



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of probation services in:

York PDU

The Probation Service – Yorkshire and the Humber Region

HM Inspectorate of Probation, December 2024

Contents

Foreword	3
Ratings	4
Recommendations	5
Background	6
1. Organisational arrangements and activity	7
2. Service delivery	16
Annexe one – Web links	23

Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Lucy Jones, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in this inspection. Without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth justice and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth justice service work with adults and children.

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.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

© Crown copyright 2024

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence or email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

ISBN 978-1-916621-62-6

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

Follow us on Twitter
[@hmiprobation](https://twitter.com/hmiprobation)

Foreword

York Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) demonstrated strengths in the engagement with people on probation, with leaders having a clear understanding of the strategic direction. Despite these strengths, the quality of work to manage people on probation was insufficient in all four of our standards. As a result of the poor case scores, overall, the PDU is rated 'Inadequate'.

As the smallest PDU in England and Wales, York PDU has unique resourcing challenges. In particular, at the middle management grade the leanness of the establishment figures does not support managers with the capacity to deliver a high-quality service to staff, people on probation, and the communities of York. The quality of management oversight, implementation of national and regional learning and change programmes as well as the support and development of practitioners need prioritisation.

The PDU was not fully resourced at practitioner and administration grades, and whilst plans to recruit were in place, the small size of the PDU meant that the vacancy rates placed additional pressure on staff resource and resilience to cover annual leave and sickness. Undoubtedly, the resourcing challenges were hindering the PDU's ability to deliver high-quality casework.

Relationships with people on probation were promising in some of the work to support engagement and desistance; however, consistent with our other recent reports, improvements were needed in the quality of work to assess and manage the risks that people on probation posed in the community. The deficits across all standards of casework were particularly poor. Work is required to improve the quality of information exchange with children's services and develop routine information sharing between social workers and practitioners where a family are known; this would support the improvements needed in the analysis and management of risk to vulnerable children by people on probation.

Although the results in the casework were disappointing, there was a solid understanding of the work required to improve at a senior level, and progress was being achieved. The prioritisation of establishing and growing strategic partnership arrangements was a real strength, as was the visibility of the PDU head who was leading a culture of open communication, support, and recognition that was beginning to make a difference to staff in the PDU. The range and availability of services within York was another key strength, and practitioners must be supported to make better use of the available resources and collaborate more effectively to reduce reoffending and keep people safe.

York PDU faces significant challenges in delivering its operating model with its current staffing complement. However, there are already some positive foundations that can be built upon to drive specific improvements in delivering interventions and work to protect the public.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

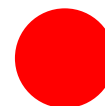
York PDU

Fieldwork started September 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.

York PDU should:

1. develop practitioners' confidence and skills in the use of professional curiosity and holding challenging conversations to respond to indicators of risk of harm effectively
2. ensure that all actual and potential victims are identified accurately
3. ensure that child safeguarding and domestic abuse information is analysed sufficiently to inform the quality of assessment, planning, and management of people on probation
4. work with York children's social care services to improve information sharing, joint planning, and collaborative working to protect children from harm
5. ensure senior probation officers have routine oversight of high risk of serious harm and MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) level one cases
6. improve the use of interventions and services available for people on probation to support desistance and manage the risk of harm
7. ensure sufficient attention is paid to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion, addressing actual and potential barriers (for engagement/compliance) for people on probation.

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

8. review the resource model for York PDU and its ability to deliver the operating model effectively.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in York PDU over a period of two weeks, beginning 16 September 2024. We inspected 12 community orders and eight releases on licence from custody where sentences and licences had commenced during three separate weeks, between 12 February 2024 and 25 February 2024, and 04 March 2024 and 10 March 2024. We also conducted 19 interviews with probation practitioners.

York is one of 11 PDUs in Yorkshire and the Humber region. There is one main PDU office, plus two courts: York Crown Court and York Magistrates' Court. The court staff are managed within the PDU. The PDU is served by North Yorkshire Police and the City of York Council. Formerly York and North Yorkshire PDU, York was separated from North Yorkshire PDU and formed as a delivery unit in June 2022. The PDU had operated in the context of significant organisational change through the unification of the probation service in July 2021, and the additional change brought about by the splitting of the PDU into two separate units just over 12 months later. There had also been a change in senior leadership with the current head of service coming into post in November 2023.

