



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

An inspection of probation services in:  
**Thames Valley**  
Community Rehabilitation Company

HMI Probation, January 2020

## **Acknowledgements**

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Noreen Wallace, 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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## Foreword

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This is the first inspection in the second round of our current inspection programme.

We are pleased to rate Thames Valley CRC as 'Good', having found improvements since our last inspection in 2018. When we last inspected, we found that full implementation of the operating model had been hampered by the lack of services available, meaning that responsible officers were not always able to refer to suitable interventions. In common with other CRC inspections, we had concerns about the work being undertaken to reduce the risk of harm posed by individuals, and found that checks in relation to child safeguarding and domestic abuse were not routinely being undertaken. We found that arrangements for the delivery of unpaid work failed to manage risk of harm issues adequately. It is evident that Thames Valley CRC is responsive to feedback and has attended to many of the areas we found lacking last time.

Despite the uncertain future for CRCs, in Thames Valley there has been continued investment in staff development and building high-quality services. Senior leaders are dedicated to ensuring that when current contracts end, staff transferring to other organisations will do so "*with their heads held high*", well trained and confident in their work. This has paid dividends, as staff throughout the CRC remain positive about their organisation and committed to their work.

The CRC continues to have firm adherence to evidence-based practice and has developed an increased range of interventions based on this principle. Interventions are subject to internal and external evaluation, with revisions made as a result when necessary. Unpaid work arrangements have been comprehensively reconsidered, and there are now safe procedures in place to manage the risks of individuals completing these sentences. We were particularly impressed with the work of the Through the Gate team, which, following national changes to the specification of this work, is providing comprehensive support to those being released from prison. In casework, at the initial assessment stage, we found robust processes, routinely being used, to share information with police and other agencies in relation to child safeguarding and domestic abuse. There remains work to do, to ensure that sentence plans are delivered in all cases, and allow individuals to benefit from the interventions available. The quality assurance framework in place has the potential to drive further progress and build on what has been achieved in the past 12 months.



**Justin Russell**  
Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

Thames Valley  
Community Rehabilitation Company

Score **17/30**

**Overall rating**

**Good**



### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



### 2. Case supervision

2.1 Assessment

Good



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



2.4 Reviewing

Inadequate



### 3. CRC-specific work

4.1 Unpaid work

Good



4.2 Through the Gate

Outstanding



## Executive summary

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Overall, Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) is rated as: **Good**. This rating has been determined by inspecting this provider in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 10 'standards', shared between the domains. These standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with people who have offended.<sup>1</sup> Published scoring rules generate the overall provider rating.<sup>2</sup> The findings and subsequent ratings in those three domains are described here.

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### 1. Organisational delivery



We have rated Thames Valley CRC as 'Good' across all four standards in this domain. In our assessment of leadership, staffing, and information and facilities, the CRC has maintained the standards reported in our previous inspection in 2018. For the services standard, we found improvements which have led to a higher rating than we gave last year. The CRC has maintained its corporate goals (to become a trusted provider of justice services; leading in developing and delivering successful interventions; improving lives to build safe communities; and reduce reoffending), and its leadership team demonstrates consistent communication of these aims internally and externally. Improvement plans are clearly aligned to the vision and strategy, and attend to learning from a range of sources, including internal quality assurance processes.

Despite the longstanding challenge of recruiting and retaining staff in the Thames Valley area, the CRC has achieved a reduction in staff turnover over the last 12 months. In addition, it has carefully considered how best to use recruitment to ensure that it attracts high-calibre staff, introducing more robust selection processes. The CRC offers development opportunities to probation services officer (PSO) grade staff, to complete professional qualifications to become a probation officer (PO), and has developed the 'enhanced PSO' role, to mitigate the lack of available qualified POs.

Staff joining the organisation receive a thorough induction, and all staff have access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities. The staff we met were mainly positive about their organisation, saying that they are consulted about planned changes and feel that they are listened to. Staff in all areas of delivery are committed to the work they complete.

Since our last visit, the range of interventions to support individuals address their offending behaviour has increased, and delivery now takes place in a wider range of locations. Premises are generally of a reasonably good standard and the CRC has continued to invest in further improving facilities. The CRC has impressive systems to

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<sup>1</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

<sup>2</sup> Each of the 10 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale, in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 30, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–5 = 'Inadequate'; 6–15 = 'Requires improvement'; 16–25 = 'Good'; 26–30 = 'Outstanding'.

produce management information, and uses this data in innovative ways to support and inform frontline work.

Key strengths of the organisation are as follows:

- Senior leaders are effective, and regularly exchange information with staff.
- Frontline staff feel aligned to the organisation's vision and strategy, and believe that there is a focus on high-quality work.
- There is a strong adherence to ensuring that all work delivered is evidence based and can be evaluated.
- Staff have access to a comprehensive range of high-quality training opportunities.

The main areas for improvement are as follows:

- Some staff report being confused about aspects of the operational delivery model, which can lead to a lack of completion of meaningful work in some cases.
- The operating model should be more explicit in requiring recognition and consideration of individual personal circumstances and diversity characteristics in the planning and delivery of sentences.

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## 2. Case supervision



We inspected 62 community sentence cases and 38 post-release supervision cases; interviewed 60 responsible officers and 8 service users; and examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of engaging the service user and addressing issues relevant to offending and desistance. In the 79 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken against each factor needs to be above a specified threshold, for that element of work to be rated as satisfactory.

Overall, in case supervision, we found that assessment and planning work was much stronger than delivery and reviewing. In the large majority of cases (90 per cent), assessment accurately identified factors relating to offending. In a reasonable majority of cases (76 per cent), the planning that followed set out actions aimed at reducing the likelihood of further offending. Individuals' strengths and protective factors were identified and, where possible, built upon to support desistance. Individuals were usually engaged in assessment and planning for their sentence, and had their views taken into account. Assessment and planning had a sufficient focus on keeping others safe in a reasonable majority of cases we inspected.

The requirements of sentences usually started promptly, with a focus on engaging the individual concerned to maximise opportunities to make a difference in their lives. We were disappointed that, despite the increased availability of rehabilitation services, only a minority of the cases were benefiting from these interventions. In too many cases, we found that, despite good assessment and planning, activities and interventions were not delivered as intended. The lack of implementation of plans resulted in missed opportunities to support desistance.

The quality of work to review cases was largely insufficient. Written reviews were completed in only just over half of cases where they were needed. Where reviews

were completed, too often they did not result in adjustments to the work being delivered as required. In too many cases, changes relating to risk of harm were not identified and information was not sought from other relevant partner agencies.

Key strengths of case supervision are as follows:

- Individuals are usually meaningfully involved in the assessment and planning of their sentences.
- Assessments, informed by a range of sources, effectively identify and analyse offending-related factors.
- Information is sought and shared, in relevant cases, in relation to domestic abuse and child safeguarding.
- Risk of harm classifications are accurate in the majority of cases.

Areas of case supervision requiring improvement include:

- There is not enough contact before release in licence cases.
- Despite the increase in available interventions, in too many cases insufficient services are delivered to address the factors linked to offending.
- Reviewing practice is stronger at considering strengths and protective factors but too often fails to engage the individual concerned, or make appropriate changes to plans in light of changes in risk of harm.

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### 3. CRC-specific work

A blue folder icon with the letters 'CRC' in white text inside.

Our key findings about other core activities specific to the CRC are as follows:

#### Unpaid work

We inspected the management of 35 unpaid work requirements, looking at assessment and planning; safety; and implementation of the court order. We also observed four induction sessions and ten work parties, plus two sites where work had been completed, to examine the extent to which unpaid work was delivered in a way that supports desistance.

Over 80 per cent of the unpaid work cases we inspected had personalised assessments and plans. Unpaid work was delivered safely in the large majority of cases (83 per cent), and in 74 per cent of cases the sentence of the court was implemented appropriately, leading to an overall rating of 'Good' for unpaid work in this inspection.

In our previous inspection, we rated unpaid work as 'Inadequate' and had concerns about how well risk of harm issues were understood and managed. The CRC has since reviewed its arrangements, provided comprehensive training to all staff involved, and introduced new procedures to manage individuals who pose a risk of harm to others. The staff involved in unpaid work delivery are positive about their roles, and model good behaviours to the groups they manage. During this inspection, we visited sites where unpaid work was carried out and observed their safe management, with consistent rules applied. We were concerned to find that some groups are regularly stood down, however, with attendees sent home without completing their hours.



Key strengths of unpaid work are:

- Factors identified in assessment that can have an impact on an individual's lives are catered for in planning to maximise compliance.
- Risks to the public and potential victims are identified and managed appropriately.
- Unpaid work staff communicate effectively with responsible officers.

Areas for improvement of unpaid work are:

- Opportunities are not always provided to increase employment-related skills.
- Individuals are sent away too often without the opportunity to complete their hours.

## Through the Gate

We inspected the management of 14 cases where the CRC had delivered pre-release Through the Gate resettlement work, looking at resettlement planning, delivery of resettlement services and release coordination. We also held meetings with the senior manager in the CRC responsible for Through the Gate services; two governors with responsibility for resettlement from two prison establishments; the middle manager responsible for Through the Gate services; and a group of CRC resettlement workers directly responsible for preparing resettlement plans and/or meeting identified resettlement needs.

We found that resettlement planning focused appropriately on offending-related factors in 93 per cent of the cases we inspected. There was effective coordination of resettlement activity in 100 per cent of the cases, and we have therefore rated Through the Gate work as 'Outstanding' in this inspection. Through the Gate services have benefited from an increase in resources since the introduction of the enhanced specification. This has allowed an increased staff group, who have more time to spend with individuals preparing for release. The increased resource also enables better liaison with other prison departments and support services.

When we last visited Thames Valley CRC, we rated Through the Gate work as 'Requires improvement' and identified a lack of communication and handover between Through the Gate and community services. At this inspection, we were pleased to find an improved service, with effective work to support those being released from custody. Resettlement planning has improved from last year and is substantially better than the average for CRCs as a whole from our year one inspections. Resettlement activity focuses appropriately on individual needs, and there was effective coordination between Through the Gate services and those in the community in all the cases we inspected.

Key strengths of Through the Gate work are:

- Plans are completed promptly, with meaningful engagement of the individual due for release, taking into account their strengths and protective factors.
- Risk of harm issues are recognised and managed appropriately in plans and activities.
- The resettlement services delivered attend to the most critical needs of the individual in most cases.

- There is good communication with responsible officers.
- Handover to community services on release is effective and supports resettlement.

## Recommendations

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### Achievement of recommendations from the previous inspection<sup>3</sup>

In our previous inspection report, we made six recommendations to the CRC. During this inspection, we investigated the extent to which these recommendations have been achieved. We found that sufficient progress has been made on three recommendations, and some progress on the remaining three.

We recommended that the CRC:

1. *'Ensures the full range of services and interventions are delivered at the frequency and volume necessary to meet local demand'.*

#### **The CRC has made some progress on this recommendation.**

During the past 12 months, 6 new interventions have been introduced. Interventions are now available in almost all offices, and the number of facilitator posts has been increased from 14 to 17 (full-time-equivalent (FTE) roles). Waiting lists for accredited programmes have been reduced – for Building Better Relationships (BBR) from 28 to 17 weeks; for Resolve from 32 to 12 weeks; for the Thinking Skills Programme (TSP) from 18 to 13 weeks. The rehabilitation service provides a comprehensive monthly report to the senior management team, detailing programme delivery and waiting times. Despite the increase in the number of interventions, it is disappointing that our findings on the implementation and delivery of services to support desistance were not more positive.

