



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

**Essex South PDU**

The Probation Service – East of England region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2024

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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

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This was the first inspection of Essex South Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) since it was established after the unification of probation services in 2021. Encouragingly, there were numerous positive aspects to this PDU, with strong strategic partnerships and impressive leadership, but the quality of work delivered to manage people on probation was insufficient in three out of four of our standards of casework. Overall, we have rated this PDU as 'Requires improvement'.

Staffing has been a long-standing challenge for this PDU. A proactive and locally targeted recruitment approach was in place with positive outcomes beginning to be achieved, but significant gaps in staffing remained. This was most pertinent at Probation Officer (PO) grade with only 45 per cent of POs in place, which was understandably hampering the PDU's ability to be able to deliver quality casework.

Improvements were needed in the quality of work to assess and manage the risks that people on probation pose in the community. This was particularly weak in implementation and delivery, where only 23 per cent of cases we inspected were judged sufficient to effectively support the safety of other people. The PDU did however, perform much better in relation into effectively supporting people to desist from offending, with 85 per cent of cases inspected judged sufficient in planning.

Although the results in casework were disappointing, we found the leadership of the PDU to be innovative, outward facing and undeterred by resourcing challenges to deliver an effective service within the resources provided. Partnership arrangements were strong, with probation recognised as a key partner across agencies. The value of partnership working was embedded across all grades of staff in the PDU and should be regarded as a positive achievement. The leadership were responsive to the needs of the PDU which was illustrated through the implementation of an additional business manager to post, funded by vacant posts, in order to support workloads of middle managers and focus on improving areas of the PDU's delivery.

Services were an area of real strength. The offer was extensive with the theme of innovation clear, an example being a successful, well-established counselling service for people on probation. The offer for women in the PDU was particularly impressive, despite challenges with the commissioned rehabilitative services' (CRS) women's service provider. The multi-agency forum to discuss complex female cases supported the development of effective relationships with local agencies to enhance the offer for women. The PDU demonstrated the significant benefits of a localised approach in its delivery to support people on probation.

Overall, Essex South PDU has much to be proud of. Given the long history of recruitment difficulty in this PDU, we consider that the current recruitment model operated nationally by the Probation Service is unlikely to be able to address the long-standing issues this PDU was facing with resourcing, and a more localised incentive-based approach may be required. This PDU has made a number of achievements, with an overall stoic culture across all grades. If improvements to staffing can be addressed and there is a focus on the quality of casework, the PDU can continue to progress on a very positive trajectory.



**Martin Jones**

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

# Ratings

## Essex South PDU

Fieldwork started: 29 April 2024

Score **5/21**

**Overall rating**

**Requires improvement**



### 1. Organisational arrangements and activity

P 1.1 Leadership

Good



P 1.2 Staffing

Requires improvement



P 1.3 Services

Requires improvement



### 2. Service delivery

P 2.1 Assessment

Inadequate



P 2.2 Planning

Requires improvement



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.

### **Essex South PDU should:**

1. improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage and review risk of harm
2. ensure a targeted approach to upskilling and training Probation Services Officers (PSOs) is in place to enable them to deliver effective case management of people on probation
3. implement consistent safeguarding information-sharing arrangements with all local authorities in the PDU's area
4. ensure domestic abuse and child safeguarding information is analysed sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment and management of people on probation
5. consider adding an additional deputy head of service resource to assist the workloads of the senior leadership team and provide the required oversight to improve quality in the PDU.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Essex South PDU over a period of two weeks, beginning 29 April 2024. We inspected 33 community orders and 15 releases from custody on licence where sentences and licences had commenced during two separate weeks, 11 September 2023 to 17 September 2023 and 25 September 2023 to 01 October 2023. We also conducted 43 interviews with probation practitioners.

