



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Wakefield PDU

The Probation Service – Yorkshire and the Humber Region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2024



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Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Shellie Adams, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in this inspection. Without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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

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This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

ISBN 978-1-916621-57-2

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

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Foreword

In Wakefield Probation Delivery Unit (PDU), staff and managers were committed, with evidence of strong leadership. However, the staffing challenges meant that the management of cases was largely insufficient in terms of the quality of work to change the lives of people on probation and manage the risk of harm they posed. As a result of our findings, the PDU has been rated as 'Requires improvement' overall. We were, however, encouraged by our findings, which represent some of the best results seen in our recent probation inspections.

Our inspection found that many of the building blocks for success were in place. Leadership across the PDU was impressive. This was demonstrated through strong governance arrangements and relationships with partner agencies, which led to innovative ways of working with individuals and promoting a professional culture. At the time the inspection was announced, the PDU had high vacancy rates for qualified probation officers (POs) (28 per cent) and for probation services officers (PSOs) (10 per cent). This resulted in higher workloads and made it harder for practitioners to deliver high-quality services.

The overall ratings for service delivery were 'Requires improvement' for assessment and planning, and 'Inadequate' for implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Although the PDU had experienced staffing challenges, we did see positive work to assess desistance and a high standard of work to engage people on probation at the assessment and planning stages, as well as in planning to support desistance. While we saw some strengths in the oversight and management of risk of harm, particularly in the oversight of Level 1 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) cases, this was not consistent across all cases and there were significant deficits in the quality of work completed. The assessment and management of risk of harm in the cases inspected were below expectations, as reflected in the ratings for service delivery.

We saw positive working relationships between the PDU and several other agencies, including local housing providers, youth justice services (YJS) and violence reduction partners. While relationships with police and child safeguarding teams were good, there were often barriers to sharing information about risk. Strategic plans to address this had not yet improved the way cases were subsequently managed.

As we see too often, when PDU staff received information from other agencies, they did not always follow it up, or use it to assess and manage risk. There were not enough services to reduce the potential risk of harm posed by individuals, and interventions were not being implemented and delivered in a way that resulted in any tangible reduction in the risk of further offending or serious harm.

The reasons for these deficits included high workloads, ongoing training needs and barriers to exchanging information with partners. Due to practitioner vacancies and ongoing learning needs, the PDU was not in a position to provide the high level of support necessary to deliver high-quality services. However, the leadership team had identified a number of enablers to achieve high-quality casework, should the PDU have adequate levels of qualified and well-trained staff.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Wakefield PDU

Fieldwork started August 2024

Score **6/21**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational arrangements and activity

P 1.1 Leadership

Good



P 1.2 Staffing

Requires improvement



P 1.3 Services

Requires improvement



2. Service delivery

P 2.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



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.

Wakefield PDU should:

1. ensure that it has sufficient staffing resources to provide a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all people on probation
2. understand the needs of both staff and people on probation, and address actual and potential barriers to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion
3. improve the use of interventions and services available for people on probation to support desistance and manage the risk of harm
4. strengthen operational relationships with Wakefield children's services to ensure that practitioners actively share information and work together to protect children who are at risk from people on probation
5. analyse information on domestic abuse and child safeguarding sufficiently to inform the quality of assessments and the management of people on probation
6. improve strategic relationships with key stakeholders across Wakefield and agree joint delivery priorities
7. ensure all necessary work to estates is completed to promote staff health and safety.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Wakefield PDU over a period of two weeks, beginning on 29 July 2024. We inspected 20 community orders and 19 releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences had commenced during two separate weeks, between 18 December 2023 and 24 December 2023 and 29 January 2024 and 04 February 2024. We also conducted 33 interviews with probation practitioners.

Wakefield PDU is one of 11 PDUs in the Yorkshire and the Humber probation region of the Probation Service. Many of the core services in the PDU are managed pan-regionally, including interventions, accredited programmes, and statutory work with victims. The PDU has two offices. One is at Merchant Gate, and this is the core site for delivering supervision and interventions for people on probation. There is also a satellite office that supports the delivery of unpaid work.

