



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Surrey PDU

The Probation Service – Kent, Surrey and Sussex region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2024



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth justice 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 Surrey Probation Delivery Unit (PDU), we saw motivated and committed leaders, staff and managers who wanted to make a difference in the lives of people on probation. There had been significant changes within the leadership team in the months leading up to inspection fieldwork. The interim head and deputy head had only been in post for five months, and both had hit the ground running. Despite this, the management of cases was insufficient in relation to the quality of the work being delivered. As a result of our findings, the PDU has been rated as 'Inadequate'.

Staff in the PDU had embraced the new leadership team, although many were anxious that these arrangements were only short term. Leaders were focused on ensuring that priorities and messages were unequivocal, and that communication was clear and relevant given the significant workload and resource pressures in the PDU. The leadership team had focused on improving internal processes, resetting the PDU culture, and building confidence and resilience within middle management.

Workload and staffing pressures, particularly for qualified Probation Officers (PO) meant that the PDU had been authorised by the Chief Probation Officer to operate as a red site under the Prioritisation Framework (PF). This meant that some sentence management tasks that were not related to managing risk had been deprioritised.

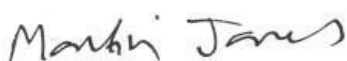
Despite this, the work to keep other people safe was insufficient in the cases we inspected. Where information was received from other agencies, this was not always followed up or analysed sufficiently to drive risk assessment or risk management activity.

A significant number of staff had been in post for less than two years. National training programmes had not addressed all learning needs to ensure that practitioners had the necessary skills to undertake this complex area of work. The demand on middle managers and experienced practitioners to provide additional support compounded their already heavy work demands, so a revised, regionally driven training plan was welcomed.

Engagement with strategic partners had been intermittent at best in the 12 months preceding the inspection, with the PDU at times feeling strategically rudderless. The Reducing Reoffending Board had not met within this time period. This had contributed to a significant lack of confidence in Surrey PDU from the partnership. Commissioning activity had been deprioritised by the PDU, meaning that some gaps were not addressed. This included services for Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals and young adults.

Where attempts have been made to re-engage with the partnership, this was welcomed with optimism. Given that Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) had been responsible for building and maintaining operational partnerships, they were not always able to focus on management oversight of cases, which was assessed as insufficient.

A focus on the development and learning needs of staff to identify, analyse and respond to risk of harm, along with the improved use of available resources to deliver sentence plans, is necessary for the development of the PDU in managing cases robustly. With the appropriate action given to these aspects of probation work, improvements should be achieved.



Martin Jones CBE
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

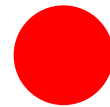
Surrey PDU

Fieldwork started: 15 January 2024

Score **3/21**

Overall rating

Inadequate



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

Inadequate



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.

Surrey PDU should:

1. ensure domestic abuse and safeguarding information is complete and analysed sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment, planning and management of people on probation
2. 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
3. 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
4. ensure all staff receive the necessary training to undertake their roles
5. ensure all MAPPA cases are identified and appropriately managed in line with their level of risk
6. improve the use of interventions and services to manage the risk of harm and support the desistance of people on probation
7. ensure that people on probation with a protected characteristic have access to appropriate services and interventions.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Surrey PDU over a period of two weeks, beginning 15 January 2024. We inspected 26 community orders and 11 releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences had commenced between 29 May 2023 and 04 June 2023, and 17 July 2023 and 23 July 2023. We also conducted 31 interviews with probation practitioners.

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

There are three main offices across the PDU, with Redhill, Guildford and Staines being the core sites for the supervision of people on probation. There is one additional office available in Redhill to support the delivery of services. Staff based at the Staines office receive a London weighting allowance within their salary. This is not available to staff working within other offices in Surrey.

Surrey PDU aligns with Surrey County Council. This is a unitary authority and is responsible for strategic services such as social care and housing, with districts and boroughs providing local services. The population of Surrey was 1,205,616,¹ with proven reoffending rates of 20.4 per cent.²

Interim leadership arrangements had been in place since September 2023, with the appointment of an interim head and deputy head of PDU. Their tenure was not specified and remained under review at the point of inspection fieldwork.

