



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

Doncaster

The Probation Service – Yorkshire and the Humber region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2024

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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.

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Foreword

This is the second Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) inspection of the 11 PDUs in the Yorkshire and the Humber probation region. In the Doncaster PDU we found a strong teamwork culture and commitment to improving the quality of service delivery. However, while we saw some examples of effective practice in the case sample we inspected, this was not yet being consistently demonstrated across all areas of casework, resulting in an overall rating of 'Inadequate' for the PDU. Reassuringly, staff and leaders understood where the PDU's work needed to improve and there were clear plans in place to make these improvements.

Staff shortages at probation officer (PO) grade in particular, plus an increase in caseload numbers, had created significant workload pressures for staff at all grades. This was compounded by competing priorities and a lack of experience in the middle management team, which affected the quality and efficacy of management oversight. PDU leaders needed to focus on ensuring that quality assurance and staff training were effective.

The PDU was well regarded by strategic partners for its collaborative approach to partnership working at both a strategic and operational level. Services were co-located, which made them more accessible to people on probation, and provided opportunities to enhance information-sharing. However, it was disappointing that practitioners did not consistently use this vital intelligence from agencies such as the police and social care to inform assessments, plans and service delivery.

Additionally, although some cohesive and effective service provision was available in Doncaster, Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) and in-house interventions were not consistently meeting the needs of people on probation. This resulted in insufficient delivery of services to reduce risk of harm and support desistance.

People on probation valued the relationship with their probation practitioner and the support for their rehabilitation. However, the PDU had not prioritised some important aspects of service delivery, such as engaging people on probation to inform service delivery and supporting minority groups across the area. This was because of pressure on resources. Further focus on these vital aspects of provision was necessary.

Undoubtedly staff and leaders in the PDU will be disappointed with our findings. However, we hope that they will continue on their journey to achieving their vision of delivering high-quality practice in partnership with community agencies to reduce reoffending and protect their community from harm.



Martin Jones CBE

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

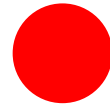
Doncaster PDU

Fieldwork started June 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

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.

Doncaster PDU should:

1. analyse information on domestic abuse and child safeguarding sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment and management of people on probation
2. improve the use of interventions and services available for people on probation to support desistance and manage the risk of harm
3. fully take into account the views of people on probation to inform service development
4. provide all staff with the necessary training to undertake their roles
5. ensure middle managers have enough capacity to provide the appropriate level of oversight according to the needs of staff members and level of casework in the team
6. 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

We conducted fieldwork in Doncaster over a period of two weeks, beginning on 08 July 2024. We inspected 25 community orders and 16 releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences had commenced during two separate weeks, between 11 December and 17 December 2023 and 18 December and 24 December 2023. We also conducted 37 interviews with probation practitioners.

The PDU is served by the South Yorkshire Police Force and the local authority is Doncaster City Council. The magistrates' court in Doncaster was closed, because of the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, and is not expected to re-open for another two years. Court team staff have been temporarily relocated to Doncaster Crown Court, and all cases are now being heard in Sheffield Magistrates' Court. There is one approved premises in the PDU and four prisons: HM Prison (HMP) Doncaster, HMP Lindholme, HMP Moorland and HMP Hatfield.

Doncaster covers 219 square miles and has a population of 308,000. There is limited ethnic diversity in the area, with 93 per cent of residents identifying as white British. There is a mixed picture in terms of the socio-economic status of residents, with pockets of low-income deprivation and associated poor health outcomes, and lower life expectancy than the national average. People on probation report a high level of need in relation to mental health, and neurodiversity and emotional wellbeing have been identified as offending-related needs for 62 per cent of the PDU's caseload.

Doncaster PDU manages a caseload of approximately 1,500 people on probation and in prison. Thirty-eight per cent of the PDU's caseload is assessed as posing a high or very high risk of serious harm, compared with a regional average of 32 per cent. Doncaster has a particularly high prevalence of burglary offences, as well as a significant amount of domestic abuse.