Wakefield PDU is a mid-sized PDU and covers both the City of Wakefield and surrounding rural areas. The city is the administrative centre of the wider metropolitan borough of Wakefield. It is overseen by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, which is a single (unitary authority) tier local government organisation. The population of Wakefield metropolitan district was 357,729 in 2022.¹ It had a proven reoffending rate of 32.8 per cent, with the average number of reoffences per reoffender at 4.9.

At the point of inspection, Wakefield PDU was being led by its third head of service (HoS) since Community Rehabilitation Services and the National Probation Service were unified in 2021. Both the HoS and the middle manager team were relatively new in post, with five out of eight senior probation officers (SPOs) having less than three years' experience as an SPO. That said, they had an extensive career history within probation services, and this was reflected in their leadership style. At the point of inspection, the PDU was faced with high vacancy rates for qualified POs (28 per cent) and PSOs (10 per cent).

The PDU has no courts. Cases are usually sentenced at Leeds Magistrates' or Crown Courts. There is one long-term, high security prison within its footprint (HMP Wakefield) and one local women's prison (HMP Newhall). There is also one male approved premises. Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) are provided by Shelter for accommodation; Ingeus for personal wellbeing and dependency and recovery services (co-located in the Wakefield PDU probation office); and Together Women for women's services.

Wakefield PDU was not subject to prioritisation framework arrangements.² This meant it was not subject to any demand management principles in terms of what it was required to prioritise in service delivery.

The Probation Reset³ policy was implemented during the time of this inspection. Seven of the 39 cases we inspected were subject to Probation Reset. This meant that those individuals had their supervision suspended for the final third of their supervision period. This change was delivered at pace and implemented from 01 July 2024.

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics (November 2023). UK population estimates, mid 2022.

² Prioritising probation framework – post-pandemic tool to help regions adapt how they deliver probation services locally according to numbers of available staff.

³ Probation Reset is a nationally mandated operational policy change and has been implemented to alleviate probation workload pressures in response to prison capacity challenges. This mandates that supervision of a person on probation, who is eligible according to certain criteria, will be suspended at the two-thirds point of their sentence. These measures aim to target resources at the start of supervision in the community.

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.

Good

Strengths:

- The PDU had a strong leadership team, who were building on their extensive experience of the probation service. Their knowledgeable approach to service delivery helped to ensure positive outcomes for people on probation.
- There was a clear vision, developed with PDU staff, to prioritise public protection, support people on probation to lead law-abiding lives and work together in a collaborative way.
- The delivery of services, and how this would be achieved, was informed by the regional business plan. This was translated locally via the vision for the PDU and the PDU business plan. The priorities for delivery aligned with findings from the inspection and had been communicated through all-staff events.
- The PDU had strong strategic and operational relationships with partners and key stakeholders across Wakefield. The HoS and middle managers sat on a number of boards to improve service delivery for people on probation. This was evidenced through the Combating Drugs Partnership, Youth Justice Partnership Board and Serious Violence Duty Silver Group. There was confidence in the PDU's leadership and its contributions under these arrangements.
- A clear governance structure was in place. This consisted of monthly leadership meetings, which involved feedback and input on performance and quality from regional leads, as well as space for innovative ideas and business cases, and set a strategic steer. Monthly manager meetings concentrated on operationalising strategic priorities. The HoS chaired the leadership meeting to set direction, and the middle managers meeting was chaired on a rotational basis by SPOs. This increased ownership of delivery and supported the professional development of SPOs in their managerial roles. There was a clear feedback loop, and the structure ensured that priorities for delivery were strategically and operationally aligned.
- Staff across all grades said that they were able to give feedback to managers on ideas for change and to provide constructive challenge when they did not feel things were working well. In our survey, 14 out of 21 respondents indicated they considered that the PDU's culture promoted openness and constructive challenge. The use of a cross-grade forum promoted the engagement of staff and investment in developing the PDU.
- PDU leaders were committed to providing protected delivery days (PDDs). These happened routinely and were positively regarded by most staff. They were being used as a vehicle for staff engagement and inclusion, as well as for learning events, and were supporting the continual development of practitioners and service delivery.

