



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU

The Probation Service – Yorkshire and the Humber region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2023



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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

Although we found numerous positive aspects to this PDU, including an impressive and dynamic leadership team, the overall quality of work to assess and manage people on probation against all five of our standards for casework was insufficient. This has resulted in an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'.

There were strong strategic relationships in place in this PDU, where leaders were ensuring the voice and influence of probation was heard, contributing to innovative projects including an accommodation project for the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) cohort. Change management has been well delivered following the unification of local Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and National Probation Service (NPS) services in the summer of 2021 resulting in a unified culture across the PDU.

Despite high workloads, we found a committed and engaged staff group across all grades, who were all working towards the delivery of quality probation work. Unlike other recent PDU inspections, we found very experienced staff at all grades, which allowed newer recruits and staff in training ample opportunities to gain knowledge and skills from more experienced members of the team. Even under the challenging circumstances that the PDU is facing, we found a positive morale in many areas of the service.

However, despite impressive leadership, staffing and innovation in the PDU, this has not yet translated into the quality of practice. The ratings across the cases we inspected were disappointing, with court work scoring very low. Improvement is needed in the quality of work to assess and manage the risks that people on probation may present to the wider community. This was particularly poor in relation to assessment, where only 34 per cent of cases inspected had an assessment which effectively supported the safety of other people.

Although there were a number of positives with staffing, there were resourcing issues similar to other recent PDU inspections. These included gaps at administrative grade and at probation officer (PO) grade where the vacancy rate was 22 per cent. The PDU and the region have been proactive in attempting to remedy this, but it remains a critical issue and a national approach is needed to assist with the appropriate recruitment of staff.

North and North East Lincolnshire will be disappointed with the overall findings of this inspection, given their strong leadership and engaged staffing group. However, the PDU has much to be proud of, has strong foundations in place and, with a focus on the quality of casework, the PDU can continue on an upward trajectory.



Justin Russell
Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU

Fieldwork started January 2023

Score **9/27**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court work and case supervision

2.1 Court work

Inadequate



2.2 Assessment

Inadequate



2.3 Planning

Requires improvement



2.4 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



2.5 Reviewing

Requires improvement



Recommendations

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

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU should:

1. improve the quality of court reports to inform sentencing
2. improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage and review risk of harm
3. improve the delivery of unpaid work, ensuring orders start promptly with a varied offer of placements
4. ensure the delivery of training is prioritised to enhance the skills of the workforce and that there is a blended offer in place of in-person and online staff training
5. ensure diversity is prioritised in both strategic and operational practice.

Yorkshire and the Humber region should:

6. review the commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) contract for accommodation support services to provide an effective service which meets the needs of people on probation
7. improve the offer and access to support services in relation to mental health
8. improve vetting timeframes, to start newly recruited staff promptly.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) should:

9. ensure all probation offices have reliable Wi-Fi access
10. address the need for improved staff recruitment and retention.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in North and North East Lincolnshire PDU over the period of a week, beginning 23 January 2023. We inspected 32 cases where sentences and licences had commenced between 13 June 2022 to 19 June 2022 and 11 July 2022 to 17 July 2022. We also conducted 30 interviews with probation practitioners.

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU is one of 11 PDUs in Yorkshire and the Humber probation region. The PDU delivers probation work across three probation offices in Scunthorpe and Grimsby, and covers both a magistrates' court and a Crown Court, located in Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire. Prior to unification in June 2021, the area covered by North and North East Lincolnshire came under North East NPS and HLNy CRC. Accredited programmes are managed regionally, but unpaid work cases, including those that are stand-alone orders, are managed within the PDU.

The PDU covers a large geographical area including the two towns of Scunthorpe and Grimsby, as well as a number of rural areas. It covers two separate local authorities – North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. This can present resourcing challenges due to the duplication of partnership meetings at both strategic and operational level. Humberside Police serves the whole PDU area. North Lincolnshire is the most populated area of the PDU and has a marginally higher reoffending rate of 26.6¹ per cent compared to that of North East Lincolnshire, which has a reoffending rate of 25.6 per cent.

