



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

**A thematic inspection of the quality of
services delivered to young adults in the
Probation Service**

Findings and recommendations

Tuesday 10 September 2024

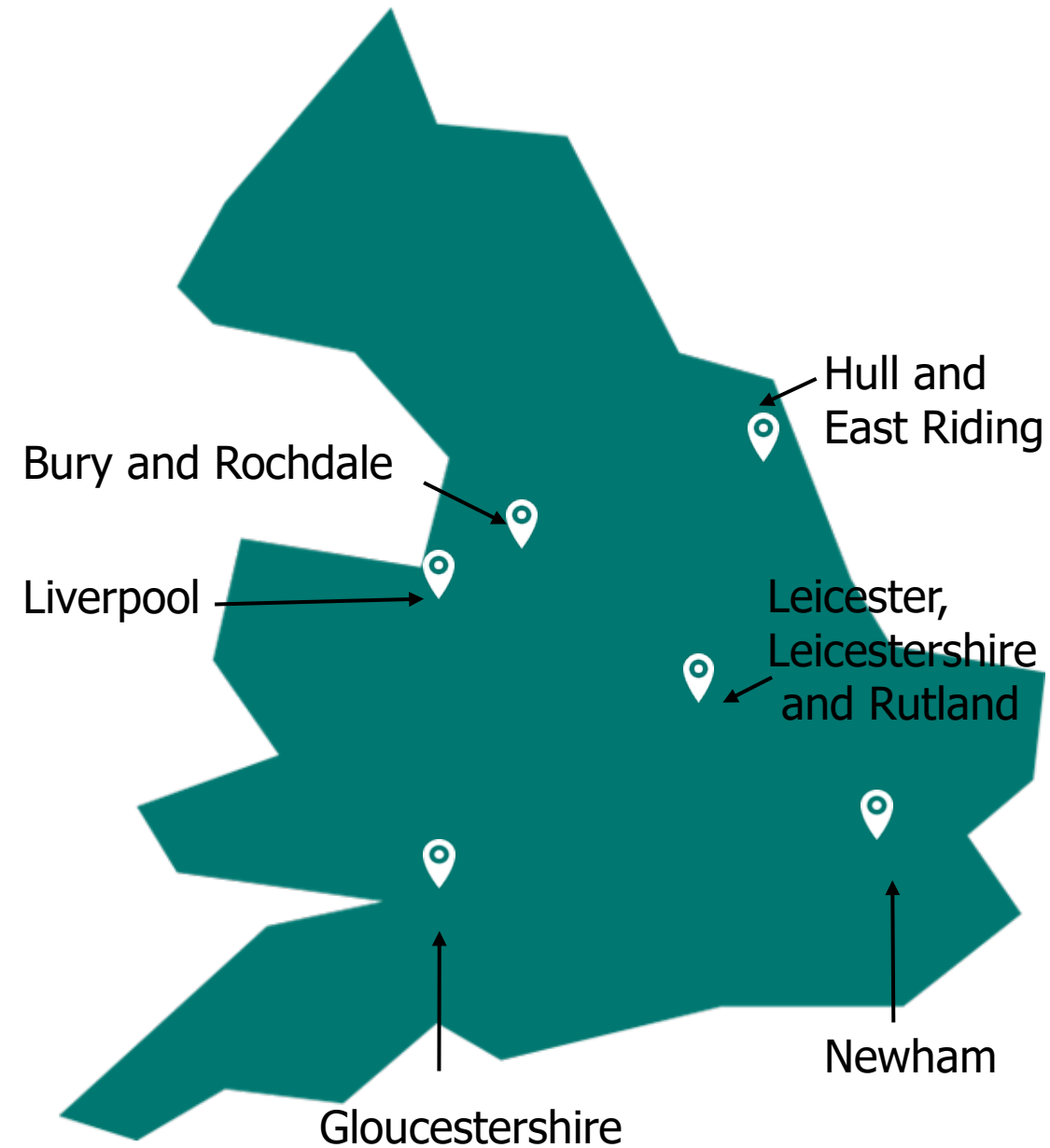


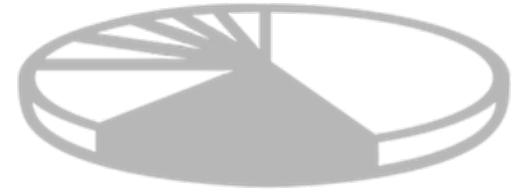
Methodology

Pre fieldwork YJS survey

Fieldwork

- Six Probation Delivery Units
- 115 young adult cases reviewed
- 259 young adults contacted for their views
- Focus groups
- Meetings with senior leaders in the national HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) teams





Characteristics

- **Forty-eight per cent** had previously been involved with children's social care, due to neglect, abuse, exploitation, violent households
- **Almost a third** of young adults had experience in the care system and had support from leaving care services
- **More than half** had previous involvement with youth justice services
- **Thirty-eight per cent** had a disability and **over a third** were neurodiverse.



Policy and strategy

Commitment and Challenges:

- The HMPPS Young Adults Policy Framework **aims to address** the unique needs of young adults with a **distinct approach** to probation services.
- While the framework is **creditable**, its implementation has been **challenging** and progress has been **limited**.
- Good work is being done in some areas, but it is **not widespread**.
- To effectively implement the framework, **improved governance structures** and clear lines of **accountability** are needed, along with sufficient resources.