- The HoS created an inclusive environment, with two-way communication with staff. This included opportunities for staff to ask questions of the HoS anonymously. These were then answered during all-staff PDDs, monthly all-staff calls and regular team meetings, by supervisors, and in one-to-one meetings offered to new staff and all staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Staff were largely positive about the leadership approach.
- There were clear lines of accountability, and all staff were clear about the boundaries of their roles. Staff across all grades were encouraged to take on lead subject roles, which promoted ownership of processes and improved service delivery.

Areas for improvement:

- The PDU had a strong leadership approach, with a clear vision, strategy and business plan. But this did not translate into delivery of a high-quality service for all people on probation, as shown in the case inspection findings for keeping people safe. This was mainly because of the high vacancy rate for practitioners, and staff's ongoing learning needs.
- While the PDU had undertaken activities to promote cultural awareness, including bi-monthly culture clubs, it had not taken a clear, strategic approach to promoting diversity and inclusion across staff groups and with people on probation.
- Only 10 out of 20 respondents to our survey said that they felt sufficient attention was paid to their safety, and inspectors observed several issues with the Merchant Gate building. For example, people on probation could access all levels of the building, with no mitigations in place to manage this. Also, there was no desk-to-ceiling divider in reception and no screen protection in the high-risk reporting room. The regional probation director (RPD) has asked for all essential building works to be flagged, and these issues had been reported, with some funding agreed. However, the work is still to be completed.
- We recognised that the learning delivered through PDD events was largely being driven by the regional learning plan. Both managers and practitioners felt that they would gain more from the sessions if they focused on local issues and responded to the identified training needs of staff within the PDU, rather than taking a 'one size fits all' approach. They provided examples of how events had previously included other agencies and speakers. Most felt this had had a positive effect on their practice development, compared with the prescribed learning events.
- The PDU was represented within the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) arrangements, although there was no business or delivery plan under the CSP. Likewise, there was no Reducing Reoffending Board in Wakefield and no strategic oversight to bring together all agencies to work to achieve shared objectives. While this was not the sole responsibility of the PDU, it would be of benefit to drive improvement of service delivery.

P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- Staffing numbers were not at target levels for POs and PSOs but were sufficient across most other grades. A lot of work had been done to recruit and retain PSO-grade staff and this had helped support transition into Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) routes. In our survey, 15 out of 20 respondents considered that the PDU promoted a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Staffing at middle manager grade was above the target levels. This allowed one part-time SPO to be given a 'roving' portfolio, and they led on engaging people on probation, MAPPA, PDD planning, Skills for Effective Engagement Development supervision, and race. Evidence from both case inspection and staff forums showed that the quality of service, particularly in oversight of MAPPA Level 1 cases, benefited as a consequence of this additional resource. Other middle managers were supportive of the roving portfolio and considered it to be a benefit to the PDU's overall progress in improving service delivery.
- Staff were allocated to specific roles to support the delivery of key outcomes, as set out in the vision and plan for the PDU. This included a commitment to seconding staff into the YJS, co-locating staff within integrated front door services, and the joint funding of a homelessness prevention officer. Commissioned services were co-located where possible, and practitioners also worked from the Women's Centre when appropriate. There was a commitment to making the best use of resources, and staff were approaching this in a strategic and considered way.
- There had been an ongoing review of caseloads, with a view to ensuring equity across teams. The workload measurement tool (WMT) indicated that, at the time the inspection was announced, POs were at 126 per cent of capacity, on average, with PSOs at 124 per cent and PQiPs operating at under 100 per cent. This was a fluid picture; fluctuations in workload due to staff sickness had peaked late in 2023. Policy changes relating to Probation Reset in June 2024 had seen a reduction in workloads, although some officers remained above 100 per cent on WMT.
- In our survey, 10 out of 12 respondents indicated that they were allocated cases for which they had appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. In case inspection interviews, 32 out of 33 practitioners that we spoke to felt they had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to manage that particular case. However, cases suitable for PSOs were being allocated to POs, even when both practitioner grades had an excessive workload. The consequence of this was that the lower-risk cases on a PO's caseload did not receive the appropriate level of service to effect positive change, as these were not being prioritised.
- The PDU had actively recruited volunteers with life experience. It has also trained mentors to support the delivery of services and work with people on probation to promote compliance. This scheme involved a training programme and was