At the time of the inspection announcement, the leadership team was fully staffed. Only 54 per cent of POs were in post, with a high number of agency staff. As a result of critical staffing pressures, the PDU was operating in a red status under the PF. This meant that some sentence management tasks not related to the management of risk had been deprioritised for some staff.³

The PDU is serviced by three courts: Guildford Magistrates' Court, Guildford Crown Court and Staines Magistrates' Court. HM Prison (HMP) Bronzefield is a private women's prison in Surrey. Staff from the PDU were seconded into the pre-release team. The pre-release team also provides satellite services into the two male prisons in the PDU, HMP Send and HMP Coldingley. The PDU seconded staff into the Family Safeguarding Team. This provided multi-disciplinary approaches to providing intervention to manage the risk of domestic abuse in order to safeguard children.

Commissioned rehabilitation services (CRS) were provided by: Seetec for education, training and employment (ETE) and accommodation, Forward Trust for personal wellbeing, Women in Prison for women's services, and dependence and recovery services were provided by Change, Live, Grow (CGL). Clinical services for drug and alcohol abusers, including requirements to monitor drug and alcohol use was provided by i-access, part of Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

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

² Source: Ministry of Justice. (October 2023). Proven reoffending statistics: January 2021 to December 2021.

³ Prioritisation Framework for Sentence Management v8.1.

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

Significant work had been undertaken in the PDU since the autumn of 2023 by an interim leadership team to ensure that priorities for staff were clear, and that these were communicated in a measured and deliberate manner. Despite recent and positive leadership changes, there had been little impact on the quality of casework and all domain two standards had been rated as 'Inadequate'. In considering the leadership demonstrated across the PDU, an overall rating of 'Requires improvement' has been evidenced against our standards.

Strengths:

- The interim leadership team was appointed at short notice but offered a 'reset' for the service. The initial focus was on clarifying the PDU's priorities and ensuring messages to staff were clear and unequivocal. This had broadly worked well and throughout the inspection, staff and managers spoke in positive terms about present arrangements. In our survey, 16 out of 24 respondents expressing a view said that the vision and strategy of the PDU drove delivery of a high-quality service.
- PDU staff had identified the arrival of the new leadership team as a turning point. They described feeling "psychologically safe", listened to, and had approachable and visible leaders. Out of 24 respondents to the staff survey, 16 felt that the culture of the PDU promoted openness, constructive challenges and ideas.
- Governance arrangements had been revised to prioritise performance and improve communications, especially given that the PDU remained in red under the PF. This worked reasonably well and included regular leadership meetings, managers meetings and weekly performance meetings. This offered a positive and proactive approach to performance and workload management. In our survey, 15 respondents out of 23 said the impact of change on service delivery was assessed and implemented appropriately.
- There was a positive approach to resource management and a clear understanding of where and how to best deploy both agency staff and the use of overtime. At the time of our inspection, all cases were allocated to a probation practitioner.
- The Surrey PDU SharePoint site was used to improve communication and information sharing, and included a useful repository for the storage of PDU policies.
- Positive and effective practice was shared with the introduction of "safeguarding heroes". This was used by leaders to emphasise positive work done in public protection, drawing on examples of effective practice and was supported further by the use of staff reward and recognition.

Areas for improvement:

- The PDU had been in red status under the PF for over two years. Recruitment and retention remained a significant risk and was unlikely to alter significantly in the next 18 months. Recruitment of POs is a national and regional function, and thus not within the direct control of the PDU.
- Despite some improvement in internal procedures, further work was needed to progress the priorities identified in the PDU's business plan.
- Work to keep people safe was weak. Messages from senior leaders around prioritisation appeared clear yet this was not consistently reflected in casework. Across all our key questions relating to keeping people safe, fewer than half were assessed as sufficient. Although safeguarding and police enquiries had been made in the large majority of cases, gaps in information were not routinely followed-up or analysed to inform the work to keep other people safe.
- Re-engagement with strategic partners was welcomed but remained relatively new and its impact had yet to be fully felt. The Reducing Reoffending Board had not met for over a year. Over the previous 12 months, there had been intermittent engagement with the Criminal Justice Board, the Youth Justice Management Board and local safeguarding children's partnership.
- Whilst middle managers had maintained some key operational relationships, such as with CRS providers and integrated offender management (IOM) teams, this was applied inconsistently and lacked coordination at PDU level. As a consequence, there were variable impacts across teams.
- Incorporating the views of people on probation was in its relative infancy. Lead representatives had been identified but key objectives and mechanisms of engagement had still to be agreed.
- While the introduction of the Probation Operational Delivery (POD) system was positive, it remained unclear how this would be rolled out given a lack of staff resources and, in some cases, a lack of clarity as to how the model would improve performance.

