informed the PDU's move to an amber status on the prioritisation framework to mitigate the impact of local recruitment and retention challenges on workloads.
- An active Engaging People on Probation forum was established, attended by the PDU Head, middle managers and staff. People on probation who attended the forum felt listened to and able to add value to the organisation.

### Areas for improvement:

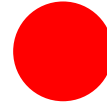
- The desired impact of the implementation of the vision and strategy was not reflected in the cases inspected.
- High workloads constrained allocation decisions meaning caseloads did not reflect concentrator preferences, and some practitioners had not received training for the essential knowledge and skills to work effectively within their specialisms. While the model would have facilitated specialist delivery to women, men aged 18 to 25, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), foreign nationals and people serving short custodial sentences, it was not operating as planned and strategically was an inappropriate decision.

- The work to improve quality and expectations on managers to provide oversight had not impacted service delivery.
- While probation practitioners were aware of the focus on recruitment and retention and workload reduction, they were unable to articulate the PDU's priorities in relation to public protection. Staff outside of sentence management lacked clarity about the PDU's vision and priorities, including the concentrator model.
- There was no timescale for the PDU to move out of amber status. This is dependent on the recruitment and retention of probation practitioners.
- Although Slough was the most ethnically diverse borough outside London, there was a lack of evidence in individual cases and in the wider PDU delivery plans that sufficient attention was being paid to understanding and addressing the needs of people on probation from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Inadequate

### Strengths:

- The PDU had the most diverse and representative staff group in the region, with 38 per cent of the staff who declared their ethnicity identifying as black, Asian or ethnic minority, compared to 49 per cent of people on probation.
- Localised recruitment campaigns were initiated in addition to national campaigns, and the PDU sought to recruit above the target operating model for Probation Service Officers (PSOs).
- It was anticipated that Professional Qualification in Probation trainees would reduce the Probation Officer (PO) vacancies in 2024, but this was contingent on the PDU's attrition rate improving.
- SPOs had case-focused supervision with practitioners using management information to inform qualitative case discussions and improve practice.
- Staff described their managers as approachable, supportive, and considerate of their wellbeing and individual needs. Staff were motivated by a desire to do a good job. They spoke positively about the team spirit within the PDU, and the willingness to help colleagues who were struggling.
- The PDU head met with trade unions to discuss staff welfare and also chaired the staff engagement and wellbeing committee, which reviewed and implemented staff suggestions, such as the creation of wellbeing rooms for staff in the Slough and Bracknell offices.
- Sentence management staff were asked to participate in a 'firebreak' in May 2023 to catch up on administrative work. This was alternated between the teams, allowing the offices to stay open. Staff felt this demonstrated senior leaders were taking their welfare seriously.
- Staff attended briefings by the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit about bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation, microaggressions, and gaslighting.

### Areas for improvement:

- The PDU was difficult to recruit to, due to the high cost of living in East Berkshire and its proximity to London. The overall vacancy rate was 26 per cent, with 30 per cent for PSOs and case administrators, and 32 per cent for POs.
- This was compounded by high attrition rates (23 per cent). Despite activity taken to improve retention, the majority of leavers were in bands two and three and had less than two years' service. Sixty per cent attributed their decisions to pay, staffing, and health and wellbeing.

- Staff expressed concern about the attrition rate and commented, *“People don’t want to join an organisation where everyone is leaving and lots of people are off sick.”* They also surmised that, *“You can’t recruit yourself out of a retention problem.”*
- The PDU’s average Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) score was 129 per cent against a target of 115 per cent. SPOs explained that some probation practitioners were as high as 170 per cent on the WMT, and one individual had a WMT score of 195 per cent.
- Workloads were unmanageable and impacted staff work/life balance. Working overtime had become the norm, and practitioners were unable to switch off from worrying about their caseload. Staff sickness during the first few months of 2023 exacerbated the issues relating to high workloads.
- Newly qualified officers described feeling under immense pressure and concerned about high workloads upon qualification. Some felt they had not been provided with sufficient management oversight, mentoring and co-working opportunities to manage their caseload effectively.
- Case administrators similarly described feeling under pressure due to high workloads exacerbated by staffing shortages.
- SPOs struggled with the expectations placed on them. They expressed concerns about the number of inexperienced staff in their teams lacking in confidence and resilience. SPOs’ experience of the level of support and supervision they received was inconsistent, and insufficient attention was paid to their welfare and professional development.
- The majority of SPOs attended Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision training for managers, but were unable to conduct formal observations of probation practitioners due to time constraints.
- Management oversight was rated as insufficient, ineffective or absent in 87 per cent of inspected cases.

