HM Inspectorate of Probation

Examining the links between probation supervision and positive outcomes – early progress

HM Inspectorate of Probation

Research & Analysis Bulletin 2023/03

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HM Inspectorate of Probation is committed to reviewing, developing and promoting the evidence base for high-quality probation and youth offending services. Our *Research & Analysis Bulletins* are aimed at all those with an interest in the quality of these services, presenting key findings to assist with informed debate and help drive improvement where it is required. The findings are used within the Inspectorate to develop our inspection programmes, guidance and position statements.

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Context

When designing our recent inspection programmes, we applied a logic model approach and focused our inspection standards upon those key 'inputs' and 'activities' which are the drivers of positive outcomes. Getting to the heart of current probation delivery through on-site inspection is where we believe we can add most value – based on our independence and the expertise/experience of our inspectors, we can focus on the quality of work with individual people on probation.

A guiding principle for our standards frameworks is to be evidence-informed, reflecting the latest evidence (from research and inspection) on what contributes to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, exemplifying what good probation work looks like. In 2021, we introduced an early outcomes standard to examine the progress being made in individual cases. Using the data collated from these cases, this bulletin examines the relationships between inspectors' judgements regarding the quality of delivery and their judgements regarding early outcomes.

Approach

The findings are based upon data collected from our probation inspections completed between October 2021 and May 2023, covering 32 Probation Delivery Units across 11 of the 12 probation regions. In each inspection, we assessed individual cases and interviewed probation professionals about these cases.

October 2021

1,539 case assessments

May 2023

1,023 community sentence

513 custodial post-release
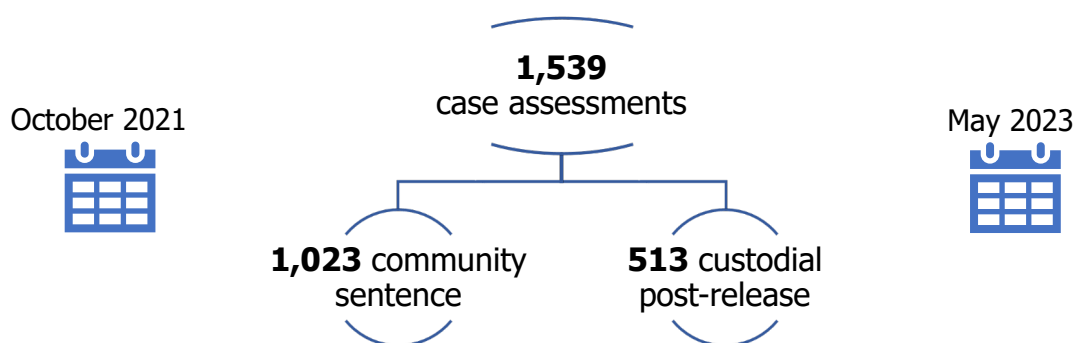
Key findings and implications

- The analysis revealed independently significant associations between inspectors' judgements regarding the quality of implementation/delivery and their judgements regarding early outcomes and reasonable progress. Positive progress was much more likely when the delivery was of a high quality, encompassing the key probation tasks of (i) engaging the individual, (ii) supporting their desistance, and (iii) keeping other people safe. This supports a personalised balanced approach, underpinned by secure, consistent and trusting relationships between practitioners and the people they are supervising.

- The findings provide one source of support for the probation delivery logic model. Bearing in mind the economic and social costs of reoffending and that about 170,000 were supervised in the community by the probation service at the end of 2022, the potential benefits for individual people and society as a whole are clear. Crucially, practitioners need to be empowered to deliver their best practice and given the time and space to build secure and trusting relationships, supported through strong local strategic partnerships and the availability of a wide range of high-quality interventions, resources and opportunities.

- A key outstanding question is whether the positive early outcomes observed by our inspectors endure over a longer time period. To help answer this question, our Research & Analysis Bulletin 2023/04 examines the relationships between inspectors' judgements on the quality of delivery and later output/outcome measures in the form of sentence completion and proven reoffending.

1. Introduction

When designing recent inspection programmes, we applied a logic model approach and focused our standards framework upon those key 'inputs' and 'activities' which are the drivers of positive outcomes. As set out in Figure 1, we have recognised that various outputs and outcomes are being measured by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). We see all of this work as complementary; without high-quality inputs (such as professional staff and comprehensive services) and activities (such as case assessment and individual supervision), probation providers are less likely to meet the enduring aims for probation.