2. *'Increases communication with sentencers to improve information exchange and build effective relationships'.*

#### **The CRC has made some progress on this recommendation.**

Thames Valley CRC has started to improve communication with sentencers, making use of increased opportunities to meet them, attending magistrates' training and providing literature on interventions specifically for sentencers. Some sentencers report an improvement in communication, although others remain dissatisfied and unclear about the work of the CRC. The CRC reports an increase in programme requirements, indicating increased confidence, but that issues such as the number of acceptable absences noted in breach reports remain a concern for sentencers. Further work is needed, to ensure that those making sentencing decisions understand the CRC services and practice.

3. *'Improves the quality of planning, service delivery and reviewing to help keep actual and potential victims safe'.*

#### **The CRC has made some progress on this recommendation.**

There has been some improvement in our findings of the quality of casework. The move to the Omnia case management system has meant that actions are required against each factor, linked by the responsible officer to offending, desistance or risk of serious harm. While we found improvements in the delivery of work linked to risk of serious harm, we did not find the same in work to support

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<sup>3</sup> HMI Probation. (2018). *An inspection of Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company.*

desistence. We did not find any improvement in the quality of reviewing across any of the three key questions.

4. *'Equips staff with the skills and knowledge to work with domestic abuse perpetrators and to deal with child safeguarding concerns'.*

**The CRC has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.**

Thames Valley CRC has good training on domestic abuse and safeguarding, enhanced by more general training on home visits and professional curiosity, which support this work. Regular audits also consider the quality of domestic abuse and safeguarding work. Staff receive one-to-one feedback from the auditor to support learning and development. We found that there are appropriate checks to facilitate information sharing with the police and children's social care services.

5. *'Ensures unpaid work allocation decisions are based on effective risk assessment, and supervisory staff understand plans to manage the risk of harm individuals pose'.*

**The CRC has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.**

Unpaid work arrangements have been overhauled since our previous inspection. Supervisors have received a range of training, to equip them to use technology to communicate more effectively. In addition, they have been trained in using Omnia and provided with tablet computers, to enable immediate access to information. The process of communicating risks between office- and site-based staff has improved and now works effectively. 'Safe allocation' forms are now used for all service users assessed as posing a risk of serious harm of medium or above, or where staff identify that there is reason to make this assessment.

6. *'Ensures Through the Gate staff communicate with local community services in preparation for individuals' release from custody'.*

**The CRC has made sufficient progress on this recommendation.**

Through the Gate services are now delivered to the enhanced specification and we have seen evidence of effective work in our domain three sample. In 79 per cent of cases inspected, resettlement activity focused sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement. All cases had effective coordination of resettlement activity, and in 88 per cent of cases we assessed resettlement services to have supported an effective handover to local services in the community.

## **New recommendations**

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

**Thames Valley CRC should:**

1. increase communication with sentencers, to improve information exchange and build effective relationships. **This recommendation has been repeated from the previous inspection**
2. improve the implementation and delivery of sentences, to ensure that appropriate interventions are delivered and offending-related factors are addressed

3. ensure that reviewing takes full account of risk of harm issues and that adjustments to ongoing plans are made as a result
4. review guidance for responsible officers, to ensure that the impact of diversity and personal circumstances are fully considered throughout case supervision work
5. reduce the number of stand-downs that take place on unpaid work requirements.
6. ensure that management oversight through supervision and audit is effective, and that recommendations made are followed through by responsible officers.

## Background

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### Thames Valley CRC

Thames Valley CRC spans the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, comprising a population of approximately 2.2 million people over a large geographical area with urban and rural sections. The area has pockets of both affluence and notable poverty, including rural poverty. The cost of living, reflected through property prices, for example, is relatively high, mainly because of proximity to London. Unemployment rates throughout much of the area are lower than the average for England, except for Reading, where this rate is slightly higher, and Milton Keynes and Slough, where rates are close to the national average. The area has seven unitary authorities and nine district councils.

Apart from the one police force for Thames Valley, no other organisation is coterminous with the Thames Valley area. Three Crown Courts and 11 magistrates' courts operate within the three local justice areas covering Thames Valley. The CRC collaborates with nine Safeguarding Children Boards, nine health and wellbeing boards and sixteen community safety partnerships. The area includes four adult prisons and one young offender institution.

The area has a lower-than-average crime rate. Police-recorded crime (excluding fraud) for the year ending March 2019 was 68.4 crimes per thousand population in Thames Valley, compared with an average across England of 88.7.<sup>4</sup>

Thames Valley CRC employs 257 staff, of whom 244 are in frontline supervisory or administrative roles working from 8 sites across the area. The CRC has increased the number of responsible officers from 78 in July 2018 to 89 in July 2019. The total caseload has fallen from 4,417 to 4,212 over the same period, and therefore the average reported caseload has fallen from 53 to 46, although caseloads vary among staff. Senior probation officers (SPOs) are reported to have a span of control of one to nine members of staff. Administrative staff, on average, support eight responsible officers.

Among its caseload, Thames Valley CRC manages:

- 500 female service users (13 per cent of the total service users)
- 1,350 service users with an offence categorised as violent
- 900 perpetrators of domestic violence
- 1,100 service users identified as having drug misuse issues
- 900 service users identified as having alcohol misuse issues
- 850 service users identified as having emotional issues.

MTC is the parent organisation awarded the contract to provide probation services through Thames Valley CRC. The company also owns the London CRC. The two MTC CRCs and secure training centre<sup>5</sup> work collaboratively with one another, sharing learning.

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<sup>4</sup> Home Office. (2019) *Crime Rates in England and Wales: Police recorded crime*. March 2019.

<sup>5</sup> This is referring to Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre.

The Probation Director of Thames Valley CRC is the senior leader of both Thames Valley and the neighbouring London CRC.

MTC is an American family-owned organisation. It supports more than 31,000 service users across 25 facilities in the USA to learn new academic, technical and social skills. In the UK, it delivers in the justice and health markets. The public- and third-sector partners comprise: RISE (a public service mutual, delivering probation services); Band of Brothers (a charity aimed at reducing self-destructive and antisocial behaviour among young men); and Novus (a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to delivering education, training and employability programmes in prisons, approved premises and the community).

For more information about this CRC, including details of its operating model and organisational structure, please see Annex 3 of this report.

## Key facts

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1,752

The number of individuals supervised on community sentences by Thames Valley CRC<sup>6</sup>

1,112

The number of individuals supervised post-release by Thames Valley CRC<sup>6</sup>

2,832

The number of individuals commencing community sentences in the 12 months before this inspection for Thames Valley CRC<sup>7</sup>

1,227

The number of individuals commencing post-release supervision in the 12 months before this inspection for Thames Valley CRC<sup>7</sup>

44.3%

The proportion of Thames Valley CRC's service users with a proven reoffence<sup>9</sup>

41.9%

The proportion of service users (England and Wales) with a proven reoffence<sup>9</sup>

£14.303m

Annual turnover, year ending 31 December 2018<sup>10</sup>

£14.369m

Annual turnover, year ending 31 December 2017<sup>10</sup>

### Performance against key targets

76%

The proportion of individuals recorded as having successfully completed their community orders or suspended sentence orders for Thames Valley CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 76%, against a target of 75%<sup>12</sup>

66%

The proportion of positive compliance outcomes with licences and, where applicable, post-sentence supervision periods for Thames Valley CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 66%, against a target of 65%<sup>13</sup>

92%

The proportion of positive completions of unpaid work requirements for Thames Valley CRC. The performance figure for all England and Wales was 92%, against a target of 90%<sup>14</sup>

6 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Offender management caseload statistics as at 31 March 2019*.

7 Figure supplied by CRC.

8 Figure supplied by CRC.

9 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Proven reoffending, Payment by results, July to September 2017 cohort, 2019*.

10 Figure supplied by CRC.

11 Figure supplied by CRC.

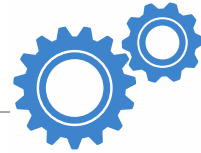
12 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *CRC Service Level 8, Community performance quarterly statistics, January 2018 – March 2019, Q4*.

13 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *CRC Assurance Metric J, Community performance quarterly statistics, January 2018 – March 2019, Q4*.

14 Ministry of Justice. (2019). *CRC Service Level 10, Community performance quarterly statistics, January 2018 – March 2019, Q4*.



# 1. Organisational delivery



Thames Valley CRC has a clear, well-embedded strategic vision focused on delivering a high-quality service. The CRC has introduced a comprehensive quality framework, with the aim of supporting staff to understand what high-quality work looks like. In the previous 12 months, the operating model has remained the same, but a new case management system (Omnia) has been rolled out. Having been involved in the design process, staff are mostly positive about the new system and how the change was managed. Good progress has been made in the availability of rehabilitation services, although further improvement is needed to ensure that they are delivered in all relevant cases, and that responsible officers fully understand this aspect of the operating model. The further improvements needed in relation to the implementation and review of casework prevented us from rating the leadership in this area as 'Outstanding'.

## Strengths:

- Senior leaders are visible and staff are positive about their employer, despite the uncertainty of the future probation landscape.
- The CRC continues to demonstrate commitment to delivering evidence-based practice, evaluating the impact of its work and developing new interventions.
- Staff are able to access a wide range of training and development opportunities.
- Management information systems are impressive and used in innovative ways to support service delivery.
- There is a clear commitment to learning, and responding to feedback, from external and internal audit and inspection.

## Areas for improvement:

- Information on diversity is collected but more could be done to consider and analyse issues of disproportionality.
- Overall, workloads and individual caseloads are improving but this is inconsistent, and in some cases they are still too high.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>1.1. Leadership</b>		
The leadership of the organisation supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users.	Good	Good

## Key data

	12 months previously	Current
Proportion of staff interviewed who agreed that the organisation prioritised quality <sup>15</sup>	66%	78%

In making a judgement about leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions.

### **Is there an effective vision and strategy driving the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?**

Thames Valley CRC has retained a clear strategy: 'Getting the right people, spending the right amount of time, doing the right thing, with the right service user'. The corporate vision makes a commitment to using an evidence-based approach and sets out an ambition for Thames Valley CRC to:

'Be valued for its ability to positively impact and inspire change in the lives of every service user; be the most trusted provider of justice services in the UK; be recognised as a leader in developing and delivering successful interventions and evidence-led outcomes; improve the lives of people in order to build stronger and safer communities, through our use of innovative technology, data analytics, collaborative partnerships and our people'.

The annual service plan sets out strategic priorities and objectives, informed by previous inspections and audits, to improve the quality of services delivered. Included are objectives to: strengthen relationships with partners and stakeholders; make probation practice more efficient and effective; grow capability through staff development; and ensure that the operating model is fully implemented. Actions are set out for each objective, and these are reviewed throughout the year. We saw evidence that actions are being progressed, although some remain ongoing. Through our meetings with partner agencies, we found that most were clear about the CRC's strategy and vision, although sentencers stated that the lack of contact by the responsible officer with prisoners pre-release was continuing to have a negative impact on their confidence in the CRC.

The CRC engages with partner agencies at a strategic level, through the local criminal justice board and sub-groups attended by senior leaders and/or SPOs with delegated responsibility. To influence and shape progress, senior leaders chair sub-groups that are priority areas for the CRC, such as on accommodation. Some key stakeholders said that a regular newsletter about the work of the CRC would be useful. The senior leadership recognises that partnership work needs a more specific focus, and this has led to the appointment of an SPO with a dedicated partnership remit.

