



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

**Barnsley and Rotherham**

The Probation Service – Yorkshire and the Humber Region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2024

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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

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This was the first inspection of Barnsley and Rotherham Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) since it was established after the unification of probation services in 2021. Disappointingly, there were a number of deficits in this PDU, primarily with resourcing and extremely high sickness levels. The leadership had steered the PDU to a more stable position, but the quality of work to manage people on probation was insufficient on all four of our standards of casework. Overall, we have rated this PDU as 'Inadequate'.

Unprecedented staff sickness had been a significant challenge for this PDU. This was an issue across all staffing groups, with an average loss of 23 days per year. It was even more acute at probation officer (PO) grade, where the figure was 35 days per year. There was a legacy of 'sickness culture' and, although this had improved, the overall staffing picture remained delicate. Additionally, there were gaps in staffing, with 28 per cent of PO vacancies unfilled and an unclear timescale of when they would be recruited to. The overall resourcing challenges were, understandably, hampering the PDU's ability to deliver high-quality casework.

Improvements were needed in the quality of work to assess and manage the risks that people on probation pose in the community. There were deficits across all standards of casework, but it was particularly poor in assessment and implementation and delivery, where only 25 per cent of cases were judged sufficient in supporting the safety of other people effectively.

Although the results in the casework were disappointing, we found strengths in the leadership team, particularly in its ability to guide the PDU through a period of crisis and to make difficult decisions to best protect the delivery of frontline services. Partnership arrangements remained strong, with probation recognised as a valued partner across agencies. This was a positive achievement, particularly given that the PDU had limited senior leadership resource.

The quality of services was more positive. The PDU had an extensive offer for people on probation. It delivered high-quality work to support individuals who were subject to Mental Health Treatment Requirements (MHTRs), and effective work with the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) team. We saw effective working relationships with police teams; for example, the PDU held joint training events with the Management of Serious or Violent Offenders (MoSoVO) team in order to strengthen this key area.

Barnsley and Rotherham PDU will be disappointed with the overall outcome of this inspection. Although the PDU has now passed its period of crisis, there remain challenges. The senior leadership arrangements limit the PDU's ability to be fully outward-facing and to focus adequately on high-quality casework; therefore, the senior leadership team needs to be expanded. With the workloads of practitioners moving to a more manageable position, the PDU has the opportunity to work with staff to build resilience and address legacy sickness issues. A focus on the quality of casework is needed, but the PDU has the tools at its disposal to make the necessary improvements to push on to deliver an effective service.



**Martin Jones CBE**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

### Barnsley and Rotherham

Fieldwork started July 2024

Score **3/21**

#### Overall rating

**Inadequate**



#### 1. Organisational arrangements and activity

P 1.1 Leadership

Requires improvement



P 1.2 Staffing

Requires improvement



P 1.3 Services

Requires improvement



#### 2. Service delivery

P 2.1 Assessment

Inadequate



P 2.2 Planning

Inadequate



P 2.3 Implementation and delivery

Inadequate



P 2.4 Reviewing

Inadequate



## Recommendations

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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.

### **Barnsley and Rotherham PDU should:**

1. improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage and review risk of harm
2. analyse information on domestic abuse and child safeguarding sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment and management of people on probation
3. clearly communicate strategic priorities and make sure these are understood by probation practitioners and middle managers
4. improve the use of interventions and services available for people on probation to manage desistance and the risk of harm
5. consider adding a deputy head of service, to reduce the workloads of senior leaders and to provide the required oversight to improve the quality of the PDU's work.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Barnsley and Rotherham over the period of two weeks, beginning on 01 July 2023. We inspected 39 community orders and 21 releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences had commenced during two separate weeks, between 04 December 2023 and 10 December 2023 and 11 December 2023 and 17 December 2023. We also conducted 57 interviews with probation practitioners.