The total caseload for Yorkshire and the Humber region is 28,238², with this PDU's caseload accounting for 1,056 of the entire region's caseload at the time of inspection. The caseload has low numbers of people from a black, Asian or minority ethnic group, which account for just 3.2 per cent of the caseload.

A range of Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) were delivered across the PDU. These included personal wellbeing services delivered by Ingeus, women's services delivered by Lincolnshire Action Trust and accommodation delivered by Shelter. Substance misuse services were provided by We Are With You and covered both North and North East Lincolnshire. CAS3 accommodation and an approved premise were also located in the PDU's area.

At the time of the inspection, as a result of staffing resource challenges, the PDU had been operating under 'amber status' under the Prioritisation Framework (PF)³. Whilst rated as amber, PDUs continue to operate to national standards but are allowed to make concessions such as lower expectations for face-to face appointments and prioritisation of cases assessed as high or very high risk of serious harm. Following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2022, administrative, practitioner and middle manager staff have returned to working 80 per cent of the time in the office or at alternative delivery sites.

¹ Source: Ministry of Justice, (October 2022). Proven reoffending statistics: January 2020–December 2020.

² Source: Ministry of Justice, (2022). Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 30 June 2022.

³ The framework is designed to assist regions in identifying areas of flexibility in response to capacity and workload concerns. This has been nationally developed by HMPPS.

1. Organisational delivery

1.1. Leadership



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- There was a strong and dedicated leadership team, with a dynamic and visible head of PDU. A clear plan for the PDU set its vision and priorities, aligned to the regional strategy.
- At a strategic level, relationships with key partners were very strong and the leadership team were considered integral in several key partnership forums, including the community safety partnership. The head of the PDU was impressive in ensuring the voice of The Probation Service was present and chairs the Youth Justice Partnership Board in North East Lincolnshire.
- Strategic innovation was focused on improving the offer to people on probation. Examples included co-commissioned projects with partners for accommodation provision for the IOM cohort.
- Following unification there was a clear united vision of 'one PDU' with a positive culture, despite challenges. There was further evidence of this in our practitioner's survey where 32 out of 37 of those surveyed described the PDU as having a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Smarter working arrangements were embedded across the PDU, with practitioners being either office based or at alternative delivery sites 80 per cent of the week. The benefits of this were evident, including case discussions amongst colleagues and the sharing of knowledge of changing processes.
- At the time of inspection, the PDU was at amber status under the Prioritisation Framework (PF), but there were clear plans, timeframes and realistic expectations to get the PDU to 'green' status to operate in a business-as-usual approach.

Areas for improvement:

- Despite evidence of strong leadership, this has not fully translated into the cases. Two of the standards for casework scored 'Inadequate', with the remaining three areas scoring 'Requires improvement'.
- The quality of court work was rated by our inspectors as 'Inadequate'. Often cases were sentenced without appropriate domestic abuse and safeguarding enquires being received or being requested.
- Staff were not operating in a consistent way and were, on occasion, choosing to prioritise what they viewed as most important for people on probation. Unfortunately, these efforts were not seen in the domain two results.
- There was limited focus at both a strategic and operational level on diversity; this area of practice was weak.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

In this inspection we have given an overall rating for our staffing standard of 'Good'.