In terms of CRS providers, Shelter is the regional accommodation provider for Yorkshire and the Humber. Doncaster PDU also has access to Community Accommodation Services (CAS3) temporary accommodation for people leaving custody; however, neither of these solutions meets the current demand in Doncaster.

Finance, benefit and debt and personal wellbeing services are provided by The Growth Company and dependency and recovery services are provided by Change, Grow, Live. Women's services are provided by Changing Lives, and the Doncaster probation women's team is now co-located in Changing Lives' premises.

Since the end of the education, training and employment (ETE) CRS provider's contract term on 31 March 2024, the PDU has been working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Creating Future Opportunities to ensure that pathways remain in place to meet the ETE needs of people on probation. A DWP adviser is now co-located in the PDU to support this. Police colleagues involved in the PDU's Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme are also co-located at the Doncaster probation office, along with victim liaison officers.

The Probation Reset¹ policy was implemented during the time of this inspection. Twelve of the 41 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 01 July 2024.

¹ 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

In this inspection, all four domain two standards were rated 'Inadequate'. However, we identified a number of areas of effective leadership that were enabling the PDU to make progress. This has supported a rating for leadership of 'Requires improvement'.

Strengths:

- The leadership team had a clear vision and strategy for promoting high-quality service delivery in the PDU. They had translated this into a local delivery plan and shared it with staff. The plan was based on a 'back to basics' methodology, which prioritised meaningful engagement with people on probation from the start of their sentence to create a strong foundation on which to effectively manage their risk of harm and support their desistance.
- The PDU head was viewed as approachable and responsive, and prioritised trust, communication and building relationships with staff to promote inclusion and engagement and to build staff resilience. Inspectors saw evidence of a very strong team identity and teamwork culture in the PDU. Staff and managers highly valued their relationships with colleagues and managers and the support they received from them.
- The PDU head used data segmentation to analyse the cohort of people on probation in Doncaster and understand their offending profile. This helped to inform strategic planning.
- Despite experiencing significant workload pressures, staff were motivated to deliver high-quality services. They were confident in voicing their views, and the PDU provided a variety of methods for them to provide feedback and share ideas. This included a newly formed cross-grade working group, which had been tasked with reviewing systems and processes and making recommendations to improve them.
- The leadership team prioritised staff wellbeing and inclusion, as evidenced through discussions in supervision, staff away-days, and activities such as breakfast clubs and celebration lunches funded through the reward and recognition scheme.
- Regional and local governance arrangements were effective in holding the PDU head to account for delivering against regional priorities and providing oversight of the PDU's progress in carrying out its delivery and quality improvement plans.
- The leadership team had put appropriate mitigations and controls in place to deal with identified risks to service delivery. In May 2024, the PDU entered amber on the prioritisation framework. It introduced a reporting centre for lower-priority cases so that staff could focus on the cases of greatest concern. The early adoption of Probation Reset subsequently enabled staff to carry more manageable workloads.
- Relationships with partner organisations were strong, although this was not consistently reflected in our casework. Probation was represented across all key partnership and safeguarding boards and subgroups, and leaders participated meaningfully in

multi-agency forums and reviews. The service supported joint training initiatives and co-located staff in the Doncaster Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to facilitate joint working and information-sharing. Strategic partners said that they had positive and collaborative relationships with the PDU. They valued its active contribution to community safety and to safeguarding adult and child victims of domestic abuse.

- There was joint learning with partner agencies to inform practice development. For example, the Serial Domestic Abuse Perpetrators meeting (a subgroup of the Doncaster Domestic Abuse Partnership) was established as a joint initiative with the police, in response to learning from serious case reviews.

