



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

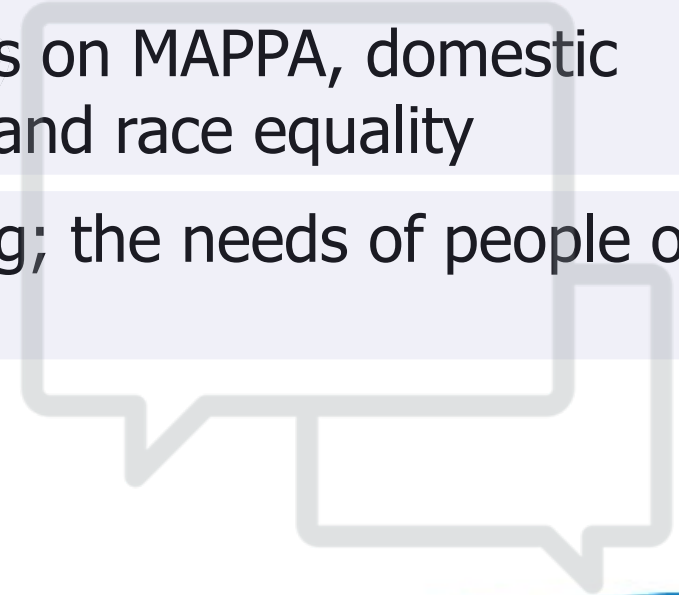
Probation Annual Report

Launch event: Thursday 21 September 2023



Overview

- My last probation annual report covers the work of the Inspectorate since beginning of 2022.
- This includes 31 local probation delivery unit (PDU) inspections across 10 regions following the re-unification of the Probation Service on 26 June 2021.
- It also includes data and findings from recent thematics on MAPPA, domestic abuse perpetrators, supervision of terrorism offenders and race equality
- The report has chapters on our local ratings; on staffing; the needs of people on probation; public protection and resettlement.



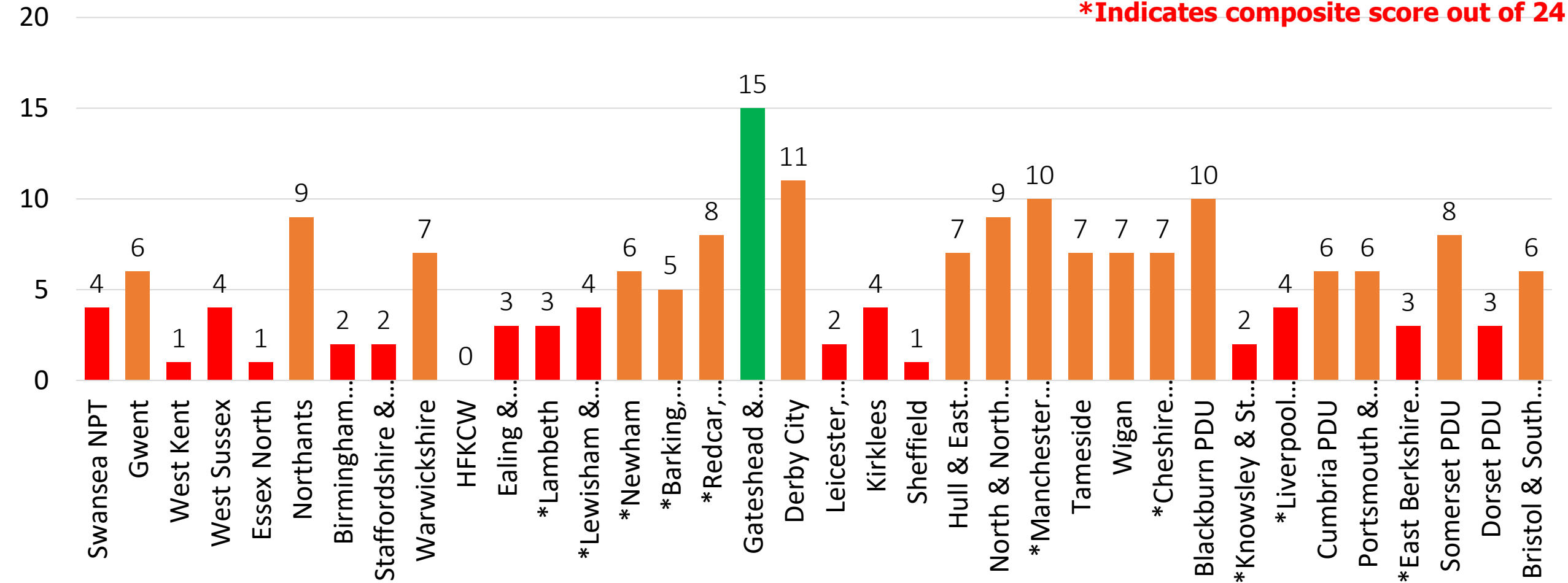
Our local probation inspection methodology