Strengths:

- Morale was positive in many parts of the PDU, including across administrative staff and middle managers. There were practitioners who were positive about their role, illustrated by a practitioner comment of "I want to stay in this job forever." This was impressive to hear, particularly given the workload and staffing challenges the PDU has faced.
- The senior and middle management team was fully staffed, experienced, dedicated and mostly described as being supportive by practitioners.
- Staff across all grades were committed to their roles and felt well supported by colleagues. This included assisting with each other's workloads, sharing knowledge or process, and supporting wellbeing.
- Active recruitment was ongoing to remedy gaps in staffing. In addition, other avenues were being explored, including offering additional hours to staff to address issues with workload. Staff were informed of recruitment strategies and the timeframe for new staff to arrive. Promotion sessions about the PDU and The Probation Service had been delivered to local colleges, in order to try and recruit staff from the local area.
- The PDU benefited from having a number of very experienced staff at all grades, which enabled shadowing and support opportunities for newer and less experienced staff.
- The skills and the diversity of the workforce met the caseload needs. Of those members of staff interviewed as part of the inspection, 100 per cent stated that they "always" or "most of the time" had the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience.
- Six per cent of the workforce identified as black Asian and minority ethnic compared to three per cent of the caseload. Therefore, in terms of ethnicity, the workforce was representative of the caseload demographic.
- Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) trainees were well supported by a dedicated PQiP Senior Probation Officer (SPO). The workload of the SPO was at an appropriate level and PQiP learners were receiving regular supervision, effective support from practice tutor assessors and suitable learning opportunities.
- Protected learning days were in place for staff for all grades. Each session had a particular theme, increasing knowledge and skills to strengthen practice.
- Staff attrition was low at 7.5 per cent for all staff and just 3.8 per cent for those of PO grade. Supportive relationships amongst staff and a dedication to people on probation all contributed to staff's desire to continue working in the PDU.

- The reward and recognition process was regularly utilised in recognition of exceptional pieces of work undertaken by staff across all grades. In addition to this all, staff in the PDU received a voucher in recognition of their continued hard work over a challenging period in recent months.
- Despite staffing gaps, 62 per cent of cases inspected had the same practitioner for the entirety of their order or licence, providing consistent and supportive relationships to the person on probation.

Areas for improvement:

- Despite ongoing active recruitment, there was a 20 per cent vacancy rate across the PDU, with prominent gaps in those of PO and administrative grade.
- Workloads across practitioner grades were high, with 21 out of 37 respondents to our practitioner survey describing their workload as “not so manageable” or “not at all manageable”. The PO grade average on the Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) was 117 per cent, but Probation Services Officer grade staff’s workload was at a more manageable level at 95 per cent on the WMT.
- There was insufficient oversight of cases. We found that over two thirds of cases (69 per cent) inspected, management oversight was either insufficient, ineffective or absent.
- Sickness across the PDU was high with an average of 12.2 days per year, adding additional pressure onto workloads. This figure was lower than the regional average (15.5 days) but, due to the smaller size of the PDU, staff sickness did impact some teams significantly.
- The vetting process for newly appointed staff was lengthy, often taking in excess of 12 weeks, leading to some individuals finding alternative employment.
- The training offer remains largely online based and feedback from staff was that this has limited value. An increased offer of a blend of online and in-person training should be considered to improve staff’s knowledge, skills and confidence.

1.3. Services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, supporting a tailored and responsive service for all people on probation.

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- There was a varied offer of services within the PDU. This included those available through CRS and other commissioning arrangements that were established in the PDU. This was further demonstrated by practitioners' views who, in our domain two case interviews, overwhelmingly felt they had the appropriate services available for the needs of their people on probation.
- Women's services were impressive, with collaborative working relationships between the PDU, the CRS provider Lincolnshire Action Trust' and partners. Women accessing these services benefited from having appointments in women-only environments, a concentrator model of practitioners and links to substance misuse services, foodbanks and access to solicitors.
- The accommodation initiatives delivered through CAS3 and Ongo (an IOM accommodation project) were positive. These enabled people on probation leaving custody and those subject to IOM arrangements being placed in short- and medium-term accommodation, which was a particularly pertinent issue across North and North East Lincolnshire.
- Recently formed community integration teams (CIT) were a very promising initiative. These teams were working with the IOM cohort and those subject to 20 months or less in custody. IOM delivery was well embedded, with strong partnership working between probation, the police and substance misuse/other services. Prompt and relevant information sharing was taking place.
- Effective and well-established public protection strategic arrangements were in place across the PDU. Communication across the partnership was strong and the PDU led training events to the multi-agency public protection arrangements partnership frequently.