Barnsley and Rotherham is one of 11 PDUs in the Yorkshire and the Humber region. The PDU delivers probation work across two main probation offices, with one in Barnsley and the other in Rotherham. There is only one court in the PDU area, Barnsley Magistrates' Court. There are no prisons within the PDU's area, and there is one approved premises (Rookwood).

The PDU covers a large area of South Yorkshire, including both the towns of Barnsley and Rotherham and more rural areas. The local authority arrangements include separate unitary local authorities in Barnsley and Rotherham. This can present resourcing challenges, because partnership arrangements have to be duplicated at both strategic and operational level. The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process was managed through a pan South Yorkshire approach, with separate meetings for Barnsley and Rotherham. South Yorkshire Police serves the whole of the PDU's area. Barnsley's reoffending rate is just above the regional average at 28.4 per cent,<sup>1</sup> with Rotherham's just below the regional average at 27.1 per cent.

The total caseload for the Yorkshire and the Humber region is 26,743.<sup>2</sup> The PDU's caseload accounted for 1,980 of the entire region's caseload at the time of inspection. The caseload has relatively low numbers of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, who account for six per cent of the caseload; however, this was similar to the regional average for this demographic.

A range of services were delivered across the PDU. These included services delivered both by Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) and through local commissioning arrangements. The CRS provision included personal wellbeing services delivered by the Growth Company, women's services delivered by Changing Lives, and accommodation services delivered by Shelter, with a sub-contract for Nacro for this PDU area. Key arrangements with other services were in place to support specific cohorts, such as the National Autistic Society, which supports practitioners working with individuals with neurodiverse needs.

Following high levels of staff sickness and strained workloads across the PDU, procedures were put in place to alleviate these pressures. This included setting up a temporary reporting centre, where low-risk cases would report for appointments to duty practitioners. As such, limited interventions were available for these individuals. Since resourcing had reached a more stable position, the PDU was moving to operate at business as usual.

The Probation Reset<sup>3</sup> policy was implemented during the time of this inspection. Five of the 60 cases we inspected were subject to Probation Reset. This meant that those individuals had their supervision suspended for the final third of their supervision period. This change was delivered at pace and implemented from the 01 July 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice. (April 2024). Proven reoffending statistics: July 2021 to June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2024). Offender Management Caseload Statistics as at 31 December 2023.

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

# 1. Organisational arrangements and activity

## P 1.1. Leadership



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

Requires improvement

The PDU met the criteria to enter the prioritisation framework<sup>4</sup> during a challenging period for resourcing and workloads at the end of 2023. However, its leaders decided, in conjunction with regional leaders, not to do so. Instead, they explored and implemented measures to alleviate pressure on workloads. The leadership and the PDU were well placed to make the necessary changes to improve the quality of work across the PDU, but as these had not been fully implemented at the time of the inspection, leadership has been rated 'Requires improvement'.

### Strengths:

- The leadership team had been responsive to unprecedented challenges facing the PDU. This included setting up a temporary reporting centre, where low-risk cases were seen for probation appointments so that priority could be given to higher-risk cases. The PDU had recruited experienced practitioners who had retired; they returned to the service through an agency to deliver key areas of specific work, such as improving the delivery of interventions. A crisis management forum was put in place by the region in early 2024; however, the difficulties in the PDU had peaked by this point. PDU leaders had managed to steer the PDU through a difficult period to a place where there was more stability.
- Leaders across the PDU were well sighted on where improvements needed to be made, and had plans to implement a resource to lead on improving the quality of practice. As caseloads were reducing, there was an expectation that an improved quality of work needed to be delivered. Leaders acknowledged that this would be a shift for some staff, as they had been used to working at crisis levels for some time.
- Leaders did not shy away from difficult decisions. They moved staff and cases across the PDU on a temporary basis and implemented a reporting centre for low-risk cases. Their overall aim was to protect frontline service delivery as much as possible.
- Partnership working was generally strong across the PDU, despite challenges with senior leadership and wider staffing resources. Probation was considered a valued partner in the strategic partnership arrangements across Barnsley, Rotherham and wider South Yorkshire. Leaders were ambitious to grow this further as the PDU entered a more stable period, to ensure that the PDU moved towards a more outward-facing approach.
- Projects supported through the Regional Outcomes and Innovations Fund were well used by the PDU, with specific offers in place to support people on probation locally. One example was the funding to support Target Housing Rotherham, a supported

<sup>4</sup> The framework is designed to assist regions in identifying areas of flexibility in response to concerns about capacity and workload.

accommodation project that provided accommodation across Rotherham borough for up to two years.

