



Response to HMIP Reports

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Referencing PDU Probation Services Inspection Reports:

Swansea Neath Port Talbot (January 22)

Gwent (February 22)

West Sussex (May 22)

West Kent (May 22)

Essex North (May 22)

Probation Practitioner Toolkits Delivery Guidance for Probation

Practitioners V.1 (April 22)

Response to the recent HMIP Reports

GMB/SCOOP welcomes the recent round of HMIP inspections and notes that the first 6 reports on the new unified Probation Service have now been published.

These inspections were undertaken following the reunification of the service after the disaster of Transforming Rehabilitation and whilst coming out the COVID pandemic during which the NPS and CRCs redesigned their delivery models and IT infrastructure to maintain public safety and continuity of service. This work was undertaken at great personal and emotional cost to the staff of the service, working from alternative locations and balancing the same pressures that the lock downs brought to the rest of the country.

The results of the reports published to date are disappointing with scores ranging from 1 to 9. The highest scoring had professional judgement applied to increase the score by 2 points.

Peter Brandt
GMB/SCOOP

General Observations

The reports largely read as if each PDU is a distinct autonomous area with little acknowledgment that they are in reality small departments of HMPPS and MoJ which control a lot of activity and resources from the centre. Hence there is a high focus on PDU activity with less perceived emphasis on regional or national plans and data.

There is little comment on the overall regional leadership structure and little focus on regional leadership plans focussing more on how the PDU head is leading the area

Where issues with the delivery of interventions or services are observed there is little mention of the role of Heads of Community Integration or Interventions and so it appears the PDU Head is solely responsible for all delivery in the area

There is inconsistent use of data sets and sources and presentations, so it is difficult to compare the reported figures.

Workloads & Caseloads

There are mixed messages about workloads/caseloads and staff observations about feeling over worked. The caseloads are compared to the Workload Measurement Tool - as if that has some additional meaning - which is confusing. The caseload is the number of cases held and the workload is the amount of work required of each case extrapolated to give a proportion of officer available hours filled by the work with the ideal being 100%. Given that there are statements that staff are feeling over worked, and that there is a consistent message that additional staff need to be employed, there should be a greater focus on the accuracy of the Workload Measurement Tool and factors that can affect how workload is reported, rather than acceptance of its product. It also needs to be clear if the Inspectorate believes workload or caseload is the more important factor to be considered.

Statements are made about frequency of supervision every 4 to 6 weeks. It is not clear what this is based upon. Mention of Touch point model is scarce, and assumptions are made about the supervision model in the Probation Service which are outdated and do not match the model offered by the Probation Service as it moves to the Touchpoint and SEEDS2 models.

Inconsistencies in Measures & Recommendations

There are different ways of calculating Percentage of UPW requirements with hours outstanding beyond 12 months. West Sussex total cases are 580, 158 beyond 12 months but calculated at 70% as it appears to have only counted the proportion of requirements past 12 months (227); whereas Gwent was a simple 617 cases with 23% beyond 12 months and no other number given. If West Sussex was calculated the same way as other reports its proportion of hours would be 27%. Other reports give figures between 23% and 37.1% with 27% being the second lowest.

In the Swansea Neath Port Talbot report it is not clear what the criteria is for "Proportion of inspected cases where the inspectors identified substance misuse problems - 70%"; and it is as inconsistently used as both "Proportion of inspected cases where Inspectors identified drug misuse problems 48%" and "Proportion of inspected cases where Inspectors identified alcohol misuse problems 40%".

In the West Sussex report, it quotes that the Toolkits are designed to be used by practitioners with no further Toolkit specific training required without, it appears, checking. (See Approved Suite of Probation Practitioner Toolkits Delivery Guidance for Probation Practitioners V1 APRIL 2022 PG 5: *"Certain toolkits may require practitioners to attend/engage with specific training and/or briefings before they are able to use them. Other toolkits might assume*

knowledge and experience sufficient for delivery has been gained through achievement of a professional qualification grade and the completion of associated learning and development expected by that role (for example Probation Officer and/or Probation Service Officer)."

The recommendations are inconsistent, e.g. Swansea Neath Port Talbot PDU has:

'Improve the quality of work to assess, plan for, manage and review risk of harm'

Gwent PDU had:

'Improve the quality of work to assess, manage and review risk of harm'

As Gwent was rated Requires improvement for planning why wasn't it included?

West Sussex PDU which was assessed as inadequate across all three domains (Assessment, planning and Implementation) had no similar recommendation.

In the Swansea Neath Port Talbot PDU report Wales is asked to 'Ensure that Performance monitoring has a far greater focus on the effectiveness of provision' and in the Gwent report it is asked 'to ensure the performance monitoring has a greater emphasis on the effectiveness and quality of service delivery'

There should be more consistency in recommendations in areas that are being inspected at the same time.

Staff vetting is flagged in 5 of the reports as an issue with different recommendations:

Swansea Neath Port Talbot there is no recommendation.

Gwent's report recommends 'HMPPS should address and significantly reduce the 14-16 week delay in vetting for both new and existing staff'

West Kent's report recommends 'HMPPS should support KSS probation region to expedite the vetting of newly joining staff as a matter of urgency.'

West Sussex's report recommends 'HMPPS should address and significantly reduce the 20-week delay in vetting for both new and existing staff'

Essex North's report recommends HMPPS 'Should expedite vetting of staff as a matter of urgency.'

There does not seem to be a clear understanding of which part of the organisation is responsible for the commissioning of the vetting of staff and therefore has the ability to address the shortcomings.

Similarly, HMPPS is asked in reports:

- ensure that staffing levels are swiftly determined for the PDU and region
- ensure that sufficient staffing levels are determined and delivered for the PDU and region
- support East of England region to recruit and retain staff
- support KSS Probation region to recruit and retain staff as a matter of urgency

Whereas in another report the region is recommended to:

'Share the target staffing data with the PDU so they may undertake appropriate workforce planning and support the PDU to promptly improve staffing levels'

It is not clear that there is a clear understanding of the role the centre plays in the recruitment and placement of PQiP staff and the role this activity will play in the planned increase of staffing across the Probation Service.

Northamptonshire had two scores lifted in banding as they were within 5% of the next score with little explanation. From the report it is difficult to see why Gwent and West Sussex with similar scores were not given similar treatment.