### **Are potential risks to service delivery anticipated and planned for in advance?**

The CRC has an up-to-date risk register, which includes commercial pressures and learning from inspection and audit. The key risks identified include unpaid work risk management and delivery, which we found to have been sufficiently addressed. Staffing is highlighted as a key risk, with mitigating actions taken, including increased

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<sup>15</sup> HMI Probation inspection data.

PSO recruitment to compensate for the lack of available POs. The announcement in May 2019 that all offender management will be brought into the National Probation Service (NPS) by 2021, with other rehabilitation services provided by probation delivery partners, causes uncertainty for CRC staff. We were impressed, however, that the staff in Thames Valley CRC told us that their current organisation continues to support them and offer development opportunities, which reduces their immediate concerns.

Thames Valley CRC is equipped to manage unexpected events, with business continuity plans for each office. Plans are regularly reviewed, and recent external events at the Reading office demonstrated that they work well in emergency situations.



Changes within an organisation are always accompanied by risks. The roll-out of the new case management system, Omnia, is an example of a large-scale change managed well. This work was carefully planned, with a taskforce in place to support staff post-implementation. Staff were involved throughout the design, planning and roll-out, and spoke positively about both the process and the new system.

### **Does the operating model support effective service delivery, meeting the needs of all service users?**

The roll-out of the current operating model in Thames Valley CRC started in May 2018. At the time of our previous inspection, it was not fully implemented and not all staff understood it. The operating model provides the means to target resources at individuals with the highest likelihood of reoffending and the most complex needs, and those posing the highest risk of harm to others. The model is supported by 'the Grid', which identifies interventions that should be considered based on the individual's risks and needs; however, it is not sufficiently explicit in setting expectations that all diversity factors should be considered. The model sets an expectation that responsible officers should plan for all appointments with those under supervision, and address areas identified in their sentence plan.

The operating model is aimed at all service users having structured, meaningful interventions, using groupwork where possible. Most staff understand the model, although some responsible officers are confused about what they can deliver to address offending-relating needs, and what should be delivered by rehabilitation services. Some responsible officers said that they felt restricted in what they could do during appointments, reporting that offence-focused work had to be pre-approved by managers for it to count as part of the rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR). In some cases, this led to them using sessions to 'check in' with individuals, rather than complete offending-focused work.

The operating model uses a gender-based cohort approach, with dedicated teams for women under supervision in place since 2015. During our previous inspection, we assessed that services for women were underdeveloped. A new women's strategy was launched in July 2019, based on the National Women's Strategy. The CRC now has women-only reporting slots in each office and has increased the availability of interventions for women.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>1.2. Staff</b>		
Staff within the organisation are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users.	Good	Good

Key staffing data <sup>16</sup>	Previous year	Current year
Total staff headcount (FTE)	210	198
Vacancy rate (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total staff headcount)	No data available	11%
Vacancy rate of PO or equivalent grade only (total number of unfilled posts as a percentage of total number of required PO posts)	No data available	7.34%
Sickness absence rate (all staff)	No data available	7%
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	23%	18%

Caseload data	Previous year	Current year
Average caseload PO (FTE) <sup>17</sup>	30.27	48.60
Average caseload PSO (FTE) <sup>18</sup>	59.2	36.12
POs (or equivalent) in this CRC describing caseload as unmanageable <sup>19</sup>	67%	50%
PSOs (or equivalent) in this CRC describing caseload as unmanageable <sup>20</sup>	47%	40%

<sup>16</sup> All data supplied by CRC.

<sup>17</sup> Data supplied by the CRC.

<sup>18</sup> Data supplied by the CRC.

<sup>19</sup> Data from inspection interviews with responsible officers.

<sup>20</sup> Data from inspection interviews with responsible officers.

For the purposes of comparison, in our inspections of all CRCs between June 2018 and June 2019, 63 per cent of POs and 56 per cent of PSOs told inspectors their caseloads were unmanageable.

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

**Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?**

Recruitment and retention, particularly of qualified POs, is difficult in Thames Valley owing to the proximity to London and cost of living in the area. Despite this, there has been a five per cent reduction in attrition rates over the past 12 months, although leaders acknowledge that rates are still too high. Recognising the shortage of qualified POs, the CRC has increased the number of PSOs, by nearly 20 FTE posts in the past 12 months. The ambition is for a staff group who can be developed into future POs and 'enhanced PSOs'.

Staff sickness rates have reduced in the past 12 months to seven per cent, which remains higher than the organisation's target of five per cent. The CRC has implemented measures aimed at reducing sickness absence, including increasing the visibility of the human resources business partner in each office to support staff, as well as promoting the use of employee assistance schemes.

Thames Valley CRC does not use a workload management tool. MTC is developing such a tool, although this is not yet ready for use. The CRC workload planning strategy sets out an aim to move away from using crude caseloads, and instead monitor each responsible officer's overall workload, taking account of their caseload mix and the different amounts of work required by different types of case. Where possible, cases are moved – for example, from PO to PSO – or are seen less often, to relieve pressures. Administration staff allocate cases to responsible officers based on caseload numbers in the appropriate cohort. Information provided by the CRC shows that average caseloads have fallen from just over 53 to just under 46. The CRC was unable to provide actual caseload numbers for responsible officers across the CRC as a whole, although approximately half the PO and PSOs of the 60 we interviewed reported caseloads of between 51 and 75, indicating that a number of responsible officers have higher caseloads than the reported average.

Just over half (56 per cent) of responsible officers reported that their caseload was manageable, which is an improvement from 44 per cent last year and better than the aggregate score from our first round of CRC inspections (41 per cent).

Middle managers are reported to have an average of nine staff to line-manage; however, some SPOs do not have line management responsibility, so the actual figures per person are higher. SPOs have an increased role in quality audits and case checking; this is expected to take up 20 per cent of their time, so other tasks, such as allocation, have been removed to allow for this.

**Do the skills and profile of staff support the delivery of a high-quality service for all service users?**

The CRC is mindful of the profile of its staff group and reports on this annually, comparing the diversity of its workforce with that of the general population of Thames Valley. It has a higher percentage of female staff than the wider population and, while this has decreased from the previous year, its equality and diversity report acknowledges that there remains work to do in balancing gender within the staff group. The percentage of black staff employed in the CRC is 6.1 per cent higher, and Asian staff 2.9 per cent lower than in the local population.

A talent management grid is used as part of the annual appraisal system, to allow staff to access a range of development opportunities. The CRC requires managers to complete unconscious bias training to ensure that processes are fair, although it acknowledges that more could be done to ensure that there is no disproportionality in access to these opportunities.

Seventy-eight per cent of the responsible officers we interviewed reported that they are always allocated cases that are appropriate to their training and experience. A further 98 per cent felt they have the skills, ability and knowledge to supervise their caseload.

### **Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?**

Thames Valley CRC SPO practice standards indicate that responsible officers and their SPO should have line management meetings (to discuss personal development) every four to six weeks, and supervision/sentence planning meetings (to discuss progress of service users) monthly. Staff report that the format of supervision is not always as set out in the practice standards, although 83 per cent of responsible officers reported having supervision that enhances and sustains high-quality work with service users.

Checklists are provided to support managers' induction of staff, including shadowing and appropriate training. There is a comprehensive six-week induction for PSOs, together with additional follow-up days. An appraisal process includes a personal development plan, although information gathered through this is not developed into a comprehensive training needs analysis. There are measures to identify poor performance through the range of quality audits, which also offer a means to address concerns and provide support through the quality team. Formal processes to address performance are instigated as needed, although these are rare.

The CRC has put in place checks and internal audits as part of its quality framework. The quality assurance arrangements were introduced in May 2019. Managers and staff involved in quality assurance have initially focused on ensuring that assessment and planning are of good quality. It is acknowledged that the implementation of sentences is not always as strong, albeit they are seeing improvements in more recent cases. In cases where our inspectors felt that management oversight was necessary, it was present and effective in only 24 per cent of the cases we inspected, which is disappointing, given the focus on supervision. In some examples, we saw appropriate oversight from managers guiding the responsible officer to complete specific tasks, although the actions were not always carried out and the manager did not appear to undertake a review to confirm that they had been done.

### **Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?**

The CRC and the parent company, MTC, offer a comprehensive range of training. The learning and development steering group considers the training needs of staff, and develops and delivers new training when the need arises. In response to learning from serious further offence reviews, the CRC has recently delivered specific training on conducting home visits and addressing the need for professional curiosity. All staff are encouraged to attend training over and above the mandatory courses for their role. The CRC has commissioned lectures from prominent academics, which staff are encouraged to attend or view later, on online learning platforms. It also provides a range of webinars (web seminars), conferences and peer group learning opportunities.

The CRC has confirmed the continued offer of PO training through the Professional Qualification in Probation process: four staff started the qualification in January 2019, six in July 2019 and four deferred until January 2020. Additionally, all PSOs can access a level 3 vocational qualification, and can apply for a level 4 qualification, subject to the need to balance this with overall workloads.



Eighty-eight per cent of responsible officers we interviewed said the organisation provides them with sufficient access to in-service training to support the delivery of a high-quality service. The CRC reports that 65 per cent of all staff attended at least one training event in the last year – this rises to 83 per cent if Omnia training is included. Staff are positive about learning opportunities; 84 per cent of responsible officers interviewed said that the organisation promotes and values a culture of learning and continuous improvement, which is significantly higher than the 57 per cent for all CRCs from our year one inspections.

### **Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?**

Most staff we met were positive about the organisation they work for; 75 per cent of responsible officers felt that managers recognise and reward exceptional work.

An employee engagement action plan is in place, with actions to address issues raised through the staff survey. Delivery against the plan has made good progress, with a range of actions to support staff engagement implemented, including increased communication, wellbeing budgets and the introduction of 'stop and think' days, which provide opportunities for discussion and engagement between teams. Reward and recognition are addressed through the 'value' and 'quality' rewards, which can be used to recognise work at a range of levels, and are well used. Staff are also encouraged to use 'thank you' cards for peer recognition. While the CRC reports that fair opportunities are offered to all staff, and that there is training to guard against unconscious bias, there is no specific analysis to consider equitable access to promotion, reward or recognition.

Most staff report being satisfied with arrangements for their safety and wellbeing. Personal protection devices are used for home visits and by unpaid work staff on-site, and these generally work well.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>1.3. Services</b>		
A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service for all service users.	Requires improvement	Good

In making a judgement about services, we take into account the answers to three questions.

**Is a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of service users used by the organisation to deliver well-targeted services?**

Characteristics of inspected cases <sup>21</sup>	All CRCs in year one	This CRC in current inspection
Proportion of caseload who are female	14%	14%
Proportion of inspected cases who are black or minority ethnic	16%	26%
Proportion of inspected cases with a disability	43%	30%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified substance misuse problems	72%	78%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified domestic abuse issues	No data available	43%
Proportion of inspected cases where inspectors identified child safeguarding issues	No data available	30%

The CRC has the capability to collect data on offending and desistance-related factors, and is looking to improve this further using Omnia, which can provide more detail than the offender assessment system (OASys). Diversity factors are recorded and information is gathered about the completion of interventions; however, the CRC acknowledges that it could do more to analyse this information and improve its consideration of disproportionality.