Areas for improvement:

- Although we saw some examples of effective practice, casework was assessed as 'Inadequate' overall across all four standards.
- There were cogent plans to improve the PDU, including developing partnership work further, continuing to reduce practitioners' workloads, and improving risk assessment and risk management, but these had yet to come to fruition.
- Leaders used a range of communication methods to inform and engage staff and to share learning, including a weekly bulletin that summarised key information. However, staff felt the effectiveness of communication from leaders was inconsistent, and administrative staff in particular struggled to keep abreast of changes. This was in part due to the speed of change and workload pressures, but case administrators also felt that the leadership team did not sufficiently consider the impact on their roles when introducing new or amended processes.
- Staff found that some processes designed to promote their safety and wellbeing were implemented inconsistently and consequently were ineffective.
- Given the number of competing demands on the PDU, leaders had decided to defer delivery of the PDU's engaging people on probation (EPOP) strategy. This was because the PDU did not have enough resources to convene EPOP forums where people on probation could share their feedback and ideas for improving service delivery.

P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

Due to a combination of PO vacancies and an increasing PDU caseload, workloads had become unmanageable earlier in 2024. However, at the point of our inspection they had reduced to more manageable levels. The rating of 'Requires improvement' reflects this improving picture, as well as the resilience and motivation of staff and managers to deliver high-quality services.

Strengths:

- The leadership team prioritised workforce planning, and the PDU head was proactive in implementing solutions to resolve resourcing issues. One example was a rolling campaign of recruitment for probation services officers (PSOs), to take account of the rate at which PSOs were leaving for professional development through the Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) programme.
- Managers had carried out a workload audit to combat the impact of workload pressures across the PDU on case administrators. They categorised administrative tasks in terms of complexity and distributed them more evenly across the administration teams. Training was provided to ensure all administration staff were competent in the tasks they were allocated.
- Management oversight of case allocations was effective, and 97 per cent of the practitioners interviewed during the course of our case assessments felt they had the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to supervise the inspected cases.
- Practitioners and managers valued the advice and support offered through regular practice surgeries. This was provided by co-located quality development officers (QDOs) from the regional performance and quality team.
- Improvements had been made to the induction process for PSOs and case administrators in response to feedback from exit interviews. These included allocating mentoring support to new PSOs from practice tutor assessors and QDOs.
- The majority of senior probation officers (SPOs) had less than three years' experience in the role. SPO development was positive and had been promoted through a range of training and development opportunities, including the First Line Management Programme, Leadership and Management Apprenticeship and Skills for Effective Engagement and Development in Supervision (SEEDS). The PDU had also piloted a management development programme called the Leadership Journey, which SPOs found useful.

Areas for improvement:

- Practitioners' workloads had reduced in the workload measurement tool (WMT) as a consequence of Probation Reset. But POs' workloads remained too high, at an average of 134 per cent on the WMT. This was a reduction from the average of 169 per cent in April 2024.

- Although staffing levels had improved across all other grades, there remained a number of vacancies for POs (7.8 full-time equivalent). Forecasting indicated that the PDU was unlikely to fill these vacancies until 2026.
- There were challenges for SPOs in managing a largely inexperienced staff group while also carrying a portfolio of lead responsibilities. A series of national initiatives, including those relating to fixed-term recalls, planned early prison releases and the implementation of Probation Reset, had created significant additional pressure. An administrator was appointed to provide support locally, in addition to the support offered by the regional management hub. But the desired effect of these measures had not yet been realised.
- Due to workload pressures, managers were not sufficiently visible and accessible. While the frequency of supervision was generally in line with the policy, staff had varied experiences in relation to its quality and whether it was effective in developing and improving their practice. Only 20 per cent of the cases we inspected were assessed as having sufficient management oversight.
- Performance targets were prioritised at the cost of quality. For example, inspectors found that some OASys assessments had been countersigned despite requiring additional work.
- Regionally commissioned training was delivered to complement mandatory e-learning, but practitioners felt the quality and depth of the training delivered were insufficient. They also felt that development time was not protected well enough to enable them to prioritise attending training sessions over managing their workload.
- The PDU head necessarily concentrated on critical business priorities, including staffing, workload, and quality improvements. But this made it difficult to focus on external stakeholder engagement and pursue opportunities for co-commissioning of services. This raised questions about whether there was sufficient senior leadership resource in the PDU.

