



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Brighton and East Sussex PDU

The Probation Service – Kent, Surrey and Sussex region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2024



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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

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

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Foreword

In the Brighton and East Sussex Probation Delivery Units (PDUs), staff and managers were committed, and we saw evidence of strong leadership. However, the management of cases was largely insufficient in terms of the quality of work being delivered. As a result of our findings, the PDU has been rated as 'Requires improvement' overall.

The PDU has a stable leadership team, who are creative, implementing the delivery plan and addressing challenges with the culture locally. They have adopted innovative ways of working with Violence and Exploitation Units (VERUs), specifically working with young adults across the PDU, and also a Short Sentence Function (SSF) supporting the release of people on probation from custody. However, despite the innovation seen, the management of risk in cases inspected across all teams within the PDU, was below expectations.

Whilst we were encouraged to see a middle manager team of Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) who were approachable and visible, the management oversight of cases was not sufficient. Probation practitioners within Brighton and East Sussex PDU included a large proportion of inexperienced and recently recruited officers. National training programmes have not addressed all learning needs to ensure practitioners have the necessary skills for this complex area of work. As such, the demand on middle managers to provide additional support, against a backdrop of an already significant workload, was unachievable.

There were positive working relationships with several other agencies, including local housing forums, youth justice services and Violence Reduction Partners. Whilst relationships with police and child safeguarding teams were positive, the return of domestic abuse enquiries had been significantly delayed over recent months, and strategic plans to address this were yet to impact on how cases were subsequently managed.

As we see too often, when information was received from other agencies this was not always followed up or used to inform and drive risk assessment and risk management. This is where we found that practitioners did not always have the professional confidence required to analyse, interpret relevant information and facilitate challenging conversations. There was a lack of services to reduce the risk of harm posed by individuals and interventions were not being implemented and delivered that resulted in any tangible reduction in the risk of further offending or serious harm.

A focus on the development of practice to identify, analyse and respond to risk of harm, along with improved implementation and delivery of sentence plans, is necessary for the development of the PDU in managing cases robustly. With the appropriate priority given to these aspects of probation work, improvements should be achieved.



Sue McAllister
Interim Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Brighton and East Sussex PDU

Fieldwork started November 2023

Score **4/21**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational arrangements and activity

1.1 Leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Services

Requires improvement



2. Service delivery

2.1 Assessment

Inadequate



2.2 Planning

Inadequate



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.4 Reviewing

Inadequate



Recommendations

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

Brighton and East Sussex PDU should:

1. ensure administrative processes for making police and child safeguarding enquiries are clear and fully understood by all staff
2. ensure domestic abuse and safeguarding information is analysed sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment, planning and management of people on probation
3. develop practitioners' confidence and skills in the use of professional curiosity and challenging conversations to identify, analyse, assess, plan and respond to indicators of risk effectively
4. ensure middle managers have sufficient capacity to provide the appropriate level of oversight according to the needs of staff members and casework in the team
5. improve the use of interventions and services to manage the risk of harm and support the desistance of people on probation.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Brighton and East Sussex PDU over the period of two weeks, beginning 27 November 2023. We inspected 26 community orders and 14 releases on licences from custody where sentences and licences had commenced between 10 April 2023 and 16 April 2023, and 15 May 2023 and 21 May 2023. We also conducted 34 interviews with probation practitioners.

Brighton and East Sussex PDU is one of five PDUs in the Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) probation region. Many of the core services within the PDU are managed pan-regionally, including unpaid work, interventions, and programmes and victim liaison.

There are three main offices across the PDU, with Brighton (Grand Parade), Eastbourne and Hastings being the core sites for the supervision of people on probation. There is also a satellite office in Tunbridge Wells to support the delivery of services to people in the north of the PDU. Additional building works at the Grand Parade office are being completed to improve accessibility, these are essential in order to facilitate the transfer of all staff from an office where the lease is due to terminate.

Brighton and East Sussex PDU is a mid-sized PDU in the KSS probation region and aligns across the Brighton & Hove City Council (a unitary authority) and East Sussex County Council, which is divided into five district and borough councils. The population of Brighton and East Sussex was 823,258¹, with proven reoffending rates of 21.6 per cent across KSS. These averages are higher in Brighton and Hove at 28.2 per cent and slightly lower across East Sussex at 19.7 per cent².