Figure 1: Probation delivery logic model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact (Goals)
HM Inspectorate of Probation	HM Inspectorate of Probation	HMPPS metrics	HMPPS / MoJ	Strategic goals / expectations for probation
enable	**generate**	**result in**	**contribute to**	
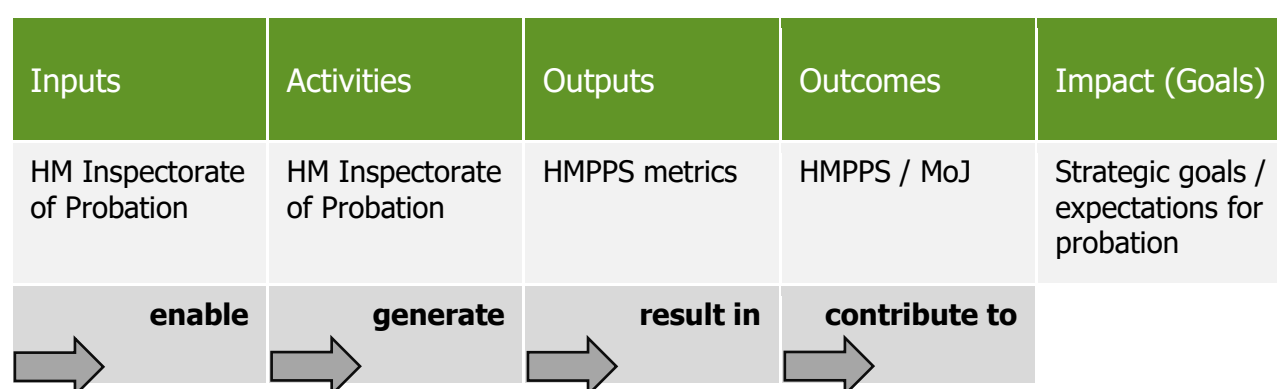
Having a common language is important when developing a logic model. Key definitions are as follows:

- **inputs**: the resources that enable providers to be able to carry out its activities

- **activities**: the day-to-day delivery within the control of the providers

- **outputs**: products or services that result from a provider's activities. These are often expressed quantitatively; for example, how many sessions received, and the amount of contact with a project/intervention

- **outcomes**: the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from what a provider delivers. These will contribute to a final goal and may include changes in an individual's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviour[1]

- **goals**: the broader social changes that providers are trying to achieve.

A guiding principle for our standards frameworks is to be evidence-informed, reflecting the latest evidence, learning and experience (from research and inspection) on the key organisational inputs and the key ingredients of day-to-day delivery.[2] In our Research & Analysis Bulletin 2020/01, we examined the relationships between these first two stages of the logic model, as captured within our inspection data, finding links between the quality of

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[1] It is beneficial to try to maintain a clear distinction between outputs and outcomes. Outputs are the products of the organisations, narrowly defined. They tend to be easier to measure than outcomes, as they are closer to the immediate work of the organisations.

[2] In developing the standards, we worked constructively with providers and others to build a common view of high-quality probation services and what should be expected.

delivery in individual cases and our organisational-level standards on staffing (standard 1.2) and services (standard 1.3). We found that that the quality of probation supervision declined when practitioners perceived that:

- their workloads were unmanageable (noticeable at 50+ cases)

- their skills, ability and knowledge were insufficient

- in-house training was poor

- relationships with other agencies were ineffective.

In 2021, we introduced an early outcomes standard to examine the progress being made in individual cases (to supplement the longer-term HMPPS/MoJ measures). In making an overall judgement on early outcomes, inspectors considered progress in the following areas:

- factors relating to offending

- strengths and protective factors

- risk of harm to others

- sufficiency of compliance

- reductions in offending.

Inspectors also took into account the nature of the sentence and what progress it was reasonable to expect by the time of inspection, bearing in mind that the cases commenced supervision within the community six to seven months previously, either at the start of a community sentence or following release from custody.

Using the data collated from recent cases, this bulletin examines the relationships between inspectors' judgements regarding the quality of delivery and their judgements regarding early outcomes, providing another source of validation for the logic model set out above. We have also examined the relationships between inspectors' judgements on the quality of delivery and later output/outcome measures in the form of sentence completion and proven reoffending; this analysis is set out in Research & Analysis Bulletin 2023/04. We see the two analyses as complementary; reoffending measures have clear strategic and symbolic importance, while other measures help to satisfy requirements around timeliness and sufficient tailoring to the individual and the services/interventions provided.

2. Findings

The findings presented in this bulletin are based upon case assessment data from inspections conducted across England and Wales between October 2021 and May 2023. Examining inspectors' judgements, the focus of the analysis was to examine whether high-quality delivery led to more positive early outcomes, and also to identify which aspects of delivery appeared most important.

The probation inspection dataset consisted of 1,539 case assessments. Our inspectors made judgements regarding quality across all stages of the ASPIRE model (see Figure 2 below). There is an inspection standard for each of these stages, with each standard underpinned by three key questions which reflect the importance of (i) engaging the person on probation, (ii) supporting their desistance, and (iii) keeping other people safe.[3] We have previously examined links across the stages (see, for example, our Research & Analysis Bulletin 2020/03.