The risk of harm profile of service users is understood, and additional interventions have been developed to meet the needs identified. The CRC benefits from the services of a researcher from the parent company, MTC, which provides analysis of

<sup>21</sup> All data from HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection.



patterns of offending. Any gaps in services and interventions are considered through a cross-grade 'reducing reoffending delivery group', which considers data analysis and feedback from staff and service users, to target and develop the services provided.

**Does the division provide the volume, range and quality of services to meet the needs of the service users?**

	<b>Previous inspection</b>	<b>Current inspection</b>
Average waiting time for BBR	28 weeks	17 weeks
Average waiting time for TSP	18 weeks	13 weeks
Average waiting time for RAR	No data	No reported waiting time
Successful completion BBR	No data	88%
Successful completion TSP	No data	79%
Successful completion of RAR	No data	77%

We were pleased to see positive progress in reducing waiting times for accredited programmes, and the CRC reports no waiting times for RAR interventions. This has been achieved by increasing staff numbers, as well as offering interventions at more sites across the area covered by the CRC.

Over the last twelve months, five additional groupwork interventions have been introduced. These include:

- Building Resilience, for men who have experienced trauma
- The Making Amends Programme, looking at harm caused through offending
- The Positive Relationships Programme, developed in conjunction with Coventry University, for those convicted of intimate partner violence
- Fostering Identity, Resilience and Strength (FIRS), a group to explore male identity
- The Beliefs Bolt-On Programme, to explore attitudes that can lead to domestic abuse.

The increase in the number of interventions provides options for individuals who do not meet the criteria for accredited programmes, and addresses needs that were not previously catered for. The CRC is committed to delivering structured, evidence-based interventions, and uses its in-house psychology services to test and evaluate interventions to ensure that they are of high quality. External evaluation is also used to gain independent scrutiny. We were disappointed that, in spite of a good menu of potential interventions, there was limited evidence of the full range of services actually being deployed in the cases we examined.

The CRC offers education, training and employment (ETE) support via a team of just over eight FTE in-house specialist staff, who provide links to employers and education providers. The ETE team has run two recent employer engagement events, resulting in two service users gaining employment. The team maintains links with a range of employers and has placed people into trial periods of employment

which have also converted to permanent work. Each adviser will have between 160 and 220 individuals on their caseload. Contact will vary, with some needing basic signposting, and others more intensive support.

The CRC has longstanding, positive relationships with its small group of supply chain partners. The services available through the supply chain include mentoring services, provided by New Leaf for those being released from prison, and the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) for individuals in the community. Restorative justice services are available through the Thames Valley Partnership. Supply chain arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet the current demand and that processes to share information are appropriate. Mentoring provision for Through the Gate resettlement has been increased with the new enhanced specification to allow for 100 referrals per year; however, current numbers (35 in August 2019) are prompting further renegotiation. Supply chain partners report positive relationships with the CRC.

### **Are relationships with providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services to service users?**

Senior leaders and middle managers have effective relationships with other agencies, which are sustained through attendance at multi-agency meetings. A commitment to partnership working is evident through the recent recruitment of an additional SPO to focus on strengthening relationships.

Over and above the work they are contracted to provide, Through the Gate staff and managers support relationships between prison and CRC staff, and are often used as a point of contact within the prisons.

The CRC has a good partnership with Thames Valley Police and receives up-to-date arrest and domestic abuse call-out information daily. This enables responsible officers to seek further information and consider changes in risks. There is a clear, effective process to ensure that information relating to risk of harm is received from the police and children's social care services. Information received from drug treatment agencies varies in quality and consistency, however, which can affect the safe management of individuals.

### **Service user involvement**

The CRC gathers feedback from service users at various points in their sentence, including at completion of unpaid work or a programme, and through an annual survey. The most recent recruitment processes have included service users, and other focus groups have been convened to consider specific subjects; however, there is no routine forum for service users to express views and opinions or contribute to the work of the CRC. The CRC provides some opportunities for service users to be employed, and gave the example of a service user recently being taken on as a health and safety trainee.

We spoke to eight individuals from our case sample who are under supervision. They told us that they were asked about things in their lives that are important to them, and felt that their views are considered in planning their work with the CRC. Only three of the eight stated that they had received the help they needed to keep out of trouble, although a higher number made positive comments about the support they had received; for example, one said:



*“When I was younger ... I used to get in trouble from stealing from shops, but as I got older my offences have been around my emotions and relationships. So, the BBR programme is now giving me more information about relationships and myself, controlling my emotions”.*

### **Unpaid work**

We have seen examples of impressive work completed as part of unpaid work projects. Projects of note include 'ecobrick', where plastic bottles are filled with non-recyclable plastics and then used as 'bricks' in construction. The unpaid work teams have used these to build an amphitheatre at a school for outdoor activities, and a reconstruction of a World War I trench at a college, which is also used for learning. In the projects we observed, the CRC has good relationships with beneficiaries and local communities, for which it regularly receives praise.

### **Through the Gate**

The resettlement teams have developed positive relationships with a range of departments in prisons. Prison governors commented that gaining information from healthcare departments, for example, can be difficult; however, we saw clear examples where staff were gaining information and sharing this with responsible officers ahead of release, to support resettlement.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>1.4. Information and facilities</b>		
Timely and relevant information is available, and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all service users.	Good	Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions.

**Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?**

The CRC’s policies and guidance are communicated using a range of methods and through the intranet, which is easy to access and navigate. In addition to planned review dates, policies are reviewed in response to learning from investigation and inspection. Interface arrangements with the NPS at a range of levels support effective communication and processes. Risk escalations are efficiently completed, leading to a small number of rejections. The rate card brochure is clear about the services offered and the referral criteria.

The CRC sets clear expectations for the recording of appointments through its ‘plan, meet and record’ model and the ‘CRISS’ (check in, review, implement sentence plan, summarise, set tasks) recording convention. Staff said that there is a clear policy about case recording (95 per cent positive), but some acknowledged that recording is sometimes delayed owing to workload pressures. In some cases, not all the required elements in appointments took place, or were not recorded in accordance with the guidelines, leading to inspector judgements that no meaningful offence-focused work was taking place. In one case, an inspector noted:

*“Most appointments are ‘check ins’, with superficial monitoring of circumstances”.*

**Do the premises and offices enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?**

The CRC has a sufficient spread of offices across the geographical area, the majority shared with the NPS. Even though it does not own these shared offices, it has invested in their fabric to provide a better working environment for staff and service users. Interview rooms are private in all offices. The office in High Wycombe is not fully compliant with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* and, although there are workarounds for individuals under supervision to attend, staff with physical disabilities are restricted from working at that site. Ninety per cent of the responsible officers we interviewed stated that appropriate attention is paid to their safety, and 75 per cent that appropriate attention is paid to their wellbeing.

**Do the information and communications technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all service users?**

ICT is a strength in Thames Valley CRC. Responsible officers report that Omnia offers a simplified, user-friendly alternative case management system. It is designed to support responsible officers in managing tasks, although not all staff have yet fully

embraced this. Changes in ICT were well thought-out. Staff were provided with support through 'floorwalkers' in the initial roll-out period, with continued assistance through the Omnia taskforce. Partner agencies can access CRC systems when they are present in offices, and can communicate through secure email when off-site.

Staff are provided with laptop computers that they can use off-site with a security token. Practitioners have mobile telephones, and unpaid work staff have tablet computers to facilitate increased communication and access to systems. The management information system, 'Tableau', is impressive and has been used to good effect. The CRC is confident that using Omnia to drive management information will lead to further improvements.

### **Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?**

The CRC has invested in a comprehensive framework of quality audits. Relevant staff have been trained using Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service standards, and a sample of their audits are externally benchmarked to ensure consistency. Managers are well supported by the insights and analytics team to understand and use data. Senior leaders have decided to shift the focus of frontline staff away from performance, to enable them to concentrate on improving the quality of their work. Middle and senior managers retain an understanding of the performance of the organisation.

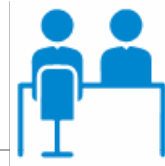
There is a proactive approach to organisational learning. The CRC uses a range of sources, including reviews of domestic homicides, serious further offences and other investigations, to drive improvements and inform action planning. The CRC provides a yearly webinar for staff, to disseminate themes following a review of all serious further offences; this is also informed by learning from London CRC. Following learning from a serious further offence review that indicated that an increased number of home visits may have supported better case management, the CRC reviewed its guidance, delivered interactive training and used management information to map out hotspots where home visits needed to be increased. National reports and reviews are also incorporated into CRC work, such as use of the Lammy Review<sup>22</sup> into the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system, to inform the equality and diversity report 2018/2019.

The most recent annual offender survey attracted fewer responses than the target set by the Ministry of Justice target for the first time in Thames Valley CRC. Nonetheless, 80 per cent of respondents were positive in their comments about the CRC.

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<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2017). *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf), September 2017.

## 2. Case supervision



We inspected 62 community sentence cases and 38 post-release supervision cases, and interviewed 60 responsible officers and 8 service users. This included looking in detail at the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected to assess service user engagement and whether issues relevant to offending and desistance had been addressed. Of the 100 cases, 79 cases included factors related to harm, and for these we also inspected work to keep other people safe. The quality of each factor is assessed against a specified threshold, for that element of work to be rated as satisfactory.



Overall, our findings on case supervision are similar to those from our previous inspection, with some improvements in planning and elements of risk of harm work. The CRC continues to make sound assessments of factors linked to the likelihood of reoffending and risk of harm, and forms appropriate plans to address the issues; however, in too many cases plans are not delivered as intended. In addition, reviewing often fails to consider fully changes in relevant factors and adjust plans accordingly.

### Strengths:

- Individuals are usually meaningfully involved in the assessment and planning of their sentences.
- Assessments, informed by a range of sources, effectively identify and analyse offending-related factors.
- Information is sought and shared, in relevant cases, in relation to domestic abuse and child safeguarding.
- Risk of harm classifications are accurate in most cases.

### Areas for improvement:

- Although diversity and personal circumstances are identified, insufficient attention is paid to their potential impact on the individual's ability to comply with their sentence.
- There are not enough contacts with prisoners in licence cases before release to support resettlement.
- In too many cases, there are insufficient services to address the factors identified as linked to offending.
- Reviewing practice was stronger at considering strengths and protective factors but too often failed to engage the individual concerned, or make appropriate changes to plans in light of changes in risk of harm.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>2.1. Assessment</b>		
Assessment is well informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Good	Good

**Our rating<sup>23</sup> for assessment is based on the following three questions:**

Comparison with Thames Valley CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs <sup>24</sup>
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?	74%	<b>65%</b>	68%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	79%	81%	63%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	68%	70%	55%

In the large majority of cases (90 per cent), assessment accurately identified factors relating to offending. Individuals' strengths and protective factors were identified. Individuals were usually engaged in assessment for their sentence, and had their views taken into account. Assessment had a sufficient focus on keeping others safe in a reasonable majority of cases we inspected.

### **Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?**

The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

During the last 12 months, the CRC has introduced Omnia, a combined case recording and assessment tool. Responsible officers are required to complete a 'risk and needs' assessment at the start of a community order or licence supervision. Omnia has an embedded self-assessment tool, 'STAR', which allows the individual to rate areas in their own lives.

In the majority of the cases we inspected, individuals were involved in their assessment through discussion and use of self-assessment tools that fed into the overall assessment. In the cases where this was not done well, in a small number the self-assessment was blank and in others information had been repeated from an earlier assessment without input from the individual concerned. In a minority of cases

<sup>23</sup> 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. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation

<sup>24</sup> From inspection data for all HMI Probation inspections, June 2018 – June 2019.