There has been a consistent head of PDU for two years, supported by a deputy head. At the time of inspection, the PDU had 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) SPOs in post. In total, there were 102.3 FTE probation practitioners³.

The PDU is serviced by three courts: Lewes Combined Court Centre and the Brighton and Hastings Magistrates' Courts. Brighton and East Sussex has one male prison within its footprint – HM Prison Lewes. There is also one male-approved premises across the PDU. Commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) are provided by Interventions Alliance for accommodation and education, training and employment (ETE); Forward Trust for personal wellbeing; and the Brighton Women's Centre for women's services.

Unlike many other areas inspected over the previous three years, Brighton and East Sussex PDU had not applied to enter prioritisation framework arrangements⁴ and, as such, were not subject to any demand management principles in terms of what was required to be prioritised in service delivery.

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics (December 2022). UK population estimates, mid 2021.

² Source: Ministry of Justice (October 2023). Proven reoffending statistics: Jan 2020 to Dec 2021.

³ Source: Brighton and East Sussex PDU data, 15/12/2023.

⁴ Prioritising probation framework – Post pandemic tool to help regions adapt to how they deliver probation services locally according to numbers of available staff.

1. Organisational arrangements and activity

1.1. Leadership



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

Good

There was recognition of strong and impressive leadership across the PDU which was reflected through governance arrangements and strengths in partnership relationships, leading to innovative initiatives being delivered and the development of a safe and professional culture. The PDU was faced with high learning and development needs, which was reflected through the cases inspected. However, they were not locally in a position to be able to provide the high level of support necessary to deliver high quality services. In considering the leadership demonstrated across the PDU, an overall rating for leadership of 'Good' has been evidenced against our standards.

Strengths:

- Brighton and East Sussex PDU operated with a permanent head of service for the last two years. This enabled a stable and consistent approach to leadership. Teams were reconfigured to drive a unified service, and offender management was operating within Probation Operational Delivery (POD) structures, as per the target operating model, to improve outcomes for people on probation.
- There was a clear vision for the PDU, developed with the engagement of staff, which articulated protect, collaborate, advocate and innovate as the core components of the vision. This clearly stated the priorities of how services should be delivered, with assessing and managing risk, working with partners, supporting people on probation and working in a solution-focussed way as the starting point for delivering against each of the core components.
- Delivery of services, and the plan for how this delivery will be achieved, was informed by regional business plans and translated locally via the vision for the PDU, the PDU business plan and the reducing reoffending strategy. The priorities of those plans aligned, in part, with evidence gathered throughout the inspection, particularly regarding relationships with partners and several examples of how these partnerships were being used to translate vision and strategy into frontline practice.
- There was a clear governance structure in place. This consisted of regular team meetings at middle manager and practitioner levels, providing updates on subject lead areas and considering innovative ideas and business cases. Quarterly learning and development boards and performance boards were chaired by the deputy head of service. A quarterly governance board was chaired by the head of service, to keep abreast of key partnership strategy and best practice. There was a route into the regional reducing reoffending board and commissioning team to support innovative ideas.
- Staff had largely been consulted and engaged when changes were implemented to team composition and ways of working, which created a

greater sense of ownership. This was particularly evident across the VERU and SSF teams.

- Likewise, staff indicated that they felt able to feed ideas to managers about change and provide constructive challenges when they didn't feel things were working well. In our survey, 23 out of 34 respondents indicated they considered that the culture promoted openness and constructive challenge.
- Across two of the three office sites inspected, there was a general sense that staff were able to feed in ideas regarding service delivery, about how the teams were working and to improve outcomes for people on probation, stating they would be heard and respected for their contributions.
- This was more difficult in the third of the sites inspected due to ongoing cultural issues within the office with recent and ongoing conduct issues with some staff. That said, there had been strong leadership displayed by senior managers, supported at a regional level, in order to address these issues constructively. This included the dismissal of staff when appropriate and arrangements having been made for interventions to be delivered with all staff across the PDU by the His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit.
- There were strong working relationships with key partners. Examples included co-location with the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) teams, ensuring consistent secondment of staff into the youth offending service (YOS) and a commitment to co-locating an officer within Front Door for Family Services in Brighton (and an ambition to replicate this across East Sussex). These relationships helped engage wider partners in achieving key delivery plan outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- Despite a consistent and stable leadership approach across the PDU, with a clear vision, strategy and business plan, this did not enable the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all people on probation.
- The key vision of protecting the public through assessing and managing risk thoroughly and effectively, along with gathering and sharing information appropriately, did not translate into practice as indicated by the cases we inspected.
- In recent months, there were significant and increasing delays to the return of domestic abuse enquiries made to Sussex Police. Direct action had been taken to resolve this with police senior leaders, with police staff being redeployed. Despite evidence of the gradual improvement in the rate and timeliness of returns, a significant number remain outstanding.