- The leadership team took a proactive response to combating high levels of sickness across the PDU. This included weekly sickness meetings and working closely with human resources business partners. PDU leaders regularly escalated issues to regional leaders, to ensure the voice of the PDU was heard and to illustrate the challenges it faced. As a result, the PDU was able to gain additional resource through initiatives such as detached duty staff to assist with workloads.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The strengths in leadership had not yet resulted in better casework, with all four of our standards rated as 'Inadequate'. There were particular concerns with work to keep people safe, and deficits in engagement and desistance.
- The priorities for staff were inconsistently understood, with not enough focus on the core values of probation practice of public protection and reducing reoffending. Leaders needed to communicate more clearly about what had to be prioritised, to ensure that staff sufficiently understood how to carry out their roles effectively. There was no sense of a 'one PDU' culture, with clear variations between the Barnsley and Rotherham offices. Although senior and middle managers had a presence across both sites, staff from other groups, including practitioners, were largely based at either the Barnsley or Rotherham office.
- Engaging people on probation needed further development and remained in its infancy. The PDU had ambitions to grow this piece of work, but it had not been a priority, because of the challenging period that the PDU had been through.



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## P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

As outlined in the leadership section, in the months before the inspection fieldwork, the PDU had suffered significant issues with staff sickness across all grades. This was the first time that the PDU had faced this challenge. The PDU was in a healthier position at the time of the inspection, but the impact was still being felt. This included on the casework, as the case sample was taken from a period when the PDU had very limited staffing. Therefore, the overall rating of 'Requires improvement' reflects the PDU's current position, with a realistic and promising ambition to improve this in the future.

### Strengths:

- Staff of all grades were committed to their roles in supporting people on probation. Additionally, there was a strong sense of teamwork, with staff valuing and supporting their colleagues at both practitioner and middle manager level. Staff recognised that the PDU had been through a difficult period, but that it was now in a more stable and positive position, with morale continuing to improve.
- Regular practice development days (PDD) were well established in the PDU. Each session had a specific focus, which often included contributions from partners such as children's social care. The PDU was developing these further, to ensure that they met staff's learning and development needs.
- Peer Action Learning (PALs) sets were in place, aimed primarily at probation services officers (PSOs). These were regular themed sessions, such as on toolkits, that gave practitioners an opportunity to share effective practice and build confidence. Additionally, PSOs and Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiPs) trainees were paired with more experienced staff, providing mentoring opportunities. Mentoring support was also extended to senior probation officers (SPOs) who were new to managerial roles.
- The PDU benefited from having very experienced members of staff across all grades, including middle managers, practitioners and administrators. Several staff members had been in service for over 30 years, which meant that the PDU could support the high number of newer members of staff in their roles.
- A staff engagement forum was in place and used well across both the Barnsley and Rotherham offices. Staff were open in sharing their views and escalating these to senior leaders when required. Leaders were responsive to this, particularly to feedback about wellbeing. Examples included the creation of a wellbeing room, which provided staff with a private space that was separate from the office environment. Staff wellbeing was a key priority for this PDU, particularly in response to its recent challenges.
- 71 per cent of respondents to our staff survey reported that the PDU actively promoted a culture of learning and continuous improvement. This was positive to see, particularly given the staffing challenges the PDU had faced in recent months.
- Staff in Barnsley and Rotherham fully recognised the value of the regional Embedding Quality and Learning (EQaL) process, where cases were peer audited by teams in different PDUs in the region. Practitioners in the PDU spoke positively about