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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

While the rating for implementation and delivery was inadequate, a range of activities were taking place not reflected in the cases inspected but evidencing appropriate provision of the services to address a wide range of needs for people on probation. This has contributed to the rating of 'Requires improvement' for services.

#### Strengths:

- Practitioners were positive about the provision offered by CRS providers in relation to women's services, personal wellbeing, and finance, benefit and debt advice. They valued the support offered by the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) team, who provided briefings on stalking and autism in addition to case consultations, assessments and direct intervention with people on probation and in prison.
- The Inside Out Trust provided emergency cash payments and grants for clothes, essential household items and costs associated with getting back into work. People on probation were given mobile phones to facilitate contact with probation and partnership agencies.
- Resourcing challenges in the programmes team impacted on the timeliness for people to commence group work, so Building Better Relationships and the Thinking Skills Programme were run on a rolling basis to minimise waiting times for people starting these programmes.
- To maximise the effectiveness of their available resources, the programmes team used caseload data to identify people on probation who met the criteria for structured interventions and initiated an 'opt out' approach to referrals. This increased the number of individuals accessing these programmes, as well as reducing waiting times to commence group work to less than four weeks.
- The Unpaid Work (UPW) team improved the quality and effectiveness of their induction process by providing an induction day which also doubled as the first work session for people on probation.
- UPW timeliness and completion rates had improved. Seventy per cent of UPW requirements commenced within 15 days of sentence, and completion rates within 12 months of sentence were at 73 per cent. The UPW team regularly engaged with the PDU leadership team to discuss ways to improve attendance and compliance.
- UPW placement managers liaised with local businesses, charities and faith groups, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and local authorities to offer a wide range of projects and individual placements.
- There was evidence of strong partnership relationships and a commitment to joint working in relation to IOM and multi-agency public protection arrangements. Thames Valley Police shared daily contact lists for known

cases, providing timely information about domestic abuse callouts and arrests.

- The PDU head chaired the reducing reoffending accommodation subgroup and led the region's homelessness prevention taskforce, which managed housing referrals to local authorities and advocated for the rights and needs of people on probation. The Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 contract was being mobilised to provide 84 nights of accommodation for people leaving prison, bail accommodation, or approved premises.
- Partnerships and commissioned providers were co-located in the probation offices to strengthen working relationships and facilitate engagement with people on probation.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Staff were frustrated about the absence of a dedicated reporting space for women and the lack of accommodation provision given the high level of need.
- A primary care mental health treatment requirement introduced in the PDU was not sufficiently resourced for the demand, leading to excessive delays to access support.
- ETE activities completed in connection with UPW requirements could only be completed online in English, which was a barrier to people for whom English was not their first language, people with literacy difficulties and those without access to the internet.
- There were resourcing issues in relation to delivering programmes to people who committed sexual offences, and recruitment could not be undertaken as the programmes facilitator job description was under review. The programmes team relied on sessional staff to bolster the capacity of the three remaining facilitators in the team.
- An engagement toolkit focused on diversity and inclusion was available to facilitate discussions with people on probation, but it had not been widely promoted.
- User Voice surveyed people on probation and while 77 per cent of respondents had accessed services relevant to their personal needs, only 51 per cent were able to access these services in a reasonable time. Delays in provision commencing was attributed to staffing shortages experienced by CRS providers.
- Probation practitioners described frustrations in relation to their engagement with the Enforcement Hub, whose approach to enforcing community and suspended sentence orders was considered to be overly prescriptive. It was also in direct contrast to the approach practitioners were encouraged to use to address licence compliance issues.