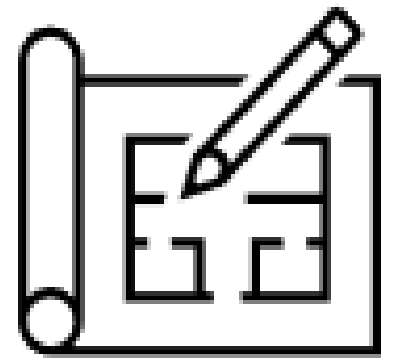
Regional and PDU leadership

- Young adults are understood to be a **priority** in almost all areas.
- **Unclear** governance structures.
- Most areas do not have a fully established **strategic direction** or local delivery plan for young adults.
- Quality assurance specific to young adults has **not been widely undertaken**.
- **Data is not being used** to understand outcomes for young adults.



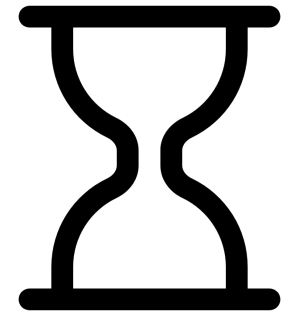
Staffing and training

- Many **highly motivated** staff
- Absence of practice guidance and **staff unsure** about expectations
- **Insufficient training** to implement mandatory aspects of the framework, such as maturity assessments
- **Staff not aware** of resources or confident to use them
- **Limited training** on diversity and discrimination
- Lack of shared **understanding** across teams



Information-sharing

- Information **not routinely requested** from other agencies such as YJS and children's social care
- Requested information focus is **risk to others**
- **Uncertainty** about what information can be requested
- Information sharing with leaving care services is **effective**
- Young adults **not routinely asked** for their consent



Transition work

- Significant reduction in cases transitioning directly from youth justice services
- Limited knowledge or use of the 'Next Steps' programme
- Joint protocols for transition are well developed
- Planning is critical but not always done well
- Many young adults have had recent involvement with youth justice services



