



## Some key principles for the effective management oversight of risk of harm to others and safeguarding/child protection and vulnerability

### Introduction

- Effective management oversight is much more than countersigning. It also includes elements of quality assurance, staff supervision, dealing with developing areas of concern in individual cases and facilitating improvements in practice. It is particularly focused on ensuring that actual or potential victims in individual cases and the young people or adult offenders themselves (including where appropriate other young people known to the offender) are sufficiently protected from harm.
- In particular, management oversight should focus on cases that have been assessed in YOTs as medium or higher risk of harm to others or vulnerability, and for adults as high or very high risk of harm to others. However, managers should also be aware of (and actively monitoring) those cases that, although not currently assessed at these levels of risk of harm or vulnerability, have the potential to increase in the level of either of these aspects.
- To be considered sufficient, oversight should assess the sufficiency of practice, identify deficits in practice, *ensure* that remedial actions are identified, and confirm that required actions have been taken; although the precise nature of confirmation may vary depending on the experience of the practitioner. Just asking for tasks to be undertaken, without ensuring they have been done, is not enough.
- In order to provide *effective* oversight, managers should themselves have sufficient underpinning knowledge about risk of harm and vulnerability, understand the assessment, planning and management processes, recognise indicators of raised<sup>1</sup> risk of harm and vulnerability, and be able to distinguish both good and insufficient practice.

### Supervision or management oversight?

- Oversight of risk of harm and vulnerability is different from regular staff supervision and the general oversight of practice, although it may sometimes be undertaken at the same time, and discussions in supervision may support identification of the need for management oversight.
- *Effective* management oversight takes into account the unique demands of the individual case, and the skills, knowledge and experience of the case manager<sup>2</sup> or responsible officer. A skilled manager, taking a fresh look at a case and with a degree of 'healthy scepticism' and challenge can help practitioners take a more balanced and informed view of a case, and identify more appropriate interventions and responses than through working in isolation.
- Managers are responsible for ensuring that cases are allocated to staff with appropriate skills and experience, according to the circumstances of the case.
- HMI Probation considers that managers should then normally be accountable for ensuring the quality of work where they were, or should reasonably have been, aware of the raised risk of harm or vulnerability.
- Therefore managers should ensure that there are systems in place for them to identify cases with raised risk of harm and vulnerability; these systems should include ensuring that all staff are aware and clear about their responsibility to raise these cases with their manager. If information systems could reasonably have identified to the manager the need to provide

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<sup>1</sup> Raised risk of harm to others or vulnerability - cases that include risk of harm or vulnerability factors that would indicate the need for management involvement

<sup>2</sup> The generic term 'case manager' is used throughout this document to refer to the case manager, offender manager or other person with case holding responsibility

oversight then lack of referral to the manager is not sufficient to excuse the gap in oversight. Examples to illustrate where information systems may be helpful include information from the police regarding arrests, charges and call outs (e.g. for domestic violence), monitoring of further appearances in court for serious offences, monitoring cases where indicators of raised risk of harm or vulnerability have been identified in the initial screening, and identifying cases where the classification of risk of harm or vulnerability would, under current guidance, require formal management involvement.

- Managers should assure themselves, in cases with raised risk of harm or vulnerability, that
  - the risk of harm or vulnerability is managed in such a way that actual or potential victims are protected,
  - as a minimum, assessment and planning is effective and appropriate to the needs of the case,
  - work undertaken is timely, undertaken as planned and responsive to changing circumstances,
  - escalation or other action is taken as appropriate to ensure that required services are delivered.
- In general, insufficient assessment and planning for cases with a recognised raised risk of harm to others or vulnerability or insufficient action to address gaps in provision of relevant services, *where the deficits have not been addressed in a timely manner*, is likely to indicate that oversight was not effective in that case.

### **Risk management forums**

- Where an organisation makes use of internal risk management forums, or inter-agency forums, these are not a substitute for case manager ownership of the case and the manager's responsibility to provide effective ongoing oversight.

### **Case manager responsibilities**

- Case managers and other staff should be clear about:
  - the provision of management oversight,
  - their responsibilities for referring cases to managers, and
  - their responsibilities to respond to the outcomes of oversight in a timely manner.

### **Recording**

- The outcomes of oversight in individual cases should be clearly recorded in the case record, so that they are available as appropriate to all who may be involved in the case.
- Effective oversight will ensure that actions taken are defensible and clearly recorded. This includes ensuring that an explanation is recorded as to why a particular action has been agreed and followed, and if not why not, along with reasons for any variance from national or local procedures where they exist.
- Evidence of where effective oversight has taken place may include, for example, assessments and plans being rolled back and improved, case discussions, direct observation of work and communications between the manager and other agencies involved in the case.
- Further information can also be found in the Case Assessment Guidance (CAG) for our inspection programmes published on the HMI Probation website: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation) .

### **Summary**

In summary, middle managers should ensure that they have sufficient confidence, in all individual cases with raised risk of harm or vulnerability, that 'all was done that could reasonably have been done' to protect actual or potential victims, including the child or young person or adult offender themselves, from harm.