1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

Whilst Brighton and East Sussex PDU was in a stronger staffing position than many of the other PDUs across KSS, many of the staff were less experienced. The level of learning and development needs remained a critical challenge for the PDU. Newly recruited and newly qualified staff received a standard level of training. However, they required much more mentoring and oversight support than the PDU and region was not resourced to provide. This created additional pressure on the ability to deliver a high-quality service to people on probation, which resulted in an overall rating for staff of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- Staffing levels were recorded above target operating levels at the time of announcement, however, at the point of inspection, this was not the case, with the largest gaps in qualified Probation Officers (POs) and case administrators. That said, there was evidence of succession planning such as case administrators moving into PSO roles and recruitment of Probation Services Officer (PSO) grades to create a pipeline of potential probation qualification learners that, in turn, would support the future recruitment of newly qualified officers.
- Supervision was offered on a regular basis, and staff were engaged and motivated in their work. 28 out of 33 staff who responded to our survey felt they received supervision that enhanced the quality of their work with people on probation, with 30 out of 33 respondents stating supervision was offered at a sufficient frequency.
- Managers had an open-door policy and senior leaders were visible, which was appreciated and valued by staff.
- At the time of the inspection, there was a full staffing complement of middle managers to drive forward improvements to service delivery.
- Of the practitioners we interviewed during our case review, 32 out of 34 indicated that they believed they had sufficient skills, experience and knowledge to supervise the specific case, and we did not see any cases inappropriately allocated.
- Workloads were more manageable than we often see in other areas, with qualified officers averaging 106 per cent on the workload measurement tool and both PSO and PQiP officers below 100 per cent, on average, at the point of announcing the inspection.
- Staff were deployed to specific roles to support the delivery of key outcomes that aligned with the vision and plan for the PDU, including a commitment to seconding staff into YOS, co-locating with Front Door for Families within Brighton and ambitions for exploiting additional co-location opportunities, including with the Department of Work and Pensions and homeless teams.

There was a commitment to making the most valuable use of resources and this is being approached in a strategic and considered way.

- Actions taken to address poor performance and conduct were tackled proactively, including the use of performance improvement plans to improve practice and undertaking conduct investigations to address inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours within staff teams.

Areas for improvement:

- Newly recruited POs and PSOs with less experience indicated that whilst they knew what they were accountable for and that they should be applying professional curiosity and having challenging conversations, they did not fully understand the 'how' in terms of approaching difficult conversations with complex individuals. This meant that often conversations to inform risk management were lacking, as reflected in our case inspection findings.
- There was a degree of frustration that PQiP recruitment cannot be influenced by local managers who had examples of competent and skilled PSOs whom they considered suitable for progression. However, they had not been successful in national PQiP recruitment campaigns, which meant capable and competent staff were unable to progress despite support from their leaders.
- The impact of management oversight was insufficient. Managers were unable to record all case discussions, actions and advice to staff due to the high level of support being provided. While managers are trying to provide staff with additional support, management oversight was insufficient, ineffective or absent in a total of 32 out of 37 cases inspected.