Areas for improvement:

- Unpaid work delivery was insufficient. The UPW caseload was 273, with 33 per cent of requirements with hours outstanding beyond 12 months. Although the offer of projects and days available was improving, there were instances where individuals faced lengthy delays before being placed on projects due to limited provision.
- Domestic abuse enquires were not completed when required in six out of 28 relevant cases inspected and safeguarding enquires were not completed in seven out of 29 relevant cases. In court work, only two out of 14 cases had domestic abuse call-out information prior to sentencing and only three out of 14 cases had relevant child safeguarding information prior to sentencing.

- The accommodation CRS contact did not meet the needs of people on probation sufficiently. Staff viewed that, due to chronic accommodation issues in the area, the service that was delivered by Shelter was ineffective.
- There was insufficient provision to support people on probation with mental health difficulties. Although there were positives in the personal wellbeing service offer, this did not cover some of the more complex issues that people on probation faced, such as dual diagnosis.
- The use of toolkits was inconsistent and accredited programme completion rates were low. The percentage of successful completions of programme requirements other than those convicted of a sexual offence was (August 2022) zero per cent, (September 2022) 50 per cent and (October 2022) 33 per cent.

Resettlement work

Strengths:

- The CIT teams in the PDU, which manage IOM and all cases where the person on probation had been sentenced to 20 months or less in custody, were positive. The function of the CIT team allows dedicated probation practitioners and partner agencies to work with individuals in a more collaborative way, improving the delivery of service to shorter-term custodial sentenced and resettlement cases.
- There was a high level of contact with people on probation to support them to reduce reoffending and to minimise the potential risk of harm posed, with this being judged as sufficient in 10 out of 12 relevant cases.
- Home visits were regularly undertaken for post-release cases and were judged as necessary and supportive of managing the risk of harm posed by the individual in nine out of 11 relevant cases. Probation practitioners were using this opportunity to gather vital information for their assessments and support engagement from the person on probation.

Areas for improvement:

- On too many occasions there was insufficient work completed to address the key resettlement and desistance needs of people probation prior to being released from custody, with only half of cases being judged as sufficient. This resulted in people being released without appropriate and supportive plans in place.
- In under half (five out of 12) of post-release cases inspected, the probation practitioner did not address key risk of harm needs prior to release. This led to factors linked to risk of serious harm not being managed appropriately and placing people at risk.
- Attention to actual and potential victims needed to improve. This area was judged as sufficient in just half of post-release cases, therefore not addressing and minimising the risk to victims to keep them safe.

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all people on probation.

Good

In this inspection, we have given our quality standard for 'information and facilities' an overall rating of 'Good'.

Strengths:

- Offices across the PDU were accessible for people on probation in both the North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire areas. The Scunthorpe office has a welcoming and positive environment, with posters featuring relevant information and services that could be of interest, and artwork created by people on probation.
- Refurbishment was due to start in the coming weeks on the Newchase Court office in Grimsby, enabling the teams that were in two sites local to each other to move to one newly refurbished site, increasing team cohesion.
- Staff felt safe in delivery of their roles. This was further evidenced in the practitioner survey where 34 out of 37 respondents felt that sufficient attention was paid to their safety.
- Plans had been approved for IOM police staff to have access to the probation case management systems to improve access and timeliness of information sharing for that cohort of people on probation.
- The PDU benefits from the regional Junction database. This provided a forum for staff to access information and guidance on policies, interventions and corporate services. Managers in the PDU also had access to 'OPEN', a tool used to access performance targets across their teams.
- A dedicated Microsoft Team's channel was in place with sections on wellbeing, training, information on toolkits, and other practice and intervention advice. This provided practitioners with a local database to access current and relevant information to their roles.
- The PDU had implemented the Embedding Quality and Learning peer auditing process. Cases were audited by alternate teams within the PDU, with future audits being completed by a different PDU in the region. Sessions were facilitated by quality development officers and the feedback delivered to the practitioners.
- There was a clear approach to driving improvement and learning from serious further offences and other serious case reviews. The leadership looked at recent reviews, drawing out themes and considering which learning should be shared wider via the teams channel or e-mail if required. Additionally, further reflection and discussion was taking place in forums such as protected learning days.