Figure 2: The ASPIRE model
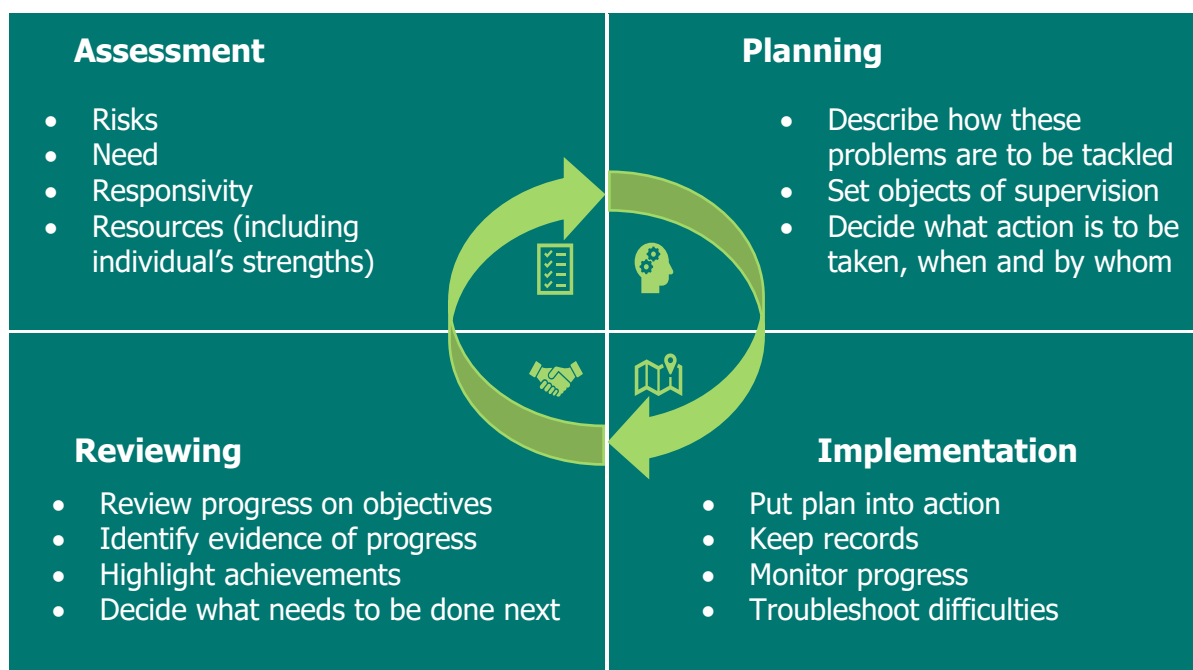
In this bulletin we have concentrated upon inspectors' judgements in relation to the implementation stage, recognising its importance to people on probation and how it should reflect and align to the work undertaken at all the other stages. The underpinning key questions on engagement, desistance, and safety were entered into regression models alongside variables covering the person on probation's demographics (age, sex and ethnicity), length and type (community sentence or post-custody) of sentence, previous

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[3] The current full standards framework can be found here:
https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings.

convictions, and risk levels (both likelihood of reoffending[4] and risk of serious harm). The outcome variable was the inspectors' further judgement as to whether early outcomes were positive, demonstrating reasonable progress for the person on probation. The headline figures for the three key questions and the outcomes question were as follows:

In **45 per cent** of cases, it was judged that the implementation and delivery of services effectively supported the person on probation's **desistance**.

In **56 per cent** of cases, it was judged that the sentence/post-custody period had been implemented effectively with a focus on **engaging** the person on probation.

In **35 per cent** of cases, it was judged that the implementation and delivery effectively supported the **safety** of other people.

In **36 per cent** of cases, it was judged that the **early outcomes** demonstrated that reasonable progress had been made.

Inspectors made further judgements in relation to a number of prompts under each key question,[5] and these were added into a further regression model. The purpose of all the models was to examine which of the inspectors' judgements on the quality of delivery were associated with their judgements on early progress when controlling for the other variables and the relationships between them. Further detail regarding the analysis can be found in Annex A, with the main outputs set out in Annex B. The associations highlighted in the following sections are those which were found to be statistically significant within the regression models. The individual/case information variable consistently found to be significant within the models was the individual's likelihood of reoffending, hence why it is included in many of the figures.

2.1 Engaging the person on probation

As specified by our inspection standard on implementation and delivery, we expect to see high-quality well-focused, personalised and coordinated services which engage the individual person on probation. A focus on engagement is one of the three underpinning key questions, recognising that one of the key tasks for probation practitioners is to find a way

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[4] Based upon the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS) score. This actuarial tool predicts proven reoffending within one and two years using demographic and offending variables. For further information on OGRS, see Moore, 2015; Chapter 8.