Taking maturity into account

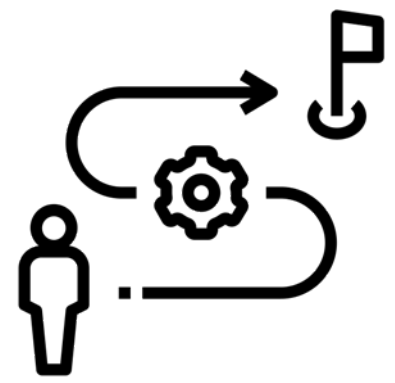
- Assessments - maturity informed – **30 per cent of cases**
- Planning – maturity informed – **29 per cent**
- Sentence delivery – maturity informed – **36 per cent**
- Reviewing – maturity informed – **34 per cent**
- Maturity assessments informed court reports – **38 per cent**





The court context

- **Not all young adults** that would benefit from a court report get one
- Maturity assessments **do not inform** sentencing proposals
- Some court staff are **not aware** of the aide memoire
- Young adults offending is **not framed** in relation to their stage of development
- Report writers **do not request**, or receive information from other agencies to support their assessment
- Sentencers **do not always feel** a report is required



Interventions and services

- **Few specific interventions** for young adults, particularly women
- **High use** of unpaid work requirements
- Commissioning arrangements
- **Levels** of engagement
- **Suitability** of programmes
- Use of voluntary and third sector
- **Different understanding** and priorities across teams

Assessment and planning

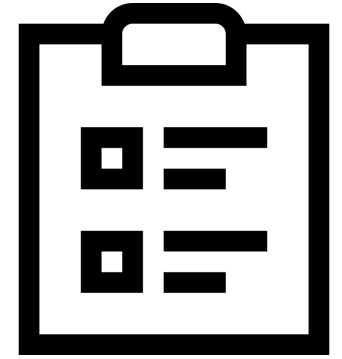
- Focussed on strengths and protective factors
- Less focus on factors linked to offending
- Lack of focus on safety and wellbeing
- Gaps in information and understanding led to poor planning
- Barriers to engagement are not considered in planning





Case supervision

- Building relationships with young adults is pivotal and is the strongest element of practice
- Effective work with care experienced young adults
- Higher breach rates
- Limited use of toolkits and structured interventions
- Third sector and special young adult services rarely used
- Enforcement action was not always taken when it should have been



Licence cases

- 11/18 cases had been sentenced to custody without a report
- Most reports were short format
- Limited contact prior to release
- Less focus on safety and wellbeing for those leaving custody
- Focus on protective factors but not risk
- Overall, the quality of release planning was insufficient

Eleven Recommendations

Themes:

- Governance, information and data
- Provision and effectiveness of services and interventions
- Guidance, training and support
- Evaluation
- Diversity