Areas for improvement:

- There was no Wi-Fi access in some sites across the PDU. Staff were reliant on hot spots on their mobile phones or using internet cables. This led to frustration amongst staff and unreliability of connections, resulting in delays.
- The Queen Street office in Grimsby was not fit for purposes; the office was in need of refurbishment and did not have the inviting environment that was in place at Scunthorpe. It was noted that the Queen Street office will be closing permanently in the future.
- Although the numbers were low, there were no sexual offending accredited programmes being facilitated in premises in the PDU area at the time of inspection. This meant that people on probation had to travel to Hull to complete the relevant programme.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 50 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of these, 57 per cent reported that they were subject to a community sentence and 39 per cent were being supervised having been released from prison. Of those responding, four per cent did not specify their sentence type. The respondents were largely representative of caseload demographics in terms of gender and ethnic diversity.

Strengths:

- People on probation felt safe accessing probation services (74 per cent) and were able to have private conversations with their probation practitioner (92 per cent).
- The area that was most positively rated by people on probation regarding their experience of supervision was their relationship with their probation practitioner (69 per cent).
- Nearly two thirds of people on probation reported being happy overall with the support they received.

“They have helped me become a better person and helped me not want to go back to prison. I have ADHD and the women’s groups helps me with that. It helps going to the women’s group.”

Areas for improvement:

- Communication was identified as an issue for people on probation, particularly around resettlement arrangements for those being released on licence.

“It was not explained to me at all, it was not good as I was coming out of prison. They had given me a new address but didn’t tell me where I was living until, I was released.”

- Only half of individuals consulted by User Voice felt that their views had been considered as part of their sentence. Similar findings were found in our case inspections in assessment, where 56 per cent of cases were judged to have been engaged sufficiently. This missed a key opportunity to include the person on probation fully in their sentence and enhance their engagement with probation services.
- In correlation with what we found in services, people on probation identified mental health as one of the most important issues to them. The support received by people on probation was inconsistent and often dependent on individual probation practitioners.

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- Six per cent of the workforce identified as being from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background, compared to three per cent of the caseload. Therefore, in terms of ethnicity, the workforce was fully representative of the caseload demographic.
- The PDU had in place plans for a diversity action group, with the aim of promoting all elements of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the PDU. The terms of reference have been agreed and the group was due to commence operation after the inspection fieldwork.
- A recently launched neurodiversity provision was available in the PDU. The service offered support to practitioners working with individuals with neurodiversity issues or offering to work with the person on probation direct.
- The PDU's offer of women's services was very strong, with dedicated women's practitioners and effective partnership working with a number of agencies to support women on probation, who account for 11 per cent of the caseload in the PDU.

Areas for improvement:

- There was very limited evidence of a priority of diversity in both operational and strategic practice. A regional EDI strategy was in place, but this had not been implemented in the PDU.
- There was an overrepresentation of women in the workforce, with 87 per cent of the staff being female compared to 11 per cent of the caseload.
- In 44 per cent of the cases we inspected, assessment did not analyse the protected characteristics of the individual and consider the impact on their ability to comply and engage with service delivery.
- Overall, limited evidence was seen to understand and address disproportionality and wider diversity characteristics.
- Recording of protected characteristics was inconsistent. Ethnicity was not recorded in 16 per cent of inspected cases and religion/faith was not recorded in 31 per cent of cases.
- Although there was a diversity action group to be launched, this was still in its development stages and no other forum of this nature was in place. Opportunities for discussions and strategies to address issues linked to diversity were being missed in the PDU.