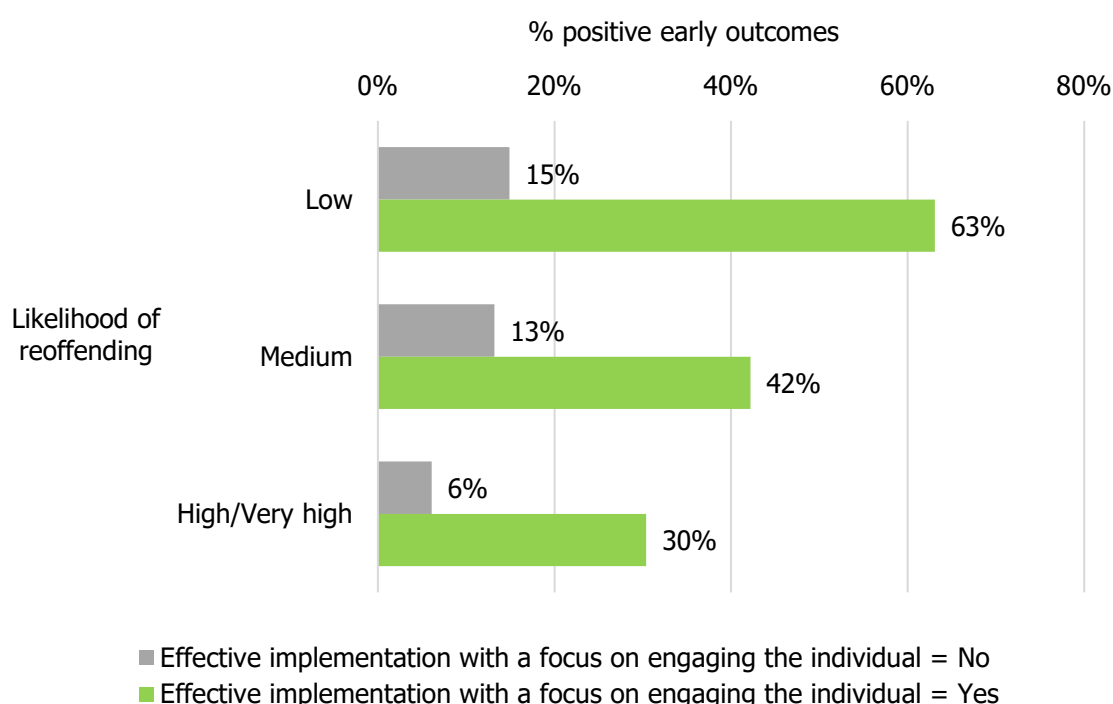[5] In our Research & Analysis Bulletin 2020/05, we examined the technical performance of the standards framework, finding that the prompts largely focused upon the most *critical* elements of the key questions; that the standards themselves had strong *coherence*, with the prompts within each key question correlating well with each other; and that the standards were measuring *discrete* aspects of delivery.

to engage with an individual, forming a level of rapport and trust, even when the individual may be extremely reluctant to comply with the process.

The research literature consistently highlights the importance of positive, respectful and trusting relationships between practitioners and those on probation, with the latter most influenced to change by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value. For example, in a 2011 study, Hughes undertook interviews with 12 members of probation staff (six probation officers and six probation services officers) as well as 12 individuals who had recently received community orders. The staff frequently identified relationship skills as most important for establishing engagement and supporting compliance; more specifically, being open, showing empathy, respect, understanding and listening. Those on probation likewise emphasised the centrality of the relationship with their probation officer to their probation experience; they stressed the importance of having a non-judgemental approach, respect, openness, fairness and being listened to. The literature further emphasises the importance of maintaining responsivity, so that delivery remains tailored to the individual, and positive, trusting relationships continue to build. Wherever possible, practitioners should act as positive and motivating role models for those being supervised, use natural opportunities to demonstrate thinking and behavioural skills, and work with individuals to seek out solutions through problem-solving advice (see Academic Insights paper 2019/05 by Raynor). Real collaboration and co-production has also been highlighted as important.

As shown by Figure 3, in those cases where inspectors made a positive judgement regarding implementation and engagement, they were far more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes were positive, with clear differences across the assessed likelihood of reoffending levels. Across all inspected cases, the judgement regarding early outcomes was positive in 53 per cent of those cases where the implementation had been judged to be effective, compared to 13 per cent of cases where the implementation had not been judged to be effective.

Figure 3: Positive early outcomes by effective implementation (and likelihood of reoffending level)

% positive early outcomes

Likelihood of reoffending

Low: 15% (No), 63% (Yes)
Medium: 13% (No), 42% (Yes)
High/Very high: 6% (No), 30% (Yes)

■ Effective implementation with a focus on engaging the individual = No
■ Effective implementation with a focus on engaging the individual = Yes

Further analysis revealed the importance of timely delivery, both in terms of commencing the sentence requirements and in identifying/addressing any risks of non-compliance. The requirements of an order or licence should commence promptly, unless there is a specific and defensible reason not to do so, with consideration given to appropriate sequencing when there are multiple requirements and to the completion timescales, allowing for consolidation work where it is needed. Attention should also be given to promoting compliance, with practitioners maintaining a balance between encouragement and 'pushing'. Practitioners should (i) help the person on probation to recognise the positive changes and benefits from desistance; and (ii) take full account of personal circumstances that might make compliance more difficult and working with them to overcome such difficulties. As part of the exercising of legitimate authority, the consequences of non-compliance should be explained to the individual. Instances of non-compliance should be dealt with in a proportionate, fair and transparent manner – procedural justice indicates that the perceived fairness of processes affects how people view those in authority and subsequently respond.