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

Whilst there were impressive examples of partnership working and co-commissioning arrangements in place across the PDU, pro-active use of interventions and progression against sentence plans were not evidenced in the cases inspected. Consequently, this resulted in an overall rating for services of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- Senior leaders were proactive at co-commissioning with partners to improve the service provision by other agencies. This included working with police and youth justice services in the development of new and innovative ways of working and accessing safe spaces for supervision and the delivery of new interventions.
- A needs analysis was in place and reviewed routinely. This was used to support business cases for additional resources and also informed data collection and analysis of partnership boards, including housing and reducing violence initiatives.
- There were largely positive strategic relationships with both police and safeguarding services and in our practitioner interviews; 28 out of 33 said they had effective working relationships with other agencies to manage the risk of their cases and 25 out of 32 cases had effective working relationships with other agencies to support desistance.
- There was a positive relationship evidenced with a range of partner agencies, including children services, youth justice service, police and CRS providers.
- To support the delivery of pre-release work, the SSF team were being key trained for the local prison at HMP Lewes. This was aimed at improving both working relationships with resettlement teams locally and also access to, and outcomes for, those individuals approaching release. This plan had been frustrated by an increasing number of prisoners being transferred prior to release to alternative prisons, but there were still positives identified to this approach.
- The delivery of toolkits and structured interventions were not well evidenced in the cases we inspected. However, there was a new approach to the delivery of structured interventions, with this being delivered to all those identified as suitable unless probation practitioners managing the cases 'opt out'. If this is implemented as intended, it is likely to improve the delivery of targeted interventions to a higher number of cases.
- There had been a pilot running for the co-location of NHS mental health staff within Brighton to support the delivery of Community Mental Health Treatment Requirements from October 2023. This had resulted in an increase

in the number of orders being made over the last two months, but outcomes were still to be evidenced.

- There was a strong concordance between the number of Alcohol Treatment Requirements and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements being proposed and subsequently imposed by courts, indicating that there was confidence in the recommendations made by court staff.
- There was a strong commitment to the delivery of services to those under 25 years of age. A PSO was seconded into court for the purposes of managing young adult cases through the court system and seconded officers, on a split role basis, into youth justice services, allowing young adults to retain the same supervising officer from the Youth Offending Team into probation services. Young adult cases were usually allocated to the VERU, regardless of the nature of their offending, in order to be able to access specific services tailored to young people.
- Risk relating to young people and both knife crime and exploitation was being managed by both police and probation via the VERUs. These PODs operated across all three offices and linked in with local policing. As part of this approach, Brighton and East Sussex PDU agreed on funding for a Habitual Knife Carriers virtual reality programme which explored both the consequences and impact of knife crime. Delivery was still in its infancy but was considered a real asset by both probation and police.
- We were impressed by co-located and multi-agency working across IOM teams within the PDU. There was a demonstration of links with a number of services to support individuals subject to IOM management. Staff from both probation and police were engaged in the work they were delivering.
- There was a mentoring service available to young adults. Initially, this was a bespoke service designed to engage people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, however, due to the needs of cases, this had evolved and widened the cohort approach. This was delivered via SPEIL lived experience mentors, contracted at a regional level and practitioners spoke positively about the practical support being offered through this.

Areas for improvement:

- Recorded rates of referrals to CRS provisions for ETE and personal wellbeing interventions were low against the identified need. This was further reflected in the low levels of service provision noted in many of the cases we reviewed. There was a lack of confidence in some of the services being offered.
- Despite the reports of effective working relationships with partner agencies by practitioners, we did not see this consistently reflected in the cases we reviewed.
- Whilst there were women specific reporting times and access to women services via Brighton Women's Centre there remained work to do to fully integrate probation supervision within accessible and women-focussed services. Although there were middle manager leads for women, they were not fully sighted on all services offered via the women's service. Previous referrals to the CRS provision had not always translated into a service being offered due to inappropriate referrals and an alternative way of screening new cases (taken from learning in West Sussex) was being implemented to improve engagement and compliance.

- Whilst 12 out of 22 respondents to our survey indicated that they thought they had access to the right services to meet the needs and risks of their cases, this was not seen in practice with interventions and services often lacking from the management of the case.
- In a number of cases inspected, Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR) activity was still yet to commence, and this was insufficient. Successful completion rates for programmes, within the last twelve months were 89 per cent for those convicted of a sexual offence, which was positive but only 57 per cent for those convicted of other offences. Relationships between probation practitioners and intervention providers was only sufficiently evidenced in three of the six relevant cases, indicating this is an area for development.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 71 people on probation as part of this inspection. This included 58 face-to-face surveys, six in-depth interviews and nine surveys completed online. Of those surveyed (67), 91 per cent were male and nine per cent were female. In total, 43 per cent were subject to a community order, with 52 per cent reporting following a period in prison, four per cent were unsure what sentence they were subject to. Most respondents were aged 25 years or over, which is representative of the caseload of the PDU. Those with a diverse ethnicity were under-represented within the cohort.