Essex South is one of eight PDUs in the East of England region. The PDU delivers probation work across two main probation offices with one in Laindon and another in Southend-on-Sea. In addition to this, there is a reporting centre in the Thurrock area of the PDU. The PDU services both magistrates' courts and Crown Courts in Basildon and Southend-on-Sea. There are no prisons within Essex South PDU's area and there is one approved premises (Felmores).

The PDU covers a large area in the county of Essex, including larger towns such as Basildon and the city of Southend-on-Sea, as well as more rural areas. The local authority arrangements are complex, with two unitary local authorities – Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock – along with Essex County Council. This can present resourcing challenges due to duplication of partnership arrangements required at both strategic and operational level as well as shared arrangements with the neighbouring PDU, Essex North. Essex Police services the whole of the PDU's area. In terms of reoffending, Southend-on-Sea has the second highest rate in the region at 28.3 per cent<sup>1</sup>.

The total caseload for the East of England region is 23,994<sup>2</sup>, with this PDU's caseload accounting for 2,499 of the entire region's caseload at the time of the inspection. The caseload has relatively low numbers of people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, which account for 6.8 per cent of the caseload.

A range of services were delivered across the PDU, which included those delivered by CRS and others through local commissioning arrangements. The CRS offer included personal wellbeing services delivered by Forward Trust, women's services delivered by Advance and accommodation delivered by Interventions Alliance. Key arrangements with other services were in place to support specific cohorts, such as 'Aspirations' which supported women in the Southend-on-Sea area.

High workloads and proximity to London PDUs (where a geographical allowance is paid) has meant that recruitment and retention is a significant challenge for this PDU. As a result of resourcing issues, the PDU were operating under 'red' status under the Prioritisation Framework<sup>3</sup> (PF). Whilst rated as 'red', PDUs continue to operate to national standards but are allowed to make concessions such as reduced face-to-face appointments and prioritisation of cases assessed as high or very high risk of serious harm.

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

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

<sup>3</sup> The framework is designed to assist regions in identifying areas of flexibility in response to capacity and workload concerns.

# 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.

Good

Leadership across the PDU was strong and impressive. This was recognised through governance arrangements and strengths in partnership relationships, that lead to innovative initiatives being delivered and the embedding of a positive culture. The PDU was faced with significant resourcing challenges, which impacted on the quality of the cases inspected. Resourcing issues, linked to national challenges in delivering the target operating model, are unlikely to be resolved for some time despite a very proactive approach from the PDU. A rating of 'Good' reflects the significant proactive measures the leadership team have undertaken to deliver a quality service in this PDU. Provided with the capacity and resourcing required, the leadership team would have had the necessary enablers in place to drive delivery improvements.

### Strengths:

- The leadership team were outward facing, innovative and passionate about their work. Undeterred by resourcing challenges, the leadership team encouraged an ambitious culture throughout the PDU.
- Partnership working was extremely impressive. Leaders had utilised the Regional Outcomes Innovations Funding (ROIF) to fund projects with partnerships across the PDU to strengthen the delivery of services to support specific areas, such as domestic abuse. Effective links with statutory and third sector agencies were well established and relationships continued to develop.
- Working relationships with regional leaders were effective, particularly with community integration teams. The PDU worked collaboratively, securing funding opportunities to procure a range of services for people on probation.
- At a strategic level, probation was recognised as a key proactive partner in various partnership forums, including that of the community safety partnerships and youth justice management boards. There was a recognised approach from the leadership team and throughout the PDU that quality probation work was delivered as a partnership and not in silo.
- Engaging People on Probation (EPoP) was a strength for this PDU. Mentors were routinely recruited and appropriately trained before being matched to people on probation, with specific mentors for areas of practice such as Integrated Offender Management (IOM). EPoP staff were fully embedded in the PDU and the value of this area of work was fully recognised.
- Using funding from vacant posts, the leadership team created an additional business manager post that sat outside the target operating model. This allowed the role to focus on key areas including projects to improve safeguarding information sharing with the unitary local authorities and essential estates matters for a new office site in Southend-on-Sea. This allowed middle management spans of responsibility to be redistributed.