(26 per cent), there was insufficient analysis of the individual's diversity and personal characteristics, and in 42 per cent of relevant cases there was insufficient consideration of how such factors could affect the individual's ability to comply or engage with their sentence.

We inspected some cases with mental health issues and learning disabilities where the extent to which these could affect compliance had not been considered. More assessments focused sufficiently on engaging with individuals in community sentence (76 per cent) than in licence supervision (47 per cent) cases.

### **Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?**

The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

Assessment of factors linked to offending and desistance is far stronger in Thames Valley CRC than the average for CRCs inspected in 2018/2019 in our first round of inspections against our new standards. Offending-related factors were identified in 90 per cent of the cases we inspected, and sufficiently analysed in 71 per cent. Responsible officers draw on a range of sources to inform assessments, including previous assessments and information from other agencies. We were pleased to find substantial improvement in the consideration of strengths and protective factors, which is key to the principles of desistance. The risk and needs assessment now completed in Omnia supports this work, as noted by one inspector:



*"The assessment tool encourages the RO [responsible officer] to draw out protective factors and strengths, and to analyse offending-related behaviours. The responsible officer has done that well in this case. The assessment has been completed, prioritising the key factors linked to offending, and clearly has used previous assessments and information from Through the Gate teams".*

### **Does assessment focus sufficiently on the risk of harm to others?**

The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts', and supplementary questions. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

Improvements have been made in some aspects of work to keep people safe. In our current inspection, we found that domestic abuse checks are made routinely and, in a reasonable majority of cases, information was shared with children's social care services to inform safeguarding practice. We found some examples of assessments based on incorrect index offences, or failing to consider previous offending, which led to inaccurate assumptions of risk of harm issues or risks being overlooked. This element of assessment work overall is on a par with our findings on this CRC from our previous inspection, but it is significantly better than the aggregated findings from CRCs in our year one inspections.



	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>2.2. Planning</b>		
Planning is well informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Requires improvement	Good

**Our rating<sup>25</sup> for planning is based on the following three questions:**

Comparison with Thames Valley CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs <sup>26</sup>
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user? <sup>27</sup>	69%	74%	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance? <sup>27</sup>	69%	74%	64%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? <sup>27</sup>	57%	<b>61%</b> <sup>28</sup>	46%

In a reasonable majority of cases (76 per cent), the planning set out actions aimed at reducing the likelihood of further offending. Individuals' strengths and protective factors were, where possible, built upon to support desistance. Individuals were usually engaged in planning for their sentence, and planning had a sufficient focus on keeping others safe in a reasonable majority of cases we inspected.

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?**

Effective planning should engage the individual and take full account of how their personal circumstances may affect their ability to complete their sentence. We found this to be the case in 73 per cent of cases.

Planning also needs to consider how motivated or ready an individual is to make changes; this was sufficient in three-quarters of cases, which was similar to the proportion found at the last inspection. We found some disproportionality here – men under supervision were meaningfully engaged in planning in 70 per cent of cases, compared with 57 per cent of women. Similarly, diversity and personal circumstances were more often considered for men (76 per cent) than women (54 per cent). The

<sup>25</sup> The rating for the standard is normally driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>26</sup> From inspection data for all HMI Probation inspections, June 2018 – June 2019.

<sup>27</sup> The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

<sup>28</sup> Although this 61 per cent score would normally lead to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement' on this standard, we have exercised professional judgement, to increase the overall rating to 'Good', as this score was within 5 percentage points of the 65% boundary for that rating and our overall findings in relation to planning were encouraging.

engagement of individuals in planning was also stronger for community sentences (82 per cent) than in licence supervision cases (61 per cent).

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?**

In the majority of cases, we found sufficient planning to address the factors linked to the causes of offending in the individual's lives. Some plans identified offending-related factors in the assessment but this had not been addressed with an appropriate action. Where they existed, strengths and sources of support were utilised and included in planning. One good example was described by an inspector as follows:

*"The sentence plan is informative and reflective of desistance needs and those interventions required to address offending behaviour. The plan includes objectives to address ongoing drug misuse; plans for the service user to engage with a New Leaf mentor, to maintain his housing association accommodation (with the assistance of the mentor); [and plans] to seek support for mental health [issues] and to [encourage him to] think about the choices he makes and the impact of these. It is a balanced and reasonable sentence plan to support desistance".*

Where cases were assessed as not sufficient in this area, we saw examples of issues identified in the assessment that did not transfer into actions, or where planning appeared unrealistic for the individual concerned. In one case this was described as a:

*"Generic plan, not tailored to the service user. It is a shopping list of objectives".*



### **Does planning address appropriately factors associated with the risk of harm to others?**

This key question is only answered in cases where factors related to risk of harm to others are present.<sup>29</sup>

Overall, we found satisfactory planning to keep people safe in the cases we inspected. The overall score for this key question, 61 per cent, was significantly higher than the aggregate score of 46 per cent from year one CRC inspections. Work in this area was weaker than in other elements of planning. To be effective, planning needs to set out activity to address and manage risk of harm factors, involving other relevant agencies; this took place in only 59 per cent of cases. Effective contingency arrangements to address changes in risk of harm were lacking in over half the cases (54 per cent), with planning by PSOs setting out appropriate arrangements in only 30 per cent of the inspection cases they managed. Plans were not always sufficiently detailed in setting out measures to be taken for specific risks, and in some cases appeared generic.

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<sup>29</sup> It is not necessary for every prompt to be answered positively, for the overall judgement on this key question to be positive.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>2.3. Implementation and delivery</b>		
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging the service user.	Inadequate	Inadequate

**Our rating<sup>30</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following three questions:**

Comparison with Thames Valley CRC in previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs <sup>31</sup>
Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively, with a focus on engaging the service user? <sup>32</sup>	65%	67%	70%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the service user's desistance? <sup>32</sup>	51%	<b>44%</b>	52%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? <sup>32</sup>	34%	47%	41%

The requirements of sentences usually started promptly, with a focus on engaging the individual concerned to maximise opportunities to make a difference in their lives. We were disappointed that, despite the increased availability of rehabilitation services, only a minority of the cases were benefiting from these interventions. In too many cases, we found that, despite good assessment and planning, activities and interventions were not delivered as intended. The lack of implementation of plans resulted in missed opportunities to support desistance.

**Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately, with a focus on engaging the service user?**

In a reasonable majority of cases (66 per cent), requirements started promptly and there was a focus on building effective relationships with individuals under supervision. For cases being released from custody, we were disappointed to find low levels of contact by the responsible officer pre-release; we assessed that this was proportionate in only 37 per cent of cases.

We found a substantial improvement in work by responsible officers to identify the risks of non-compliance with individuals, with the aim of reducing the need for formal enforcement. Where necessary, however, enforcement took place in a reasonable

<sup>30</sup> 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 by bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>31</sup> From inspection data for all HMI Probation inspections, June 2018 – June 2019.

<sup>32</sup> The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

majority of cases (68 per cent). We also saw continued efforts to re-engage after such actions in the large majority of cases (87 per cent); again, this was done less well for those recalled on licence than for those on community sentences.

### **Do the services delivered focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?**

Despite the increased range of interventions and services on offer since our previous inspection, we were disappointed that this has not improved delivery to reduce reoffending or desistance, which we found to be sufficient in only just under half of the cases we inspected. One inspector noted:

*“The responsible officer had a clear plan in place of the work that would be carried out; the group work was listed, as was other work to develop supportive and protective factors. However, the responsible officer did not maximise the early time of good engagement to commence useful work, and many sessions were seen to be check-in sessions”.*



In too many cases, plans to address reoffending were not delivered as intended, and far too little work was completed on the factors related to offending in individual cases. While activity to build on strengths and protective factors was stronger than delivery to reduce reoffending, there was a deterioration from our previous inspection. The involvement of other agencies was far less well coordinated than we had previously seen.

In three-quarters of cases where service users engaged, the level and nature of contact were sufficient to support desistance.

### **Do the services delivered focus appropriately on managing and minimising the risk of harm to others?**

This key question is only answered in cases where factors related to risk of harm to others are present.

Overall, this area of work remains insufficient, although some elements have improved. We found significant improvements in the level and nature of contact offered to manage risk of harm, but there was a marked difference between contact offered in community orders and in licence supervision cases, where the offer was only deemed sufficient in less than half of cases (48 per cent). We found some improvement in the protection of actual and potential victims, although this remained below the line of sufficiency and, again, was less positive in licence cases. We saw little improvement in the number of home visits completed as an activity to support risk management. The CRC has recently delivered training for staff conducting home visits, however, and is monitoring how frequently these are completed as part of quality assurance arrangements.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>2.4. Reviewing</b>		
Reviewing of progress is well informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the service user.	Inadequate	Inadequate

**Our rating<sup>33</sup> for reviewing is based on the following three questions:**

Comparison with Thames Valley CRC in previous inspection	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs <sup>34</sup>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's compliance and engagement? <sup>35</sup>	62%	57%	65%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's desistance? <sup>35</sup>	62%	59%	62%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? <sup>35</sup>	44%	<b>42%</b>	44%

The quality of work to review cases was largely insufficient. Written reviews were completed in only just over half of cases where they were needed. Where reviews were completed, too often they did not result in adjustments to the work being delivered as required. In too many cases, changes relating to risk of harm were not identified and information was not sought from other relevant partner agencies.

**Does reviewing effectively support the service user's compliance and engagement?**

Reviews of how well individuals were engaging in their sentence, and consideration of relevant barriers, took place in 70 per cent of the inspected cases where it was deemed necessary; however, this resulted in adaptations to plans in only just over half of the cases. Only 36 per cent of individuals under supervision were meaningfully involved in reviewing their own progress, which was a missed opportunity to mark good progress or discuss barriers. Although we found that POs more often considered and adjusted plans in response to the compliance of those under their supervision than PSOs, both failed to do so in too many cases. Reviewing of progress takes place in a number of ways and is not limited to formal written reviews,

<sup>33</sup> 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. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>34</sup> From inspection data for all HMI Probation inspections, June 2018 – June 2019.

<sup>35</sup> The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.

but a written review was completed in only 56 per cent of cases where it was required. One inspector recorded:

*“There was never a consideration of how to approach things differently (beyond enforcement), given that the approach taken by the responsible officer was not working”.*

### **Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?**

While we found an increase in the number of cases where reviews focused on the individual’s strengths, work to assess and respond to changes in factors linked to their offending behaviour was less effective, taking place in less than half of plans where we judged this to be necessary. Although we found good examples of responsible officers engaging with other agencies to inform reviews, this took place in only 55 per cent of cases. Failure to consult with other agencies working with individuals can lead to inaccurate assessments, as noted by one inspector:

*“There was a significant gap in contact with treatment providers, during which time the service user had stopped attending for treatment. This would obviously have been an area to be addressed but there was no review structure in place regarding contacting others or establishing his current circumstances”.*



Although a formal written review may not always be needed, we found that this took place in only just over half of the cases where it was necessary.

### **Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

Reviewing of factors linked to keeping other people safe was poorly done in many cases. Responsible officers identified changes in factors related to risk of harm in less than half the cases where we assessed they should have done. Plans were adjusted because of changes in risk of harm in only one-third of cases where they should have been.