- The majority of respondents stated that they understood what was expected of them whilst on probation. However, one in five stated they were not aware of having a sentence plan. Of those who were aware of their sentence plan, one in three stated they were not involved in creating it. This lack of engagement with people on probation in the planning, implementation and review of the sentence was evidenced in our case inspection.
- Respondents expressed a mixed experience of their induction, with some not feeling that their needs were understood. However, overall, 64 per cent stated that they thought their probation practitioner took the time to understand their personal needs during induction, and this was reflected in our inspection data.
- Regarding their experience of probation appointments, 45 out of 67 respondents stated they felt these were helpful in supporting their rehabilitation.

“Very useful, it keeps you switched on and understanding the next steps.”

- Unfortunately, this was not always the case, with 16 out of 67 respondents indicating that they did not find their appointments with probation helpful.

“Nothing’s getting sorted in my appointments. Most of the time it’s just chit-chat and nothing I need.”

- Almost mirroring whether respondents felt probation supervision was supporting their rehabilitation, 44 out of 67 stated they had a good working relationship with their probation practitioner, with 15 out of 67 indicating this wasn’t the case.
- Encouragingly, most respondents stated their appointments started on time, were held within a reasonable distance in terms of travel, they felt safe accessing the probation office and that they had been able to contact their practitioner when they needed to.
- Access to mental health support was the largest unmet need amongst respondents, and this was reflected by practitioners who stated there were gaps in mental health provisions in the community.

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- 'Being responsive to meet diverse needs' was part of the core pillars of the vision for how services should be delivered.
- There was evidence that diversity characteristics had been asked about at the start of the sentence in 88 per cent of the cases inspected. As the sentence progressed, sufficient focus was given to maintaining an effective working relationship, taking into account diversity needs in 70 per cent of cases.
- Personal circumstances were considered throughout the duration of the sentence in the majority of cases.
- Diversity data was shared and used to inform services and drive commissioning priorities. This included the Violence Reduction Partnership and Youth Adolescent Strategy Board to track knife crime across Brighton and East Sussex PDU. Much of this work impacted directly on how services were delivered by probation, including the development of a VERU POD model across the PDU specifically to work with young adults.
- Diversity and protected characteristic data were used to inform housing research, with case examples being given to partners regarding the risk and needs of people on probation struggling to access accommodation, with a view to improving outcomes.
- Of the PDU staff, 11 per cent identify as from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, in comparison to 12 per cent of people on probation.
- There was active engagement with local universities, promoting the work of the probation service and encouraging applications into the service. This included identified staff to engage with students from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background and neurodivergent learners to promote the recruitment of a diverse staff group.
- Tackling unacceptable behaviour amongst staff was a priority and we saw examples of how discriminatory values and attitudes were being dealt with via grievance and disciplinary procedures. This was being led by a strong management team, supported by HR and KSS equalities lead.
- To help improve the culture within the workplace, HMPPS Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit was scheduled to deliver a number of events in 2024. This was to support the development of a safe and supported professional space within which to work.

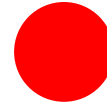
Areas for improvement:

- Analysis of protected characteristics and how this impacted an individual's ability to engage and comply in the initial assessment was only evidenced in 63 per cent of the cases inspected. Furthermore, this only translated to protected characteristics being considered in the planning stages of sentences in 35 per cent of cases.
- Within women's services in general, it was acknowledged that women from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds were under-represented in

accessing the service, and they struggled to engage with these women. Whilst they were exploring ways of improving this, the management team across both probation and CRS acknowledged that their staff group was not representative of the local community, this changed when unpaid volunteers and mentors were included in staff numbers.