- A culture of innovation was a clear theme in the PDU, with staff's views and ideas welcomed and valued. An approach of "*We all discuss things and the attitude is try it and see*" was a clear illustration of the creative culture in the PDU. Successful examples of this included an offer of counselling delivered by student counsellors for people on probation, which had been successfully established for some time and had been extended to neighbouring PDUs.
- Leaders promoted and encouraged a positive culture; inspectors interacted with staff who were engaged and motivated, despite working in difficult circumstances for a sustained period of time.
- Staff reported that wellbeing was a regular standing agenda item as part of supervision and generally felt supported by their line managers around this area. In the staff survey, all those staff who required reasonable adjustments reported having received appropriate support, which reflected the importance given by leaders to the wellbeing of the teams.
- At the time of inspection, the PDU was under 'red' status as part of the PF. The leadership viewed this as a recognition of the challenges the PDU faced in terms of workloads and resourcing, which mandates a reprioritisation of specific tasks. However, in line with the values and ethics of probation service delivery, many staff felt it was unrealistic to expect staff to significantly reduce contact with certain cases. As such, a clear, one-page guide on expectations created by the leadership was communicated to staff to ensure a consistent understanding across the PDU.
- A smart approach to encompassing learning from serious further offences and other serious case reviews was in place. These were tracked and discussed as part of the quality improvement group. Learning from these reviews guided topics for PDU development days, therefore capturing the key targeted audience of practitioners. Quality Development Officer (QDO) support was also in place to support practitioners with any specific learning required as a result of a serious case review.

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

- Despite the number of strengths in leadership, this was not reflected fully in the casework, with three of the four standards being rated as 'Inadequate' and the other rated as 'Requires improvement'. The areas for improvement were related to the quality of public protection, with strengths in supporting desistance for people on probation.
- Court work was of concern. Gaps in staffing and limited experience were having an impact on the quality of court delivery. Workloads prevented staff from accessing training opportunities provided by the PDU and morale in court teams was low. The leadership were sighted on this issue and were committed to prioritising court teams going forward. While the impact meant court reports did not always fully support a thorough assessment, the PDU had limited ability to address the issues.
- There was inconsistency in understanding the PDU's priorities. Although some staff viewed public protection as the primary focus, others were of the view that meeting performance targets carried more weight than completing work of a high quality. A consistent message regarding how both performance and quality intertwine was needed to clarify this.



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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

Having the right staff in place to undertake the delivery model was a critical hindrance to achieving sufficient quality of service delivery, specifically in relation to public protection. The PDU did not have enough qualified POs and were stretched in management capacity to provide effective oversight. A high level of learning and development was required for an underdeveloped workforce. Despite this, the PDU were doing all they could to strive to achieve sufficient delivery and the morale and passion of the workforce was a credit to the PDU, something that should not be underestimated as a key enabler. Had the PDU been resourced with the necessary staff and managers to provide effective oversight, it would have been in a strong position to achieve positive service delivery.

### Strengths:

- Recruitment was a key priority for the PDU, with a persistent and targeted approach to improve staffing. This included promoting opportunities at local colleges, recruitment events and continuing to keep staff that were being onboarded updated on progress. The positive impact of this was evident, with significant improvements to administrative grades, and overall staffing improving to 84 per cent.
- There was a largely positive culture within the PDU. Of the staff we surveyed, 97 per cent viewed that the culture promoted openness, constructive challenge and ideas. Given that this was a PDU that has faced significant resourcing challenges for a prolonged period, it was to the PDU's credit. In further recognition of the positive culture, there were several members of staff returning to the PDU under the regional returners scheme.
- Practitioners were committed to supporting people on probation, evidenced by some strong desistance scores in domain two. A stoic sense of morale was present amongst practitioners who were striving to deliver quality work in challenging circumstances.
- Administrative staff were valued and embedded within the PDU. There was recognition of the importance of their roles and how they may be developed further in the future. Progression routes were clear, with this being achieved by members of staff in recent months.
- In response to staff wanting an increased offer of in-person training, the PDU had embedded development days delivered face to face at both the Southend-on-Sea and Laindon offices. These were based around targeted subjects, such as multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and involved input from leads of specified areas and QDOs.
- The senior and middle management group were fully staffed and dedicated to their roles. This included supporting their direct reports, but also a number of lead areas of practice, with strong collaboration with partners.