Leadership and resourcing	Individual case inspections
<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1 Leadership1.2 Staff1.3 Services1.4 Information and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1 Court work2.2 Assessment2.3 Planning2.4 Implementation and delivery2.5 Reviewing2.6 Outcomes



Overall PDU ratings: Jan 2022 - Aug 2023

*Indicates composite score out of 24



	Overall rating	Score out of *24/27	Leadership	Staffing	Services	Information and facilities
Swansea NPT		4				
Gwent		6				
West Sussex		4				
West Kent		1				
Essex North		1				
Northants		9				
Birmingham North East and Solihull		2				
Staffordshire & Stoke		2				
Warwickshire		7				
HFKCW		0				
Ealing & Hillingdon		3				
Lambeth		3				
Lewisham & Bromley		*4				
Newham		*6				
Barking, Dagenham & Havering		*5				
Redcar, Cleveland & Middlesbrough		*8				
Gateshead & South Tyneside		15				
Derby City		11				
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland		2				
Sheffield		1				
Kirklees		4				
Hull & East Riding		7				
North & North East Lincolnshire		9				
Manchester North		*10				
Tameside		7				
Wigan		7				
Cheshire West PDU		*7				
Blackburn PDU		10				
Knowsley & St Helens PDU		*2				
Liverpool North PDU		*4				
Cumbria PDU		6				
Portsmouth & IoW PDU		6				
East Berkshire PDU		*3				
Somerset PDU		8				
Dorset PDU		3				
Bristol & South Gloucestershire PDU		6				

Inadequate	
Requires improvement	
Good	

PDU scores for:

- leadership
- staffing
- services
- facilities

(Jan '22 to Aug '23)



We have assessed over 1,500 individual cases

- At each PDU we inspect a sample of all cases over a two week period which started supervision in the community roughly six months previously. Sample sizes ranged from 21 to 101.
- Samples included community orders and post-release supervision and cases at every level of risk classification from low to high.
- For each case, our Assistant Inspectors judge the quality of work at each stage of supervision, from assessment through to ongoing case review against three key criteria – engagement, work to encourage desistance and work to assess and manage risks of serious harm to others. They then make a judgement about whether the work is of sufficient quality against 12 key questions.
- Wherever possible our inspectors interview the probation practitioner that's been responsible for the case as well as looking at case files on nDelius and other systems.