The overall number of staff in post was 94 per cent of the target. Vacancies across practitioner and administration grades indicated the shortages against the staffing target, with probation officers (POs) at 21 per cent below, probation services officers (PSOs) at 24 per cent, and case administrators at 26 per cent. In addition, the annual staff sickness rate was 12.9 days, in line with the national average.

The population of York is approximately 206,780 with a white majority population: 7.2 per cent were from a minority ethnic background (3.8 per cent Asian, 0.7 per cent Black, 1.8 per cent mixed ethnic group, and one per cent other) at the last Census. The total caseload at the time of the inspection announcement was 543, with 3.2 per cent from a minority ethnic background. The caseload comprised 263 community sentences and 145 people on post-release supervision. There were a further 135 cases in the custodial estate.

A range of services were delivered in the PDU, including both commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) and those commissioned through alternative arrangements. The CRS agencies included: Ingeus, responsible for dependency and recovery services and personal wellbeing; Shelter for accommodation services; The Growth Company for finance, benefit, and debt in custody; and St Giles Wise partnership responsible for women's services.

One of the 20 cases inspected was subject to the national Probation Reset policy, which was implemented during this inspection.¹ This meant that the individual 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, a nationally mandated operational policy change, was implemented in July 2024 to alleviate probation workload pressures in response to prison capacity challenges. It 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

As a result of the domain two ratings, the Inspectorate's rating decision guidance would normally indicate a leadership rating of 'Inadequate'. However, given the strengths in leadership, the rating of 'Requires improvement' has been applied.

Strengths:

- The vision and strategy of York PDU - "we will work together to provide the best probation services to all the communities of York" - was underpinned by an aim to refocus on professional standards in the workplace and the quality of service delivery. Despite challenges with staffing, positive progress had been achieved against the delivery plan in the first six months of 2024/2025, reflected in the strengths in assessment and planning for engagement and desistance in the cases inspected.
- Probation was an active participant at all relevant boards and strategic groups, and the effective strategic partnerships in place supported innovative multi-agency approaches. For example, probation was a key partner in the multi-agency problem-solving forums to plan for people with multiple and complex needs, as well as multi-agency task and coordination (MATAC), a perpetrator-focused domestic abuse scheme, with positive impact reported through a reduction in repeat offending.
- Governance arrangements were effective in monitoring and reviewing delivery across the partnerships, with escalation processes supporting improvements. The PDU head supported commissioning of the new York Drug and Alcohol Service (YDAS), including direct involvement in the commissioning of the service, evaluation, and interviews of providers. This had resulted in improved service provision.
- Strategic decisions to strengthen information sharing to inform court reports with critical domestic abuse intelligence was well embedded through probation administration access to the police Niche database. One hundred per cent of relevant court reports were informed by sufficient quality domestic abuse intelligence.
- The PDU head had a solid understanding of the risks to service delivery and was working systematically to address these. Priority had been given to raising the profile of probation across the strategic partnerships, the support and development of middle managers, and establishing a culture of safety, openness, and transparency. Our inspection found progress had been achieved across all priorities.
- The visibility and accessibility of the PDU head was a key strength. Staff were unanimous in speaking highly of the efforts of the PDU head to communicate key

business issues such as policy and guidance changes or recruitment and resourcing through in-person monthly Q&A sessions.

- Despite challenges with staffing, there was a commitment to priority groups of people on probation. The women's strategy was well embedded with holistic provision delivered at a women's centre. A youth justice service (YJS) secondee was also in post and operated a 50:50 split role managing transition cases (young people moving from the YJS to the probation service when they turned 18) in both the YJS and probation, in line with national protocol.
- Although the 'engaging people on probation' group was paused in May 2024 due to lack of staff capacity, there was a credible plan to recommence this by December 2024. There were alternatives in place to capture the views of people on probation through panels for life sentence prisoners and those on indeterminate sentence for public protection (IPP). These were well attended by people on probation, capturing the voice of people subject to MAPPA, and the probation service 'Your Views Matter' survey, for which completions were the highest in the region. Sixty-nine per cent of people who took part in the User Voice survey as part of our inspection reported that they had been asked for their views and they felt listened to.