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## **Resettlement work**

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East Berkshire PDU included short custodial sentences as an area of focus in its concentrator model which was launched in June 2022. However, due to resourcing challenges, case allocations have not taken account of concentrator preferences, therefore, this model was not delivering its intended outcomes in terms of improving the quality of resettlement work with people who were subject to short custodial sentences.

Resourcing issues in nearby prisons caused issues for probation practitioners attempting to arrange handovers from Prison Offender Managers. This impacted the PDU's ability to complete pre-release assessments with people subject to Offender Management in Custody.

### **Strengths:**

- Probation practitioners arranged a proportionate level of contact with people in prison in 71 per cent (ten out of 14) of the resettlement cases in our sample.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Assessment, planning, and reviewing were comparatively worse in resettlement cases than for community sentences.
- The failure to complete adequate pre-release assessments meant key resettlement needs were not addressed by the probation practitioner prior to release in eight out of 14 resettlement cases. There was a lack of attention to assessing the suitability of release accommodation to protect victims and children. Motivation and triggers for offending, protective factors, diversity characteristics and personal circumstances were not sufficiently understood to support comprehensive assessments of reoffending and harm and robust pre-release planning.
- Risk of harm to others was only accurately identified, analysed and addressed in two of the 14 resettlement cases, which was concerning and meant appropriate measures to keep others safe were not in place prior to release.
- Home visits to support the effective management of risk of harm were undertaken in just three of the 13 resettlement cases where they were required.
- Following release, insufficient contact was maintained with people on probation to reduce reoffending and support desistance, and to manage and minimise risk of harm.

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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.

Good

### Strengths:

- The PDU head attended bi-monthly Learning, Effectiveness and Accountability Panels (LEAP) to review learning from internal and external audits, inspections, serious further offence (SFO) reviews, complaints, death under supervision reviews and research. Learning was disseminated via SPO performance and accountability meetings, PDU LEAP meetings, protected development days, and team meetings.
- Probation practitioners spoke positively about the benefits of the protected development days and the relevance of the material covered at recent events.
- Learning from SFO reviews prompted a range of process improvements, including protected time for new starters, recruitment of an administrator to improve child safeguarding and police intelligence enquiries, and the corporate hub tracking case transfers to improve timeliness.
- Changes to policy and guidance were summarised into quick guides for practitioners to promote understanding and focus on key areas.
- The PDU considered the views of people on probation through various methods, including the Engaging People on Probation forum, UPW exit interviews on completion, accredited programme reviews, and encouraging people who completed sexual offending programmes to speak to people waiting to start group work about their experience and promote the benefits of attending the programme.
- A twice-weekly leaders newsletter provided key updates, messages and actions for managers to deliver to their teams.
- Both offices in the PDU were standalone and purpose-built. They were refurbished following the smarter working approach, which improved the design and functionality of open-plan spaces. The needs of staff requiring assistive technology or reasonable adjustments were incorporated into the planning and installation of desks and furniture.
- Both offices were accessible, centrally located close to transport links, with sufficient interview rooms equipped with security features. Quiet rooms were available, and both the Slough and Bracknell offices had a wellbeing room. Late-night reporting was also available and the Slough office had group room facilities.
- Staff and people on probation felt safe in the probation offices, and staff had access to lone worker devices for home visits.
- The Practitioner Dashboard was user-friendly and provided easy access to performance data at a PDU, team and individual practitioner level for managers and staff.

- All staff had access to the region's One Stop facility which acted as a repository for communications, policies, guidance and training, and signposted staff to the national probation intranet, the Probation Hub and Equip. It also included a comprehensive directory of local services.
- The PDU was rolling out Jitbit functionality to enable more effective tracking and management of administrative tasks.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Disappointingly, despite the steps taken through a range of activities, the necessary learning was not evident in the cases inspected, with concerning findings, particularly in relation to public protection.
- Persistent issues with the remote door release function at the Slough office necessitated the receptionist going out to speak to people on probation and letting them into the building. The intercom was also problematic which resulted in people often having to repeat their name loudly to be heard. These issues created tension and undermined the safety of reception staff, who said they had been reported but there was no known resolution date.
- There was a lack of clarity from probation practitioners in relation to the police intelligence checks and safeguarding enquiries they were requesting, and responses from police and children's social care were inconsistent in terms of the volume and quality of the information provided.