Although we did not find any systemic issues in accessing information from the police or children’s social care services, there was too little consultation with other agencies in reviewing the risks that individuals posed; moreover, the individuals themselves, or key individuals, were involved in reviews of the risks that they posed to others in only 18 per cent of cases. The following is a concerning example noted by one inspector:

*“Lack of overall reviewing activity and no formal review completed. It was acknowledged by the responsible officer in interview that this is required, but is yet to take place. Despite a recent further domestic violence callout, where the service user's ex-partner refused to return her child to her care, liaison with social care would appear to have been minimal and no further domestic abuse checks have been undertaken, despite numerous callouts having been listed within a short period at the time of the last check at court”.*

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>4.1. Unpaid work</b>		
Unpaid work is delivered safely and effectively, engaging the service user in line with the expectations of the court.	Inadequate	Good

*Due to changes in inspection standards and methodology between the first and second rounds of CRC inspections, the rating for unpaid work is **not** directly comparable with the rating for the previous year.*

We inspected the management of 35 unpaid work requirements, looking at assessment and planning, safety, and implementation of the court order. We also observed four induction sessions, ten work parties and two sites where work had been completed, to examine the extent to which unpaid work was delivered in a way that supported desistance.

During this inspection, we were pleased to find unpaid work delivery much improved. The CRC has considered arrangements for unpaid work and invested time in implementing new processes and ensuring that staff understand what is required of them. Tablet computers have been introduced, to allow staff working remotely to access case records and assessments, and allow them to make entries into case management systems. We found that the risks posed by individuals on unpaid work are now generally understood and managed well.

Unpaid work is completed either on an individual placement or as part of a groupwork project. The CRC offers a range of placements that benefit the community, although individuals less often recognise the benefits to themselves. Staffing issues in some parts of the CRC led to groups being stood down too often, and on some occasions attendance had not been not recorded, potentially leading to missed enforcement.

#### Strengths:

- Risk of harm issues are understood and managed sufficiently well on unpaid work placements.
- Personal circumstances are assessed, and appropriate flexibility is offered to support individuals to complete their hours.
- Communication with responsible officers is regular and effective.
- Unpaid work staff are well trained and supported, with regular team meetings and supervision.

<sup>36</sup> CRC aspects of domain three work are listed in *HMI Probation's Standards* as 4.1 and 4.2.

### Areas for improvement:

- Unpaid work groups are stood down too often, affecting individuals' motivation to comply.
- Recording practice is inconsistent in some cases, leading to a lack of clarity about whether an individual has attended or not.
- Enforcement is not always completed when it is needed.

### Unpaid work key data

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
Average unpaid work stand-down rate in previous 12 months <sup>37</sup>	4.47%	7.61%
Percentage of successful completions of unpaid work requirements in previous 12 months <sup>38</sup>	90%	94%

### Our rating<sup>39</sup> for unpaid work is based on the following four questions:

Current inspection	
Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised? <sup>40</sup>	83%
Is unpaid work delivered safely? <sup>40</sup>	83%
Do arrangements for unpaid work maximise rehabilitative elements and support desistance?	This question produces qualitative evidence only, used to moderate the indicative rating calculated from case inspection data
Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately? <sup>40</sup>	<b>74%</b>

Over 80 per cent of the unpaid work cases we inspected had personalised assessments and plans. Unpaid work was delivered safely in the large majority of cases (83 per cent), and in 74 per cent of cases the sentence of the court was

<sup>37</sup> Information supplied by CRC.

<sup>38</sup> Information supplied by CRC.

<sup>39</sup> The provisional 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. The ratings panel considers the range of qualitative evidence, and may then decide to increase or decrease the provisional rating by one band to take account of other factors. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>40</sup> The answer to this key question is underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response.



implemented appropriately, leading to an overall rating of 'Good' for unpaid work in this inspection.

### **Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised?**

In the large majority of cases, we found that assessments considered relevant personal circumstances and diversity characteristics, and allocated individuals to suitable work as a result. Assessments usually identified health issues but did not always analyse the impact on the individual's ability to complete work, or the support they would need, demonstrated in the following example:

*“Consideration was noted regarding Allen’s social anxiety around groups and that the risk he presented (of domestic abuse) would not affect his placement. However, there was no further consideration recorded regarding his hearing and visual impairment”.*

Of the 16 cases where ETE needs should have been identified, there was evidence that it had been in only 7 cases, meaning missed opportunities to build on the individual's strengths.

### **Is unpaid work delivered safely?**

The CRC has reviewed its working practices since our previous inspection. A 'safe allocation form' is now completed for individuals assessed as posing a medium risk of harm or higher, or if staff assess a need to complete the form for other reasons. This assessment is used to inform measures to manage specific risks. In two cases, we found examples where there was a restraining order but it was not clear whether unpaid work staff were aware of these restrictions, and making decisions based on them. Codes are used to draw attention to risks or alert staff to seek further information. Site staff have been trained in case management systems, and have access to them through tablet computers enabling remote access. It is evident from case records that communication between unpaid work staff and responsible officers is much improved. Last year, we assessed that risk of harm was sufficiently considered in less than half of cases, but this year we found that risk of harm to service users, staff and the public had been taken into account in 83 per cent of cases.

#### **Good practice example**

A risk assessment and safe placement assessment was completed with Brian, and he was [assessed as] medium risk. Both of these [assessments] identified Brian's risk to his partner and the impact this may have on his unpaid work placement. The safe placement assessment identified to unpaid work staff the risk [that] Brian posed towards his victims and how this may impact on members of the public and his placement.

The health and safety, or vulnerability, of individuals was not sufficiently considered in 10 cases we inspected. These included individuals with mental health problems, where the impact of their conditions was not fully considered. This sample also included women who were placed in inappropriate situations, such as being the only woman in a group. The CRC does not have any women-only groupwork projects, and so if a woman is not suitable for an individual placement, the options are limited, as this example illustrates:

*“Samantha was a 26-year-old female sentenced to stand-alone unpaid work of 100 hours for assault and public order. There was no evidence of an assessment of Samantha’s diversity needs and what type of unpaid work would be suitable. Samantha had advised [the] CRC that she had anxiety and bipolar needs but there was no evidence that this influenced the unpaid work allocation”.*

### **Do arrangements for unpaid work maximise rehabilitative elements and support desistance?**

Unpaid work inductions are completed in a group where attendees receive information from staff, as well as watching instructional videos to ensure that consistent messages are given about rules and health and safety.

Unpaid work rules allow up to 20 per cent of hours to be used for ETE opportunities, and individuals are made aware of this during induction, but we did not always see further consideration of this in individual placement discussions. Although the CRC offers opportunities to complete practical courses, such as the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme card, as the CRC has problems accessing attendance information, this is not counted towards completion of unpaid work hours.

Decisions about placement suitability are not routinely informed by skills matching or the prospect of the place offering skills development. Individuals completing work usually see the benefit of the project to the local community, but fewer describe it as personally useful or rewarding to them.

### **Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately?**



Overall, we assessed that, in a reasonable majority of cases, unpaid work sentences were implemented appropriately, although the recording and frequency of stand-downs could be improved. In the cases we inspected, requirements usually commenced promptly and work was carried out regularly. We saw good examples of flexibility offered to support individuals who had caring responsibilities or work commitments to enable them to complete their hours. Of the 35 cases we inspected, 20 (57 per cent) had experienced occasions when they attended for work but were turned away, or instructions were withdrawn ahead of their attendance; in 15 cases, this had happened on 2 or more occasions. We found cases where the individual lost motivation having repeatedly been unable to work. One inspector noted:

*“There were 10 occasions where he was credited an hour (4) or where work was withdrawn (6); he then breached his order”.*

During our visits to unpaid work group placement sites, we met individuals who reported frustration at being turned away and being credited an hour, particularly when they had a long travel time or incurred costs to attend.

Where absence occurred, the reasons were always recorded in 55 per cent of cases, and sometimes recorded in 35 per cent. In some records, there were several occasions when outcomes had not been recorded, and therefore it was unclear whether enforcement action should have been taken; for example:

*“There are two outstanding appointments that have no outcome and it is therefore unclear if he attended or if enforcement should have taken place. He has attended since but no apparent decision has been recorded to record attendance, make acceptable or enforce/warn”.*

	Year one	Year two
<b>4.2. Through the Gate</b>		
Through the Gate services are personalised and coordinated, addressing the service user's resettlement needs.	Requires improvement	Outstanding

*Due to changes in inspection standards and methodology between the first and second rounds of CRC inspections, the rating for Through the gate is **not** directly comparable with the rating for the previous year.*

We inspected the management of 14 cases where the CRC had delivered pre-release Through the Gate resettlement work, looking at resettlement planning, delivery of resettlement services, and release coordination. We also held meetings with the senior manager in the CRC responsible for Through the Gate services; two governors with responsibility for resettlement from two prison establishments; the middle manager responsible for Through the Gate services; and a group of CRC resettlement workers directly responsible for preparing resettlement plans and/or meeting identified resettlement needs.

In our previous inspection, we rated Through the Gate services as 'Requires improvement', having found some areas of good practice but a lack of effective handover to community services when prisoners were released. In the current inspection, we were pleased to find an improved picture, with a well-coordinated, personalised service offered to support individuals being released from prison.

Through the Gate services are provided in three prisons in the Thames Valley CRC area through the supply chain partner, Milton Keynes College. As part of a national change, Thames Valley CRC rolled out the enhanced Through the Gate model in April 2019. The new model requires increased staffing to deliver a more comprehensive service, introducing minimum expectations for delivery across a range of pathways. A total of 27 staff are now employed in Through the Gate services in HMPs Bullingdon, Springhill and Woodhill, an increase of over 11 FTE staff. Owing to the different nature of these prisons, the largest number of cases in scope for Through the Gate come from HMP Bullingdon, and then highest number of staff are accordingly based there.

#### Strengths:

- Through the Gate staff use a range of information sources to inform their work and have developed effective relationships within the prisons to ensure coordinated working.
- Individuals being released are involved in planning how their needs will be met.
- Risk of harm issues are taken into account in planning.
- There is good communication with responsible officers in the community throughout the process.
- Risk of harm issues are considered in resettlement planning and activity.

Area for improvement:

- None identified.

**Our rating<sup>41</sup> for Through the Gate is based on the following three questions:**

Comparison with previous inspection and all CRCs	Previous inspection	Current inspection	All CRCs <sup>42</sup>
Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance? <sup>43</sup>	77%	93%	69%
Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?	68%	<b>79%<sup>44</sup></b>	62%
Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?	55%	100%	59%

We found that resettlement planning focused appropriately on offending-related factors in 93 per cent of the cases we inspected. There was effective coordination of resettlement activity in 100 per cent of the cases, and we have therefore rated Through the Gate work as 'Outstanding' in this inspection.

**Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance?**

In the cases we inspected, we found high-quality work taking place to assess and plan for the needs of individuals due for release. Where short sentences are being served, this work often must be completed at short notice. Good use was made of prison records and previous assessments, to check the validity of information and ensure a robust assessment. In all cases, the prisoner concerned was involved and contributed to their planning. The needs of the individuals were accurately identified, with personalised plans produced to support resettlement.

**Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?**

We saw positive improvement in the delivery of resettlement activity, with attention paid to risk of harm in all the cases we inspected. The cases had access to a range

<sup>41</sup> 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. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>42</sup> From inspection data for all HMI Probation inspections, June 2018 – June 2019.

<sup>43</sup> The answers to these key questions are underpinned by more detailed 'prompts'. The table in Annex 4 illustrates the percentage of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to each prompt.