Areas for improvement:

- Despite some strengths at leadership level, these were not translated into service delivery for people on probation. We rated the standard of service delivery as inadequate in all four areas in the inspected cases, specifically on public protection.
- Performance targets for staff focused on accountability, as opposed to delivering high-quality work. In some cases, assessments had been completed poorly, with limited information, to meet a target date. It was reassuring that there was a plan to change this culture.
- Child protection and child safeguarding enquiries were of insufficient quality for both court report and post-sentence to inform work to keep people safe. Processes for information sharing did not consistently provide the information necessary, which led to delays in receiving the detail required. Where families were previously known but no longer active with their involvement with Children's services, information required by probation was not shared, which affected the understanding of previous concerns and behaviours. While there had been strategic work to improve information sharing, we found little impact of this in the inspected cases.
- Formal team meetings had not taken place for a significant period. The less formal meeting structure in place had been detrimental to supporting practitioner confidence and knowledge. Whilst practitioners understood 'what' changes in policy and guidance were, they were less clear about 'how' to put these into operation.
- While longer serving staff described their colleagues and managers as supportive, newer and less experienced staff said they felt unsupported, lacked regular supervision, and found managers difficult to access. Whilst there was recognition of newer staff's needs, high workloads and lack of capacity to support their learning and development was disheartening for managers, and a barrier to good quality support for the development of new practitioners.
- Although staff attrition had improved from 16 per cent to 11 per cent between 2023 and 2024, the retention of band 2 staff remained a key business risk; this

was attributed to low salaries compared with similar roles locally, and the cost of living in York.

- Effective learning processes to develop and improve service provision were needed. There were initiatives that indicated a learning culture was a priority. Monthly practice development days were embedded to deliver a programme of learning in line with regional priorities. The regional quality development officer attended monthly managers meetings to share RCAT (Regional Case Audit Tool) and CCAT (Court Case Audit Tool) findings, and were tasked to deliver reflective sessions and assessment and planning workshops with practitioners. Some in-person learning events had been delivered, such as multi-agency workshops with the police on topics such as disclosure, management of sexual and violent offenders (MOSOVO), and a MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference). However, we found limited impact of these initiatives on the work to keep people safe.
- There had been minimal opportunities for learning from serious further offences (SFOs) and other serious case reviews. Although there had been some regional briefings on the SFO process, staff we spoke to were not aware that anything had been shared locally from national or regional learning.

P 1.2. Staffing



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- Workloads were actively reviewed and redeployed in response to long-term sickness absence, retirement or maternity leave. Managers reviewed the workload measurement tool (WMT) in response to staffing changes. Some staff described a holistic approach where wellbeing, managing acute crisis within a caseload, and WMT were considered during discussions on workload and allocations.
- The majority of PSOs and staff with Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP) interviewed described their workload as 'quite manageable', within the context that this was a relatively recent situation attributed to Probation Reset policy. Average workloads were significantly better in York for these grades of staff than in other PDUs inspected, with the highest workload at 81 per cent.
- Strategies to reduce the impact of resourcing deficits included monthly budget and staffing meetings with the PDU head and a human resources business partner, who were working to mitigate delays with recruitment and sickness absence, and through the use of agency staff and overtime.
- Staff progression and promotion across different grades were used, as well as opportunities to undertake specialist roles and leadership apprenticeships.
- The use of reward and recognition was embedded well, and staff were aware of how to use this to recognise their colleagues' work. Reward and recognition awards were presented by the head of PDU at monthly Q&A meetings, of which staff spoke highly.
- There was effective case allocation through use of the 'allocate a person on probation' digital tool, and managers had oversight of allocations from court and prison release cases. A process for escalation allowed practitioners to raise concerns with line managers about incorrect allocations. All the practitioners interviewed felt they had the relevant skills and experience to manage their cases all or most of the time.
- To complement the Probation Service national competency based framework, the PDU had completed individual development plans for every staff member, designed to improve inclusive access and ownership of professional development.
- Processes to welcome and induct new staff were positive, and staff who had been through this process spoke well about their experience. Local induction processes for administration and reception staff had also been developed and improved; newly recruited staff and staff responsible for delivering learning and shadowing opportunities were confident about the improvements.

Areas for improvement:

- Senior probation officers' capacity to lead and deliver a quality service was significantly undermined by the significant workload. The small size of York PDU placed limitations on the staff establishment figures, and an allowance of 3.2

full-time-equivalent (FTE) SPOs were allocated to manage the courts and sentence management teams. As a result, the SPO group did not have sufficient spans of control, responsibilities or resilience to meet the expectations of partnership meetings, lead roles, and operational responsibilities, including management oversight and staff development. Some staff said they found it difficult to watch the detrimental impact of their managers' workloads on their health and wellbeing.