overseen as part of the regional Ingeus contract, with four mentors being used to support service delivery in Wakefield.

- There were established allocation processes, which included the initial oversight of middle managers. Most cases had a record of the allocation, including pertinent information on risk at the start of supervision. This included updated domestic abuse and safeguarding enquiries in most cases, and direction on the risks and needs of the case that practitioners needed to consider from the outset. This supported a clear understanding of the case from the point of initial allocation.
- We saw evidence of MAPPA Level 1 reviews being undertaken in the cases inspected. There was an established process for initially recording the decision-making relating to setting the MAPPA level. There was also a well-embedded process for identifying and screening cases eligible for MAPPA. The initial screening, level-setting and subsequent reviews were effective in Level 1 cases and supported the management of risk.
- Where management oversight of cases was effective, it was reflective and had an impact on the subsequent management of the case. However, this effective oversight was usually linked to specific processes or points in a sentence, rather than in response to a change in circumstances or risk management, where practitioners would have benefited from additional advice and support.
- Approximately five per cent of Wakefield PDU's caseload identified as Black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group, compared with 10 per cent of staff. Work had been done to promote employment opportunities across diverse groups, including representation at Pride events, Armed Forces Day and at local colleges. There was a commitment to ensuring diverse interview panels for all recruitment.

Areas for improvement:

- While the PDU was achieving overall target staffing numbers, there was a 28 per cent shortage of POs, and a 10 per cent shortage of PSOs at the point when the inspection was announced, as well as a number of less experienced staff. This was all having a negative impact on service delivery.
- Practitioners were able to contact managers to discuss cases when needed, and the initial management oversight of cases at the point of allocation and MAPPA reviewing was positive. However, managers were open in telling us that they were unable to physically record all conversations. While we were assured that support was being offered, both through supervision and on a less formal basis when required, the resulting impact was disappointing: management oversight was insufficient, ineffective, or absent in 64 per cent of the cases we inspected.
- The PDU follows national induction programmes for staff. It supplements these with additional shadowing opportunities and office inductions, to strengthen the initial offer of training when someone joins the service. This was particularly relevant to PSO and PQiP officers. We were advised that there was no similar induction process for administrative staff, and this should be addressed. It was, however, encouraging to see that administrative staff were offered the same protected development time as practitioners.

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

Strengths:

- The PDU had strong strategic links with a number of partner agencies, including the Combating Drugs Partnership, Adult Safeguarding, the Youth Justice Partnership, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) teams and the Serious Violence Duty (Silver Group). Staff had used these relationships to ensure appropriate access to treatment under Drug Rehabilitation Requirements and Alcohol Treatment Requirements, share learning and monitor trends in crimes by young adults.
- A needs analysis was in place and reviewed routinely. Leaders used this to identify delivery priorities with other agencies and partnership boards, including housing, reducing violence initiatives and combating drugs.
- We saw evidence of positive relationships with a range of partner agencies, including children's services, the YJS, police and CRS providers.
- We were impressed by co-located and multi-agency working across IOM teams. PDU staff collaborated with a number of services to support individuals subject to IOM management. Staff from both probation and the police were committed to the work they were delivering.
- There were also strong links with the police public protection unit. Although the unit was not co-located with the PDU, there was a positive model in place for managing MAPPA cases. For example, the police and PDU co-worked with people on probation housed via a local accommodation project. This supported the management of high-risk cases.
- Wakefield PDU was represented at a number of operational domestic abuse and safeguarding meetings. These ensured that staff had access to appropriate services and supported the multi-agency management of cases.
- Staff were encouraged to deliver services from the local women's centre, and women-only reporting times were available, which supported individuals' needs.
- Referral rates into CRS were positive, and these referrals were translating into the delivery of services in approximately 70 per cent of cases.⁴
- Cases were being referred into Offender Personality Disorder Pathways, which resulted in people receiving support in a reasonable number of cases. This pathway included access to female-specific interventions for women with complex and enduring needs. This service was relatively new and worked with only a small number of women. But it helped those women to transition from custody into the community and was valued by practitioners.