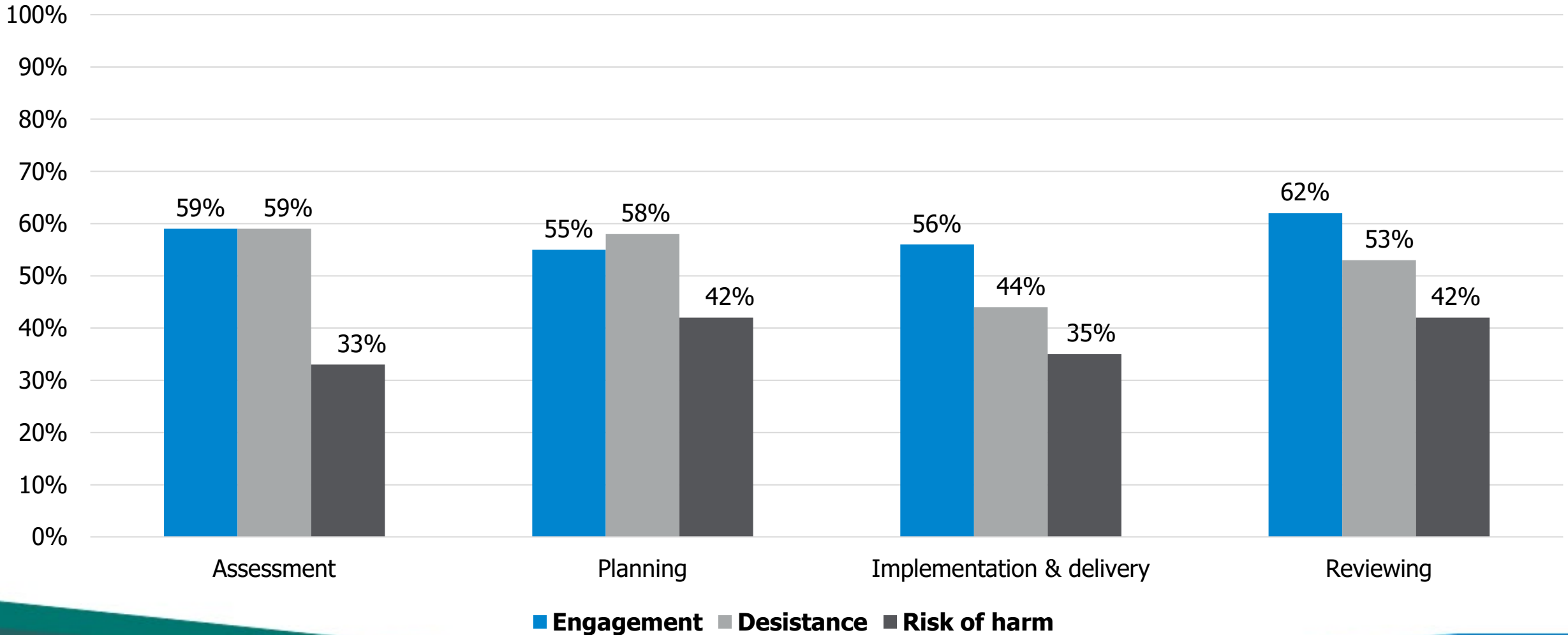
Case supervision and delivery

- Disappointingly, analysis of the caseload data across all these probation areas shows that not one element of the case supervision process was being delivered well across England and Wales.
- No element of the supervision process was delivered satisfactorily in more than 62 per cent of the 1,509 cases we inspected. In only three PDUs were more than half of the cases sufficient against the worst scoring quality question – the assessment of risks of serious harm.
- Probation practitioners generally performed better at criteria relating to engaging people on probation at all four stages of supervision, but the attention they paid to risk of harm was consistently poor, and this is the key reason why so many services have received an overall rating of 'Inadequate'.



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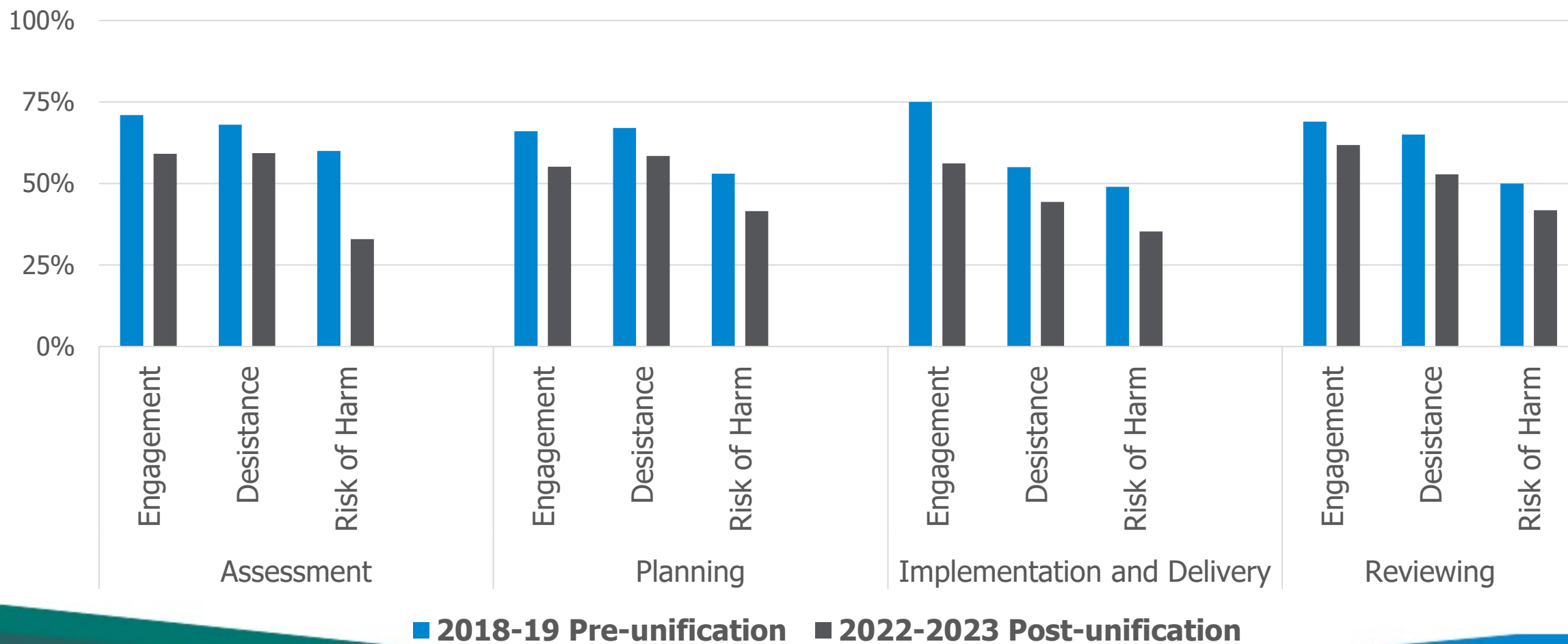
Cases delivered to expected level at all stages of case supervision (n = 1,509)