- The probation officer (PO) grade had the highest vacancy rate at 4.6 FTE under the target, and five of the six POs interviewed described their current workload as unmanageable. All POs had been consistently operating above 110 per cent on the WMT, with the majority at 120 per cent. It was positive that there was a credible plan for four newly qualified officers to be in position by December 2024, but the effects of this additional resource will take time to be realised.
- Administration staff were operating at 1.5 FTE under the target figure and, given the smallness of York PDU, this had an impact on staff workloads in sentence management. Poor retention of administrators placed an additional burden on existing staff who had been repeatedly training new starters, which took time. The process for safeguarding and domestic abuse enquiries for all court reports was implemented without additional staff resource, and this task and the shortage of experienced staff left some administrators concerned about the quality of service provision.
- There was an under-representation of minority ethnic staff and, as with similar findings nationally, male staff were also under-represented compared with the caseload.
- The practitioners we spoke to described varying frequencies in receiving one-to-one supervision. This was also reflected in our staff survey, which identified a 60:40 split in those who reported receiving regular supervision, in which only 40 per cent said they received regular supervision. Although some staff described effective and regular supervision arrangements from their line managers, we did not find that this had enhanced the quality of work with people on probation. This was evident in the casework we reviewed, where management oversight was ineffective, insufficient or absent in just over three-quarters of relevant cases.
- The fragility of some staff we met, who were experiencing anxiety and work-related stress, was stark. The absence of a coaching and mentoring culture and prioritisation of continuous development were having a detrimental impact on effective resilience among the staff group.

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

Strengths:

- There was a comprehensive offer of services, including commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS), as well as targeted and specialist local services to support the needs of people on probation. Service delivery that built upon strengths and enhanced protective factors was a strength in the cases inspected (65 per cent).
- Arrangements were in place to monitor, evaluate, and review service delivery through the regional community integration and partnerships team. At a local level, the interface between providers and probation was supported by effective co-location working arrangements and open communication.
- MAPPA were collaborative, with the required attendance from all duty-to-cooperate agencies. Dedicated probation resource was sufficient to ensure an appropriate timeframe from referral to discussion for level two and three cases. Similarly, integrated offender management (IOM) arrangements were working well with dedicated support from the region. IOM police officers were co-located in the York probation office, which strengthened information exchange and collaborative working to manage people on probation subject to IOM.
- The offender personality disorder pathway was performing well with positive screening and referral rates. We found valuable clinical psychology support, with screening and case formulations that enhanced practitioners' understanding of working with some of the most complex and high-risk people on probation, and which supported their engagement.
- Unpaid work requirement commencements had been consistently above the national target of 80 per cent for the last 12 months. In the cases we inspected, there was evidence of effective service availability in examples of people on probation who had completed the requirement within the first six months of the order.
- Services for women on probation were delivered at a women's centre by dedicated practitioners, and the CRS provider, St Giles Trust, was delivering services from the York probation office. A women's-only reporting time was allocated to provide a safe space for women unable to attend the women's centre.

Areas for improvement:

- The implementation and delivery of services were rated inadequate in the cases we inspected. The delivery of services to support desistance was particularly poor, with just six of 20 cases determined to be sufficient. There was an under-use of services where there was a clear identifiable need, and the prioritisation of services to address the most critical needs required improvement.
- Of particular concern was the delivery of services to keep people safe and reduce the risk of harm posed by people on probation; only four of the 20 cases inspected were deemed to be sufficient. The protection of potential and actual victims and

the coordination of a multi-agency approach to manage domestic abuse and child safeguarding concerns were deemed to be insufficient in many cases.