HM Inspectorate
of Probation

THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE YOUNG ADULTS INSPECTION

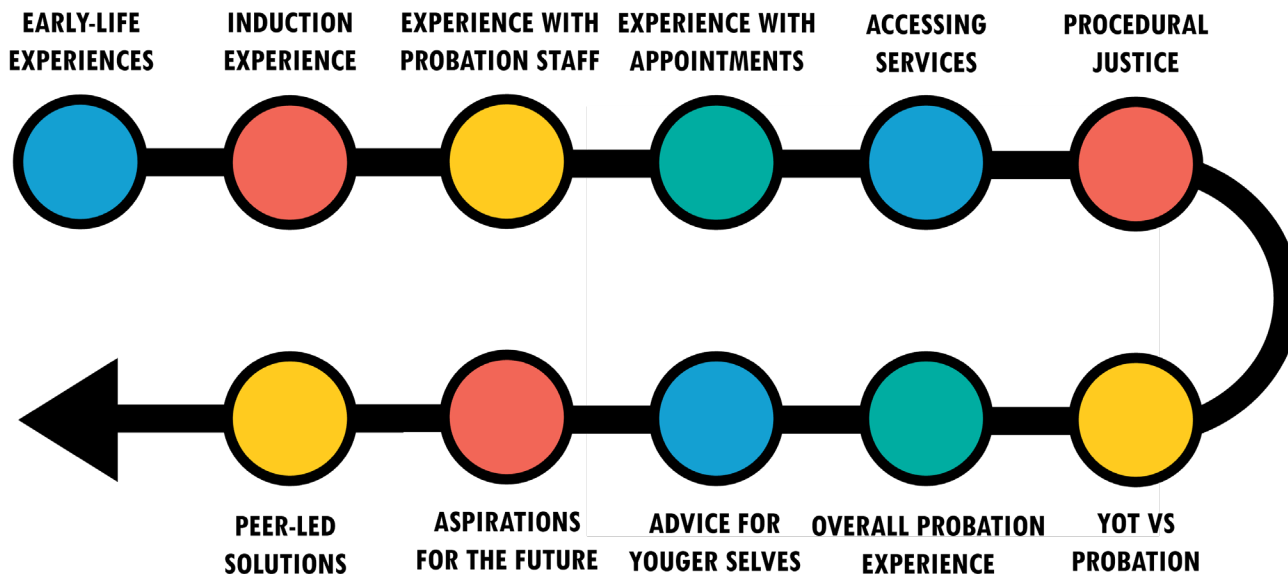
LAUNCH EVENT

APPROACH

259

18 - 24 year olds had their say via surveys and interviews

A MAP OF THE REPORT: A YOUNG ADULT'S PROBATION EXPERIENCE



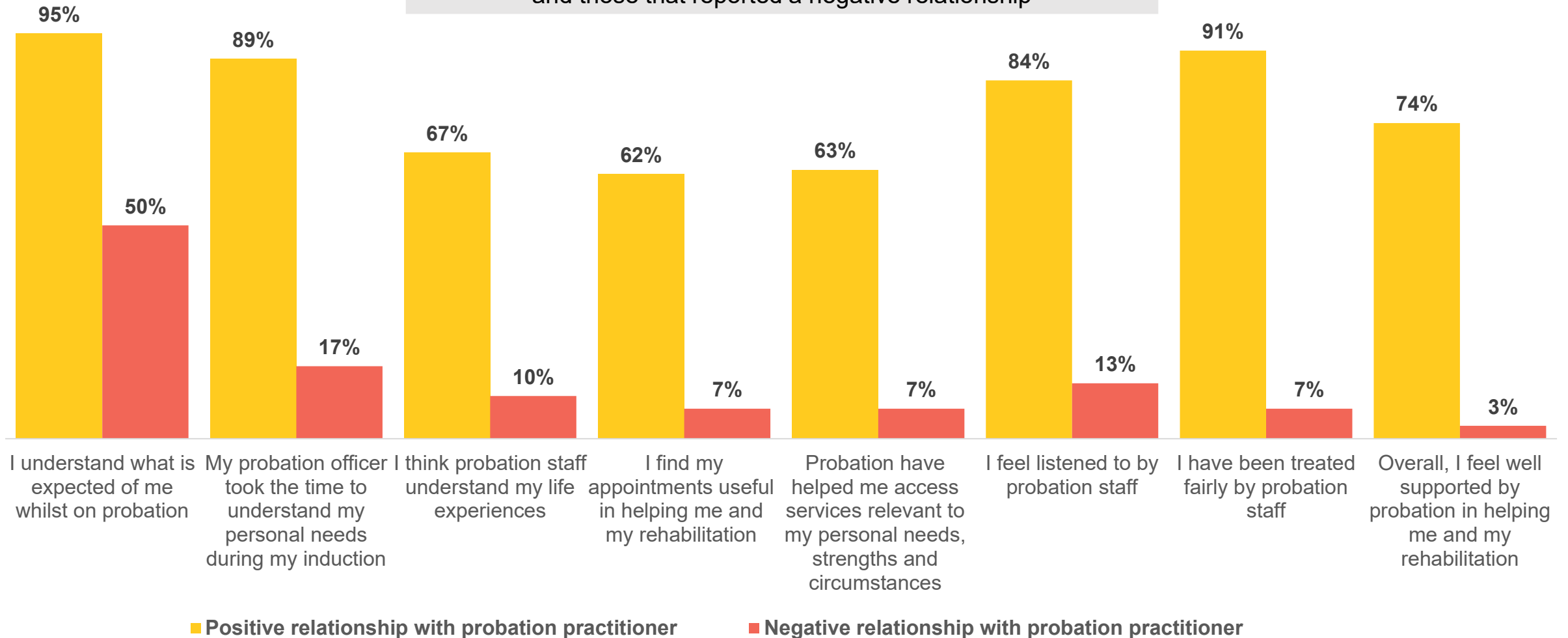
OBJECTIVES

The consultation aimed to understand a Young Adult's experience whilst on probation. Furthermore, our objectives were:

- To better understand their early life experiences.
- To better understand their probation experience which included their experience with the following: Induction, appointments, relationships with staff, and accessing services
- To better understand their experience relating to procedural justice.
- To better understand their aspirations for the future.
- To highlight any good practice that could be built upon.
- To develop peer-led solutions to Young Adults' biggest issues whilst on probation.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH A PROBATION PRACTITIONER IS MAKE OR BREAK ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROBATION EXPERIENCE

Comparing responses to probation-based questions between those that reported a positive relationship with their probation practitioner and those that reported a negative relationship



YOUNG ADULTS FROM MORE DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS GENERALLY REPORTED A MORE DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE WHILST ON PROBATION

Young Adults from more disadvantaged backgrounds, as specified in the list below, have a more difficult experience whilst on probation:

- A negative home life experience
- A negative education experience
- Problems as a teenager
- Mental health struggles prior to arrest
- Care experience
- A child protection plan
- A family member with prison experience
- Arrested at a younger age
- Neurodiverse conditions



THE ISSUE

Many Young Adults feel that probation staff do not properly understand them or how their life experiences have affected them and contributed to their offending.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Probation staff and other institutions need to have more consideration of an individual's background which can be achieved through training that involves young people with lived experience.