2. Court work and case supervision

The pre-sentence information and advice provided to court supports its decision-making.	Inadequate
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Our rating⁴ for court work is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against the key question:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the pre-sentence information and advice provided to court sufficiently analytical and personalised to the individual, supporting the court's decision-making?	29%

Strengths:

- Practitioners were involving people on probation meaningfully and considering their views in all of the pieces of court work inspected, enabling the voice of people on probation to be present in reports for sentencing.

Areas for improvement:

- In total, 14 reports were inspected in a cohort of 32 cases. Only four pieces of court work inspected were judged as sufficient.
- Necessary domestic enquiries were not made prior to sentencing in seven out of 12 relevant cases. Where enquiries were requested, only two of the five were made available to the court prior to sentencing. In regard to safeguarding, the picture was similar to safeguarding enquiries, and did not take place in seven out of 11 relevant cases. Without this information, the appropriateness of sentencing was questionable.
- The absence of vital information from the police and children's social care raised questions about the accuracy of assessments and consideration of sentencing proposals that kept actual and potential victims safe.
- Suitable sentencing proposals were inconsistent. In our inspection we found examples of cases not being considered for drug rehabilitation requirements, despite there being a clear need, as well as inappropriate proposals for stand-alone unpaid work for an individual with very complex needs.
- Resourcing was an issue in court, with a vacancy rate of 14 per cent. The skill sets of PO staff were not being fully utilised as they were often spending large portions of their time completing court duty tasks, preventing practitioners completing sentencing reports for the court.

⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection.](#)

2.2. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁵ for assessment is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	56%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	63%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	34%

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU is rated as 'Inadequate' for assessment as the lowest score out of the three questions was 34 per cent. Concerningly this related to whether there was sufficient focus on keeping people safe, which was only demonstrated in the minority of cases, regardless of sentence type.

Strengths:

- Practitioners were involving and engaging individuals in the assessment process. Information had been gathered on their personal circumstances and the impact on the individual's engagement and compliance. This was used to inform future work as part of the person on probation's order or licence.

Areas for improvement:

- Domestic abuse and child safeguarding information sharing did not always take place and some staff were not making the necessary enquiries.
- There were too many cases where the safety of victims and potential victims was missing. Assessment failed to analyse specific concerns related to victims in half of the inspected cases.⁶
- Critical risk of harm factors were being missed in too many cases within assessment. Inspectors judged that the appropriate factors were only identified and analysed in 15 out of 31 relevant cases. Without a robust assessment and sufficient understanding of risk, it is challenging to identify what practitioners were to focus on throughout the period of supervision.

⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the score for the key question, which is placed in a rating band. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection.](#)

⁶ Relative Rate Index (RRI) not used.

2.3. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁷ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	69%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	50%

North and North East Lincolnshire PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for planning as the lowest score of the three key questions was 50 per cent.

Strengths:

- Throughout the planning process, practitioners were engaging with people on probation. Consideration was given to the individual's personal circumstances and motivation to engage with their order or licence. In nearly three quarters of cases inspected, planning clearly set out the requirements of the sentence or licence with appropriate timescales. This increasingly supported people on probation's engagement and understanding of their order and licence.
- There was a strong focus within planning on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance for people on probation, evidenced by the fact that this area was judged sufficient in 81 per cent of inspected cases. There were several examples of the appropriate focus on offending-related areas, such as substance misuse, with the relevant links and referrals.

Areas for improvement:

- Too often, planning did not reflect the most crucial factors linked to offending. Eleven out of 28 of the cases inspected did not have the necessary constructive and restrictive interventions in place to keep others safe.
- In a similar way to what was found in assessment, not enough consideration was given to the critical factors linked to risk of harm. This was sufficient in only half of relevant cases. By failing to address critical risk information, the impact and appropriateness of planning is limited.

⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection.](#)

2.4. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁸ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	63%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	50%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	50%

The PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for implementation and delivery as the lowest score of the three key questions was 50 per cent.