- Despite resourcing issues, particularly at practitioner grade, 90 per cent of the cases had no more than two practitioners for the entirety of the licence or order inspected. This provided consistency and the ability to build a working relationship with the person on probation.
- Staff received regular effective case-focused supervision that enhanced and sustained the quality of work with people on probation, with 83 per cent of respondents from the staff survey answering this as 'always' or 'most of the time'. Tools such as the practitioner dashboard were used as a way of assisting both practitioners and managers with work that needed to be prioritised.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The PDU was disadvantaged by significant gaps in staffing, this being most pertinent at PO grade. Only 45 per cent of staff were in post, which had led to an overreliance on agency staff who accounted for 27 per cent of the PO-grade workforce. High workloads, a competitive job market, limited pay and the lack of a geographical allowance, offered in London PDUs, which were in close proximity, had all been factors impacting on this area. The staffing levels for POs impacted on the PDU's ability to deliver a quality service.
- Workloads were too high, with the average workload measurement tool for POs being 123 per cent and 131 per cent for Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) trainees. Although workloads had reduced in recent months, they remained at a level that was fragile to sustain.
- As with other middle managers nationally, the Senior Probation Officer (SPO) workload was extensive. However, were there to be a full complement of practitioners in place, there would be insufficient SPO resource to manage these posts, particularly given the challenge of learning, development and increased oversight requirements.
- Both sickness and retention of staff had been a significant challenge, with sickness and attrition rates in the PDU being higher than that of the regional average. Although retention was improving, this was still a challenge.
- The quality of PSO work needed to improve. Limited levels of experience in this grade, coupled with insufficient long-term and continuous training, had resulted in some challenges in casework, particularly in regard to keeping people safe.

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### 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

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 significant strengths in the service's delivery, which had led to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'. Had there been a higher rating for 2.3, services would have been rated 'Good'.

#### Strengths:

- There was an extensive offer of services for people on probation across the PDU. This included both the offer from CRS and that of externally commissioned providers.
- The offer to support women on probation was impressive, despite challenges with the CRS women's provision. Links with local partnership agencies such as Aspirations in Southend-on-Sea were very strong, offering a wide range of support including links with housing and outreach support. A multi-agency forum to discuss women at risk in the area, chaired by probation, was well established and had representatives from a cross section of agencies, including the police.
- The counselling service on offer was regarded as a key achievement. The service worked with a local university and counselling students. A simple referral system to pair counsellors with people on probation was in place that was tailored to the individual's need. Counselling was delivered both in person and remotely when required. This provided a much-needed resource to support people with emotional challenges.
- MAPPA delivery across the PDU was strong. Robust processes were in place whereby coordinators held level two consultation meetings to consider alternatives and assist in any blockages of information. This ensured appropriate cases were discussed at level two MAPPA panels. Information was shared routinely from other multi-agency panels including multi-agency risk assessment conferences.
- Complex case panels, which were being piloted across four PDUs in the region, were well utilised, with the PDU having the highest referral numbers in the region. The panel was attended by members of the offender personality disorder pathway unit, QDOs and others, providing a space to discuss cases that were posing significant difficulties that required a multi-faceted approach. This was another example of the PDU recognising the benefits of working collaboratively with others for effective delivery of probation work.
- Integrated Offender Management delivery was strong. Effective multi-agency working with the police and substance misuse and local housing groups was in place. The 'free' cohort worked with individuals involved in gangs and county lines to target this specific area of risk. Diversionary

activities supported by the police were on offer, along with support from an IOM-specific mentor.

