



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Bedfordshire PDU

The Probation Service – East of England region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2024



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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.

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Foreword

The Bedfordshire Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) demonstrated a number of strengths, specifically relating to the strong partnership arrangements with local services and efforts being made to address the long-standing cultural experiences of its staff. The unit illustrated partnership strengths through multi-agency arrangements, innovative development of some services and in particular, smooth and transparent information sharing arrangements with the police and children's services. However, the leadership efforts at this strategic level did not set clear priorities for staff delivering frontline services, reflected in our ratings of 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement' for casework. Overall, the PDU is rated 'Requires improvement'.

We were impressed by the positive and motivated culture that existed for administration staff, the backbone of an organisation, which was set up well to support frontline service delivery. However, some middle managers and frontline staff did not share this enthusiasm and positive outlook. Some staff are not happy, feeling unsafe and reported experiencing discrimination, together with high workloads and limited staffing capacity to share the load. Senior leaders are addressing these challenges and have worked with equity, diversity and inclusion departments to lift the lid on staff experiences and develop a psychologically safe working environment. Continued work is needed to increase visibility of the future direction of addressing cultural and morale barriers to make the PDU the best working environment for all.

The PDU is not fully resourced at all levels with concerns at the level of gaps for frontline service delivery. Some services are also deprioritised, in response to vacancies and high workloads, which reflects some of the reasons for the limited evidence of service delivery taking place. Ultimately though, the rehabilitation of people on probation and quality of work to keep the communities safe is being affected. While national operational policy changes are being introduced (probation reset), we are yet to see how national governance arrangements are effectively supporting struggling PDUs to deliver the services required.

Having outlined the challenges and concerns, the PDU leadership understand the areas for improvement and recognise there are strengths that they can build up further to strengthen the position of the workforce. They have indeed made efforts to drive local recruitment, staff are recognised through the reward and recognition scheme, and we have outlined positive practice where we have seen it to support learning and drive further improvements.

This PDU can only make the required changes if firstly, they are supported nationally by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to recruit and train the required staff, secondly, by actively, openly and positively creating a safe environment for all which incorporates equity, diversity and inclusion and thirdly, by focusing on the quality of frontline service delivery and providing necessary oversight arrangements to rehabilitate people on probation and protect the public.



Martin Jones
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Bedfordshire PDU

Fieldwork started: 20 May 2024

Score **4/21**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational arrangements and activity

P 1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



P 1.2 Staffing

Requires improvement



P 1.3 Services

Requires improvement



2. Service delivery

P 2.1 Assessment

Inadequate



P 2.2 Planning

Requires improvement



P 2.3 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



P 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.

Bedfordshire PDU should:

1. understand the needs and address actual and potential barriers for staff to promote equality, diversity and inclusion
2. ensure sufficient attention is paid to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, addressing actual and potential barriers (for engagement/compliance) for people on probation
3. improve the quality of work to assess, manage and review risk of harm
4. ensure that pre-release planning focusses sufficiently on managing the risk of harm
5. ensure domestic abuse and child safeguarding information is analysed sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment, planning and management of people on probation
6. ensure that people on probation have appropriate access to interventions and services
7. ensure that strategic priorities are clearly communicated and understood by probation practitioners and middle managers
8. 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.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Bedfordshire PDU over a period of two weeks, week one commencing 20 May 2024 and week two commencing 03 June 2024. We inspected 27 community orders and 21 releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences commenced between 09 October 2023 and 15 October 2023 and 06 November 2023 and 12 November 2023. We also conducted 35 interviews with probation practitioners.

Bedfordshire is one of eight PDUs in the East of England region. Geographically, it spans three unitary authority areas; Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton and is served by Bedfordshire Police force. There are three PDU offices, one in Bedford and two in Luton, plus two courts: Luton Crown Court and Luton and South Bedfordshire Magistrates' Court. The court staff are managed within the PDU.

The head of service had been in post since December 2022 and was supported by a deputy head of service. At the point of our inspection some probation activity had been deprioritised under the national Prioritisation Framework (PF). The PDU was operating in amber under the PF and had previously been a red site just prior to the inspection announcement.

The overall staff in post was at 97 per cent against target staffing figures. Vacancies existed at all grades with the most significant being the Probation Officer (PO) grade at 34 per cent.