As indicated by Figure 4, in those cases where inspectors made positive judgements regarding the timeliness of delivery, both in terms of commencing sentence requirements and in terms of identifying/addressing any risks of non-compliance, they were significantly more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes were positive.

Figure 4: Positive early outcomes by prompts linked to effective implementation

% positive early outcomes

Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?
- Yes: 48%
- No: 20%
- No, due to non-compliance: 8%

Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?
- Yes: 40%
- No: 15%
- No risk of non-compliance: 54%
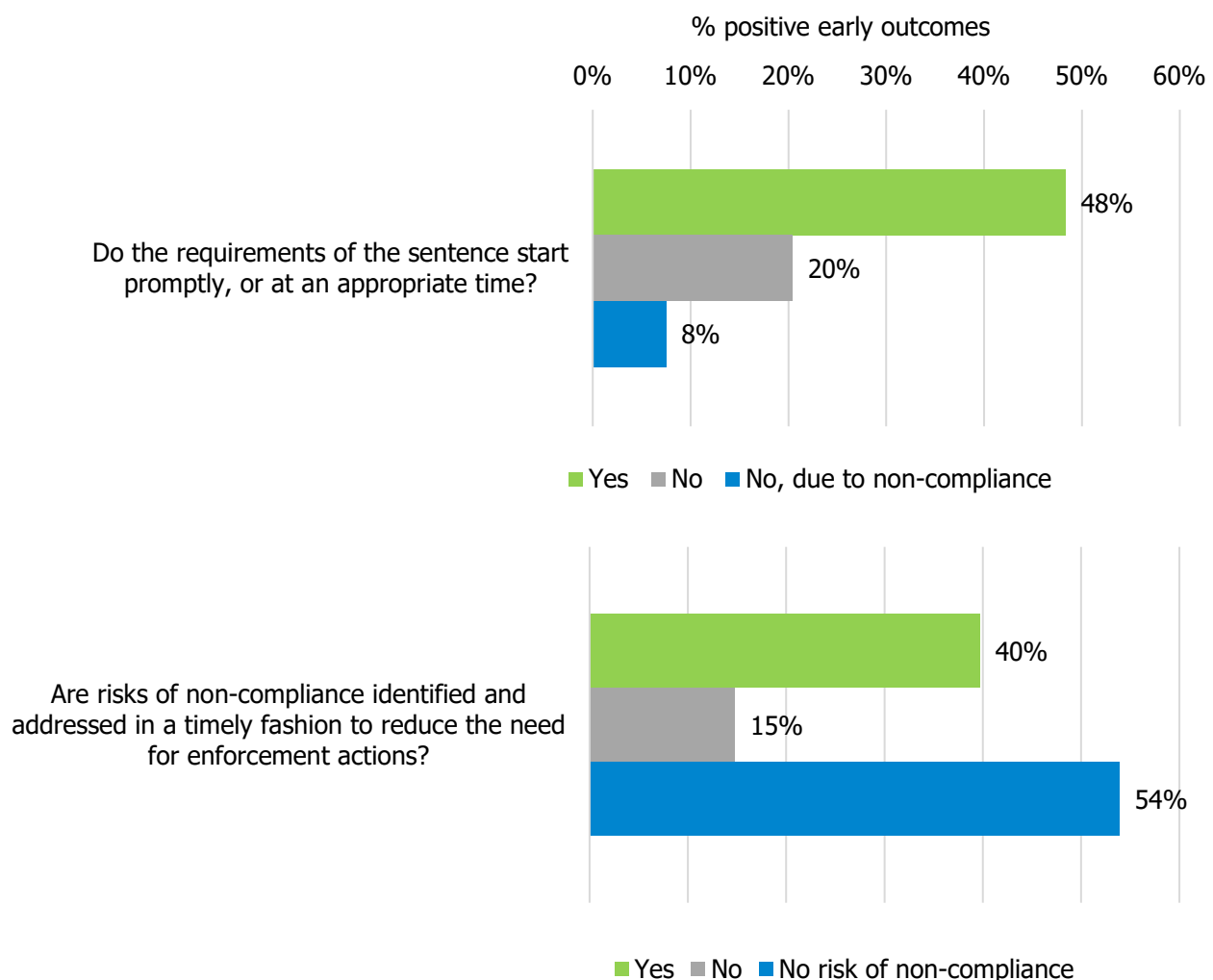
2.2 Effectively supporting the individual's desistance

Research studies indicate that desistance from crime is more likely where the delivery of services is consistent and integrated, with sufficient continuity and consolidation of learning. Interventions should combine holistically to address individual risks and needs and build upon strengths. Sufficient emphasis should be placed on helping the individual overcome practical obstacles to desistance. Sequencing and alignment are also important to ensure that the most immediate needs are addressed first; only after some stability has been established can work be effectively undertaken on additional needs.