2. Service delivery

2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁵ for assessment is inadequate based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

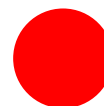
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	58%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	65%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	23%

- A higher number of people on probation were meaningfully engaged in their initial assessment when they were subject to licence supervision (11 out of 14), rather than subject to a community order (11 out of 26). This reflected the work completed via the SSF team, and also those longer-serving, high risk of serious harm licence cases who had an established working relationship with their probation practitioner pre-release.
- The current model within the PDU for initial reporting and induction, post-sentence when a community order had been given, was not conducive to building a working relationship with the person on probation straight after sentence and this was reflected in engagement scores.
- Factors relating to offending were identified and analysed sufficiently in three-quarters of all cases, with the strengths and protective factors being identified in three-fifths of cases. Focusing on factors linked to offending and desistance was more strongly evidenced as sufficient within licence cases than those subject to community supervision.
- Where we did see initial risk assessments delivered well. This included liaison with other agencies, pro-active use of the information obtained to inform assessments and evidenced classification of risk of harm level with sufficient analysis regarding the nature and impact of an individual's behaviour. However, this was evidenced in too few cases, and assessment was rated 'Inadequate' based on an insufficient focus on keeping other people safe.

⁵ 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](#).

- In 20 out of 35 relevant cases inspected, there was either missing or insufficient information received regarding domestic abuse, which directly impacted the subsequent quality of assessment. Even when domestic abuse information was received, often a number of weeks after being requested, this was not always used to inform the overall risk assessment of the case. There had been disruptions to the return of domestic abuse and police intelligence enquiries due to changes in police staffing structures, although at the point of inspection these backlogs were being addressed.
- Information relating to child protection and safeguarding was more routinely used to inform risk assessments, however it was still lacking in 16 out of 34 cases. As a consequence of delays in obtaining information and the subsequent lack of pro-active use of information received from all sources, the assessment of risk to others was insufficient in 23 out of 39 cases inspected.
- The assessments failed to analyse specific concerns relating to actual and potential victims in 24 out of 39 cases, and subsequently, initial assessments were not sufficiently focused on keeping other people safe.
- The lack of analysis relating to the risk of harm posed by people on probation and understanding the impact of information obtained from other agencies was underutilised and reflected the gaps in professional confidence amongst practitioners due to the outstanding learning and development needs of the workforce.

2.2. Planning



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

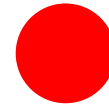
Inadequate

Our rating for planning is inadequate based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	40%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	68%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	45%

- Limited discussions took place with people on probation about their sentence and risk management plans. In too many cases, there was insufficient attention paid to engaging the person on probation with both the formulation and planning of sentence plan objectives, and this was also reflected in findings by User Voice. This engagement was better evidenced with those subject to licence supervision, often beginning pre-release, but still not across all cases.
- Whilst planning took account of personal circumstances in 27 out of 40 cases we inspected, wider planning failed to address possible barriers to compliance and willingness to engage with supervision.
- Identification and planning that focussed on reducing reoffending and supporting the person on probation's desistance was sufficiently demonstrated in 27 out of 40 cases. This included prioritising the critical factors linked to offending and identifying other services that would support the individual in addressing their behaviour, as well as the need for referrals into interventions, CRS provisions and mental health support.
- However, in under half of cases (18 out of 39), planning did not sufficiently address the risk of harm factors or prioritise those that were most critical. Largely, this was due to failing to fully consider and analyse the risk of harm to others and the subsequent actions required to keep actual and potential victims safe. In most cases where this information was absent it specifically linked to inter-familial violence, domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns, all critical to public protection.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

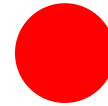
Our rating for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	53%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	38%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	25%

- In just under half of the cases inspected (18 out of 40), requirements of the sentence did not start promptly, either due to them not being delivered or due to non-compliance of those subject to supervision. Requirements were started promptly for those subject to licence supervision rather than community orders and again, this reflects some of the challenges we saw in the current model of allocating to a probation practitioner post-sentence in community cases.
- An additional complication for people on probation being able to progress through their sentence plan objectives and access the services they needed came from a change in officers. In over half the cases inspected (21 out of 40), there had been two or more practitioners allocated to the case since the start of their order or licence.
- Where cases had transferred, the most recent officer had often been unaware of what had happened previously within the case and was not fully sighted on all factors pertinent to both risk and need. In part, they apportioned this to receiving several case allocations at once when other staff members left and needing to address previous poor practice within cases to get them up to scratch. There did not appear to be a mechanism to allow for work relief for the proper handover and embedding of new cases at the point of transfer.
- Out of 26 cases where a RAR was ordered at court, 14 had no RAR interventions delivered at the point of inspection, which was up to seven months post-sentence, which was insufficient.
- There were six people on probation subject to accredited programmes within the inspected cohort. Effective partnership working with the regional intervention teams was only evidenced in half of these cases, and we saw little evidence of probation practitioners accessing structured interventions or delivering toolkits.