Quality of casework has got worse since unification (p.15)

Probation inspections summary judgements pre- and post-unification (% Yes)





Public protection and risk of harm

- Over the past 18 months, we have not seen improvements in the area of public protection performance. Bendall and McSweeney reviews show what can happen when things are missed
- **67 per cent** of individual cases were judged **insufficient** against risk of harm practice. Only 3 out of 31 PDUs had more than half of their cases satisfactory on risk of harm assessment
- We often found that the necessary public protection enquiries or home visits had not been carried out.
- Evidence around past behaviour of risk (such as violence against previous partners) was not being properly analysed and was often missed.
- Practitioners are underestimating the nature and level of risk of serious harm posed.

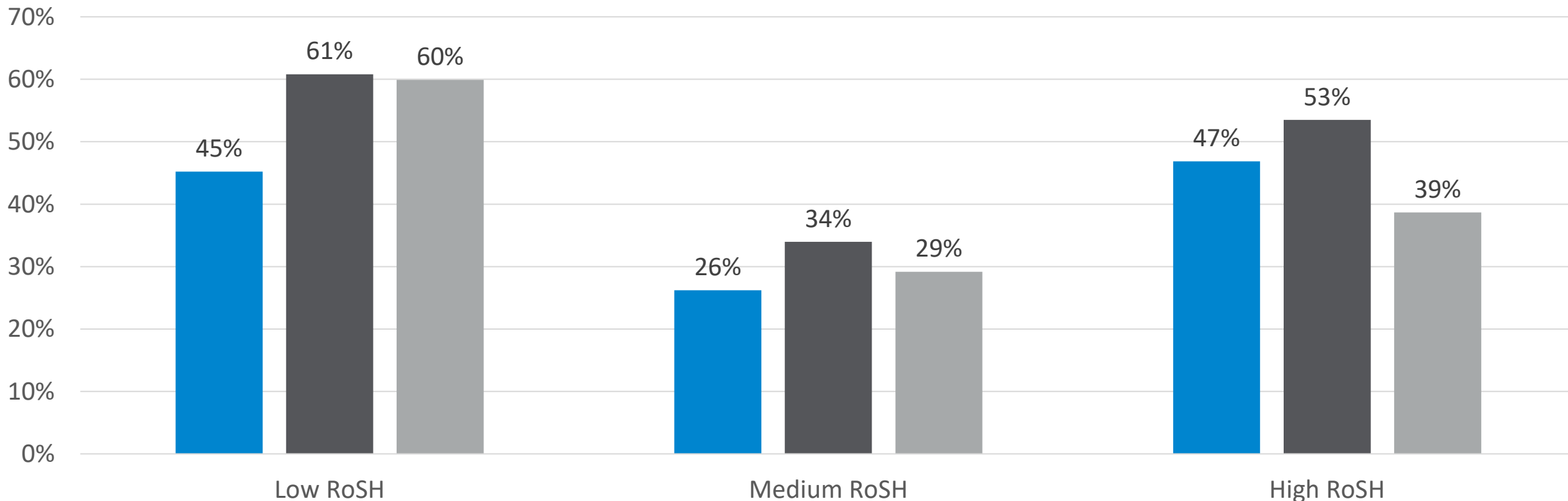
Risk of harm classification was wrong in **15 per cent** of cases.

Domestic abuse enquiries were carried out in just **49 per cent** of cases where they should have been made.

Child safeguarding enquiries were made in **55 per cent** of cases where they should have been made.



Risk of harm performance worst for medium risk cases



- Assessment focuses sufficiently on keeping other people safe
- Planning focuses sufficiently on keeping other people safe
- Delivery of services effectively supports the safety of other people

Learning from Serious Further Offence (SFO) reviews

We audited 86 Probation Service SFO reviews and were also commissioned to undertake our own independent SFO reviews into the supervision of Damien Bendall and Jordan McSweeney.

- practitioners are underestimating the nature and level of risk of serious harm posed
- enforcement action is not always being used consistently or in line with policy guidance, particularly with license cases
- diversity is not always fully considered and there is insufficient liaison between prison/probation staff
- there is sometimes a lack of professional curiosity, with practitioners not using all available resources to manage the risks posed by people on probation in the community
- practitioners often did not use the range of approved toolkits available for them to work through with those subject to probation supervision.