P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

Staffing pressures were particularly acute across qualified PO grade. This meant that the PDU had to utilise a high number of agency staff. Many staff were less experienced, with learning and development needs remaining a critical challenge for the PDU who were not fully resourced to provide the oversight and mentoring they needed. Given these concerns, there was little resilience left within the system. This placed additional pressure on the ability to deliver high-quality services to people on probation, which resulted in an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- PDU and regional leaders actively engaged in monthly workforce planning meetings with the Human Resources business partner to monitor and forecast staffing levels. This allowed shortfalls in staffing to be mitigated by some use of overtime and agency staff to manage limited resources across teams.
- The head of PDU had reviewed secondment arrangements to ensure that all available qualified PO staff could be utilised within sentence management teams. All active cases in the PDU were allocated to a practitioner at the point of inspection.
- There had been a small increase in the net number of POs and Probation Services Officers (PSOs) in the last 12 months. It was anticipated that 90 per cent of PSOs would be in place by the end of April 2024. A further nine case administrators were due to commence once pre-employment checks had been completed.
- Supervision was offered on a regular basis with 20 out of 23 respondents in our survey saying that this was sufficiently frequent and 20 out of 24 respondents feeling that this enhanced the quality of their work.
- Despite workload pressures, we did not see any cases in our selected cohort that were inappropriately allocated. In our survey, all 10 respondents said they were allocated cases for which they had the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. In our practitioner interviews, 29 out of 31 said they had the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to supervise the specific case under review.
- Staff largely felt safe to share their concerns with the leadership team and were confident that they would be addressed.

Areas for improvement:

- In our survey, 19 out of 23 respondents indicated that PDU staffing levels were insufficient, and in our case interviews, only 13 out of 27 practitioners said their workload was manageable. There were substantial variations in workload to account for new staff, with POs averaging 142 per cent on the workload management tool.

- For many staff, the complexities of the cases they were managing, compounded in some cases by their relative inexperience, meant they were struggling to undertake all necessary work on their caseload. This was evidenced by insufficient service delivery in our case cohort.
- In total, 54 per cent of POs were in post at the time of the inspection announcement, with 34 per cent of agency staff in qualified PO posts. However, at the point of inspection, this was lower as a result of a decision to release some agency staff due to performance issues.
- Some initial assessment and sentence planning tasks were undertaken by using targeted overtime and agency staff to support high workloads. This was often prior to allocation, leading to, in some cases, a lack of continuity and engagement with people on probation. In the cases we inspected, 27 per cent had been allocated to three or more practitioners.
- The PDU had a high level of new PSOs, with 60 per cent in post for less than two years. PSO training was not sufficiently providing staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively undertake their work. Whilst the impact is yet to be seen, the PDU had launched a new PSO training pilot, to run alongside national training and mandatory learning.
- There were low completion rates of required learning, with only 16 per cent of staff having undertaken MAPPA training and 12 per cent of staff completing domestic abuse training.
- The attrition rate of staff was 16 per cent, which was the highest across the region. This increased for PSOs to 24 per cent. More needed to be done to understand the underlying reasons for this and to address this issue.
- Pressure on caseloads and workload management was further compounded by the average number of days lost to sickness per year, which was currently 11.2, higher than the average across the region of 9.5. Given the critically low practitioner numbers in the PDU, this compounded workload and resource pressures.
- The SPO span of control was too wide. Managers had responsibilities for subject leads, which often involved developing and maintaining links with partnership organisations. This impacted on their ability to undertake some fundamental aspects of oversight within sentence management.
- Although some managers provided opportunities for reflective discussions, we found management oversight was insufficient, ineffective or absent in 31 out of 36 relevant cases that we reviewed. Only two managers had completed necessary training and this was not prioritised by the PDU.