<sup>44</sup> Although this 79 per cent score would normally lead to an overall rating of 'Good' on this standard, we have exercised professional judgement, to increase the overall rating to 'Outstanding', as this score was within 5 percentage points of the 80 per cent boundary for that rating.

of activities before release, including employment courses, and substance misuse and mental health support. Accommodation is often a key issue for those being released, and we saw good work in this area, as the following example shows.

#### Good practice example

Tim is a 38-year-old sentenced to three months' custody for a shoplifting offence, part of an established pattern of offending behaviour. Given the short sentence, the review plan was completed within a sufficient timeframe and clearly stated how each need would be addressed, including consideration to building strengths within the area of employment. The resettlement activity was very clearly 'above the line', and the continued focus on the most critical area of accommodation resulted in Tim being released into supported accommodation, and planning had already started for longer-term housing options.

#### **Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?**

Communication with responsible officers in the community and handover to community services had improved substantially. In the cases we inspected, we found good examples of resettlement staff gathering information from other prison departments and ensuring that responsible officers had the information they needed, particularly on healthcare and substance misuse needs. Where needed, appointments were made with support services in the community, and resettlement workers ensured that responsible officers were notified, to enable follow-up.

## Annex 1: Background of probation services

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Around 255,000 adults are supervised by probation services annually.<sup>45</sup> Probation services supervise individuals serving community orders, provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison (in anticipation of their release), and supervise, for a minimum of 12 months, all individuals released from prison.<sup>46</sup>

To protect the public, probation staff assess and manage the risks that offenders pose to the community. They help to rehabilitate these individuals by dealing with problems such as drug and alcohol misuse and lack of employment or housing, to reduce the prospect of reoffending. They monitor whether individuals are complying with court requirements, to make sure they abide by their sentence. If offenders fail to comply, probation staff generally report them to court or request recall to prison.

These services are currently provided by a publicly owned National Probation Service (NPS) and 18 privately owned Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) that provide services under contract. The government has announced its intention to change the arrangements for delivering probation services, and has given notice to CRCs that it will terminate their contracts early, by spring 2021, with responsibility for offender management passing to the NPS at that point.

The NPS advises courts on sentencing all offenders, and manages those who present a high or very high risk of serious harm or who are managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). CRCs supervise most other offenders who present a low or medium risk of harm.

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<sup>45</sup> Source: Offender management caseload statistics as at 30 June 2019, Ministry of Justice (based on the average number of total offenders supervised in the previous four quarters to the end of June 2019).

<sup>46</sup> All those sentenced, for offences committed after the implementation of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, to more than 1 day and less than 24 months in custody, are supervised in the community for 12 months post-release. Others serving longer custodial sentences may have longer total periods of supervision on licence.

## Annex 2: Methodology

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The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

### **Domain one: organisational delivery**

The provider submitted evidence in advance and the CRC's Chief Executive Officer delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How does the leadership of the organisation support and promote the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users?
- How are staff in the organisation empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all service users?
- Is there a comprehensive range of high-quality services in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service for all service users?
- Is timely and relevant information available, and are there appropriate facilities to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all service users?
- What are your priorities for further improvement, and why?

During the main fieldwork phase, we interviewed 60 individual responsible officers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings with groups and individuals, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 33 meetings, which included meetings with senior managers, operational partners and stakeholders, and with middle managers and frontline staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>47</sup>

### **Domain two: case supervision**

We completed case assessments over a two-week period, examining service users' files and interviewing responsible officers and service users. The cases selected were those of individuals who had been under community supervision for approximately six to seven months (either through a community sentence or following release from custody). This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined 100 cases from across all local delivery units. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, type of disposal and risk of serious harm level matched those in the eligible population.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases, PO/PSO cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than 5.

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<sup>47</sup> HM Inspectorate's domain one ratings characteristics can be found here: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/Probation-Domain-One-rating-characteristics-March-18-final.pdf>

### **Domain three: CRC work**

We completed case assessments for two further samples: unpaid work and Through the Gate. As in domain two, the sample size for unpaid work is set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5). Published data is insufficient to calculate accurate margins of error for Through the Gate work, so the size of the case sample for that element of work is estimated, based on overall workload and previous inspection data.

#### *Unpaid work*

We examined 35 cases with unpaid work requirements that had begun at least three months previously. The sample included cases managed by the NPS, as well as those managed by the CRC. We ensured that the ratios in relation to gender and risk of serious harm level matched those in the eligible population. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

We observed 10 unpaid work projects and four unpaid work induction sessions to gather qualitative evidence.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and gather additional information:

- the senior manager with overall responsibility for the delivery of unpaid work
- the middle manager with responsibilities for unpaid work
- a group of supervisors of unpaid work, from a range of geographical locations.

#### *Through the Gate*

We examined 14 custodial cases in which the individual had been released on licence or post-sentence supervision from the CRC's resettlement prisons over a 4-week period, shortly before the inspection fieldwork. The sample included those entitled to pre-release Through the Gate services from the CRC who were then supervised post-release by the CRC being inspected. We used the case management and assessment systems to inspect these cases.

We also held meetings with the following individuals/groups:

- the senior manager in the CRC responsible for Through the Gate services
- two governors with responsibility for resettlement from two prison establishments
- the middle manager responsible for Through the Gate services in specific prisons
- a group of CRC resettlement workers directly responsible for preparing resettlement plans and/or meeting identified resettlement needs.

### **Ratings explained**

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website.

Domain two and three standard ratings are based on the results of the inspection of individual cases. Ratings are at the standard level, and based on consolidated results (at key question level) of all cases inspected in the relevant domain. In CRC inspections only, the rating for unpaid work in domain three may also be influenced by evidence from observations.



For each standard, the rating is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

We use case sub-samples for some of the key questions in domains two and three. For example, when judging whether planning focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed the risk of serious harm to be low. This approach is justified on the basis that we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

An element of professional judgement may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. Exceptionally, the ratings panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised where the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the rating boundary, for example between 'requires improvement' and 'good' (specifically, within five percentage points of the boundary or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

### Rating unpaid work

For the unpaid work standard, domain three case inspections provide data on key questions 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.4. Analysis of that data provides an indicative rating for the unpaid work standard, aligned with banding, as above. Qualitative evidence for key question 4.1.3 is obtained from observations during the fieldwork, other written evidence provided by the CRC, and evidence obtained from relevant meetings. This qualitative evidence may be used to increase or decrease the indicative rating for unpaid work by one band. If the lead inspector believes that is justified, the proposal is put to the ratings panel, for ratification or rejection.

### Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the ten standards will be scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0-30, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0-5 = Inadequate
- 6-15 = Requires improvement
- 16-25 = Good
- 26-30 = Outstanding.

We do not include any weightings in the scoring rules. The rationale for this is that all parts of the standards framework are strongly linked to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, and we have restricted ourselves to those that are most essential. Our view is that providers need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours in any undesirable ways. Furthermore, the underpinning evidence supports including all standards/key questions in the rating, rather than weighting individual elements.

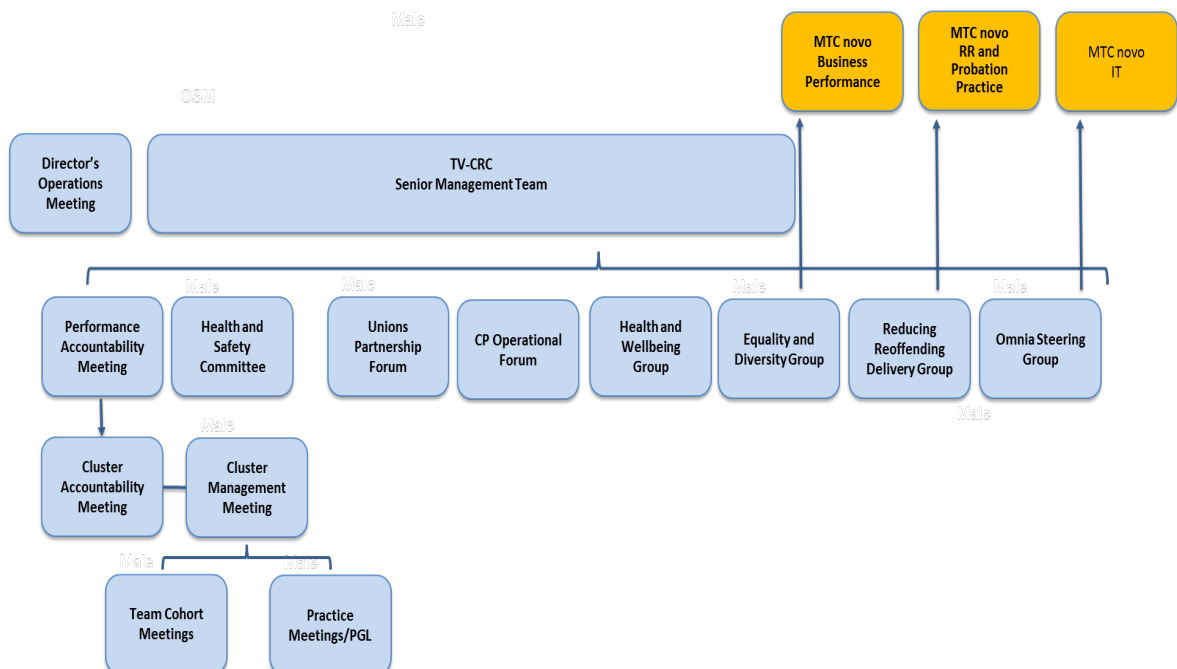
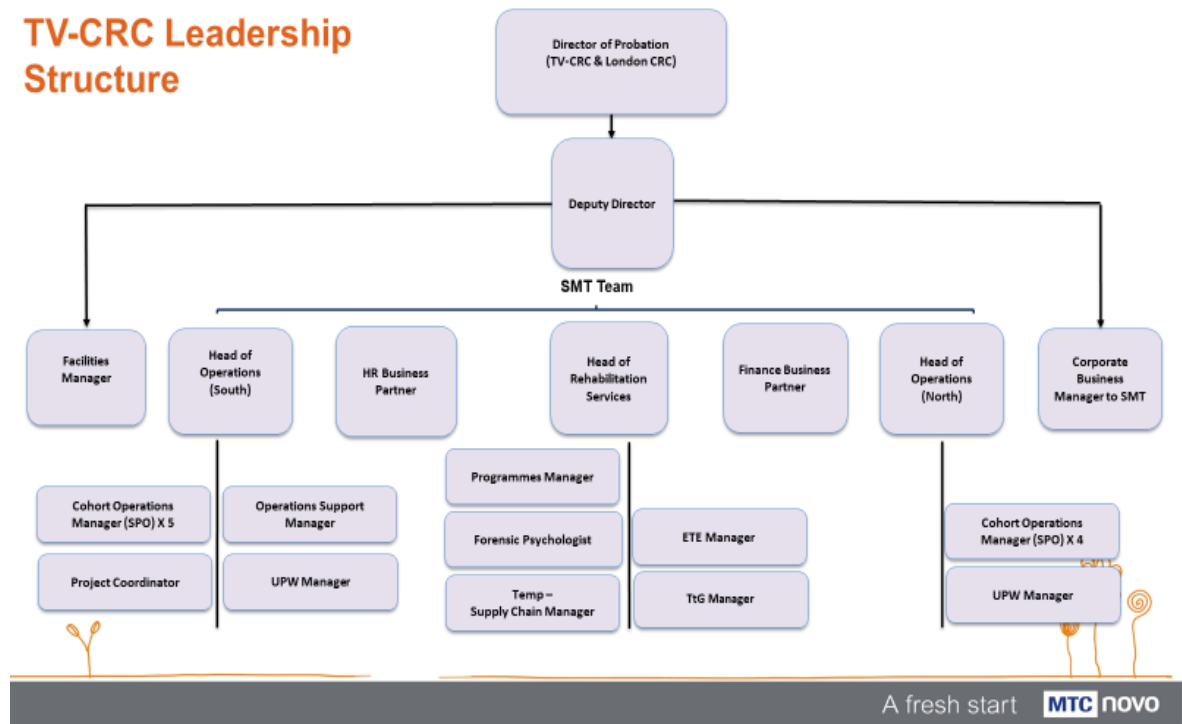
### **Comparative data**