⁴ Wakefield CRS conversion rate: July 2023 to July 2024. Wakefield PDU data, August 2024.

Areas for improvement:

- While 28 out of 33 practitioners interviewed indicated that they thought they had access to the right services to meet the needs and risks of their cases, this did not translate into sufficient case management or positive outcomes for the cases we inspected.
- PDU leaders need to address issues relating to accessing and sharing information with children's services on an operational level. Wakefield PDU was not a member of the Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive and there had been a lack of senior management involvement to unblock barriers between the PDU and children's services. There were effective processes for accessing initial information, attending relevant multi-agency meetings and providing joint training for new staff, but these did not go far enough to keep people safe, as reflected in the cases we inspected.
- Toolkits to deliver interventions were not being used regularly. While we saw evidence of some constructive work being completed during supervision appointments, this was not consistently evidenced across all cases. Practitioners told us that they felt they often lacked the 'in the room' skills for both delivering toolkits and offering alternative interventions to meet the needs of that case. This was expressed by both experienced and less experienced staff.
- Risk relating to the increasing number of young people who carry knives and weapons had been recognised through work with the early intervention team in Wakefield. A joint training event had taken place with probation practitioners and partners, and a new programme designed to address the issue had been developed and shared with probation. Trained facilitators were available in the probation service, but, due to competing demands on resources, the programme had not yet been rolled out.
- Delivery of accredited programmes needs to improve. In the past 12 months, the rates for successful completion were 41 per cent for those convicted of a sexual offence, and 45 per cent for those convicted of other offences. Relationships between probation practitioners and the intervention team were sufficiently evidenced in three of the four relevant cases inspected. However, only one person out of those four cases had started the accredited programme at an appropriate time.
- The lift at Merchant Gate repeatedly needed to be repaired. When it was broken, the office was inaccessible to both staff and people on probation with mobility needs. Ongoing works to make the Wakefield office accessible for all were beyond the PDU's control, and relied on subcontracted work agreements.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 75 people on probation as part of this inspection. This included 60 face-to-face surveys, four in-depth interviews and 12 surveys completed online. Of those surveyed (72), 74 per cent were male, 14 per cent were female and 13 per cent preferred not to say. In total, 36 per cent were subject to a community order, with 46 per cent reporting following a period in prison, and 18 per cent were unsure what sentence they were subject to. Most respondents were aged 25 years or over, and the diverse ethnicity of the respondents was representative of the overall caseload of the PDU.

- The majority of respondents stated that they understood what was expected of them while on probation. However, six out of the 72 respondents stated that they were not aware of having a sentence plan. Of those who were aware of their sentence plan, the majority stated they were involved in creating it. Engagement with people on probation in the assessment and planning stages of their sentence was a strength, which was evidenced in our case inspection.
- As per our inspection findings, it was encouraging to see that protected characteristics and personal circumstances were considered at the start of an individual's sentence. Respondents to the User Voice survey expressed a similar experience, with 78 per cent stating that they thought their probation practitioner took the time to understand their personal needs during induction.
- Regarding their experience of probation appointments, 45 out of 72 respondents (63 per cent) stated they felt these were helpful in supporting their rehabilitation.

"I find that appointments keep me grounded and keep me on the straight and narrow."

- Unfortunately, this was not always the case, with 15 out of 72 respondents indicating that they did not find their appointments with probation helpful.

"It's just ticking boxes for some of them, you're just another number."