The population of Luton is ethnically and culturally diverse, with 55 per cent of the population being from a minority ethnic background. Bedford is the county town of Bedfordshire and includes a significant rural area. The population of Bedford is approximately 187,466 and central Bedford is approximately 301,501 people. Approximately 24 per cent of the population of Bedford, and 10 per cent of central Bedfordshire, have a minority ethnic background. The Bedfordshire PDU caseload is made up of approximately 19 per cent of people from a minority ethnic background.

The total caseload for Bedfordshire PDU at the time of inspection announcement was 2148. This comprised 917 community sentences and 655 people on post-release supervision. There were a further 576 cases in the custodial estate.

A range of commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) were delivered across the PDU: Interventions Alliance are responsible for accommodation, the Forward Trust delivers personal wellbeing services. Luton Citizens Advice had recently commenced delivery of the finance, benefit and debt services via a grant agreement in November 2023. Advance Charity subcontract local women's service provision to Luton All Women's Centre in Bedford and Stepping Stones in Luton. Change, Grow, Live provide dependency and recovery services in Luton, while Path 2 Recovery (P2R) provide the service in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

1. Organisational arrangements and activity

P 1.1. Leadership



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

Requires improvement

Leadership reflected some strengths with a commitment to service improvement. Strategic relationships were impressive with the success of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) model in Bedfordshire as one example of the collaboration between statutory and charity services. Chronic under resourcing, particularly in the PO grade, inevitably impacted on the quality of work undertaken with people on probation and the ability to operate a learning culture. Significant effort had been made to manage resourcing and several strategies to manage workload allocation were in operation. The rating of 'Requires improvement' reflects the significant issues and challenges faced by the PDU.

Strengths:

- The vision and strategy were aligned to regional and national priorities and progress had been achieved against the delivery plan. It was a particular strength that some achievements were being made given that over the last 12 months both the PDU and a range of service providers had significant issues with staffing, potentially likely to disrupt service delivery which they prevented. Strategic partnerships were a strength, with positive relationships across all key partnerships and consistent representation at strategic groups. Governance arrangements were effective in monitoring and reviewing delivery across the partnerships. The head of service chaired the IOM executive board and the Reducing Reoffending board, demonstrating a pro-active approach to ensuring probation had a voice and supported partnership arrangements.
- Senior leaders had a solid understanding of the risks to service delivery and had prioritised mitigating these challenges. The approach to mitigating staff shortages had seen tangible improvements in the numbers of staff at administration and Probation Services Officer (PSO) grade. Priority had been given to the learning and development of new staff given the significant numbers of staff with under two years' experience through a structured induction and training programme which included the introduction of a dedicated Senior Probation Officer (SPO) for new PSOs. Our case inspection showed early indications of the success of this initiative.
- A response was taken following concerns of unacceptable behaviour, with specialist support sought from national and regional arrangements such as the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviours Unit (TUBU), the regional equalities manager and DAWN (Disability, Advocacy, Wellbeing Network), PIP (Pride in Prison and Probation) and RISE (Racial Inclusion and Striving for Equality) representatives.
- Reasonable adjustments were accessible for staff with a disability, and barriers were overcome that had previously existed for some time.

- Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) were well established, collaborative and were supported by the strategic management board. The strategy ensured multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) and other panels and boards were integrated across critical public protection partnerships to enhance information sharing for the most critical cases.
- An engaging people on probation co-ordinator, with lived experience, was embedded in the PDU. Monthly coffee mornings took place to gain feedback from people on probation to drive changes. The co-ordinator was included in the quality matters and equality boards for consultation and sharing the voice of people on probation. The co-ordinator was also involved in commissioning and recruitment. User Voice found that two-thirds of people on probation that participated in their survey felt their views had been sought and listened to.
- Multi-agency arrangements were in place to understand learning from serious further offences (SFOs), domestic homicide and serious case reviews. Action was taken to identify learning from these forums via a weekly newsletter, weekly POD (sub-team) meetings and at the Quality Matter board. Staff told us learning from SFOs was rolled out well and gave examples of process developments with safeguarding and domestic abuse enquiries in response.