- Despite effective MAPPA, our case inspection identified examples of high-risk MAPPA level one cases that required escalation to level two to support complex risk issues that did not take place. The coordination of multi-agency oversight of high-risk cases, as well as processes to review MAPPA level one cases, needed attention.
- In line with similar circumstances nationally, the demand for CRS accommodation services was high, and providers described a surge in referrals as a result of the prison early release scheme that began in July 2024. There was a lack of locally available and suitable housing services, especially in the CAS3 (community accommodation services tier 3) provision for the first night of those released from prison and onward resettlement. We found insufficient accommodation services to support desistance (12 out of 14 cases) and to keep people safe (10 out of 12 cases) in the cases inspected.
- Access to adequate mental health services in York was a gap due to provider recruitment problems. Practitioners said it was difficult to access mental health services and support due to lengthy waiting times for assessment and treatment. Although some brief interventions were available through the personal wellbeing CRS provision, this was not enough to support people on probation adequately. Positively, a new service was launched in November 2024.
- The waiting time for commencement of an accredited programme was between seven and 12 months post sentence. Staff vacancies in the regional interventions team had led to insufficient delivery across accredited programmes and structured interventions.
- The judicial satisfaction survey result were the lowest in the region, with a satisfaction rate of 46 per cent; the quality of advice from probation and the information on service delivery caused most dissatisfaction. The court SPO was working to deliver a programme of monthly lunchtime engagement events, quality assurance of pre-sentence reports, and a more efficient staffing process across the Crown and magistrates' courts.
- Too many women, young adults, minority ethnic people, and those at risk of custody were being sentenced without a pre-sentence report. Despite the sentencer engagement work taking place, probation's influence at court was not having an impact on disproportionality, with every cohort of people on probation performing under the national target for sentencing priority cohorts (Black, Asian and minority ethnic, women, young adults and those at risk of custody) with a full pre-sentence report in the last six months.
- The poor quality of child safeguarding work in the PDU was concerning. Information exchange was not sufficiently detailed and there was limited professional curiosity, with an over-reliance on self-reporting in child contact where there were clear indicators of alcohol and drug use, and domestic abuse.

Feedback from people on probation

User Voice, the ex-offender-led charity, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation, had contact with 45 people on probation, which included 42 face-to-face surveys and three online surveys, as part of this inspection.

- The User Voice survey results reflect the casework findings on some of the work to support engagement and desistance at the assessment and planning stages of practice with people on probation. Engagement practice through meaningful induction, assessment, and planning by practitioners was evidenced by 80 per cent of respondents, who reported that their probation officer took time to understand their personal needs during induction, four in five felt involved in creating their sentence plan, and, overwhelmingly, 93 per cent understood what was expected of them whilst on probation.

| *“They explain what I need to do in detail, very helpful.”*

- The value placed on strong relationships between practitioners and people on probation to support engagement was evidenced by the 84 per cent of respondents who reported a good relationship with their probation officer. In supporting desistance, overall respondents felt well supported by probation in helping them and their rehabilitation.

| *“My probation officer had been very helpful in every way. I couldn't thank them enough. I am a positive person now. Genuinely helpful.”*

| *“I have an open and honest working relationship with my probation officer, who is very understanding. I am committed to continue working with probation to ensure I do not reoffend, and live a happy life.”*

- Although 20 per cent of respondents had experience of breach processes where relationships might break down, almost all of those surveyed, 41 out of 45, reported that have been treated fairly during their time on probation.
- The efforts to obtain the views of people on probation were seen in the 69 per cent of respondents who felt they have been asked for their views and felt heard.
- In relation to the services required to support needs and desistance, nine of the 24 people who needed support from mental health services had not yet been able to access the service.

| *“Mental health service is poor with such a long waiting list.”*

| *“Mental health support is very limited.”*

Diversity and inclusion

Strengths:

- The head of PDU and middle managers had completed Show Racism the Red Card training, in line with the regional and PDU delivery plan.
- There was a commitment to provide services for women in line with the women's whole-system approach evidence base. Despite resourcing pressures in the PDU, dedicated women's practitioners were in place, and the collaborative working relationship between probation and a range of specialist women's services providers at the York women's centre supported a trauma-informed and holistic approach to working with women on probation.
- The work to support transition arrangements for young adults had been prioritised. A Youth Justice Service (YJS) secondee was in post and operated a 50:50 split role managing young adults transitioning between the YJS and probation, in line with national protocol.

Areas for improvement:

- The assessment and planning to work with people with protected characteristics, as well as the understanding of experiences of discrimination and how these might be linked to engagement or desistance, was a lower scoring area of practice. This linked to practitioner lack of confidence to identify and discuss people with protected characteristics. Given the high number of cases with an identified disability, this was disappointing to find.
- Practice to understand and engage responsively with people on probation with neurodiversity needs was an area that had improved in the case inspection. There was an absence of exploration and discussion on the neurodivergence indicated by learning needs and behaviours presented by some people on probation in the cases inspected, which was detrimental to the engagement and desistance of services delivered.
- Work with young adults that was trauma- and maturity-informed tended to be driven by practitioner interest or outside experience rather than training or any deliberate approach to working with young adults. Some of the cases discussed people at 18 as 'adults' and not requiring safeguarding which was a concern. Work was needed to support practitioners' understanding of maturity and vulnerability of young adults.
- There was no structure in place, such as an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) group, to facilitate delivery of EDI objectives in the PDU's delivery plan and team charter, or to take ownership of promoting and celebrating diversity and inclusion.