“Take into consideration that people might have mental health problems or bad up bringing, where we are from and come from. This goes for the police, courts and probation. They need to prepare people for not being on probation anymore but need to understand them first.”

“Probation could be more aware about childhood trauma and cater to our specific needs.”

**14 OUT OF 16 INTERVIEWEES
WITH YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM
EXPERIENCE HAD A BETTER
EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR YOT
COMPARED TO PROBATION**

“I feel like YOTs supports more than adult probation. Like I could open up more to the YOT team as they speak to you differently to probation. They seem to spend a little bit more time with service users, sometimes it's a bit rushed in adult probation... YOT would always review how it is weekly or fortnightly. They seem to genuinely care, where as probation is a bit more punitive.”

“In the Youth Offending team we would do activities which were quite enjoyable. I don't really do things like that adult probation.”

“The YOT helped me get on the right path, but probation feels more like box ticking.”

“YOTs seem to be more understanding and less punitive than probation. Could talk better to YOT staff and probation is more formal.”

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

- **2 in 3** reported having a positive relationship with their probation practitioner.
- Less than **half** found their appointments useful to their rehabilitation.
- Just under **3 in 5** who need services get access to the services they need.
- Just under **2 in 3** feel listened to by probation staff.
- Just over **7 in 10** reported that they have been treated fairly by probation staff.





HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Effective practice guide

Guide contents:

- **Introduction**
- **Background**
- **Our standards:** what we looked for and our expectations
- **Examples of effectiveness including:**
 - Organisational delivery
 - Leadership and governance
 - Training for practitioners
 - Partnerships and services
- **Case management themes including:**
 - Trauma informed practice
 - Neurodiversity in young adults
 - Young adults in court
 - Young adult transitions
 - Exit planning



Where we see our
standards delivered
well, in practice.



Where we see our standards
delivered well, in practice.