- The personal wellbeing CRS provision delivered by Forward Trust received high levels of appropriate referrals. Positive working relationships with probation practitioners were in place, with an effective service being delivered that collaborated with local projects to improve life skills and social isolation for people on probation.
- A proactive approach to increase the use of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements was clear across the PDU. There were very high numbers of individuals subject to Mental Health Treatment Requirements, so much so that there was a waiting list of several months.
- Courts had seen an increase in Drug Rehabilitation Requirements and Alcohol Treatment Requirements but there was an ambition to increase this. The setup of drug and alcohol services in the PDU was complex, with there being several different providers, but a policy of 'No wrong door' was operated ensuring that an appropriate service would be on offer for individuals.
- Improvements in gaining domestic abuse information had been made in recent months with the introduction of the ATHENA<sup>4</sup> system. This provided a more streamlined process whereby domestic abuse information for the last six months from Essex Police could be obtained promptly.

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

- Accredited programme completion rates were low. The successful completion of accredited programmes requirements other than those convicted of a sexual offence was 29.5 per cent. The significant resourcing challenges that faced the programmes team along with the impact of the national job evaluation had heavily impacted service delivery. A further example of this was lengthy waiting times for the Horizon programme for those who had been convicted of sexual offences.
- There were challenges with the consistency of sharing of safeguarding information. The complexity of working with two unitary local authorities and a county council meant that there were variations in the timeliness and the quality of vital safeguarding information. Twenty-seven out of 44 cases inspected did not have sufficient child safeguarding information as part of their assessment.
- The ATHENA system only provided six months of information on domestic abuse. Requests for extended periods required justification, and they were not routinely completed. There were also challenges gaining police information from neighbouring forces such as the Metropolitan Police Service.
- Similar to what we have seen in other PDUs nationally, the CRS provision for accommodation provided by Interventions Alliance faced significant challenges, with many staff viewing this service as ineffective. Staffing for the provider had been a challenge, particularly given the high numbers of referrals, which had impacted on the ability of the provider to meet with individuals promptly.

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<sup>4</sup> ATHENA is a police system operating across the Essex and Kent Police areas, which holds information related to domestic abuse incidents.

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## Feedback from people on probation

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User Voice, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 107 people on probation as part of this inspection. Of these, 67 per cent reported that they were subject to a community sentence and 32 per cent were being supervised having been released from prison. One per cent of the respondents did not specify their type of order or licence they were subject to. The respondents were largely representative of the caseload in terms of gender but were overrepresented in terms of ethnic diversity as 35 per cent of the respondents were from a minority ethnic background, in comparison to six per cent of the caseload.

### Strengths:

- People on probation overwhelmingly felt safe accessing probation services (88 per cent) with nearly three quarters of respondents reporting reasonable travel distances to travel to appointments. This was positive considering the large size of the PDU.
- The strengths recognised in regard to services by inspectors were also reflected in the views of people on probation. This was particularly pertinent for drug and alcohol misuse where 91 per cent of those who needed support in this area rated this positively. Similarly in relation to mental health support, 79 per cent of respondents reported 'good' or 'very good' experiences being supported in this area.
- Overall, nearly two thirds of respondents reported a positive relationship with their probation practitioner.

*“He treats me with respect and gives me detailed plans for how to get help and then helps me follow them through. I know I have support and help around me when I need it.”*

### Areas for improvement:

- Appointments for people on probation were often very short. Eighty-three per cent of the respondents reported that their appointment was 15 minutes or less. This raised questions regarding the value of certain appointments between people on probation and practitioners, but also gives an indication of how busy practitioners are, that they can only spend limited time with people on probation.
- Respondents did not feel their views about their supervision were routinely listened to by practitioners, therefore missing an opportunity to increase engagement with people on probation.