Strengths:

- Probation practitioners were having appropriate and regular contact with people on probation. The frequency and the nature of contact was sufficient to support desistance and reduce reoffending in 21 out of 26 relevant cases. The level and nature of contact to keep people safe was sufficient in 22 of 29 cases. This was impressive given the PDU was operating under 'amber' status where there can be reductions in levels of contact offered.
- Of all the cases inspected, 62 per cent had had the same allocated practitioner since the start of the order or licence, and 97 per cent of cases had no more than two allocated practitioners. This provided continuity and time to build a working relationship. This was evidenced further by almost two thirds of cases being judged as having sufficient focus on engaging the person on probation.

Areas for improvement:

- Protecting actual or potential victims was judged as sufficient in only 11 out of 27 relevant cases. In cases with domestic abuse concerns, too often there was a lack of monitoring of developing or existing relationships to ensure measures were in place to keep potential victims safe.

⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection.](#)

- The coordination of multi-agency working to manage risk of harm was poor in too many cases, assessed sufficient in only 13 out of 24 cases. There was limited information sharing with other agencies, and when it was, it was not being used as part of delivery of an intervention with the person on probation.

2.5. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁹ for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	78%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	63%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	47%

The PDU is rated as 'Requires improvement' for reviewing. Although the lowest score to the three key questions was 47 per cent, professional discretion was applied due to positive scores in the remaining two key questions.

Strengths:

- Reviewing was regularly informed by the input from other agencies. This was the case in supporting desistance and to assist in keeping people safe, differing to what was found in implementation and delivery. Input from other agencies ensured that current and pertinent information from a number of sources were used within reviewing, improving accuracy in the process.
- Practitioners were considering improvements in compliance, engagement and overcoming any relevant barriers to working with people on probation. There were a number of examples where probation practitioners continued to work closely with individuals following breach or recall, improving their working relationship and increasing chances of desistance going forward.

Areas for improvement:

- When reviewing the risk of harm, practitioners were not involving individuals and key individuals in their lives. This was a missed opportunity to improve engagement and gather up-to-date information for the review process.
- The completion of formal reviews was inconsistent. Although formal reviews were completed in two thirds of relevant cases, the overall quality, particularly in relation to risk of harm, was insufficient. Significant information within reviews was missing, demonstrated by 14 out of 22¹⁰ cases failing to identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table.

¹⁰ RRI not used.

2.6. Outcomes

Early outcomes are positive, demonstrating reasonable progress for the person on probation.

We do not currently rate the Outcomes standard, but provide this data for information and benchmarking purposes only.

Outcomes	Percentage 'Yes'
Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	44%

Strengths:

- An increase in offending was found in only three per cent of cases inspected. Given that there are resourcing and workload issues within the PDU, it was positive that the rate on the cases we inspected was very low.
- There had been progress made to address factors that were linked to offending. There were promising scores around accommodation, despite this being a challenging issue in the PDU. There were improvements in strengths and protective factors, with impressive progress made in employment and some improvements motivation to change. This was often evidenced through practitioners' continued impactful working relationships with people on probation.

Areas for improvement:

- Early outcomes demonstrated sufficient progress in just 14 out of 32 cases. Whilst it is acknowledged this is the early stages of some orders and licenses, this figure is disappointing.
- Compliance levels were low, with 18 out of 32 cases inspected not judged to have sufficiently complied with their order or licence. This is a disappointing figure given the early stages of orders and licences of these cases.
- Insufficient work was undertaken to address and reduce risk of serious harm posed by individuals, with improvements seen in only 13 per cent of cases. Out of 15 cases where domestic abuse was linked as a factor to keeping other safe, inspectors judged that improvements had been made in just one case.

Annexe one – Web links

Full data from this inspection and further information about the methodology used to conduct this inspection is available in [the data workbook for this inspection](#).

A glossary of terms used in this report is available on our website using the following link: [Glossary \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/glossary).