HM Inspectorate
of Probation



AN HM INSPECTORATE OF PROBATION EFFECTIVE PRACTICE GUIDE

Effective practice guide: **Working with young adults**

Based on: The quality of services delivered to young adults in probation. A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation.

September 2024



Effective practice guide

Finding your way



Tools for practitioners



HM Inspectorate of Probation recorded interview



Useful links



External video



Reflection questions

Thinking about your practice as a leader and/or practitioner working with young adults:

- How well do you understand the profile and needs of young adults?
- What is your area's strategy for working with young adults on probation?
- Do training and development programmes equip staff to work with young adults in a gender and trauma informed way?





Spotlight on Hull and East Riding

Example of effectiveness: Risk management panels, Hull and East Riding

The panels have successfully improved information-sharing and networking with stakeholders at both organisational and operational levels. As a result, practitioners have improved their risk assessment skills and understanding of young adults and the support available from other agencies. This has led to a reduction in the volume of referrals to the panel, reserving resources for the most complex and concerning cases.



Example of effectiveness: Strong voice influencing partnership decision-making in Hull and East Riding

Influencing commissioning plans and arrangement to support delivery of work with young adults.

Specialist substance misuse service for 18–25-year-olds



Extension of Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panels to 18–25-year-olds

Example of effectiveness: Individualised approach

Sam was initially difficult to engage, and the probation practitioner was conscious of the complexities in Sam's life and past trauma that may affect his engagement and desistance.

The practitioner adopted a person-centred approach, which Sam responded well to. Alternative engagement methods were used, such as walking around the local park, having a coffee, or buying Sam some lunch to build a rapport, making him feel more at ease while having discussions.

Consistent recording of the reasoning behind activities and how this strengthened engagement and work towards desistance.



Effective Practice



Example of effectiveness: Understanding and responding to individual needs of the young adult

Through building a relationship with Ana, the practitioner made appropriate assessments and decisions to respond to her needs following the birth of her child. The practitioner considered Ana's diversity, and issues related to intersectionality, in managing this case.

"She understands my experiences, this is very important for me, I'm Romanian and some other people can be racist, but she wasn't."

- *The practitioner had a good understanding of intersectionality and engaged Ana well in completing the assessment.*
- *The practitioner responded to Ana's circumstances by carrying out more home visits due to her pregnancy and following the birth of her baby, working in a gender-informed way.*



Young adults reported that the relationship with their worker was *'make or break'* when it came to engaging with probation services, accessing interventions and support, successfully completing their sentences, and making positive changes in their lives.



Effective Practice



Example of effectiveness: Young adult support worker, Merseyside

The YASWs provide a crucial service to people on probation, acknowledging that building trusting relationships “*based on mutual respect, and a good understanding of the life, associations, and environment of the individual*” can contribute to a route out of offending.

Example of effectiveness: Early Break, Greater Manchester



Effective approach to working with Tracey that took account of her previous trauma and ACEs. Early Break provided interventions and worked collaboratively with Tracey from the outset to address issues related to her addiction.

Example of effectiveness: Phoenix programme, Leicester

The Phoenix Programme aims to support young adults through a combination of personalised assistance and structured enforcement, ensuring a balanced approach to reducing reoffending and promoting positive life outcomes:

The team aims to offer tailored and tangible support carefully balanced with deterrence through swift, certain, and well-coordinated disruption and enforcement activity if concerns persist.





Example of effectiveness: Health provision, Newham Hub

The health provision in Newham Hub was impressive. Data analysis demonstrated that meaningful engagement with health services promoted better engagement with other statutory appointments.

This reinforced the need to engage young adults in care and provide support that is meaningful to them.



Contact us

-  • Civil Justice Centre, Manchester, M3 3FX
-  • HMIP.enquiries@hmiprobation.gov.uk
-  • 0161 240 5336
-  • www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation
-  • @hmiprobation
-  • <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10285534>