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:

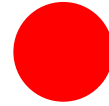
Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does assessment focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	70%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on the factors linked to offending and desistance?	80%
Does assessment focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	25%

- The quality of assessments focused well on engaging people on probation in the majority of cases. Analysis of motivation, readiness, personal circumstances, and the impact of these on the ability to comply and engage with the sentence was completed in most assessments (85 per cent).
- The identification and understanding of protected characteristics, and the potential impact on engagement, were insufficient in half of the cases. In some cases where protected characteristics were identified, such as being from a minority ethnic group or neurodiversity and mental health conditions, there was no analysis of factors such as experience of discrimination or behaviour that might impact on engagement and compliance. For young adults, there was no analysis of maturity and emotional development in three out of four cases.
- On desistance, offending-related factors were assessed sufficiently in all cases. Strengths and protective factors were identified in the majority of cases (90 per cent), and assessment of desistance needs was based on available sources of information in three-quarters of cases.
- Safeguarding enquiries (three out of 19 relevant cases) and domestic abuse enquiries (two out of 20) were not completed in all relevant cases. The quality of information received was insufficient in one-third of relevant cases (six) relating to child safeguarding, and in three cases relating to domestic abuse. In addition to concerns with quality, the information received was not used to inform the assessment of risk of harm in too many cases (11 out of 17 child safeguarding and eight out of 18 domestic abuse relevant cases).

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.](#)

- There was a lack of professional curiosity to follow up indicators of risk or seek clarification regarding the basis of decisions with children's services. There were cases where information known by probation that would require a further safeguarding assessment was not shared and, as a consequence, missed opportunities to safeguard vulnerable children. There was an over-reliance on self-reporting by the person on probation regarding relationships or contact with children that required verification.
- Available sources of information were used to inform the assessment of risk of harm to others in just five out of 20 cases. This meant critical information was missing, leading to the insufficient analysis of specific concerns about actual and potential victims in too many cases (just over two-thirds).
- The classification of risk of serious harm was incorrectly assessed in a quarter of the cases. Concerningly, risk classification was too low in three cases where the practitioner had determined a low risk of harm assessment where there were identifiable risks presenting a medium risk of harm to others.
- Overall, the quality of work to focus on the assessment of risk of harm to others was concerning. Work was insufficient across all grades of practitioners, and all categories of risk. This was a consistent theme throughout the findings in relation to risk across the Aspire (assessment, planning, implementation, review, and evaluation) case supervision model.

P 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

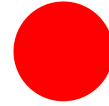
Our rating³ for planning is based on the percentage of cases we inspected being judged satisfactory against three key questions and is driven by the lowest score:

Key question	Percentage 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on engaging the person on probation?	70%
Does planning focus sufficiently on reducing reoffending and supporting desistance?	70%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	35%

- The work that focused on planning to support engagement and desistance was a strength: 70 per cent of the cases inspected considered the personal circumstances, readiness, and motivation to change of the person on probation. Plans set a level, pattern, and type of contact sufficient to engage the individual and support the effectiveness of interventions in 17 out of 20 cases.
- Practitioners prioritised the most important factors linked to supporting a reduction in offending and these were strengths-based in most cases (85 per cent). Subsequently, the majority of plans (85 per cent) also identified appropriate agencies to support the needs of the person on probation.
- Within planning, practitioners did not plan to address risk of harm factors and prioritise those most critical in 45 per cent of cases. Poor identification and analysis of risk to victims from assessments then filtered through to the planning activity to protect them. Subsequently, effective contingency planning was an area requiring development. The necessary and effective contingency arrangements required to manage risk of harm were found in just 35 per cent of cases.
- Our findings in assessment relating to limited professional curiosity, information sharing, and multi-agency collaboration to manage risk of harm were similarly evident in planning, where appropriate links to the work of other agencies involved with the person on probation and any multi-agency plans were absent in almost half of the cases (45 per cent).