- Only three respondents indicated they either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement 'I have a good relationship with my probation officer'. However, it is disappointing to see that, although there were good working relationships overall, this did not translate into people on probation feeling their supervision appointments supported them and their rehabilitation. This reflected what we saw during the inspection, in terms of a lack of implementation and delivery of sentence plans.
- Encouragingly, most respondents stated that their appointments started on time and were held within a reasonable distance in terms of travel, and that they had been able to contact their practitioner when they needed to.
- Access to advice on finance, debt and benefits and support for education, training and employment were assessed as poor or very poor in 17 per cent and 29 per cent of responses respectively. Neither of these needs were supported by any CRS provision in the community.

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- Practitioners had asked about diversity and protected characteristics at the start of the sentence, and used this information to consider the person's ability to comply with the sentence, in 82 per cent of the cases inspected.
- As the sentence progressed, practitioners focused sufficiently on maintaining an effective working relationship, taking into account diversity needs, in 77 per cent of cases.
- Diversity data was shared with partnership boards and used to inform services and drive priorities. We saw examples of this with the uplift in services to meet higher demand caused by an increase in Drug Rehabilitation Requirements, a rise in knife and weapon possession among young adults, and services available for women.
- Women-specific services were available. These included access to safe spaces, counselling and Offender Personality Disorder Pathway interventions to meet complex needs. Women-only unpaid work sessions were available, as well as an additional group for males who would struggle to attend mainstream placements due to their individual needs, such as neurodivergence and mental and physical health issues.
- Active engagement with the local community promoted the work of the Probation Service and encouraged applications from diverse groups. There was also a commitment to ensuring diverse panels for all recruitment.
- SPOs were assigned lead roles across specific protected characteristics and we saw examples of how they were able to promote positive action.
- There was a fair representation of Black, Asian and ethnic minority members of staff across the PDU. Approximately five per cent of Wakefield PDU's caseload identified as Black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group, compared with 10 per cent of staff.
- A member of staff seconded from the local YJS supported the risk assessment and management of young people and provided a link across the YJS, probation and the local young offender institution.

Areas for improvement:

- The gender diversity of the workforce was disproportionate, compared with the gender of people on probation.
- We did not see any evidence of specific services being delivered for people under the age of 25, despite research about emerging trends in risky behaviours within that group.
- There was no analysis of the specific needs of those from Black, Asian or ethnic minority backgrounds to inform probation practice or the commissioning of services to meet specific needs.
- The National Autistic Society had completed an autism audit of the office and made recommendations on improving the environment to support those with neurodiverse needs. These were yet to be actioned.

2. Service delivery

P 2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁵ for assessment is 'Requires improvement', 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?	79%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	90%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	56%

- A high number of people on probation were meaningfully involved in their initial assessment. Practitioners considered the person's motivation and readiness to engage and comply with their sentence in just over three-quarters of cases. They analysed the individual's protected characteristics and personal circumstances and used these to inform the assessment in the majority of cases, and engagement at the initial assessment stage was positive.
- Analysis of offending-related factors was a particular strength. Assessments relating to desistance and further offending drew on all available sources of information in the majority of cases, and practitioners considered the individual's strengths and protective factors in 67 per cent of cases.
- Child safeguarding concerns were present in 72 per cent of the cases inspected. While practitioners obtained sufficient information on child protection and safeguarding in 26 out of 37 relevant cases, in a further eight cases the information received was insufficient to inform the risk assessment. In some cases, there appeared to be a lack of understanding between probation and children's services about what information would be helpful to inform the initial assessment and why it was being requested. Where information was received, it was used to inform the initial risk assessment in only 20 out of 33 cases where it would have been appropriate to do so.
- Current domestic abuse concerns were identified in 74 per cent of the cases inspected, and sufficient information about domestic abuse was received at either

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.](#)

the court stage or the start of the sentence in 90 per cent of all cases. Through strong working relationships with the police, there was direct access to information on domestic abuse and practitioners were able to complete enquiries via probation administrators. The process for making enquiries was simple and effective. The information received was timely and, although it was not entirely easy to decipher, it did date back to the person's birth. This gave practitioners an opportunity to understand current and previous domestic abuse behaviours, as well as information about partners and children, whose details may not previously have been known. It also provided information on the person on probation's experiences of domestic abuse from childhood. This had the potential to inform the approach that practitioners took in managing them. Domestic abuse information was used to inform the initial risk assessment in 26 out of 36 cases where this would have been relevant. This provides a strong foundation to build on but needs to happen in all relevant cases.