the process, including when their own cases had been audited. There were examples of staff who had been awarded recognition badges for the quality of their work.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Sickness across the PDU was extremely high. This was most acute at PO grade, where the average number of sick days was 35 per year. The average for all staff was 23 days. A legacy of 'sickness culture' existed across the PDU, and this was a prominent issue at the end of 2023. Although this had improved, the overall staffing picture remained fragile. Climate assessments were planned for later in the year, with an ambition to address the issue further.
- There were not enough senior leaders. The make-up of the PDU, covering two local authorities over a sizeable geographical area, meant that there were extensive partnership commitments. These often fell to middle managers to take on, even though they had very limited capacity and did not always have sufficient seniority to make decisions in the strategic arena. In order to maintain effective strategic oversight, the PDU needed to increase the number of senior leaders.
- There were difficulties with staff retention. Attrition rates for all staff in the PDU were higher than the regional average. High attrition rates were compounding already high workloads. Overall, practitioners' workloads were not manageable. The average workload measurement tool figure was 125 per cent for a PO and 115 per cent for a PSO (excluding PQiPs). The caveat to this, however, was that the caseloads were already falling following the implementation of Probation Reset, a position recognised and appreciated by practitioners.
- The PDU was disadvantaged by gaps in staffing. This was most pronounced at PO grade, with 28 per cent of vacancies being unfilled. The region had placed a temporary freeze on recruitment for PO-grade staff across Yorkshire and the Humber. Therefore, it was unclear how the PDU would be able to reach target staffing in the near future, as only five PQiPs were currently training in the PDU.
- In line with other middle managers nationally, SPOs' workloads were too high. SPOs were responsible for a number of lead areas, including deputising for the head of service in their absence. This made it difficult for them to provide sufficient oversight of cases and address the learning and development needs of staff to improve the quality of casework.
- As a result of workload and staffing pressures, only 33 per cent of cases inspected had the same practitioner for the whole licence or order. This caused instability in the working relationship with the person on probation, which has been reflected in some disappointing scores for engagement.

### P 1.3. Services



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

Requires improvement

An impressive offer of services was available in this PDU. Decision guidance states that for an overall rating of 'Requires improvement', the rating for 2.3 implementation and delivery would usually be 'Requires improvement' or 'Good'. Although 2.3 was rated 'Inadequate', there were strengths in the service delivery, which has led to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'.

#### Strengths:

- The PDU offered an extensive range of services. This included services provided by both the CRS and other externally commissioned providers.
- Integrated Offender Management (IOM) was delivered well across the PDU. Joint working arrangements with the police were a strength, and information was shared effectively between partner agencies. Cases transitioning from Rotherham Youth Justice Service were being managed as IOM nominals, providing additional monitoring and support for this cohort.
- Joint working between the PDU and the MoSoVO team was a strength. Both parties had collaborated closely to improve the quality of work delivered by the partnership. For example, they had delivered joint training events in the past, and had an ambition to develop these further. Future training events were planned for later in 2024, to continue to improve the quality of public protection work, particularly given that the PDU had several members of staff new in post.
- The PDU had taken a proactive approach to increasing the number of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements, in line with the national drive for this. For example, it had done positive work with individuals who were subject to MHTRs, with an assistant psychologist co-located in the Barnsley office for up to four days a week. The success of the MHTRs had increased demand and led to a waiting list of approximately three months. Compared with the wait for NHS talking therapies, this was considered reasonable. In addition to this, the PDU had committed to seeing individuals within 14 days of sentence to provide some tools to ensure they felt supported during the initial period.
- Drug and alcohol services in Barnsley were effective and delivered well. The 'humankind' service was located within the PDU five days a week, and provided a prescribing clinic. There was strong communication between the services and practitioners. In the past 12 months, there had been a 40 per cent increase in the number of Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs) and Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATR), which was evidence of success in working with the court teams. Practitioners worked closely with dependency and recovery and women's services, to ensure that appropriate support was provided to individuals who needed it.
- The PDU was well engaged with the OPD pathway service and recognised the value of the offer this team provided. There were strong relationships between the OPD service, link SPOs and practitioners and, even during periods of staffing challenges,

there was no reduction in activity. This included practitioners using formal consultations, reflective practice and informal drop-in sessions.