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

Whilst the PDU had access to an array of services, the absence of any monitoring of their effectiveness meant that practitioners were not always using the best available resources in order to progress sentence plans for people on probation. There remained gaps in services for a diverse range of needs given that the PDU had de-prioritised commissioning activity under the PF. Consequently, this resulted in an overall rating for services of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- There was some promising practice in the implementation of sentences, focused on engaging the person on probation in 68 per cent of the cases we inspected. Practitioners were responsive and flexible to individual needs when delivering services.
- There had been a renewed strategic focus on service delivery which was encouraging. This included the safeguarding children's partnership, the MAPPA strategic management board and Criminal Justice Board. Partner agencies were optimistic about this.
- Practitioners spoke positively about the provision for dependence and recovery services provided by CGL. The referral to commencement rate was relatively high at 70 per cent. Where they were co-located, staff were actively and positively engaged with team meetings.
- The co-location of IOM police within one of the three offices in Surrey PDU offered good information sharing and relationships with practitioners. The IOM-free cohort also provided positive support to individuals identified as potential perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- We were encouraged to see a recently initiated (December 2023) and regionally managed pilot running for the co-location of NHS mental health staff within Surrey PDU to support the delivery of community mental health treatment requirements at court.
- Despite staffing pressures within the accredited programmes team, there was no backlog for services. Out of seven cases inspected with a requirement of an accredited programme, five commenced at an appropriate time.
- Low referral rates for structured interventions had led to a review of provision and the introduction of a more proactive and targeted approach to identify people on probation who are eligible to access these services.
- The PDU was involved in developing a referral pathway with a local charity that provides support for people on probation posing a risk of domestic abuse. This included the provision of specialist accommodation and holistic support. Whilst we only saw evidence of this in one of the cases we reviewed, this was a promising development.

- The PDU had a dedicated PSO accommodation specialist to support referrals to the local housing teams, Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3) provision and approved premises. Where a need for CAS3 was identified within the cases we inspected, we saw timely referrals, appropriate allocations and good levels of information sharing with the provider.
- Surrey PDU had seconded an SPO and staff to the multi-disciplinary Family Safeguarding Team, based within the children's single point of access service. Despite the limited resource, the PDU remained committed to the service and had worked with Surrey County Council to provide funding in order for them to retain probation practitioners.

Areas for improvement:

- There was an overreliance on administrative processes when initiating police domestic abuse and child safeguarding enquiries, rather than the use of professional curiosity. Information received was not then sufficiently scrutinised, with gaps in information not routinely followed up. Information received was not sufficiently analysed in too many of the cases we inspected.
- A national and local needs analysis had been undertaken to identify priority areas for the development of services. No resources had been allocated for commissioning at a PDU level due to critical delivery needs. There were insufficient services to meet some diverse needs including those for Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals and young adults.
- SPOs had, in many cases, developed positive and supportive links with service providers and partner agencies. Opportunities to analyse referral patterns and any barriers to service provision were limited and could not be prioritised sufficiently by SPOs who were also responsible for oversight of sentence management teams.
- Recorded rates of referrals to CRS provision were low against identified needs. For instance, CRS referrals should have been made but were not in 11 out of 29 relevant cases inspected. Practitioners expressed frustration at what felt sometimes to be overly complicated referral processes.
- The quality of some CRS provision had been inconsistent, which in part was due to staffing and resource issues, particularly for CRS women's services and accommodation. This had sometimes meant delays in allocating work, or the ability to provide flexible appointment times.
- Providers of women's services and personal wellbeing had utilised telephone appointments in order to manage demand, which was often not the most effective engagement method with the person on probation.
- There was no commissioned service to support people on probation requiring finance, benefit and debt services, with commissioning for CRS services taking place at a regional level. Whilst there were services available such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, these were not being effectively utilised in 10 out of 11 relevant cases we reviewed.
- ETE provision was being decommissioned and no longer accepted referrals. Practitioners were largely unaware of the contingency arrangements.
- The i-access service delivering drug and alcohol treatment requirements and wider clinical treatment support for people on probation was insufficiently coordinated. Those subject to treatment requirements were often not

receiving the interventions they required. In some cases, requirements were prematurely closed or, where treatment was being delivered, feedback to practitioners was often inconsistent and brief.