Areas for improvement:

- The impact the PDU's vision and strategy was not reflected consistency across all standards of casework. The concerns with practice to keep people safe related to the identification of current and future victims, information gathering, and utilising all relevant sources of information as well as contingency planning to manage risk.
- Staff survey results highlighted unacceptable behaviour in the form of bullying and mental/emotional abuse which was more prevalent for minority ethnic staff. Whilst we were optimistic about the action that had taken place, senior leaders and middle management were not sufficiently setting the necessary expectations to foster inclusivity.
- In addition, legacy issues prior to the current unification of probation services had a significant impact on culture, with staff experiencing hierarchal differences and operating in cliques, where we heard examples of teams being referred to as the CRC or NPS¹ which were no longer in existence.
- To some extent high workloads and staff stress was causing poor morale, with staff describing being in survival mode at work. However, the impact of *Transforming Rehabilitation* and later unification were so significant that despite staff turnover, practitioners were not working collaboratively to deliver the service. The relatively recent introduction of a POD model and closure of Sceptre House, if managed well, should go some way to improving culture and promoting one identify for all staff and the PDU.
- Although the extent of the culture and morale issues were deep rooted and will take time to achieve tangible change, the lack of effective and transparent communication about the delivery on the TUBU action plan left

¹ Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS), probation service agencies delivering service under *Transforming Rehabilitation*.

staff unclear on action taken. At the time of the inspection some staff did not feel safe to share their experiences. Staff were not hearing what the work leaders and managers were doing to address the culture which needed effective communication and prominence through clear messaging.

- Efforts to communicate messages to staff were undermined by high workloads and feeling overwhelmed with the volume of information, and inconsistent messaging from middle managers. Staff were disconnected from the vision and priorities of the PDU. Some learning and collaboration networks existed for new PSOs, PQiPs and administration staff, however, the PF which had moved from amber, to red and back to amber had delayed plans to roll out protected learning time and instil mandatory attendance at thematic workshops and learning events. Ultimately, although there were some initiatives that contributed to a learning culture through new staff learning, IOM and engaging people on probation, until practitioners, particularly existing staff, are better engaged with this work there will be deficits in the ownership of improvement for people on probation.

P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

Chronic staff shortages impacted on the quality-of-service delivery, particularly the implementation and delivery of services and work to manage risk of harm. Despite the staffing obstacles, there had been innovation in the approach to supporting new PSOs, recruitment had also seen some successes.

Strengths:

- Recruitment was a key priority and the success in the PDU's approach to rolling recruitment campaigns and local events meant that staffing overall had increased in the last 12 months by 37.5 full-time equivalent. Staff retention was a strength, with overall staff attrition at 4.7 per cent. Processes to welcome and induct new staff were positive, and new staff spoke well about their induction experiences. The dedicated SPO for new PSOs delivered an induction programme which included learning and shadowing opportunities. New PSOs generally spoke positively of their experience of this process.
- Strategies to reduce the impact of resourcing deficits were utilised, including support from outside of the PDU, agency staff and overtime. Consistency and the importance of practitioner relationships were priorities despite resourcing pressures, which was reflected in the cases inspected where 96 per cent had no more than two practitioners assigned.
- Administrators described manageable workloads. Administrators were impressive; they were motivated, engaged, and connected to the bigger picture of service delivery. They had ownership of lead roles that were effective in driving quality service provision – for example, a dedicated administrator was in post to support performance and processes to track and monitor that safeguarding and domestic abuse enquiries were embedded.
- The diversity of the staff group was representative of the local community and the caseload. With 43 per cent of the staff group from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with 18.9 per cent of the caseload, and 18.9 per cent in the local community.
- We found examples across all grades of development opportunities with practitioner and SPO subject area lead roles as well as promotion and progression. Of the middle management team, 41 per cent were from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic group.
- The use of reward and recognition was fully embedded, and staff were aware of how to use this to recognise their colleague's work.
- Alongside the national Competency Based Framework, the PDU had designed a 'development needs analysis' tool pilot to identify and agree individual developmental plans.
- The approach to poor performance recognised the significant workloads and reflected the PDU having been a red site under the PF in the period just prior

to inspection. Poor performance was dealt with through informal performance plans, additional support via quality development officers (QDOs) and mentoring/buddying opportunities.