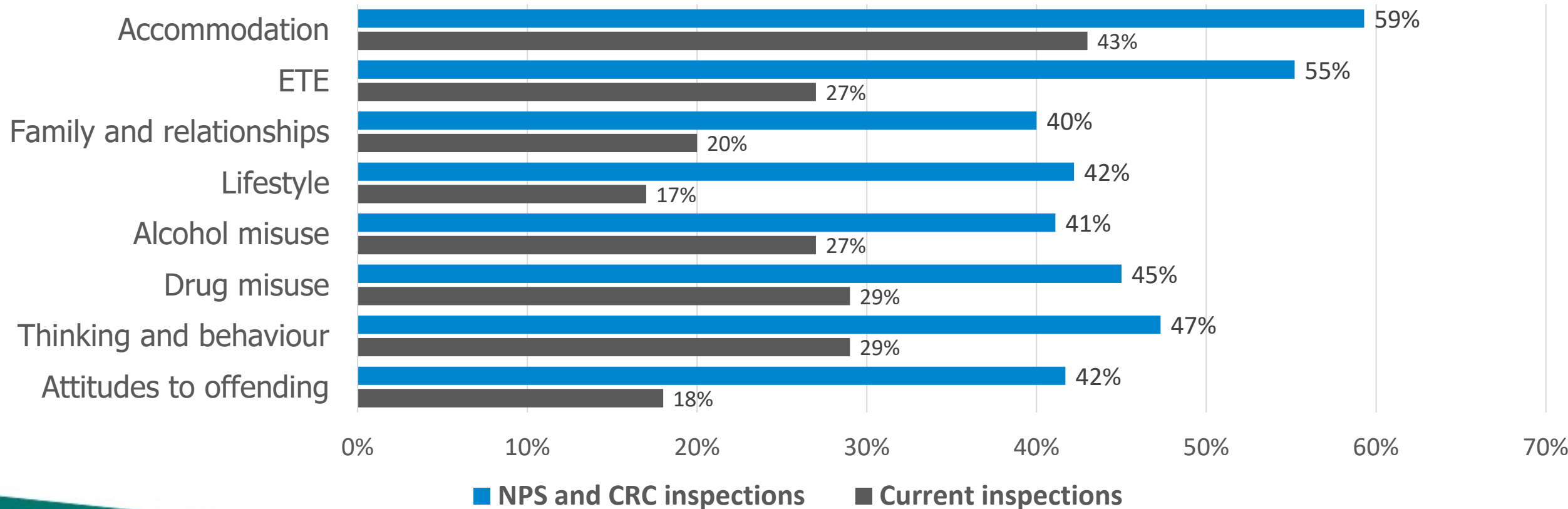


Meeting the needs of people on probation

- The needs of people on probation which underlie their offending are often not being met and performance has got worse since unification.
- Just **43 per cent** of the cases we inspected had their accommodation needs met; only **29 per cent** had received adequate support for a drugs problem.
- Major backlogs in the delivery of unpaid work – up to 50 per cent of orders still outstanding at 12 months in some areas.
- Long waiting times and low completion rates for accredited programmes, e.g. for domestic abuse perpetrators.