As the desistance research has continued to develop over recent decades (see, for example, Rocque, 2017; Maruna and Mann, 2019; Albertson, 2021; Beck and McGinnis, 2022), further key principles have been highlighted, as set out in Figure 5.
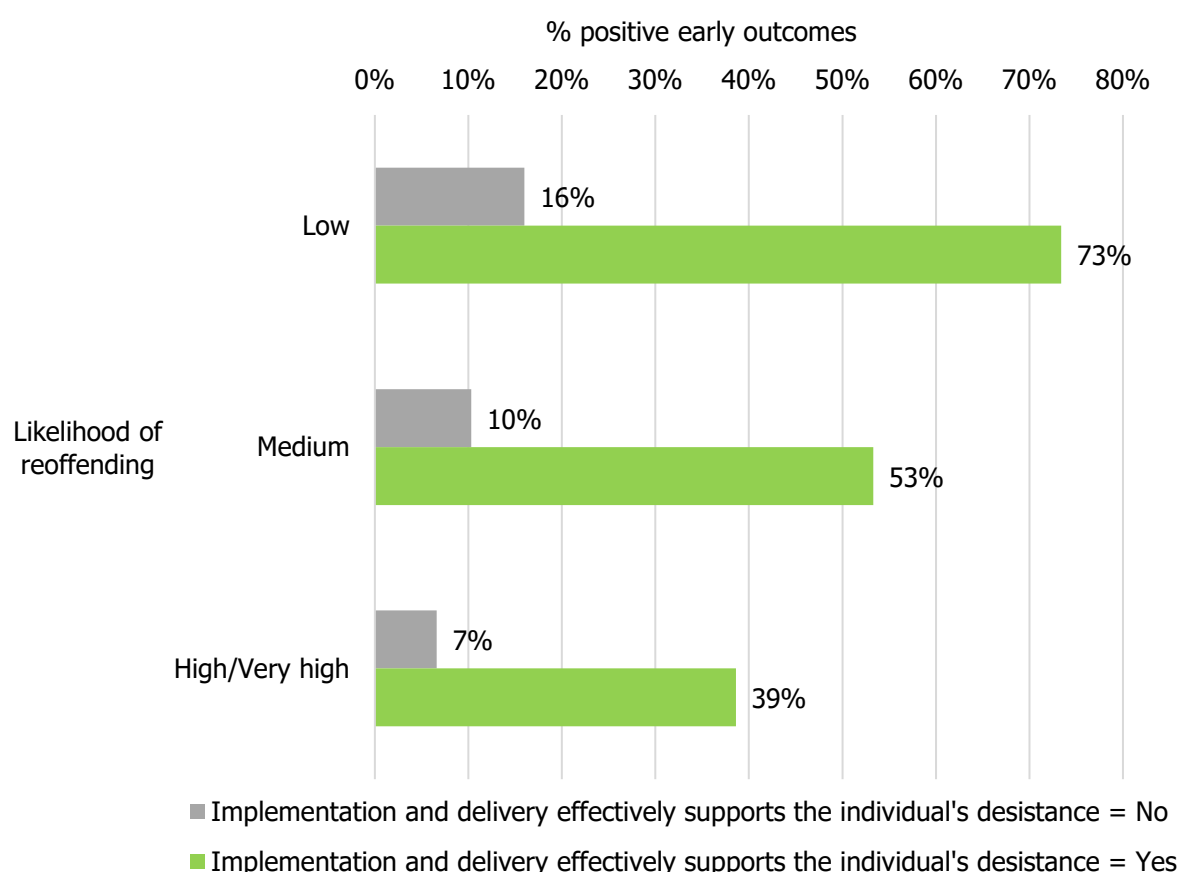
Figure 5: Key principles for supporting desistance

As shown by Figure 6, in those cases where inspectors made a positive judgement regarding the quality of the delivery in effectively supporting the individual's desistance, they were far more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes

were positive, with clear differences across the assessed likelihood of reoffending levels. Across all inspected cases, the judgement regarding early outcomes was positive in 64 per cent of those cases where the delivery was deemed to be effective, compared to 13 per cent of cases where it was not deemed effective.

Figure 6: Positive early outcomes by effective support of the individual's desistance (and likelihood of reoffending level)

% positive early outcomes

Low
- No: 16%
- Yes: 73%

Likelihood of reoffending

Medium
- No: 10%
- Yes: 53%

High/Very high
- No: 7%
- Yes: 39%

■ Implementation and delivery effectively supports the individual's desistance = No
■ Implementation and delivery effectively supports the individual's desistance = Yes