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## Feedback from people on probation

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User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 59 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of these, 47 per cent reported they were subject to a community sentence and 42 per cent were being supervised after being released from prison. Ten per cent of respondents did not specify their sentence type.

The respondents were largely representative of the caseload demographics in terms of ethnicity, but 93 per cent were male which was an over-representation of the overall caseload.

### Strengths:

- The majority of people on probation surveyed by User Voice (81 per cent) said the location of supervision appointments, courses and support were within a reasonable travelling distance.
- People on probation said one of the most positive aspects of their probation experience was their relationship with their probation practitioner.

*“Treatment by my PO is very decent and fair and they’re lovely, and reception are great.”*

*“My officer is helpful and helped me when I was homeless and with a drink and alcohol course, always courteous and polite and asks how I feel.”*

- Fifty-one per cent of respondents were happy with the overall support they received from probation.

*“They have helped quite a bit with my mental health and my PO is nice.”*

*“The alcohol course was worthwhile.”*

*“It’s kept me out of trouble and helped constructively.”*

### Areas for improvement:

- Only 32 per cent of people on probation said they had been asked for their views about being on supervision.



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## Diversity and inclusion

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### Strengths:

- Slough probation office had a prayer room for staff and people on probation.
- The UPW placement managers liaised with local faith leaders to understand how best to support people on probation completing UPW during Ramadan and to provide a wide range of projects and individual placements to accommodate the diverse needs of people with UPW requirements.
- The PDU had a single point of contact to provide information and advice to practitioners about working effectively with transgender people on probation.
- Programme facilitators received training on how to work more effectively with people with neurodiversity and additional needs, and probation practitioners had been provided with a briefing about autism by the South Central regional forensic psychologist.
- A member of the programmes team had lived experience of the criminal justice system and spoke about how warm, receptive and supportive his team had been, and the value of his lived expertise when building a rapport with group members.
- The regional outcomes and innovation fund was used to support a sheltered housing charity for vulnerable people, enable a women's charity to expand their work in Slough, and commission a service providing a range of bespoke and intensive support and advocacy services to people on probation with multiple complex needs.
- 'Safe space' events provided a forum to reflect on diversity factors, and in March 2023 black, Asian and minority ethnic staff were invited to feedback on the staff survey and probation race survey.
- The PDU head confirmed there was no evidence of disproportionality regarding grievances, investigations and attendance management warnings, or in relation to reward and recognition nominations and awards.
- 14 out of 23 staff who responded to our survey believed staff from all backgrounds had equal access to promotion opportunities.

### Areas for improvement:

- Despite the significant Asian population in Slough, there was little evidence of the PDU actively engaging with community and faith groups, except in relation to UPW projects and individual placements.
- There was no women-only reporting centre in the PDU and women-only reporting at the probation offices was only available for two hours a week.
- Inspectors were informed there was no longer a basic skills check included in the induction process to ascertain the literacy and numeracy abilities of people on probation.
- UPW ETE provision was provided in English and was only accessible online.

- Probation practitioners were assigned to concentrator roles with the expectation that they would upskill these areas to improve the quality of service delivery to women, 18 to 25-year-olds, and foreign nationals. However, not all probation practitioners received the necessary training for their concentrator cases. Additionally, SPOs were struggling to allocate cases due to the majority of staff being over capacity, and concentrator preferences were not a primary consideration in allocation decisions.

## 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 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>1</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?	41%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	46%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	15%

East Berkshire PDU is rated 'Inadequate' in this area because the quality of assessments was only sufficient in the minority of cases, and practice was particularly poor in terms of keeping other people safe.

### Strengths:

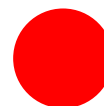
- In 68 per cent of inspected cases, practitioners engaged individuals in their assessments, building the foundations for effective working.
- In 25 out of 34 relevant cases the assessment identified strengths and protective factors, which allowed for these to be developed to support desistance.