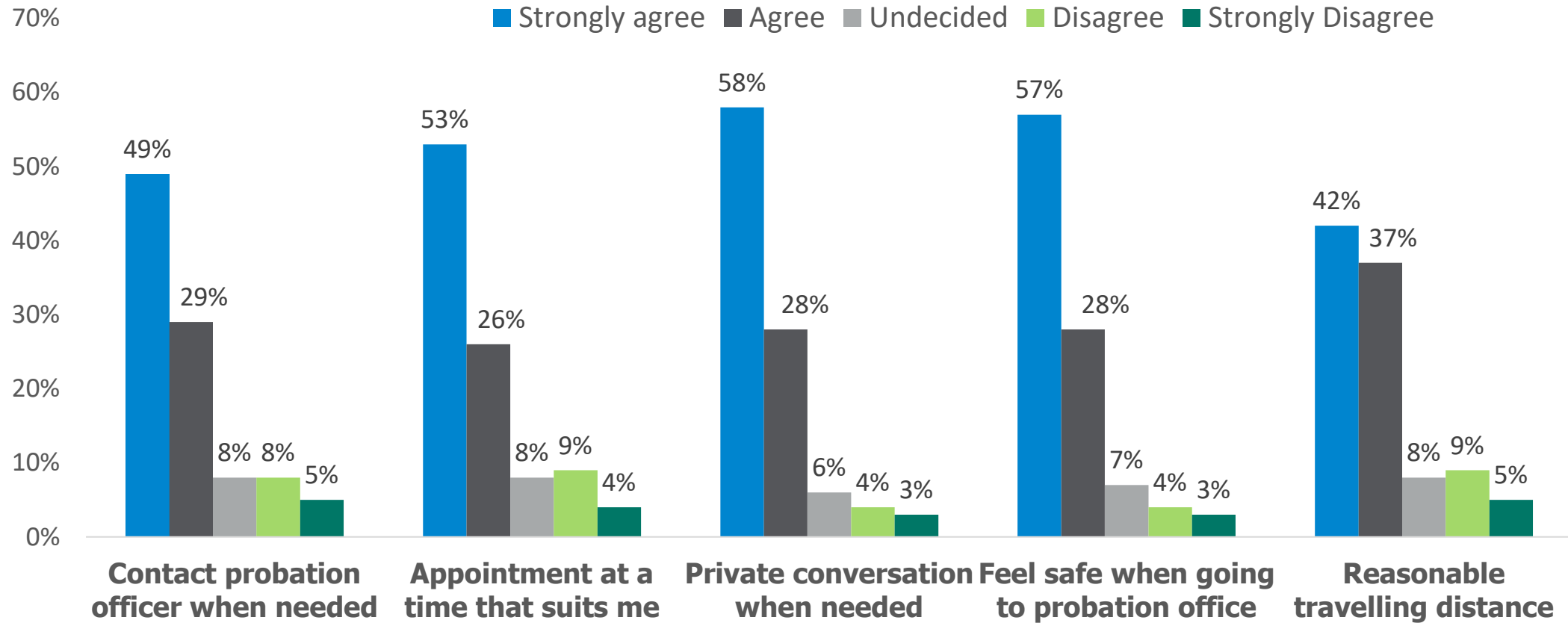
Issues around £195 million Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) investment – lack of direct access to housing for people on probation, lack of referrals by probation practitioners to some services but more than expected for others

Sufficient delivery against needs?



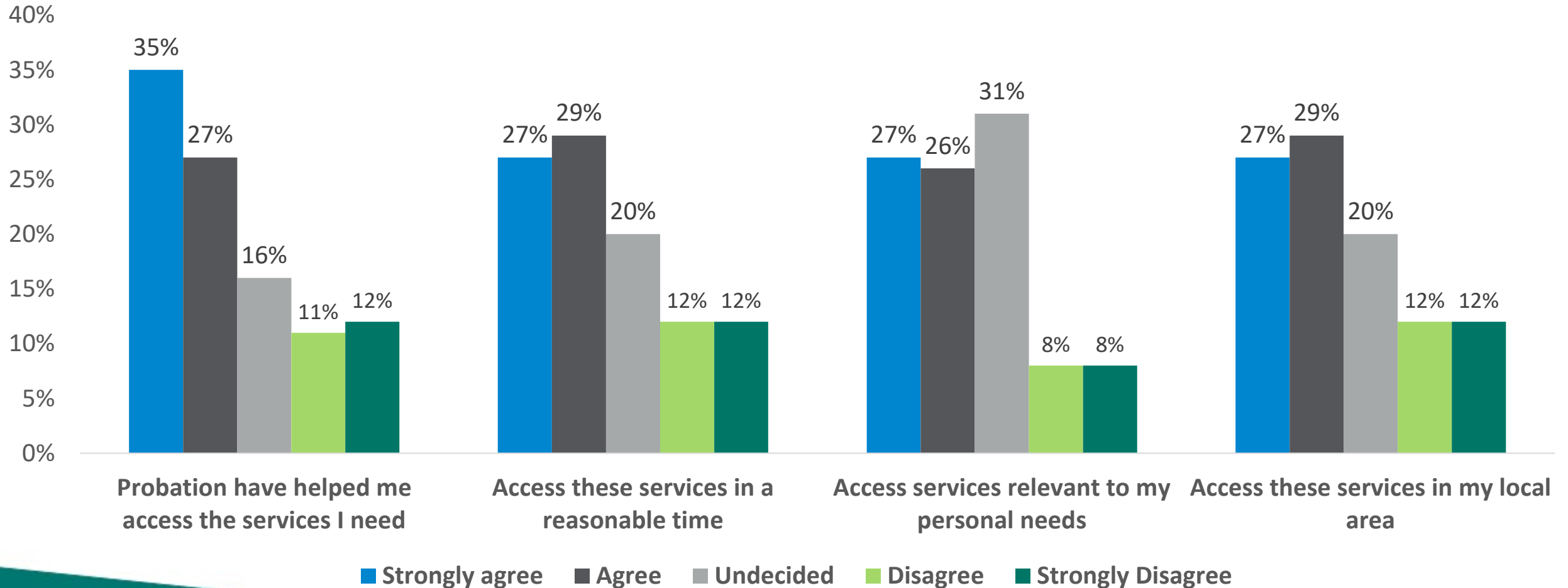


People on probation – views on supervision? (N = 1353)





People on probation – views on services (n = 1,353)





Staffing challenges

Recruitment: Whilst staffing levels have varied between regions and have started to show some signs of improvement, generally our inspections have shown insufficient staffing levels, with some areas having chronic staff shortages. 29 per cent probation officer vacancy rate (March 2023)

Retention: Whilst the number of trainee probation officers has increased, the number of staff leaving the service has also increased – particularly those with over 5 years experience.