- Whilst there was good engagement between Change, Grow, Live and some of the cases we inspected, in part promoted by the co-location of services within offices, there was a lack of traction in implementing Alcohol Treatment requirements.
- Referrals into CRS for support with accommodation, personal wellbeing or ETE were not evidenced in all cases where we would have expected to see this. There were 12 out of 30 cases where access to CRS would have been appropriate but this was not considered or actioned.
- Whilst we acknowledged that the conversion rate from referrals into CRS to a service being offered was problematic, more could have been done to encourage practitioners to utilise these services with their cases. Many practitioners were of the opinion that there was little point in referring as they might as well do the work themselves, yet where services were delivered well, particularly in regard to personal wellbeing, dependency and recovery and ETE services, these had a positive impact on cases.
- There was no directory of services for probation practitioners to refer to in determining what additional services were available for their cases to access. Whilst there have been attempts to do this on a wide scale for cases under the age of 25, a more generic guide, detailing core services, may improve referral rates, and subsequent implementation and delivery within cases.
- Enforcement action was not taken in all cases when required. In 18 out of 26 cases, there was a lack of appropriate enforcement action, even where there had been repeated failure to attend or comply.
- Where risk management was delivered well, this included ongoing sharing of information in relation to both child safeguarding issues and domestic abuse, but this was not seen across all cases. In 25 out of 37 cases, involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm was insufficiently co-ordinated.
- Given the lack of attention to managing risk regarding actual and potential victims, lack of co-ordination with other services and lack of home visits to support risk management, the implementation and delivery of services were insufficient to support the safety of other people.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	45%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	43%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	30%

- Where reviewing activity was delivered well, this included engaging the person on probation about their progress, barriers to engagement, and compliance and setting future objectives. This was often done on an informal basis rather than with formal written reviews.
- Cases that were well managed included an increase in the frequency of reporting when required due to a change of circumstances, for instance, during periods of mental health decline or increased substance misuse.
- This was not consistently applied, and we saw instances where an increase in reporting would have been appropriate, not considered. There was also evidence of a lack of challenge within cases when changes relating to risk or need had been identified. Less experienced staff were honest in telling us that whilst they felt they knew the 'why' of professional curiosity, they lacked the confidence and skills to manage challenging and complex conversations, and consequently, these were at times avoided.
- Formal written reviews were only undertaken in a third of cases where it would have been appropriate to do so when considering risk factors, although we did see an increase in reviewing activity immediately prior to inspection which did assist refocusing the priorities in managing the case.
- In 28 out of 35 cases, the reviewing activity failed to identify and address changes in factors relating to risk of harm, and necessary adjustments were not made to the ongoing plan of work. This was insufficient and reflects the lack of robust risk management that we found in too many cases.

2.5 Outcomes

Strengths:

- Where professional curiosity was applied with a consistent approach and confident professional boundaries, there was evidence of effective engagement and risk management of cases, which resulted in appropriate links into safeguarding services and cases progressing through interventions to address both risk and need.

Areas for improvement:

- Sufficient improvements in those factors most closely linked to offending, relating to both developing strengths and addressing needs, were only evidenced in seven out of 40 cases. This reflected the gaps we saw within sentence implementation and delivery.
- Improvements to the individual factors linked to risk of harm were only evidenced in five out of 39 cases inspected. This largely reflected what we had seen in terms of the quality of work delivered in managing the risk of harm and lack of reviewing any changes to risk related factors.
- There was room for improvement in terms of engaging and supporting individuals to comply, with sufficient compliance being evidenced in just under half (19 out of 40) of cases.

Annexe one – Web links

Full data from this inspection and further information about the methodology used to conduct this inspection is available [on our website](#).

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