### Areas for improvement:

- People on probation's diversity characteristics were collected in 93 per cent of cases, but analysis of their impact on individuals' ability to engage and comply was evidenced in less than half (44 per cent) of assessments.
- Enquiries to the police and children's social care about domestic abuse and child safeguarding risks were made in 76 per cent of cases but these and other available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, were only used to inform assessments of risk of harm in 27 per cent of cases. Insufficient analysis was taking place despite the information being available.
- Assessments did not adequately identify and analyse risks in 26 of the 38 cases where the person on probation's behaviour could cause harm to actual and potential victims.

<sup>1</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.](#)

## 2.3. Planning



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>2</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?	44%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	54%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>27%</b>

East Berkshire PDU is rated 'Inadequate' for planning as there was a lack of attention given to the interventions and controls needed to reduce risk of harm to others.

### Strengths:

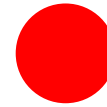
- We found some examples of plans that had been created collaboratively with the person on probation, which facilitated discussions about diversity factors and ways to accommodate them.

### Areas for improvement:

- Planning only took sufficient account of the person on probation's readiness and motivation to change in 56 per cent of cases. These factors are important to maximise compliance and engagement.
- Plans needed to pay more attention to critical offending-related factors and involve services that could reduce reoffending and support desistance. A lack of appropriate referrals to drug and alcohol treatment agencies was a recurring theme.
- There was a lack of multi-agency planning to keep people safe, particularly in relation to addressing domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns. The protections provided by civil court orders imposed to protect victims were not understood by practitioners or incorporated into risk management plans, and contingency planning did not comprehensively set out how practitioners should respond if risk of harm escalated.

<sup>2</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>3</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>	41%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?</b>	29%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>20%</b>

East Berkshire PDU is rated 'Inadequate' for implementation and delivery, as sentence delivery was insufficient to reduce reoffending and manage risk of harm.

### Strengths:

- In 73 per cent of cases practitioners gave sufficient focus to maintaining effective working relationships with people on probation, including supporting them to complete their sentence by making appropriate adjustments to accommodate their personal circumstances.

### Areas for improvement:

- In 13 out of 22 inspected cases where there were risks of non-compliance, the issues were not effectively addressed in a timely manner to reduce the need for enforcement action. Enforcement action was not subsequently undertaken as required in nine out of 20 cases.
- The type, frequency and quality of contact was insufficient to manage and mitigate risk of harm in 22 out of 37 cases, and home visits were only undertaken in just over a third of the cases where they were needed. Some decisions to reduce face-to-face reporting had not adequately considered the risks of the case.
- There was insufficient sentence delivery by probation staff and missed opportunities to engage partnership agencies to support desistance and manage the risk of harm. The lack of attention to addressing domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns was particularly worrying.

<sup>3</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.

**Inadequate**

Our rating<sup>4</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>	54%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?</b>	41%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>29%</b>

East Berkshire PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' in this area because reviews of assessments and plans were not sufficiently robust and well-informed to keep people safe.

### Strengths:

- We found some examples of reviews where the people on probation had been meaningfully involved in a discussion about their progress and changes to their personal circumstances. This enabled practitioners to make appropriate amendments to their plan of work and referrals to support services.

### Areas for improvement:

- In 24 out of 36 relevant cases reviewing did not identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour, and in 27 out of 32 relevant cases reviewing did not identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm.
- Reviewing was not sufficiently informed by input from other agencies. This meant opportunities to obtain critical intelligence about risk of reoffending and harm may have been missed.
- Practitioners demonstrated a lack of professional curiosity in response to disclosures about changes in personal circumstances, including intimate relationships and child contact. This resulted in a lack of appropriate action to address domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns.

<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.

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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>	22%

### Strengths:

- In 33 out of 41 cases, there were no further charges or convictions since the start of the order or licence being inspected. In 17 per cent of cases inspected there was a reduction in offending.
- Compliance was sufficient in 68 per cent of the inspected cases.

### Areas for improvement:

- There was only a 24 per cent improvement in the factors most closely linked to offending. This may be attributable to the fact that less than half of the people on probation in our case sample (37 per cent) had received necessary interventions and services.
- There was only a five per cent reduction in factors most closely linked to risk of harm to others. This was disappointing, but corresponded with our findings that work to protect others from harm needed to improve across all areas of case management.



## 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://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/glossary)