- Overall, risk of harm to others was identified and sufficiently analysed in 21 out of 38 relevant cases inspected. Risk assessments drew on all available information in 56 per cent of cases, and analysis of specific concerns relating to actual and potential victims in 25 out of 38 relevant cases. The lack of analysis of the risk of harm posed by people on probation, and not sufficiently using information obtained from other agencies to inform the assessment, led to a lack of understanding of risk of harm in too many cases.

P 2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁶ for planning is 'Requires improvement' based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

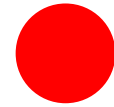
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	77%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	62%

- Considering personal circumstances and taking account of the individual's readiness and motivation to change were particular strengths in engaging the person on probation in planning their sentence. Engagement would have been improved further if practitioners considered protected characteristics more and set out how all requirements of the sentence would be delivered within the available timescales. But, overall, engagement at sentence planning stage was good, as reflected in findings by User Voice.
- Following on from the robust assessment of factors relating to desistance, plans for working with the individual largely prioritised the factors most critical to reducing the risk of further offending. There was evidence that practitioners had set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance in 79 per cent of cases.
- There was evidence that the practitioner had sufficiently set out the necessary constructive or restrictive interventions to manage risk of harm in 72 per cent of cases. In part, this reflected work by middle managers that we had seen at the allocation and commencement stages, which clearly detailed the rationale for allocation and any domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns in the case.
- The screening of eligibility for MAPPA and level setting were also timely and helped practitioners to plan how to manage risk of harm. Links to the work of other agencies and any multi-agency plans relating to risk were also evidenced in 27 out of 35 cases where we would have expected to see this.
- In 24 out of 39 cases, planning did not sufficiently address the risk of harm factors or prioritise those that were most critical. Contingency planning was only sufficient in 20 out of 39 cases. This was largely because the practitioner had failed to fully

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.](#)

consider and analyse the risk of harm to others, or the appropriate actions to be taken if there was an increase in presenting risk. In most cases where this information was absent, it specifically linked to inter-familial violence, domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns, all critical to public protection.

P 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁷ 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?	51%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	49%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	33%

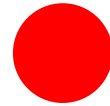
- It was encouraging to see that, in the majority of cases, practitioners routinely considered how to build on the individual's strengths and protective factors. Practitioners considered these factors when implementing and delivering the sentence plan in 72 per cent of cases.
- We saw CRS being offered in 21 out of the 28 cases inspected. While limited outcomes were evidenced by the CRS accommodation provider, these referrals were still being made. The conversion rate from a referral being made to a person starting with the service was approximately 70 per cent across dependency and recovery, personal wellbeing, and women's services.⁸ Providers indicated that there was a reasonable referral rate into their services, although they still had capacity to meet additional demand if the rate of referral increased.
- While the high referral rate into CRS was positive, we were advised that the family and relationships and lifestyle and associates strand of the personal wellbeing contract were underused. This was disappointing, given that these issues were considered to be linked to offending in 90 per cent and 79 per cent of cases respectively. This resource has the potential to improve outcomes for people on probation and could be better used.
- For those who complied with their supervision, requirements started promptly in 23 out of 32 cases. We also saw local services being used to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond in 18 out of 29 cases. Overall, services provided by CRS were accessed in a timely way.