- Although Surrey PDU had begun to meaningfully re-engage in many strategic partnership meetings, there had been limited opportunity to build upon service development or joint commissioning. Whilst there was support from regional commissioning teams to identify and implement new initiatives, none had yet been introduced.
- Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 represented 18 per cent of the overall caseload of Surrey PDU. Practitioners and managers had operational leads for this cohort but had not received any additional training. No specialist services had been identified to support young adults. Engagement by PDU leaders at the Youth Justice Management Board and work to support transitions of cases had been ineffective and despite some recent re-engagement by the service, much more was still required.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 56 people on probation as part of this inspection. This included 39 face-to-face surveys, five in-depth interviews and 12 surveys completed online. There was a proportionate representation of gender, age and diverse ethnicities within the User Voice feedback. In total, 51 per cent were subject to a community order, with 45 per cent being supervised following a period in prison. Only four per cent were unsure what sentence they were subject to.

The PDU was proactive in offering initial appointments at court following sentence. This system was broadly working well, with only one individual indicating in the feedback they did not have an induction. This was reflected in findings from our case inspections.

Despite identified workload pressures on staff, 38 out of 50 respondents indicated that practitioners were taking the time in induction meetings to understand the personal needs of the person on probation. This set a good foundation for supervision with the large majority of respondents stating that they understood what was expected of them whilst on probation (48 out of 51).

“My induction was very informative with regards to alcohol groups and housing. There was information that was shared which was more than what I was expecting.”

In many cases, initial assessments and sentence plans had been completed by the use of remote agency staff or by use of targeted overtime to manage workloads. Nine respondents in the survey stated that they had no sentence plan. Where individuals knew they had a plan, 13 out of 42 said they were not sufficiently involved in creating this with their practitioner.

“I don’t get to have the same probation worker all the time so it makes it difficult to get what I need from them.”

Feedback from the User Voice survey reflected promising delivery and reviewing activity to engage the person on probation within case inspections. The large majority of respondents said they were able to have appointments at a time that took into account their individual circumstances, with appointments starting on time for 44 out of 51 individuals. Relationships between people on probation and their practitioners were described as positive by 38 out of 51 respondents.

“I have been able to express myself through therapy. Having probation officers that are understanding helps. They have been flexible around schedules.”

As found within case inspections, access to services to support finance, benefit and debt were insufficient. Of those individuals requiring this support, eight out of 12 respondents considered these services to be poor. Where accommodation support was required, nine out of 19 individuals stated that they had not received sufficient support.

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- Probation practitioners asked people on probation about their diversity characteristics in 95 per cent of all cases inspected. This was regularly discussed within the induction process. Only one out of 51 people on probation surveyed by User Voice said that they did not have an induction. In total, 76 per cent of people on probation believed that the probation practitioner took the time to understand their personal needs within this process.
- The PDU had sought to meet a diverse range of needs. The set up of PODs with subject leads across a range of protected characteristics and diverse needs demonstrates a commitment to developing specialist knowledge and developing partnerships.
- Two of three teams within the PDU offered women-only reporting times. Whilst this was not in place in Redhill, there was a breakfast club which was held in an alternative venue to support the engagement of women on probation. The provision utilised local services to support talking therapy, developing literacy and numeracy, and support for sex workers. The staffing profile of Surrey PDU sufficiently reflected current caseloads of those identifying as Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.
- Despite assessment and planning activity to engage the person on probation being insufficient at the start of sentences, practitioners were responsive to individual circumstances. Appropriate levels of flexibility were exercised around the employment and health needs of people on probation. Barriers to engagement were identified, with practitioners adapting their approaches where required. Sufficient efforts were made to enable the individual to complete their sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstance in 86 per cent of cases inspected.

Areas for improvement:

- The PDU was not measuring disproportionality in sentencing trends or the impact of services across a range of protected characteristics in order to address gaps in service provision or to improve outcomes.
- Assessments only analysed the protected characteristics of the individual and considered the impact on their ability to comply and engage with the service in 51 per cent of inspected cases.
- Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 represented 18 per cent of the overall caseload of Surrey PDU. Practitioners and managers had operational leads for this cohort but had not received any additional training. No specialist services had been identified to support young adults. Engagement by PDU leaders at the Youth Justice Management Board and work to support transitions of cases had not been effective. The head of PDU had re-engaged with the youth justice partnership, with specialist staff and managers attending and contributing to multi-agency transition panels and identify future training.