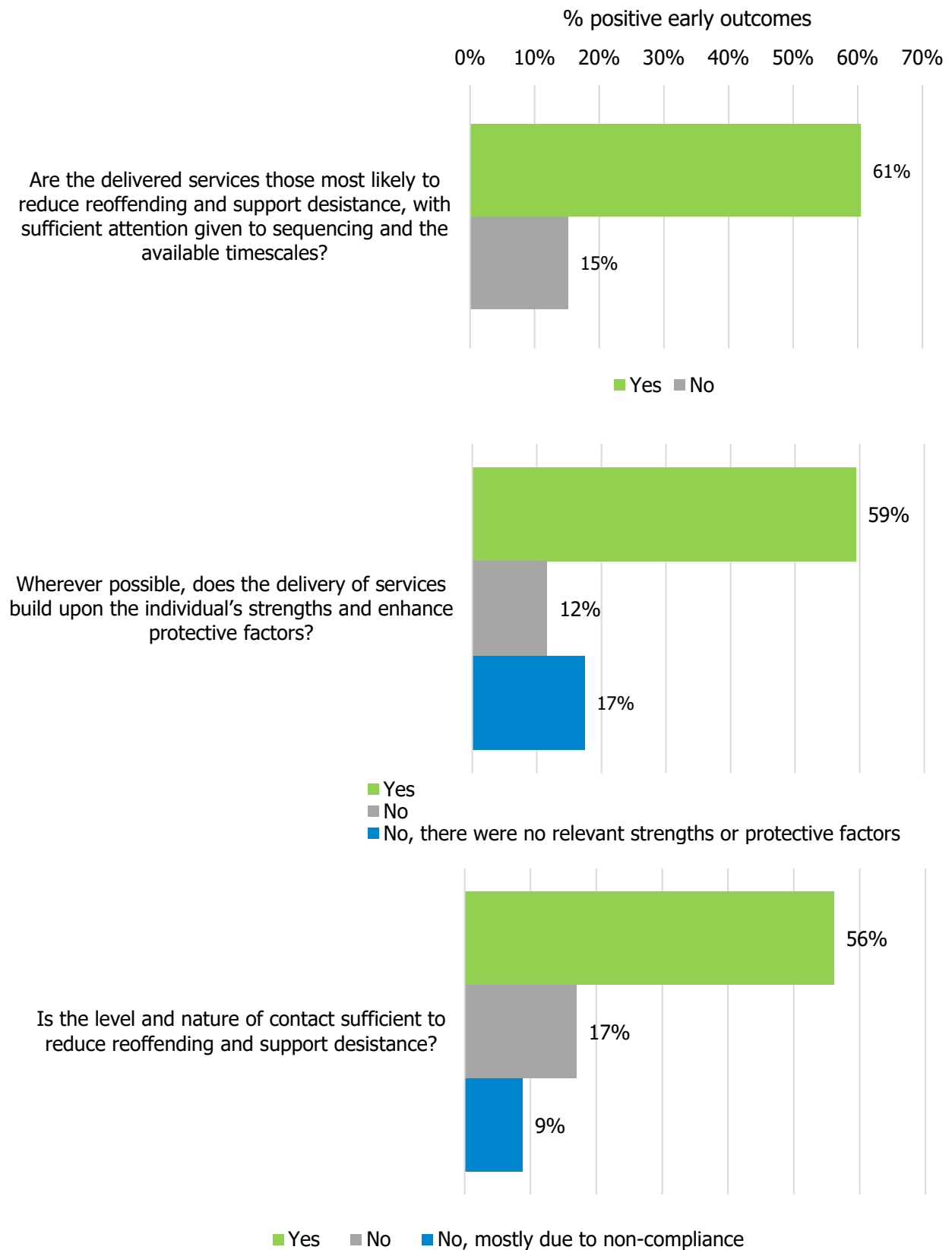Further analysis of the inspection prompts revealed the importance of the following:

- *Delivering services which are most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales.* Within the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model (see Academic Insights paper 2023/06 by Bonta), the need principle states that relevant criminogenic needs should be the focus of targeted interventions, with the goal of moving these needs in the direction of becoming strengths; while the responsivity principle specifies that interventions should be tailored, among other things, to the individual's strengths, motivations, preferences, personality, age, gender, ethnicity and cultural identifications. There should thus always be a clear rationale for the delivery of specific services and interventions, in line with the needs of the person on probation, with appropriate sequencing to address the most critical factors first unless there is a specific reason for doing otherwise (Stephenson, Harkins and Woodhams, 2013). The interventions should also be consistent with the nature, requirements and length of the order/licence, and they should be easy to access and person-centred, with all efforts having been made to identify and remove barriers to access. This requires practitioners to have access to good range of high-quality services and interventions. There should be

a strong mix of internal and external services, and of universal, targeted and specialist services, providing the necessary range and depth of intervention to meet the full range of individuals' needs. Sufficient flexibility and options are required to cater for those with often chaotic and unstable circumstances, and for more vulnerable groups.

- *Building upon the individual's strengths and enhancing protective factors.* This includes interventions to develop internal strengths, such as motivation to change, and those which help to build external protective factors, such as involvement in pro-social activities. Importantly, protective factors have been identified at the individual, family, community and society levels. We previously examined whether probation delivery was being tailored to both needs and strengths in our [Research & Analysis Bulletin 2020/03](#). The importance of utilising protective factors wherever possible was again highlighted, which could include family members who were willing to offer accommodation or take an active part in discussions, or placing a focus on regaining access to children when needs had been appropriately addressed (see also Kitson-Boyce and Betteridge, 2022).