Areas for improvement:

- Vacancies existed across all staff grades. The workloads of POs and SPOs were significant and had an impact on morale and wellbeing. The biggest vacancies were at PO grade (34 per cent) and plans to reach target establishment figures was at least six months away. With 16 out of 23 relevant staff responding to our survey describing the workload as unmanageable; ultimately the deficits at PO grade impacted the ability to deliver a quality service overall.
- Sickness levels in the last 12 months were significant at 16.8 days. Whilst average sickness had reduced at the time of our inspection to 8.4 days, PO sickness absence remained high at 15.3 days. Work-related stress was one cause of long-term sickness absence for POs.
- The number of PQiP staff, and the reduction in capacity to carry a full caseload, meant that the PDU was unable spread the workload. Overall average workload measure tool (WMT) figures for Bedford were 113 per cent and Luton 122 per cent, however some practitioners had the equivalent of two people's work, (198 per cent) on WMT, and others were operating for prolonged periods above 150 per cent. Workloads of this size, over a prolonged period were not supportive and hazardous for staff wellbeing.
- SPOs described being overwhelmed with their workloads, resourcing pressures, managing staff stress and wellbeing, for some, was having an impact on their own stress and wellbeing. With 30 per cent of the middle management grade being relatively new, managing these staff pressures, alongside delivering a service with limited staff, and providing necessary oversight was a challenge.
- Staff supervision took place every four to six weeks but was not having significant enough impact on the quality of casework. Similarly, management oversight was ineffective or absent in 33 out of 47 cases.
- For senior leaders, Bedfordshire was a complex PDU with three unitary authorities requiring multiple sets of strategic partnerships and oversight of service delivery across both town and rural geographies. The issues with unacceptable behaviour required significant resource to manage complaints and grievances in the last 12 months whilst progressing a programme of work to take action. While the necessary support was identified from specialist teams, the impact of running an understaffed PDU, with geographical complexities and addressing the cultural issues, will have impacted on the head of service and deputy head of service, who would benefit from wellbeing support.

P 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

Decision guidance states that for an overall rating of 'Requires improvement', the rating for Implementation and delivery, would usually be 'Requires improvement' or 'Good'. Although 2.3 was rated 'Inadequate', there were significant strengths in the services delivery, which have led to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- There was a comprehensive offer of services, including CRS, as well as targeted and specialist services demonstrating local innovation commissioned by the regional outcome innovation fund via contracts and grants.
- Provision for women was under development despite resourcing issues. There was an impressive holistic women's centre provision in Bedford with two dedicated semi-specialist practitioners who were co-located at the centre. Staffing pressures had delayed similar arrangements being maintained in Luton, however, women-only reporting arrangements were in place. A similar women's centre was available and there were strong relationships with partners to develop the model further in Luton once staffing levels allow.
- Aligned to regional priorities and informed by recommendations made in the HM Inspectorate of Probation Race Equality in Probation thematic inspection, the PDU had commissioned three specialist services for minority ethnic people on probation to provide therapeutic interventions through the 'Belong Me Time' project, one-to-one mentoring and coaching through Luton Town Football Club and support with community re-integration through 'Luton Rights'. Although these services were new, referrals were being made and providers were positive about the relationship with staff and where delivery had commenced early outcomes were promising.
- We found no barriers to information sharing with the police and child/adult safeguarding. Requests for intelligence from a range of police departments within Bedfordshire and neighbouring counties were returned timely and were of sufficient quality. This was the same for requests made with all three unitary authorities in relation to safeguarding enquiries.
- MAPPAs were robust. Up to 10 MAPPAs level 2 cases were discussed each week, chaired by a co-ordinator ensuring liaison and joint working across all relevant agencies in Bedfordshire. The co-ordinator had effective processes to share information across other risk management panels for domestic abuse, serious youth violence and gang-related offending in Bedfordshire such as MARAC, MAGpan (multi-agency gangs panel) and the serious youth violence panel. There were examples of enhanced management of risk under MAPPAs level 2 in our case inspection.
- The arrangements under IOM between the regional IOM team and You Turn Futures to monitor, evaluate and review provision were impressive. Quarterly review of service availability supported identification of risks and gaps in

provision and informed commissioning arrangements. The co-ordination of this work by the charity You Turn Futures who are commissioned as IOM co-ordinators in Bedfordshire added real value to the scheme.

- IOM commissioning included a range of bespoke services specific to supporting people with long-term substance misuse. Some examples of services available under IOM include a trauma counselling service and Boxing Saves Lives, which gives help to build self-esteem and self-worth.