2. Service delivery

P 2.1. Assessment



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

Our rating⁴ 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?	46%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	73%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	32%

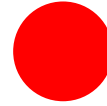
- People on probation were only meaningfully engaged in their assessment in just over half of the cases inspected. The current model within the PDU in allocating initial assessments to remote agency staff for those individuals subject to community orders was often not conducive to effectively analysing individual needs of the person on probation. This was reflected by insufficient engagement scores within the cases inspected.
- Diversity characteristics were discussed with the person on probation in 95 per cent of cases. Practitioners were routinely considering the impact of personal circumstances, such as childcare or employment, on individuals' supervision. However, assessments did not effectively explore and analyse individuals' protected characteristics, lived experienced and health needs. Practitioners, especially those staff with less experience, did not always feel equipped or confident to explore these factors.
- There was an overreliance on administration processes when initiating police and child safeguarding enquiries. Practitioners were not routinely using professional curiosity to identify and follow up gaps in information received. Out of a total of 36 domestic abuse police enquiries initiated, 11 either did not receive a response or it contained insufficient information. This was also reflected when requesting child safeguarding information. In total, 14 out of 36 did not receive a response or it contained insufficient information. Where there were potential victims outside of the PDU area, enquiries were often not

⁴ 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.](#)

followed up with the relevant police force or children's services responsible within that area.

- Where critical risk information was received, this was not sufficiently utilised in risk assessments. As a result, over half of all cases did not clearly identify and analyse risks posed to other people. This was impacting on the ability of practitioners to assess risk correctly. In the cases we inspected, inspectors disagreed with the risk classification in six out of 36 relevant cases.
- In the cases we inspected, assessments considered and balanced the identification and analysis of offending-related factors (81 per cent) and the strengths and protective factors of the person on probation (78 per cent). This provided practitioners with a good understanding of individuals and which type of interventions were necessary to promote sustainable desistance.
- Short sentence function teams were not fully established within the PDU. Some resettlement cases were being allocated to dedicated practitioners where workload allowed. In the cases we inspected, assessments of those on licence were more effective at identifying factors linked to offending and desistance than those with community sentences. Practitioners were drawing on available sources of information in 91 per cent of cases compared with 54 per cent in the community. Custody screenings had been utilised within assessments, with nine out of 11 relevant cases having a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner pre-release.

P 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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:

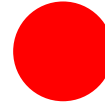
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	43%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	46%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	38%

- Planning was not collaborative and did not meaningfully involve the person on probation in around half of all cases inspected. In some cases, the allocated practitioner undertaking the sentence plan had not met with the person on probation. This was reflected in findings from the User Voice survey. Out of 51 respondents, nine stated that they had no sentence plan, and a further 13 indicated that they were not involved in its formulation.
- There were varying degrees of quality in plans to support desistance. Offending-related factors identified as most critical within assessments were then only reflected and prioritised in plans in 54 per cent of the cases inspected. Where this work was to be deprioritised within the PF, this was largely not reflected within the plan.
- Services required to reduce reoffending and support desistance were only identified in 51 per cent of cases. This contributed to a low referral rate into available services, including CRS. Had these services been identified within planning activity more effectively, it may have provided additional support for practitioners under pressure to deliver key services. Practitioners were not always applying PF permissions consistently, meaning that where interventions had been identified, the level, frequency and type of contact identified did not support their effective delivery in 41 per cent of inspected cases.
- In total, 21 out of 37 cases inspected did not sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those that were most critical. The lack of professional curiosity in following up gaps in information in undertaking assessments was also reflected in planning activity. In many cases where information was

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.](#)

absent, there had been insufficient liaison with key partners or reference to the work of other agencies. We found this in 20 out of 35 relevant cases. We also found that practitioners were unable to formulate effective contingency plans to manage changes in the individual's risk in 20 out of 37 cases.

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:

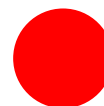
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	68%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	32%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	30%

- Requirements of the sentence started promptly in just over half (20 out of 37) of the cases inspected. This improved for individuals subject to licence supervision (seven out of 11). Given that practitioners were more likely to be responsible for undertaking assessment and initial sentence plans where an individual was on licence, practitioners had often already started to develop a relationship with individuals pre-release. This momentum allowed interventions to commence in a timelier fashion than those on community sentences.
- Due to the staffing pressures of the PDU, there were a high number of case transfers, which impacted on the continuity of supervision and the progression of the sentence plan for people on probation. In the 37 cases we inspected, 22 had been allocated to two or more practitioners. Four cases had been allocated to four or more practitioners.
- There was a lack of focus to ensure that the case transfer process was sufficiently robust. Given the high levels of internal transfers between practitioners, several cases were often allocated at once with no mechanisms to allow for workload relief for a proper handover. Practitioners were therefore not always fully sighted on the factors related to both risk and need. Despite this, practitioners remained focused on developing effective working relationships with people on probation in 76 per cent of the cases inspected and were flexible in taking into account their personal circumstances (86 per cent).