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

Overall, there was a reasonable range of services and local partnership initiatives for people on probation. However, the quality and effectiveness of some of this provision were too variable. This led to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement' for services in Doncaster PDU.

Strengths:

- In response to the prevalence of domestic abuse among the people managed by the PDU, the IOM scheme appropriately targeted resources on the most prolific perpetrators. This aimed to reduce the disproportionate impact of this offending behaviour on local services and protect the most vulnerable victims.
- Given the significant volume of burglary offences in Doncaster, the IOM scheme widened its referral criteria for people committing serious acquisitive crime to maximise the impact of the multi-agency response to this community priority.
- Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) were reviewed and streamlined by the MAPPA coordinator and police co-chair, who scrutinised referrals to ensure cases were managed at the most appropriate level. MAPPA meetings were well attended by partner agencies and care was taken to ensure the victims' voices were heard.
- There was positive joint working between the IOM scheme partners. They made effective use of departure lounges in prisons locally to engage with people on probation from the point of release and help them to comply with their sentence. The weekly IOM multi-agency case conference was well attended by partners and enabled them to share information quickly and plan proactively to reduce individuals' risk of reoffending.
- Service provision for women on probation in Doncaster was impressive. Women were offered the opportunity to work with a female probation practitioner, and the women's concentrator probation practitioners were co-located at the CRS provider's premises, which helped women to engage and comply with their sentence. Women on probation could access a wide range of support and activities at the Changing Lives women's centre, as well as specialist services, including outreach support for women involved in sex working and at risk of sexual exploitation. Changing Lives support was also available through outreach, prison in-reach, home visits, and at the Complex Lives hub, which provided a creche to make it easier for parents to attend appointments.
- Probation was a critical partner in the establishment of the Doncaster Complex Lives Alliance. This provided a comprehensive range of services (including accommodation advocacy) in accessible locations to meet the diverse needs of the most vulnerable and hard to reach people on probation.
- A DWP outreach worker was co-located at the Doncaster probation office to provide advice on benefits and employment advocacy.

- There were a high number of referrals to the personal wellbeing CRS provision. This was delivered by a co-located practitioner from the Growth Company, who had established links with a local football club to provide a programme promoting healthy living and social inclusion. The service also provided free cooked meals, SIM cards and gym passes. Emotional wellbeing was the area of greatest need identified in referrals and, in addition to providing one-to-one counselling, the CRS practitioner referred people on probation to Doncaster MIND.
- The Regional Outcomes and Innovation Fund was used effectively to commission a range of services. These included the National Autistic Society providing advice and guidance for probation practitioners and direct support to neurodiverse people on probation; Circles of Support for people who had committed sexual offences; a restorative justice intervention; and finance, benefit and debt advice in the community from Citizens Advice.
- The PDU had established links with the Forensic Outreach Liaison Service, whose specialist support for people with a learning disability and/or autism spectrum disorder contributed to their improved engagement, compliance and positive outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- Some of the CRS provision for men on probation was insufficient in terms of both quality and timeliness of delivery. As a result, probation practitioners made fewer referrals to these services.
- There were gaps in the provision of accredited programmes and significant delays in participants beginning the domestic abuse perpetrator programme, Building Better Relationships. This was a concern, given the high rate of domestic abuse in Doncaster.
- There were delays in installing alcohol monitoring tags for those with an Alcohol Abstinence Monitoring Requirement (AAMR), and breaches were not notified to practitioners quickly enough.
- Referrals for accommodation advocacy were time-consuming and the range of provision was insufficient to meet the needs of the PDU's caseload.
- There remained a high level of unmet need for mental health treatment and intervention, particularly where there was a dual diagnosis. The growing waiting list for the primary care Mental Health Treatment Requirement caused delays in people beginning the intervention, which meant it was less effective.
- Despite consistent feedback from staff, managers and partners that there was good collaboration with partner agencies to address both desistance and risk, we found shortfalls in the inspected cases.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, surveyed 65 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of these, 40 per cent reported that they were subject to a community sentence and 43 per cent were being supervised after being released from prison. Seventeen per cent of respondents did not specify their sentence type.