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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

⁸ Wakefield CRS Conversion Rate July 2023 - July 2024 – Wakefield PDU Data August 2024

- We saw a number of instances where Together Women (CRS) appointments were being altered, at the request of the service. This was due to a current vacancy within the CRS team and, despite best efforts, did have an impact on delivery.
- Eleven out of the 12 MAPPA cases inspected were identified as Level 1. There was evidence of coordinated multi-agency oversight, including joint working with the police in 10 out of those 12 cases. However, involvement with other services was not sufficiently coordinated in 16 out of 32 cases where we would have expected to have seen this happen. This had an impact on the implementation and delivery of services, and positive outcomes.
- Management oversight was insufficient, ineffective, or absent in 64 per cent of cases. We were assured that practitioners received regular supervision and were able to approach managers to discuss cases whenever needed. Although we saw some good work in cases, we acknowledge that managers were unable to keep a record of all case discussions held. Even with unrecorded oversight, managing risk of harm and desistance factors was insufficient.
- We saw evidence of positive relationships with children's services. For example, there were formal meeting structures to share information in specific scenarios. These included pregnancy and any risks associated with unborn babies, Claire's Law disclosures and multi-agency discussions on the assessment and management of people who have committed sexual offences. The Probation Service was highly regarded by partner agencies within these forums; however, the day-to-day operational relationships with children's services were less well developed.
- Initial information received from children's services was insufficient in just over a fifth of cases inspected. It was explained that this was likely to be because the request for information had not been specific enough. We did see barriers to accessing additional information when it was required, with social workers often being unavailable. Practitioners faced resistance when trying to share concerns, due to the information relating to risk that they held not meeting the threshold for action by children's services. This led to some apathy among practitioners, who believed that the information they had was unlikely to be accepted by children's services. This acted as a barrier to attempting to share information. The combination of these factors meant that risk management at both the implementation and delivery and reviewing stages of a sentence were often insufficient against our standards.

P 2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁹ for reviewing is 'Inadequate' based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	62%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	46%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	41%

- Reviewing was sufficiently focused on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation in 62 per cent of cases overall. Where reviewing activity was delivered well, it included engaging the person on probation about their progress, barriers to engagement and compliance, and setting future objectives. This was often done on an informal basis rather than with formal written reviews.
- Overall, reviewing activity did not sufficiently focus on supporting the person on probation's desistance. In just over half the cases we did not see changes to factors linked to further offending being identified. There was a lack of adjustments to the work being delivered to address changes in offending-related factors.
- Where we saw reviewing activity being delivered well, this included building on strengths and protective factors, as well as using information from other agencies to inform reviewing activity, but we saw this in too few cases.
- In 14 out of 31 cases, the reviewing activity failed to identify and address changes in factors relating to risk of harm, and necessary adjustments were not made to the ongoing plan of work. The person on probation, other agencies and, where appropriate, key individuals were not routinely involved in reviewing the risk of harm. This was insufficient and reflects the lack of robust risk management that we found in too many cases.

⁹ 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.

Outcomes

Strengths:

- Where we saw cases being managed well, this included: strong engagement with the person on probation to include them in all aspects of their assessment and sentence planning and delivery; prompt liaison with other agencies once the case was allocated; timely home visits to assess risk; intervention work, with the probation practitioner and with the support of CRS; and responsiveness when there were changes in the level of risk or need.
- Despite difficulties in accessing education, training and employment provision within the PDU, the number of people in full- or part-time employment or training improved from five at the start of their supervision to 15 people at the point of inspection.

Areas for improvement:

- We heard of significant issues with accessing accommodation. This was reflected in our inspection findings: 19 people were in settled accommodation at the start of their supervision, and this had only increased to 23 people at the point of inspection.
- We saw sufficient improvements in the factors most closely linked to offending, relating to both addressing needs and developing strengths, in only eight of the 39 cases inspected. This reflected the gaps that we saw in sentence implementation and delivery.
- Improvements in the individual factors linked to risk of serious harm were evidenced in only six out of the 39 cases inspected. This largely reflected what we had seen in terms of the quality of work to manage the risk of harm and lack of reviewing of any changes to factors related to risk.
- Sufficient compliance was evidenced in 24 out of the 39 cases inspected. Improving compliance would have a direct impact on service delivery and support positive change for people on probation.

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)