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.](#)

- Referrals into CRS were low across the PDU. There were 11 out of 29 cases where access to CRS would have been appropriate, but this was not considered or actioned. Many practitioners felt that the referral process was lengthy and complex.
- Practitioners were not routinely using other available resources to assist them in delivering services. Out of 24 cases where a rehabilitation activity requirement was ordered at court, practitioners were personally delivering 13 of these. In total, the delivery of interventions on nine further cases were supported by other providers, with eight requirements yet to commence. Overall services to reduce reoffending and support desistance were not delivered sufficiently in 62 per cent of the cases inspected.
- Some aspects of sentence management had been de-prioritised under the PF. This provided guidance to staff around levels of recommended contact for individuals where interventions were not directly related to the management of risk. Given the lack of identification of key risks across assessments and plans, the level and nature of contact offered to individuals was sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm in only around half of all inspected cases.
- Where risk management was delivered well, this included ongoing information sharing in relation to both domestic abuse and child safeguarding, but this was not seen in enough cases. In 25 out of 34 relevant cases, involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm was insufficiently coordinated.
- Whilst practitioners often indicated they did not have sufficient resources to undertake all necessary tasks across their caseloads, this meant that opportunities to manage the risk of harm had not been fully utilised. In 22 out of 31 cases, key individuals in the person on probation's life were not sufficiently involved in supporting the effective management of risk of harm. Home visits were not undertaken where necessary in 25 out of 36 of the cases we inspected.

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?	59%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	32%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	27%

- Where reviewing activity was delivered well, this included engaging the person on probation about their progress, barriers to engagement and compliance. Practitioners were responsive to individuals' personal circumstances, flexible around reporting times and had in some cases amended curfew times to promote engagement with employment. This was often done on an informal basis rather than within formal written reviews.
- Whilst some progress was being captured in relation to desistance, this was often based on self-reporting with little external verification. Reviewing activity was not informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the person on probation, with necessary adjustments, in 20 out of 31 applicable cases.
- Within the cases inspected, eight had either drug or alcohol treatment requirements attached to their sentences delivered by i-access. The relationship with i-access was not conducive to providing a high-quality service. When received, feedback from i-access was inconsistent and did not allow practitioners to understand and review the progress of individuals. This was especially concerning where the drug or alcohol treatment was in place in order to manage risk of harm to others.
- Formal written reviews were not utilised in 19 out of 30 relevant cases, despite this being necessary to review and record the management of the risk of harm. Given that risk assessments and management plans were not sufficiently identifying and prioritising all of the relevant risk factors, practitioners were not in a strong position to monitor critical changes in risk. In instances where reviews were taking place, this was too often undertaken

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.

without obtaining necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm.

- Where enquires were initiated with police and children's services for the purpose of review, there remained a disconnect between the administrative process and use of professional curiosity in order to implement necessary adjustments to the risk management plan.

Outcomes

Strengths:

- As identified, with promising and flexible practice to engage individuals with their sentences, there was sufficient compliance within 25 out of the 37 cases we inspected.
- We saw a small reduction in unemployment within the case cohort. In total, 14 individuals were unemployed at the start of their sentences, with this reducing to nine at the point of the inspection.
- Overall compliance with sentences was sufficient in 25 out of 37 cases inspected.

Areas for improvement:

- Improvements in those factors most closely linked to offending were only evidenced in eight out of 37 cases inspected. This reflected low referral rates across CRS services, with some poor coordination of services. This was in addition to poor scores relating to the work to promote desistance.
- Despite a key priority of the PDU being to identify and manage risk effectively, we only saw improvements to the individual factors linked to risk of harm in six out of 37 cases inspected. This also reflected poor scores related to the work to keep other people safe.

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)