- The majority of respondents (86 per cent) understood what was expected of them on probation.

“My probation worker set clear and achievable targets and explained everything to me.”

“My probation officer is very straight down the line in what is expected of me and very helpful towards me.”

- Ninety-four per cent of people surveyed (61 out of 65) received an induction to their sentence and 50 said that their probation practitioner took the time to understand their personal needs during their induction.

“I feel there is a good understanding from my probation officer and they are easy to talk to.”

“No judgement, allowing me to feel human and helping me get any help I require.”

- However, only 34 respondents had been involved in creating their sentence plan.

“I was given a clear plan that I was involved in the process of creating.”

“My sentence plan was created prior to my release and I had very little impact in it.”

- Eighty-two per cent of respondents felt they had been treated fairly by probation staff and 75 per cent said they had a good relationship with their probation practitioner.

“We connect well together and I feel I can openly talk to them.”

“Prepared to take the time and listens, (properly).”

- Seventy-four per cent of respondents felt that probation had supported them well with their rehabilitation.

“After five years trying to access help for my mental health. I appreciate the offer of so many services.”

“I have been supported very well and I'm glad I have learned a lot.”

“My offence was heavily based on my alcohol addiction at the time and my probation worker went above and beyond to ensure that I received the absolute best path forward. My life is changed for the better because of the services of the probation system.”

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

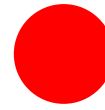
- Probation and partnership services were delivered at a range of accessible locations to help people attend appointments and engage with their sentence. Services included outreach and prison in-reach work, prison departure lounges and multi-agency hubs.
- There was a collaborative working relationship between probation and a range of specialist women's services providers at the Changing Lives women's centre. This supported a trauma-informed and genuinely holistic approach to working with women on probation.
- The Complex Lives Alliance of statutory and voluntary agencies worked creatively to support people with the most complex needs. This provision was highly valued by probation and partner agencies.
- The PDU engaged with specialist services such as the National Autistic Society and the Forensic Outreach Liaison Service to improve work with people on the autism spectrum and those with learning disabilities.
- The PDU had established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee. This was created to help the PDU deliver the EDI objectives in its delivery plan and to complete equality impact assessments. The committee organised activities to celebrate diversity and promote awareness and inclusion.
- The PDU head created one-to-one meeting slots for staff with protected characteristics who might find other feedback methods inaccessible.
- Managers made reasonable adjustments to accommodate staff's diversity needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Due to competing strategic priorities, the PDU had not yet implemented the young adult framework to inform work with people on probation aged 18 to 25.
- Doncaster had a significant Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, and frontline staff required more information and guidance about how to work effectively with them.
- While the PDU leadership team understood the priority cohorts based on offence type, they had not sufficiently analysed the outcomes of work with minority groups.

2. Service delivery

P 2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

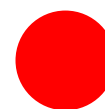
Our rating² for assessment is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	59%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	78%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	37%

- In response to feedback from practitioners and people on probation the PDU implemented its Start Right initiative in September 2023, to improve the quality of early engagement and initial assessments. Positively, we found in our case sample that more than three-quarters (78 per cent) of people on probation had been meaningfully engaged in their assessment.
- Unfortunately, we saw inconsistent analysis of the information being collected by probation practitioners. Sixty-three per cent of assessments considered how individuals' personal circumstances affected their ability to comply and engage with services, but only 49 per cent considered potential barriers relating to individuals' protected characteristics.
- Assessment consistently focused on the factors linked to offending and desistance. Practitioners accurately identified individuals' offending-related factors in 85 per cent of cases and strengths and protective factors featured in 83 per cent of assessments.
- Practitioners did not always ask for information from the police and social care where this was needed and only 46 per cent of risk assessments drew on all available sources of information. In some cases, this led to practitioners underestimating the risk of serious harm, in our view. Practitioners did not consistently use intelligence on domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns to inform assessments, including in five of the eight inspected cases where a curfew was imposed, which was particularly concerning.