Areas for improvement:

- The implementation and delivery of services was rated 'Inadequate' in the cases we inspected. Of particular concern was the delivery of services to keep people safe and reduce the risk harm posed by people on probation; 35 out of 48 cases inspected were determined to be insufficient. The co-ordination of a multi-agency approach to manage domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns was determined to be insufficient in many cases.
- There was not enough use of third sector and voluntary services within the local community to fill the gaps. Whilst there was a comprehensive Bedford services directory, the level of delivery of services in the caseload did not suggest this was having a significant impact on people on probation accessing the services they need.
- Despite effective MAPPA arrangements at levels 2 and 3, more work was required in relation to MAPPA level 1 cases. Work was being progressed and dedicated administration support to monitor and support performance improvement with registration and reviews was in place. Some MAPPA level 1 cases were missing registrations and reviews, and there were examples of high-risk cases requiring better coordination of services to manage risk.
- There were too many cases lacking a strengths-based focus. Building strengths and enhancing protective factors was found to be insufficient in 60 per cent of cases.
- Similar to what we have seen in other PDUs, regionally and nationally, the CRS service for accommodation provided by Interventions Alliance faced significant challenges, with many staff viewing this service as ineffective. Staffing for the provider had been a challenge, as had managing the expectations of practitioners in line with the agreed level of service under nationally agreed regional contracts.
- Personal wellbeing CRS provision had experienced similar staffing issues adding to reduced practitioner confidence in CRS provision overall. There was due to be two newly appointed personal wellbeing staff co-located in PDU offices imminently and the provider was positive about plans to improve service availability.
- Accredited programme delivery was mixed. Four out of nine cases with a programme requirement did not commence timely and in the same cases partnership working with the interventions team was ineffective. Where programmes did commence, insufficient progress was achieved largely due to an overly lenient approach to enforcement.
- Very little meaningful work took place in the inspected cases, and planned appointments took the format of a check-in. This was disappointing as there were signs that the planning to work with people was a strength, however

implementing and delivering on those plans was too difficult against a context of high workloads and an absence of resource in many of the available services.

- The delivery of services to protect actual and potential victims and coordination of effective multi-agency working was found to be insufficient. Overall, the implementation and delivery of services to support the safety of other people effectively was insufficient in almost three-quarters of the inspected cases.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 73 people on probation as part of this inspection, eight people completed an online survey, 61 were interviewed face-to-face and a further five people contributed to the evaluation via in-depth interviews. Of the 69 survey respondents, 46 per cent were supervised post-release from prison and 52 per cent were subject to community-based sentences. There was a slight over representation of women and people from a minority ethnic background in comparison with overall caseload demographic.

Strengths:

- Three-quarters of respondents felt they had been treated fairly by probation staff, and 69 per cent felt practitioners took time to understand their personal needs during the induction period.
- When asked if they understood what was expected of them while on probation, 86 per cent responded positively.
- Overall, three in every four respondents reported a positive relationship with their practitioner.

“They have supported me through all my challenges. I’ve struggled with alcohol for a long time. I can now say no to drinking. I’ve completed all of my RAR (rehabilitation activity requirement) days. I’m nearly finished on probation. My officer listens to me. It’s good to have someone to talk to.”

Areas for improvement:

- Only half of the people on probation surveyed said they had been involved in creating their own sentence plan. This is slightly more than our case inspection findings.
- Similarly, with our findings of insufficient delivery of services support desistance effectively, fewer than half of those surveyed have been able to access the support they need in a reasonable amount of time.

“I’m waiting for support for mental health and my alcohol problem, but I am on a waiting list.”

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- The head of service was described by some local equalities board members as a 'champion for diversity' and had prioritised tackling unacceptable behaviour and improving the culture. The action taken was a result of listening to staff and investigating negative staff experiences. There was optimism amongst some staff about improving inclusivity and equality, with recognition of the work that was outstanding. Initiatives such as the Black, Asian and minority ethnic recruitment panel members scheme were in place within the recruitment processes.
- The Autism Bus had been commissioned in response to regional data identifying a need to understand how to work with people with a diagnosis of Autism. The Autism Bus provided staff with an opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of Autism.
- A young adult support worker had been newly recruited to work with 18-25-year-olds, in recognition of the expert knowledge and experience needed to maximise engagement.