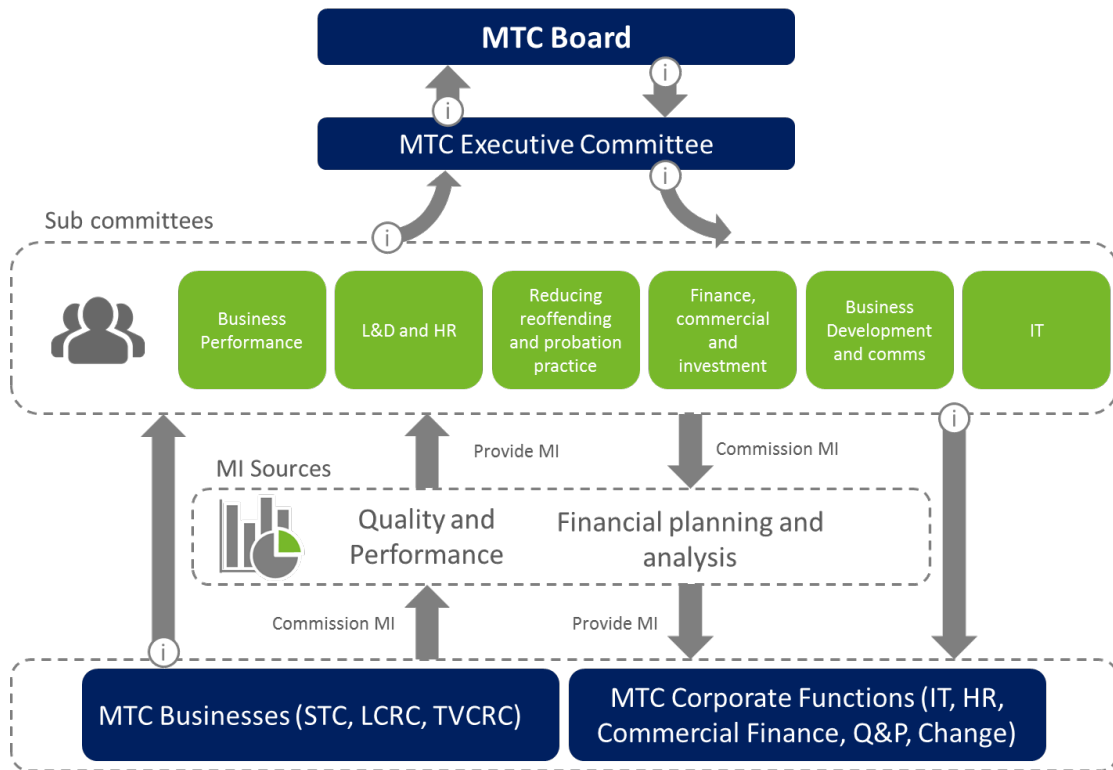
Where HMIP have comparative data, our internal data analysis calculates whether any changes are statistically significant or not (using the Z-score test, with a significance level of 0.1). We do not publish that level of detail, but where inspectors are referring to changes in data that meet this significance test, they will use the word 'significant'. They use different words to describe other changes in data, which do not meet the significance test.

## Annex 3: Organisational design and map

Information supplied by Thames Valley CRC.

### TV-CRC Leadership Structure





## Thames Valley

Berkshire  
Oxfordshire  
Buckinghamshire



**Total population for Thames Valley = 2,282,558**

Populations taken from 2011 Census and 2012 mid-year estimates, with latest data used, where released

## Annex 4: Inspection data<sup>48</sup>

The answers to the key questions that determine the ratings for each standard are underpinned by answers to more detailed ‘prompts’. These tables illustrate the proportions of the case sample with a satisfactory ‘yes’ response to the prompt questions. It should be noted that there is no mechanistic connection between the proportion of prompt questions answered positively, and the overall score at the key question level. The ‘total’ does not necessarily equal the ‘sum of the parts’. The summary judgement is the overall finding made by the inspector, having taken consideration of the answers to all the prompts, weighing up the relative impact of the strengths and weaknesses.

Where we have changed the standard, key question or prompt since the previous round of inspections, no comparative data is available.

	Previous inspection	Current inspection
<b>2.1. Assessment</b>		
<b>Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?</b>		
Does assessment analyse the service user’s motivation and readiness to engage and comply with the sentence?	76%	73%
Does assessment analyse the service user’s diversity and personal circumstances, and consider the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery?	No data available	54%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	67%	68%
<b>Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?</b>		
Does assessment identify and analyse offending-related factors?	71%	70%
Does assessment identify the service user’s strengths and protective factors?	76%	88%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information?	66%	81%

<sup>48</sup> HMI Probation inspection data

<b>Does assessment focus sufficiently on the risk of harm to others?</b>		
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	57%	56%
Does assessment analyse any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	No data available	63%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	43%	51%
Were domestic abuse checks undertaken? <sup>49</sup>	No data available	85%
Did child safeguarding information sharing take place in cases where required? <sup>50</sup>	No data available	79%

## 2.2. Planning

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the service user?</b>		
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	56%	67%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, which may affect engagement and compliance?	70%	73%
Does planning take sufficient account of the service user's readiness and motivation to change, which may affect engagement and compliance?	74%	76%
Does planning set out how all the requirements of the sentence or licence/post-sentence supervision will be delivered within the available timescales?	70%	69%
Does planning set a level, pattern and type of contact sufficient to engage the service user and to support the effectiveness of specific interventions?	73%	66%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?</b>		

<sup>49</sup> Expected in all cases.

<sup>50</sup> Expected in all cases where the service user has children, is in contact with children or presents a potential risk of harm to children.

Does planning sufficiently reflect offending-related factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	71%	72%
Does planning build on the service user's strengths and protective factors, utilising potential sources of support?	78%	75%
Does planning set out the services most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	72%	76%
<b>Does planning address appropriately factors associated with the risk of harm to others?</b>		
Does planning sufficiently address risk of harm factors and prioritise those which are most critical?	65%	59%
Does planning set out the necessary constructive and/or restrictive interventions to manage the risk of harm?	68%	59%
Does planning make appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the service user and any multi-agency plans?	58%	59%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	52%	46%

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery

<b>Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented appropriately, with a focus on engaging the service user?</b>		
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	65%	66%
Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the service user?	70%	67%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the service user to complete the sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	85%	76%
Post-custody cases only: Was there a proportionate level of contact with the prisoner before release?	54%	37%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?	57%	71%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	55%	68%
Are sufficient efforts made to re-engage the service user after enforcement actions or recall?	83%	87%



<b>Do the services delivered focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting the service user's desistance?</b>		
Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	53%	49%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance protective factors?	76%	63%
Is the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services sufficiently well coordinated?	67%	58%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support their desistance?	56%	49%
Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	49%	47%
Are local services engaged to support and sustain desistance during the sentence and beyond?	67%	49%
<b>Do the services delivered focus appropriately on managing and minimising the risk of harm to others?</b>		
Is the level and nature of contact offered sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	45%	61%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims?	39%	53%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well coordinated?	59%	49%
Are key individuals in the service user's life engaged, where appropriate, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	43%	47%
Are home visits undertaken, where necessary, to support the effective management of risk of harm?	34%	39%

#### 2.4. Reviewing

<b>Does reviewing effectively support the service user's compliance and engagement?</b>		
In cases where it is needed, does reviewing consider compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	66%	70%

In cases where it was needed, were any necessary adjustments made to the ongoing plan of work to take account of compliance and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	55%	53%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement?	48%	36%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of actions to implement the sentence?	62%	56%
<b>Does reviewing effectively support progress towards desistance?</b>		
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work?	46%	42%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the service user's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	64%	68%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies working with the service user?	65%	55%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the progress towards desistance?	60%	53%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>		
Does reviewing identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm, with the necessary adjustments being made to the ongoing plan of work?	35%	31%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the service user's risk of harm?	49%	45%
Is the service user (and, where appropriate, key individuals in the service user's life) meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm?	23%	18%
Are written reviews completed as appropriate as a formal record of the management of the service user's risk of harm?	40%	40%

#### 4.1 Unpaid work

**Is the assessment and planning of unpaid work personalised?**

Does assessment consider the service user's diversity and personal circumstances, and the impact these have on their ability to comply and engage with unpaid work?		83%
Does unpaid work build upon a service user's strengths and enhance their protective factors?		71%
Is the allocated work suitable, taking account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?		86%
<b>Is unpaid work delivered safely?</b>		
Does the delivery of unpaid work take account of risk of harm to other service users, staff or the public?		83%
Does unpaid work consider issues relating to the health and safety or potential vulnerability of the service user?		71%
Where the responsible officer is engaged in other activity/work with the service user, does regular communication take place?		87%
<b>Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately?</b>		
Does unpaid work commence promptly and happen regularly?		71%
Do arrangements for unpaid work encourage the service user's engagement and compliance with the order?		82%
Are professional judgements made in relation to decisions about missed appointments?		68%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?		60%
<b>Is the sentence of the court implemented appropriately?</b>		
Does unpaid work commence promptly and happen regularly?		71%
Do arrangements for unpaid work encourage the service user's engagement and compliance with the order?		82%
Are professional judgements made in relation to decisions about missed appointments?		68%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?		60%

4.2 Through the Gate		
<b>Does resettlement planning focus sufficiently on the service user's resettlement needs and on factors linked to offending and desistance?</b>		
Is there a clear and timely plan for how the service user's resettlement needs will be addressed?	100%	93%
Does the plan sufficiently draw on available sources of information?	91%	93%
Is the service user meaningfully involved in planning their resettlement and are their views considered?	100%	100%
Does the resettlement plan identify the service user's strengths and protective factors and consider ways to build upon these?	100%	93%
Does the plan take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?	86%	93%
Does the resettlement plan take account of factors related to risk of harm?	77%	88%
<b>Does resettlement activity focus sufficiently on supporting the service user's resettlement?</b>		
Are resettlement services delivered in line with the service user's resettlement needs, prioritising those which are most critical?	65%	No aggregated data available
Wherever possible, do resettlement services build upon the service user's strengths and enhance their protective factors?	89%	92%
Does resettlement activity take sufficient account of the service user's diversity and personal circumstances?	80%	93%
Does resettlement activity take sufficient account of any factors related to risk of harm?	70%	100%
<b>Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity?</b>		
Is there effective coordination of resettlement activity with other services being delivered in the prison?	81%	86%
Is there effective communication with the responsible officer in the community, prior to and at the point of release?	59%	92%

Do resettlement services support effective handover to local services in the community?	46%	88%
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