*“Honestly no I don't feel like I have a say. I know they do surveys every so often, but it never feel like there are any changes.”*

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## Diversity and inclusion

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### Strengths:

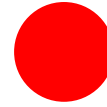
- The PDU had available relevant data to understand the staff and people on probation profile, with 14 per cent of the workforce identified as being from a minority ethnic background, compared to seven per cent of the caseload. Therefore, in terms of ethnicity, the workforce was fully representative of this demographic. This was particularly important as this demographic had larger representations in certain areas such as Thurrock, where 23 per cent of the local population are from a minority ethnic background.
- In response to a need to strengthen working with young adults aged 18-25, the PDU had in place a young adult support worker role to specifically work with this cohort. Additionally, the PDU had seconded staff to both Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea youth justice services despite staffing challenges. This was in recognition of the PDU prioritising the key work of transitions for young adults.
- A recently launched mentoring project was in place to support people going through the court process. The project was to work with those from a minority ethnic background to improve engagement and understanding of all stages of the court and sentencing process.
- There were various projects to support women funded through ROIF and other commissioning processes. This included 'Project goldcrest' supporting victims in reporting sexual assaults and funding for a 'reclaim the night' community event. Women-only reporting venues were available in Southend-on-Sea and Laindon, with a venue recently sourced in Thurrock.
- In the staff survey, staff who required reasonable adjustments all reported having received appropriate support, which reflected the importance given by leaders to the wellbeing of the teams.

### Areas for improvement:

- Nearly half of cases inspected did not analyse the protected characteristics of the individual and consider the impact of these on the ability to comply and engage with service delivery. Improvements around this area were required to increase engagement with people on probation.
- Tracking of specific cohorts and demographics could be improved. An example of this was around those transitioning from youth justice services to probation, whereby there was limited information on the outcomes on individuals once supervised by probation.
- The CRS women's service delivered by Advance was unable to deliver a sufficient service for women. High turnover of staff and difficulties in resourcing had meant that there was limited face-to-face provision being offered. Although the PDU had other services to support women, the CRS offer needed to improve.

## 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?	58%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	75%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	33%

- A strong approach to desistance was evident in assessment across the cases inspected. Practitioners routinely identified the strengths and protected factors, where relevant, of people on probation and took into account the individual's motivation to engage with their sentence. Taking a considered approach in the assessment stage was key to considering what support could be offered to reduce the risk of individuals reoffending.
- There were deficits in the use of domestic abuse and child safeguarding information. Although information was often requested, on too few occasions was it received or used sufficiently to inform risk assessments. In 16 out of 39 cases inspected there was insufficient information relating to domestic abuse and on occasions critical information such as domestic abuse call-outs was not used to fully identify and address risks posed.
- Improvements were needed to ensure assessments were sufficiently drawing on information from available sources. This included past behaviour and key information from other agencies. This was judged to be sufficiently completed in less than half of cases inspected, with this being much weaker in cases managed by PSOs and PQiPs.
- Not enough cases inspected had sufficient analysis of the risk of harm factors posed by individuals, with this being sufficient in just 48 per cent of cases. Without a robust assessment and sufficient understanding of risk, it is challenging to identify what practitioners were to focus on throughout the period of supervision.

<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 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.