Workloads: 60 per cent of practitioners reported that their workloads were either '**not so manageable**' or '**not at all manageable**'. Perceptions of workloads have got worse since unification, despite average caseloads coming down.

Oversight: Management oversight was "**insufficient, ineffective or absent**" in **72 per cent** of cases.

Sickness: Sickness rates were high and ranged from an average of 10 working days lost per year (South West region) to 16.7 days (London).



What is good resettlement?

On 31 December 2022 (the latest figures available), the overall probation caseload included 71,617 people in prison pre-release and 60,910 post-release. The number of people supervised on post-release license has increased by 56 per cent since 2015.

Good pre-release planning by prison-based probation staff addresses practical needs: accommodation, identification documents and a bank account, benefit claims and immediate income to live on and access to continuity of treatment for substance misuse, physical and mental health needs)

Good pre-release planning addresses risk and ensures that risk management plans are in place including any appropriate license conditions

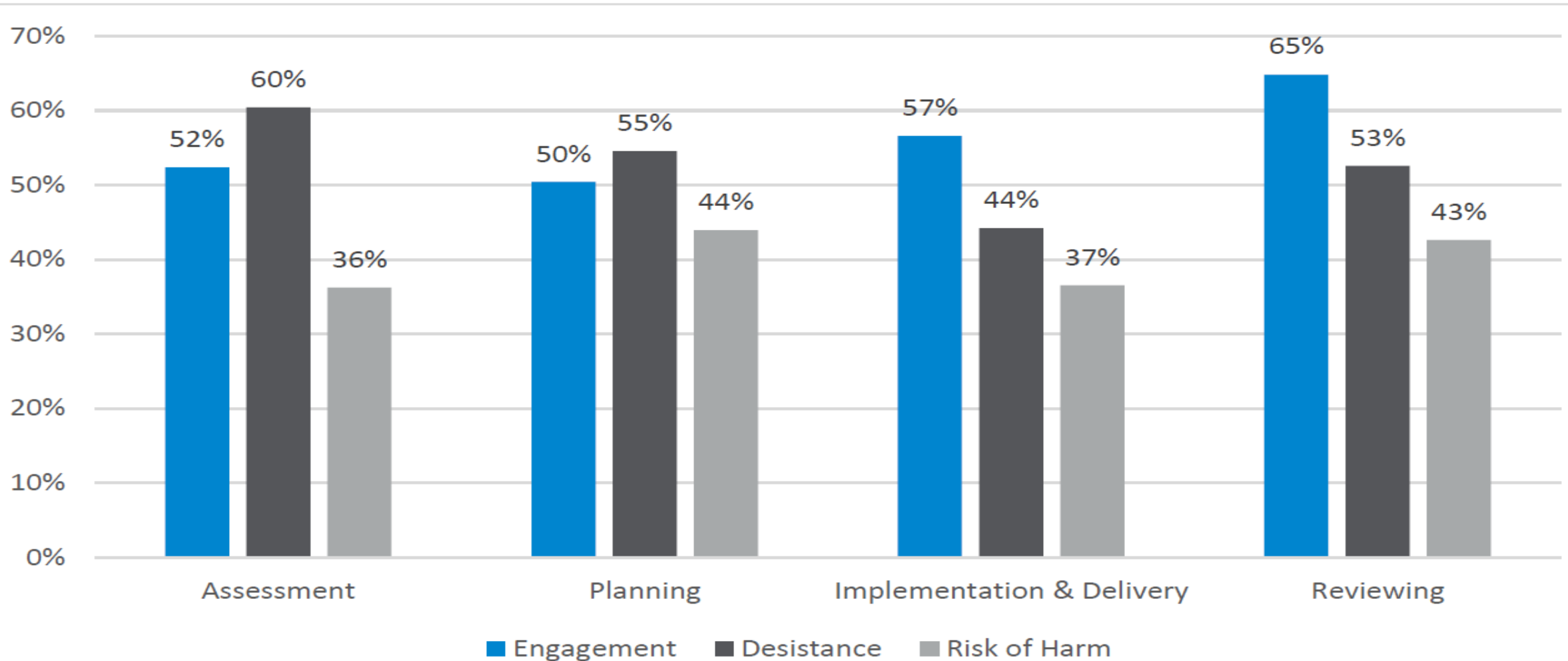
It includes comprehensive and timely handover from prison-based to community-based probation staff and the sharing of sentence management and risk information between prison/probation

And community probation officers should be expected to supervise people released from prison according to the same standards set out in the ASPIRE case supervision model.