Areas for improvement:

- The number of grievances raised in the PDU following the TUBU climate assessment was an important measure of staff dissatisfaction. Whilst it was positive that staff felt able to instigate formal complaint processes, some minority ethnic staff were experiencing incidents of racism, discrimination and poor behaviour. In direct correlation with the findings of HM Inspectorate of Probation's Race Thematic in 2021, and review in 2023, perceptions about the fairness of outcomes between white and non-white staff of formal complaint processes, staff from minority ethnic groups in the Bedfordshire PDU perceived unfairness in processes in comparison to their counterparts. The PDU had worked in line with national HR processes, however, the recommendations of the race thematic for HM Prison and Probation Service to revise grievance processes in consultation with staff and representative organisations had not had traction here.
- Despite mobilising support such as TUBU and consultation with staff network leads, the culture and morale remained poor. Some minority ethnic staff we spoke to did not find the culture to be open and safe and there was an absence of support specific to this need, such as access to Race Allies.
- A transparent local equalities plan that sets out the arrangements to improve inclusivity for all staff (to include all intersectionality) and staff confidence in challenging discrimination was not in place.
- There was an absence of robust monitoring and reviewing of reward and recognition for staff to enhance the current process. Some staff perceived inequity in recognition of their work or ideas and more robust monitoring and reviewing of current process is needed.
- Despite the staff group being representative of the caseload and local community, the value of the diverse workforce was not realised. This was

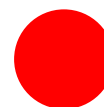
particularly significant given the parallels we found in the casework around analysis and planning to support personal circumstances and protected characteristics. Practice² with people on probation from minority ethnic backgrounds was found to be of lower quality across the cases inspected.

- Assessing and planning protected characteristics and ways to effectively work with protected characteristics was insufficient in the casework. Work to increase practitioner understanding of protected characteristics and confidence to hold conversations with people on probation about the impact of discrimination was not taking place.

² 'The findings relating to ethnicity have not been subject to a relative rate index analysis, which is test used to compare rates of incidence, we report on our findings with that caveat.'

2. Service delivery

P 2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating³ for assessment 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 assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	52%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	60%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	42%

- While analysis of barriers to engagement was done well, the work to identify and understand the impact of protected characteristics on engagement was insufficient in over half of the cases. Age, specifically the barriers for engagement for young adults, was not assessed well in many cases as well as ethnicity, cultural awareness and English as a second language.
- Where information was requested in relation to domestic abuse and child safeguarding, it was not routinely used when assessing the case. Use of available sources of information and involvement of other agencies to inform assessment of risk of harm was done sufficiently in just 46 per cent of cases despite effective information sharing processes.
- Risk related to actual and potential victims was not sufficiently analysed in 17 out of 42 cases. Insufficient identification of safeguarding concerns and verifying information related to contact with children or vulnerable adults, was evident in the low number of safeguarding enquiries to inform assessments. Sufficient enquiries were completed in just 28 out of 44 relevant cases.
- Overall, the assessments completed by POs⁴ were determined to be of a lower quality than those completed by PQiPs and PSOs.

³ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

⁴ The findings relating to different staff grades have not been subject to a relative rate index analysis, which is test used to compare rates of incidence, we report on our findings with that caveat.

P 2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

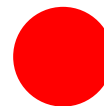
Our rating⁵ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	52%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	65%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	52%

- Planning was the strongest area of practice. Plans reflected the most critical offending-related needs and were strengths based in 30 out of 44 relevant cases. The work completed by PSOs to set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending was done well in a large majority of the cases.
- Resettlement plans overall were found to be insufficient with the lowest scoring area being plans to manage risk to others on release from custody being the biggest area of concern. Only 38 per cent of cases were found to be sufficient.
- Similar to assessment, plans to support people on probation with barriers to engagement presented by protected characteristics was poor. In 29 out of 44 relevant cases, were determined to be insufficient. For resettlement cases, this was worse with more than three-quarters of cases determined to be insufficient.
- Work to prioritise the most critical risk of harm factors and make use of the necessary constructive and restrictive interventions to keep people safe was done sufficiently in just over half of the relevant cases. Plans for ongoing monitoring of identifiable domestic abuse and safeguarding risks was sufficient in just over half of the relevant cases.
- Generic contingency plans were used in too many cases, meaning responding to increased risk was not sufficiently personalised or specific in setting how to respond to a particular deterioration in circumstances. Robust and effective contingency plans were found in less than half of the inspected cases.

⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

P 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁶ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions 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?	54%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	40%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	27%

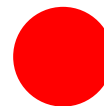
- Implementation and delivery was the weakest area of delivery. Practice that focused on protecting actual and potential victims was concerning. The gaps in identifying and analysing risk to potential and current victims in assessment, which resulted in poor planning to monitor and respond to risk, ultimately underpins the deficits found in delivery of services to protect actual and potential victims.
- Of a possible 42 cases, 30 were found to have insufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims. This included practice with high and very high risk of harm cases where 75 per cent of cases were determined to be insufficient. There were too many cases where insufficient services were delivered in respect of family and relationships, related to risk of harm.
- Where there were safeguarding and domestic abuse risks, the multi-agency work, including sharing of information, required to manage the safety of others was ineffective in too many cases. A similar theme was found with insufficient co-ordination of other agencies to manage risk in 25 out of a possible 35 cases. Routine discussions with agencies delivering substance misuse work and engagement with mental health services to verify and monitor progress were absent in many of the insufficient cases.
- In contrast to planning activity, services delivered were not focused on building upon the strengths of the person on probation in too many cases. The delivered services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance was insufficient in 67 per cent of cases. This parallels with the

⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

availability of service provision and the challenges that providers faced in relation to staff resourcing. The services delivered to support desistance, reduce reoffending and keep people safe were insufficient against every area of identified need.

- While the PDU were delivering under difficult circumstances, reflected by the red and amber status on the PF which meant that some delivery of service was not a priority, there was little evidence of using local services. As a result, too little was done with people on probation to fulfil the requirements of their order.

P 2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁷ for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions 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?	58%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	58%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	48%

- Where reviewing was done well, activity to review engagement, respond timely to issues with compliance and changes in behaviour, including good progress was completed routinely. However, overall work to review engagement, support desistance and keep people safe was insufficient.
- The identification of changes in behaviour linked to offending and necessary adjustments required to ongoing work was completed in only half of the relevant cases. This was the same in relation to work to review changes in factors related to risk of harm, and the necessary adjustments to keep people safe with only 12 out of 33 cases determined to be sufficient.
- Similar to the practice found with delivery and implementation, information from agencies working with the person on probation to deliver offence-focused work as well as agencies involved in managing the risk of harm was not routinely obtained to inform reviews. Too many cases, including high and very high risk of harm work, were missing active monitoring and liaison with police and safeguarding in response to specific risks. In addition, there were examples of a lack of an investigative approach to disclosures made about lifestyles, associates and relationships.
- Staff were operating service delivery in a challenging environment, reflected by limited resources, adjusted priorities through the PF, and low morale and cultural experiences. This may provide some context for the low scoring in practice delivery. However, as reflected in the practice example below, we were encouraged to find positive elements of practice to aid and support future learning.

⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

Good practice example

J was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for an offence involving a weapon. Reviewing activity takes place routinely throughout the licence period. Practice to support engagement was strengths based and built upon progress achieved with abstinence from class A drug use through routine drug testing, behaviour whilst at the Approved Premises (AP) and the involvement of key individuals in A's life to inform decisions around home leave from the AP to support reintegration and strengthen family connections. Police intelligence enquiries were completed where required to approve suitable move on accommodation and overnight stays to include neighbouring counties and monitor behaviour. Children's services enquiries were also completed with the relevant county where required. All information received was analysed and used to inform ongoing decision making.

Outcomes

Strengths:

- Out of 48 cases, 39 had not been charged or convicted of a new offence since the order.
- Desistance-focused practice was a strength in assessment, planning and reviewing, and together with the User Voice survey feedback about positive relationships people on probation reported to have with practitioners, there was evidence of the impact of practitioners making a difference to people on probation.
- Although small, there were improvements with finding settled accommodation and full-time employment during the period of inspection despite the challenges with service provision.

Areas for improvement:

- Of the three cases inspected, outcomes for women on probation were insufficient. Overall, there were no improvements in factors linked to offending, both in developing strengths and addressing needs. However, each case had poor compliance which will inevitably affect the progress that can reasonably be achieved.

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)