- The PDU had resources in place to enable practitioners to access child safeguarding systems in both Barnsley and Rotherham. This meant that practitioners could gather information on child safeguarding quickly and more effectively, which helped them to make more accurate risk assessments.
- The importance and benefits of the co-location of services were evident across the PDU. Although there were variations between the Barnsley and Rotherham offices, services such as accommodation, substance misuse and women's services were all located in the probation offices across the PDU. This meant that probation staff and partner agencies were able to build stronger working relationships to support people on probation.
- An extensive service was available to women on probation from the CRS provider 'Grow' and other commissioned services. This included a weekly women's group in Rotherham, a sexual health clinic, a hepatitis C clinic for testing, and substance misuse support. A female-only unpaid work group had previously been in place in the PDU, and there were plans to restart this, as staffing had improved. Both the Barnsley and Rotherham probation offices had female-only reporting times. This offered a more conducive environment for women to be seen by probation practitioners and other services.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Despite the wide offer of services, inspectors judged that 24 out of 55 cases inspected were not referred to a CRS service and should have been. This was a missed opportunity to adequately support people on probation to desist from further offending and potentially alleviate the pressures of high workloads across the PDU.
- Accredited programme completion rates needed to improve. The rates for successful completion of accredited programme requirements were 33 per cent for those convicted of a sexual offence, and 46 per cent for those convicted of a non-sexual offence. The significant resourcing difficulties that faced the programmes team, along with the impact of national job evaluation, had hampered service delivery. This included occasional lengthy waiting times for programme requirements.
- There had been challenges in delivering the 'We are with you' substance misuse service for DRRs and ATRs in Rotherham. The provider had experienced significant resourcing difficulties, which had affected communication and delivery. Concerns were escalated to the appropriate strategic boards, and new processes had been put in place to improve the service in the future.
- The personal wellbeing CRS service was considered weak. Referral rates were low, as practitioners considered the service to be ineffective. A more flexible approach to working with people on probation was needed to improve support from this service.

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## Feedback from people on probation

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User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 68 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of these, 49 per cent reported being supervised after release from prison and 47 per cent reported that they were subject to a community sentence. Four per cent of the respondents did not specify the order or licence they were subject to. Female respondents were underrepresented, with only six per cent of respondents identifying as female, compared with 11 per cent of the caseload.

### Strengths:

- People on probation overwhelmingly felt safe accessing probation services (93 per cent), with 81 per cent of respondents reporting that travel distances to appointments were reasonable. This was positive considering the large geographical size of the PDU.
- Over three-quarters of respondents reported an overall positive relationship with their probation practitioner. This was positive, particularly given that the PDU has had to change supervising officers on a regular basis.

*“All of my probation workers have been very good to me, and I had no issues. I have a new one now and she is very good. She has offered me lots of help and they are definitely not what people tell you in prison.”*

### Areas for improvement:

- People on probation did not always consider that their supervision was helpful in supporting their rehabilitation, with a quarter of respondents viewing this negatively. This raised questions about the value of certain appointments between people on probation and practitioners, particularly in reporting centres. However, it also indicates that workloads are high, which limits the time practitioners can spend with individuals.
- The PDU’s resourcing issues were being felt by some people on probation. This was particularly relevant for those who had had numerous changes in officer, and who were, on occasions, finding that their supervision was of limited value.