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Cases delivered to expected level at all stages of case supervision for people supervised on release from prison (local inspection data n = 510 post-release)



OMiC thematic findings

Serious flaws in the OMiC model – staffing shortages (prison and probation), lack of communication, role confusion

Staffing level at crisis point in some prisons and probation regions – pre-release resettlement work happening too late

Prison officer keywork quality poor and not connected to offender management - 35 per cent of prisoners interviewed had not seen their key worker in the last six months:

Probation officer 'Prison Offender Managers' "not adding value" – little contact with prisoners; 64 per cent of prisoners had seen their POM only one or two times in the last six months

Level and nature of pre-release contact sufficient in only one third of cases

Not enough accredited programmes running in prisons

Effective handover from prison to the community in only 40 per cent of cases – prisoners "in the dark" about who their offender manager was

OMiC – Post release outcomes

One in ten released homeless. 60 per cent released without settled accommodation. (But improved to 40 per cent by point of inspection. Positive impact of the CAS3 post-release accommodation in 5 regions guarantees up to 84 nights temporary accommodation after custody.

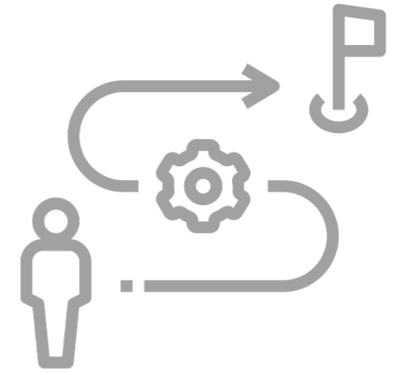
Some improvement in employment from 6 per cent at point of release to 33 per cent at point of inspection (though 39 per cent still unemployed)

Services to meet a drugs misuse problem linked to offending were delivered in only 24 per cent of cases and for an alcohol problem in only 32 per cent of cases

Sufficient finance, benefits and debt services were delivered to help reduce re-offending in only half of the cases where it was required

Referrals to commissioned services haven't matched forecast levels. Providers can't access probation records to get up to date information on risk issues or contact information

Late referrals of high risk cases to approved premises and lengthy referral forms



When things go right – the supervision of terrorism offenders

- probation, police and prison services worked well together with good information sharing arrangements in place
- supervision within the community was robust overall, balancing rehabilitation with tight risk management
- probation practitioners were well trained specialist officers, holding a small and restricted caseload
- terrorist offenders were subject to additional oversight throughout their sentences
- there has been significant financial investment to improve services dealing with counter terrorism, and staffing levels were appropriate



Key findings

- overall ratings disappointing – one 'Good' PDU; 15 'Inadequate'; 15 'Requires improvement'
- quality of casework has got worse since unification
- two-thirds of inspected cases were not sufficient on assessment of risk of serious harm – weakest area of performance
- chronic staff shortages at all grades plus high sickness rates have led to what are perceived to be unmanageable caseloads and poor quality case management
- the underlying needs of people on probation which have driven their past offending – e.g. for accommodation; employment; drug and alcohol use, are not being met
- delays in meeting orders of the court and in delivering offending behaviour programmes
- But positive performance around victims services and terrorism offenders show what can be achieved



An independent review of probation governance

Local probation leaders are heavily constrained by current centralised structures and processes – very little devolved responsibility over budgets, staffing, training or tech innovation. First time in it's history that probation hasn't had at least some element of locally autonomous delivery

Pre-TR performance of the 35 probation trusts was significantly better. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspections in 2012-13 found that "75 per cent of the work undertaken by probation trusts was sufficient to keep the individual's risk of harm to a minimum". NOMS rated all 35 as 'good' or 'exceptional'




HM Inspectorate of Probation rated 70 per cent of youth justice services as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' last year – reflecting the inherent strengths, flexibilities and resilience that come from a much more locally autonomous and partnership-based model of governance and delivery.

"While I recognise that another reorganisation of the service, and any shift in this direction would have to be with the explicit agreement of local managers and staff, I think the time has come for an independent review of whether probation should be moved back to a more local form of governance and control, building on the highly successful lessons of youth justice services."



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