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?	55%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support desistance?	30%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	20%

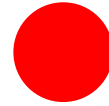
- Maintaining effective working relationships, including taking account of diversity (65 per cent) and the appropriate flexibility to consider personal circumstances (80 per cent), was done well. This was balanced with appropriate responses to compliance issues, with enforcement action taken in 13 out of 16 cases.
- Despite staff vacancies and absence, 70 per cent of the cases inspected had one practitioner during the inspection period. This provided consistency and continuity for people on probation.
- The most critical services to reduce reoffending and support desistance were not always sequenced in order of priority need; 65 per cent of cases inspected did not receive the most critical service first.
- While there were some positive co-location working arrangements, and we had found relationships with providers to be a strength in the domain one inspection findings, the involvement of other organisations in the delivery of services was not coordinated well in 70 per cent of the cases. In some instances, referrals to providers were made and the work either not commenced or stopped quickly due to non-compliance. Practitioners did not follow up these cases to address the barriers to engagement and continue with the delivery of interventions. In addition, referrals were not always made when needed; for example, in 12 of 17 cases where commissioned rehabilitative services were required, these were not offered.
- Although the level, nature, and contact offered to people on probation were sufficient to manage and minimise risk of harm in the majority of cases (80 per cent), we found limited meaningful work to reduce reoffending and keep people safe across all offending behaviour needs in the inspected cases. Within this, the

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.](#)

most-needed interventions were those to address lifestyle and associates, thinking and behaviour, and attitudes. Structured interventions and toolkits designed to meet these needs were not routinely delivered; we found just one case with toolkit delivery.

- The themes we found in the work to protect the public in assessment and planning fed through to the interventions and delivery of services to keep people safe. There was insufficient attention to protecting actual and potential victims (17 out of 19 relevant cases). In particular, we found limited multi-agency working (in three of 15 relevant cases), including information sharing in safeguarding children and domestic abuse (four out of 14 relevant cases).
- The coordination of other agencies in managing and minimising risk of harm was insufficient in 65 per cent of cases. This included MAPPA level one cases with risk factors such as accommodation, where homelessness was an acute risk indicator, not escalated sufficiently, and practitioners engaged in MAPPA level setting and reviews without sufficient management oversight.
- There were missed opportunities for valuable strategies to support the effective management of risk and professional curiosity. Home visits were conducted in half of the relevant cases, and key individuals in the life of the person on probation were not engaged, where appropriate, in 12 out of 19 relevant cases. This meant there was an over-reliance on self-reporting about behaviours such as alcohol and drug use, and contact with children and intimate partners.

P 2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating for reviewing⁵ 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?	50%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting desistance?	55%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	25%

- Improvements were needed across all aspects of reviewing. Disappointingly, the strengths found in the work to support engagement and desistance in assessment and planning activity were not replicated in the work on reviewing.
- Consideration of adjustments required to support compliance and engagement was insufficient in more than half of the relevant cases (eight out of 15). There were cases where superficial engagement, for example an over-reliance on self-reporting on levels of alcohol and drug use, was not challenged and plans not adjusted to include routine drug testing, where appropriate, or referrals to specialist services. Where interventions had not started, or limited work had been delivered, reviewing did not prompt information exchange with providers or an opportunity to review and reset the necessary progress.
- Consistent with the improvements required in the work to manage risk of harm under assessment, planning, and implementation and delivery, reviewing that focused on keeping people safe was also insufficient. Changes in factors related to risk of harm and the necessary adjustments to ongoing work was done sufficiently in just two out of 13 relevant cases. This meant that indicators of a deterioration in protective factors, such as increased alcohol use, the development of intimate relationships, and repeat non-compliance, were not sufficiently reviewed.
- Input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm was sufficient in just three out of 14 relevant cases. Where information was missing, the limited professional curiosity and insufficient focus on actual and potential victims in assessment, planning, and delivery, reviewing activity did not rectify these gaps. There were cases missing police intelligence where there was a clear need to verify concerning behaviour and obtain up-to-date information. Opportunities to follow up and share information with children's services were also not completed as part of the reviewing activity.

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

Outcomes

- Despite strengths in the assessment and planning to support a reduction in reoffending, it was disappointing, given the range and availability of services in York PDU, to find that sufficient improvements in the factors most closely linked to offending (25 per cent) and the factors related to risk of harm were achieved in few cases (14 of 19 relevant cases).
- Three people on probation had been charged with a new offence and a further six convicted of a new offence since the commencement of the order or licence. It was concerning that almost half of the cases (eight out of 20) had been convicted or charged with further offending.

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)