*“I don’t get anything out of my appointments as I have a basic sentence plan And in 12 months, I have never seen the same probation worker twice.”*

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## Diversity and inclusion

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### Strengths:

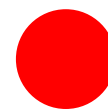
- The PDU had relevant data to understand the profile of staff and people on probation. Nine per cent of the workforce identified as being from a minority ethnic background, compared with six per cent of the caseload. Therefore, in terms of ethnicity, the workforce was fully representative of this demographic. This was particularly important, as the demographic had a higher representation in Rotherham, where nine per cent of the local population were from a minority ethnic background.
- The neurodiversity service offer, delivered by the National Autistic Society, was well used in the PDU and had one of the highest referral rates in the region. The service worked jointly with practitioners to support people on probation who had a neurodiverse condition. It also provided training to upskill staff working with individuals who may have a diagnosed or undiagnosed need.
- Despite significant staffing challenges, a seconded probation officer was in place in Rotherham Youth Justice Service (YJS). The PDU also had a specific practitioner who managed the transition cases once they had transferred over from the YJS. This highlighted the PDU's recognition of the importance of transition work for young adults.
- The PDU took a proactive approach to celebrating cultural events such as International Women's Day and Black History Month, and held team events to mark these occasions. It had extended this further, with services such as Apna Haq, a support service for women and girls from an ethnic minority, coming to a PDD to raise awareness of the support it provided for individuals in the area.

### Areas for improvement:

- Tracking of specific cohorts and demographics could be developed. This included those transitioning from the YJS to probation, where there was limited information on the outcomes of individuals once supervised by probation.
- In 60 per cent of the cases inspected, the assessment did not analyse the individual's protected characteristics or consider their impact on the individual's ability to comply and engage with service delivery. The PDU needed to improve this area, to increase engagement with people on probation, an area where deficits were identified in the casework.
- Women on probation were too often seen for appointments in probation offices. This was a missed opportunity for women to be seen in women's centres in a more holistic environment. Support services were delivered from women's centres, and provision for women would be strengthened by moving probation appointments to women's centres as well.
- The PDU was not using the offer to support veterans. Across the region, high numbers of veterans had been through the criminal justice system. The Project Nova service was able to provide a wide range of support for these individuals, but it was receiving limited referrals and communication from the PDU. This was a missed opportunity to support this cohort of individuals.

## 2. Service delivery

### P 2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

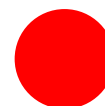
Our rating<sup>5</sup> for assessment is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	43%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	62%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	25%

- The area of assessment where there were the most strengths was desistance. Practitioners were routinely identifying and analysing the factors related to the person on probation's offending. Identifying these factors was key in enabling practitioners to target appropriate support for individuals to reduce the risk of further offending.
- There was insufficient use of information on domestic abuse and safeguarding. Although this information was often requested, it was received on too few occasions and not used often enough to sufficiently inform risk assessments. In 31 out of 52 cases inspected, there was insufficient information on child safeguarding and, on occasions, critical information on children's involvement with social care was not explored or used to fully identify and address the risks posed.
- Improvements were needed to ensure assessments drew sufficiently on information from available sources. Practitioners needed to consider further the individual's past behaviour and/or the use of information from other agencies. This was judged to be sufficiently completed in only a third of cases, and weaker in cases managed by PSOs and PQiPs.
- Practitioners had sufficiently analysed the risk of harm posed by individuals in too few of the cases inspected. This was sufficient in only 22 out of 59 relevant cases. Without a robust assessment and sufficient understanding of risk, it is challenging to identify what practitioners were to target their delivery on throughout the period of supervision.

<sup>5</sup> 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 are available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

## P 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

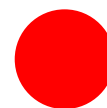
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?</b>	58%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	42%

- Although there were still deficits in its delivery, desistance was the strongest area of planning. As inspectors had seen in assessment, planning sufficiently reflected and prioritised the offending-related factors that were most critical. This included a focus on key areas such as substance misuse and emotional wellbeing.
- The weakest area of planning was engagement. Practitioners were not involving the person on probation meaningfully in the planning for their order or licence. This was judged sufficient less than a third of cases. The impact of staff sickness in the PDU is likely to have affected engagement, but this was a missed opportunity to gather the views and motivations of people on probation.
- Not enough cases set out the necessary constructive and restrictive interventions to manage risk of harm. This was judged sufficient in just over half of relevant cases. Restrictive measures such as restraining orders were either absent or they were not being used efficiently in safety planning. This also meant that practitioners missed a vital opportunity to plan adequately for the safety of others.
- Too few cases had sufficiently robust contingency plans. Plans were often too generic and did not fully reference the valuable input from other agencies involved in managing risk. Because they did not use this information sufficiently, practitioners would have found it challenging to mitigate fully the potential risk posed by individuals.