² 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 on our website.](#)

P 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

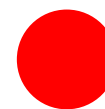
Our rating³ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	41%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	68%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	59%

- Despite the positive levels of engagement that we saw in assessment, in too many cases engagement with planning was insufficient. People on probation had been meaningfully involved in creating plans to manage their risk of reoffending and harm in only just over half (51 per cent) of cases.
- Similarly to our findings in assessment, there was inconsistent evidence that practitioners sufficiently considered individuals' protected characteristics and personal circumstances and the adjustments needed to ensure all people on probation were given equitable access to services and interventions.
- Sixty-eight per cent of plans demonstrated practitioners' understanding of individuals' offending-related factors, and 73 per cent identified strengths and protective factors that could be developed to support desistance.
- However, the quality of planning to manage risk of harm was inconsistent. We saw some comprehensive risk management plans that included interventions and safety measures to address key risk factors, supported by appropriate multi-agency working, monitoring and contingency planning. However, in 17 out of 39 relevant cases, the plan did not sufficiently address all known risk of harm factors and prioritise the ones that were most critical. This included identified risks to the public, staff, partners and children.

³ 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

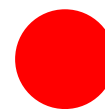
Our rating⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	49%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	41%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	27%

- The PDU's focus on promoting positive engagement was evident in sentence delivery. In 88 per cent of cases, practitioners worked flexibly with people on probation to take account of their personal circumstances. However, this was not balanced with an appropriately robust response when individuals' compliance fell below what was expected, and enforcement action was only taken in 10 of the 25 cases where it was needed.
- Requirements started promptly in fewer than half (49 per cent) of the cases in our sample and the level and nature of contact with people on probation was insufficient to support desistance or manage their risk of harm. Home visits were only carried out in 17 out of 37 cases where they were needed.
- In too many cases, the delivery of services didn't sufficiently build on the strengths and protective factors that were identified in individuals' assessments. The involvement of other organisations in delivery of services wasn't coordinated well enough in 18 out of 31 relevant cases.
- There was a high prevalence of domestic abuse in Doncaster and family and relationships were linked to risk of harm in 34 (83 per cent) of the inspected cases. Worryingly, we only saw sufficient service delivery to address these issues in seven of these cases. This was compounded by a lack of effective multi-agency working and information-sharing to keep adult and child victims safe.

⁴ 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 rating⁵ 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'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the compliance and engagement of the person on probation?	44%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	44%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	44%

- The level of engagement we saw in the early stages of sentences was not sustained during reviews. People on probation were only meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement in 44 per cent of the cases we inspected.
- Probation practitioners were not consistently responsive to changes in personal circumstances that could increase the risk of reoffending and harm, such as a deterioration in mental health or increase in substance misuse. In 22 out of 30 relevant cases, reviews did not identify and address changes in factors linked to offending behaviour. In 21 out of 28 relevant cases reviews did not identify and address changes in factors related to risk of harm.
- Probation practitioners believed they had effective working relationships with external agencies to manage risk of harm and support desistance in the majority of cases we inspected. However, reviews were not sufficiently informed by intelligence from other agencies that were working with the person on probation and/or involved in managing their risk of harm. This meant opportunities to obtain critical information about risk of reoffending and harm may have been missed.

⁵ 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.

Outcomes

Strengths:

- In the cases we inspected, we found there had been sufficient improvements in factors most closely linked to offending in a small number of cases (nine) between the beginning of the supervision period and the time of our inspection.
- During this period, there was a small increase in the number of people in settled independent accommodation (five).
- We also found there had been a very small increase in the number of people on probation (three) who had secured full or part-time employment.

Areas for improvement:

- People on probation only demonstrated full compliance with the requirements of their sentence in 34 per cent of inspected cases.
- Of the people on probation in this cohort, eight (20 per cent) had been charged with or convicted of a new offence.
- There was only a reduction in factors most closely linked to risk of harm to others in seven out of 39 relevant cases. This was disappointing, but corresponded with our findings that work to protect others from harm needed to improve in the implementation and delivery of sentences.

Annexe one – Web links

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)