Requires improvement

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:

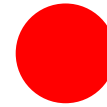
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?</b>	85%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>52%</b>

- Planning was the strongest area of casework in this PDU, with impressive scores overall for desistance. In the vast majority of cases, planning set out the services most likely to support desistance and reduce potential further offending. This included appropriate and timely referrals to services to support women, drugs and alcohol misuse and education, training and employment (ETE).
- In over two thirds of cases inspected, practitioners were setting out the necessary restrictive factors to manage risk of harm posed by individuals. This included bespoke licence conditions and enhanced monitoring to ensure robust arrangements were in place to keep victims and other people safe.
- Not enough cases had sufficiently robust contingency planning and were often too generic. On too many occasions, the valuable input from other agencies involved in managing the risk was not fully referenced. Without this information, it is difficult to mitigate fully the potential risk posed by individuals.
- As identified in assessment, there were disparities between the quality of work completed by POs and that of PSOs. In terms of keeping people safe in planning, inspectors judged that 71 per cent of cases managed by POs were sufficient in this area, in comparison to just 35 per cent for PSOs. Deficits were found in links with other agencies and the necessary restrictive interventions to manage risk of harm with a more targeted focus on supporting PSOs needed to strengthen their management of risk of serious harm posed by people on probation.

<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

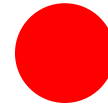
Our rating<sup>7</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
<b>Is the sentence or post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?</b>	67%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?</b>	54%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>23%</b>

- Implementation and delivery was the weakest area of casework. Operating under 'red' status meant there were limitations in what was expected to be delivered by practitioners for those cases assessed a medium or low risk of harm. However, deficits in keeping people safe were found in cases of all risk levels, with only 36 per cent of high risk cases being judged as sufficient.
- Practitioners were engaging with individuals well as part of the implementation and delivery or their order or licence. There was an emphasis on maintaining effective working relationships, taking into account diversity needs. In almost all cases inspected, practitioners were flexible in their approach, considering the individual's personal circumstances to support them to complete their sentence.
- The work being done to protect actual or potential victims needed to improve, with this being judged as sufficient in only 12 out of 42 relevant cases. There were times where limited victim awareness work was being completed with individuals, and in cases where there was domestic abuse concerns, there were occasions where there was a lack of 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 was judged as insufficient in 35 out of 47 cases. This was a missed opportunity for vital services to have the required 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>	75%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?</b>	71%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>44%</b>

- Practitioners were consistently considering compliance, engagement and overcoming relevant barriers to working with people on probation. This included engaging with individuals following enforcement action and increasing or decreasing reporting where appropriate. This engagement improved their working relationship and increased the possibility of desistance going forward.
- Reviewing was not sufficiently informed from the input from other agencies. In relation to desistance this was insufficient in 16 out of 41 cases. In regard to keeping people safe, the picture was slightly worse, with this area being judged as sufficient in only 22 out of 47 cases relevant cases. Input from other agencies is crucial to ensure current and pertinent information from various sources is reviewed, thus improving accuracy in the process.
- When reviewing risk of harm, practitioners were not routinely involving individuals and key people in individuals' lives. This was a missed opportunity to improve engagement and gather up-to-date information for reviewing.
- The quality of formal reviews was inconsistent, with more reviews for resettlement cases being judged as sufficient in comparison to community cases. Although formal written reviews were taking place, these were stronger in relation to engaging individuals than in regard to desistance and keeping people safe. Crucial information was missing from too many reviews, demonstrated by 20 out of 40 cases failing to fully identify and address changes in 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 cases inspected, 37 out of 48 had not been charged or convicted of any new offences during the period that their licence or order was inspected. This demonstrates some evidence of the positive contribution practitioners have had with a desistance-focused approach to managing people on probation.
- Although relatively small in number, improvements had been made in regard to ETE and accommodation status for people on probation. Twelve individuals were in some form of ETE at the start of their order compared with 19 at the time of inspection. In terms of accommodation, 34 individuals were in settled accommodation at the time of inspection in comparison to 33 at the beginning of their order or licence. This was despite significant challenges with accommodation provision.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Not enough cases we inspected had sufficient work completed to address the factors related to the risk of harm individuals posed, with this being judged sufficiently in just nine out of 46 relevant cases. This linked to an overall theme that there needed to be a stronger delivery of risk of harm-focused work across the PDU.

## 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://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)