<sup>6</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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)



## P 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

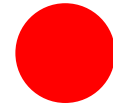
Our rating<sup>7</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?</b>	48%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?</b>	37%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>25%</b>

- In all three aspects of implementation and delivery, the number of cases assessed as sufficient was below 50 per cent. However, the quality of work was significantly better in licence cases than in community orders. This was most pronounced in engagement, where in 81 per cent of licence cases the practitioner had focused sufficiently on engaging individuals in the post-custody period, compared with 31 per cent for those subject to community orders. This demonstrated a strong approach in the PDU to building an effective working relationship with those being released on licence.
- Improvements in the level of contact with people on probation were needed to support desistance and reduce reoffending. The PDU's resourcing challenges, and implementation of a reporting centre, had reduced the levels of contact. Now that this issue was more stable, the PDU had an opportunity to ensure people on probation were seen at an appropriate frequency for their risk level to minimise the risk of further offending.
- The work undertaken to protect actual or potential victims needed to improve. This was judged sufficient in only 16 out of 56 relevant cases. In some cases, domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns were evident, but there had been limited monitoring of developing or existing relationships to keep people safe.
- The involvement of other agencies to manage and minimise risk of harm was poorly coordinated and judged as sufficient in just 15 out of 54 cases. This was a missed opportunity for key services to have the relevant input to keep people safe

<sup>7</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. [Full data and further information about inspection methodology is available in the data workbook for this inspection on our website.](#)

## P 2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for reviewing is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?</b>	50%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?</b>	40%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>30%</b>

- Improvements were needed across all elements of reviewing, but there were more strengths in the work delivered around engagement, particularly in relation to licence cases. Inspectors judged that in 71 per cent of licence cases, reviewing sufficiently focused on supporting the compliance and engagement of individuals subject to licence. This included engaging with individuals promptly when they were subject to early release and when there had been a change in practitioner. This improved the working relationship and increased the possibility of desistance in the future.
- Reviewing was not sufficiently informed by input from other agencies. In relation to desistance, this was insufficient in 28 out of 52 relevant cases. The picture was similar with regard to keeping people safe; this area was judged as sufficient in only 24 out of 60 cases. It is crucial that practitioners receive input from other agencies, so that they can review current and pertinent information from different sources, and ensure that reviews are accurate.
- When reviewing risk of harm, practitioners were not involving people on probation and key people in their lives often enough. This was a missed opportunity to improve engagement and gather up-to-date information for reviewing.
- The quality of formal reviews was variable, and again more reviews for licence cases were judged sufficient compared with community cases. However, the overall quality needed to improve. Crucial information was too often missing: in 40 out of 52 cases, practitioners had failed to fully identify and address factors related to risk of harm.

<sup>8</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.

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## **Outcomes**

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### **Strengths:**

- Of the cases inspected, 38 out of 60 had not been charged or convicted of any new offences during the period that their licence or order was inspected. This was evidence of the positive contribution practitioners had made in difficult circumstances, with a desistance-focused approach to managing people on probation.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Not enough of the inspected cases had sufficient work completed to address the factors related to the risk of harm that individuals posed. This was judged sufficient in just 11 out of 60 cases. This was linked to the overall theme that delivery of work to reduce risk of harm needed to improve across the PDU.
- Despite it being relatively early in some individuals' order or licence, improvements were needed in regard to compliance. This was judged sufficient in just half of cases.

## Annexe one – Web links

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Full data from this inspection and further information about the methodology used to conduct this inspection is available [on our website](#).

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