- *The level and nature of contact.* This should always be personalised, with the risk principle within the RNR model highlighting the need to match intensity to the likelihood of offending. At the same time, as recognised within our [Research & Analysis Bulletin 2023/05](#), the establishment of trust and rapport is aided by sufficiently regular supervision sessions, particularly when of a reasonable length and quality – this is even more important where there is a history of non-compliance and/or the person displays low levels of engagement. Practitioners need to continue to encourage and motivate, paying attention to the overall direction and the progress being made, with adjustments being made when necessary. Conversely, irregular and/or poor-quality appointments or a lack of timely follow up can lead to detrimental 'drift'.

As indicated by Figure 7, when inspectors deemed that these requirements were being met, they were significantly more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes were positive.

Figure 7: Positive early outcomes by prompts linked to effective support of the individual's desistance

% positive early outcomes

Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?
- Yes: 61%
- No: 15%

■ Yes ■ No

Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the individual's strengths and enhance protective factors?
- Yes: 59%
- No: 12%
- No, there were no relevant strengths or protective factors: 17%

■ Yes
■ No
■ No, there were no relevant strengths or protective factors

Is the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?
- Yes: 56%
- No: 17%
- No, mostly due to non-compliance: 9%

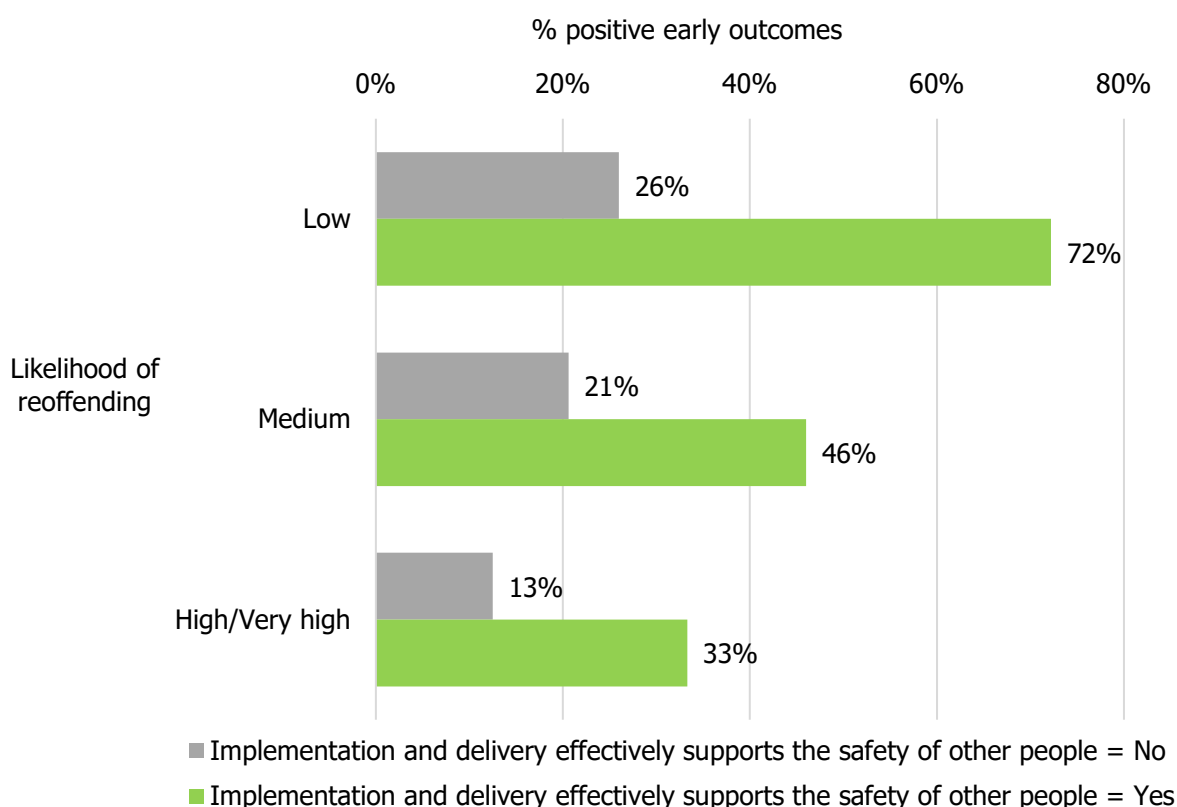■ Yes ■ No ■ No, mostly due to non-compliance

2.3 Effectively supporting the safety of other people

The third key question which inspectors consider is whether the implementation and delivery of services effectively supports the safety of other people. We expect probation practitioners to take reasonable steps to keep other people safe, including ensuring that constructive and restrictive interventions are delivered when these are required. As set out in the Academic Insights paper 2021/07 by Kemshall, the aim should be to integrate practice to manage risk with practice to enhance desistance, supporting the safe reintegration of individuals into the community.

Focus on desistance + Focus on safety = Protective integration

As shown by Figure 8, in those cases where inspectors made a positive judgement regarding the quality of the delivery in terms of the safety of others, they were far more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes were positive, with clear differences across the assessed likelihood of reoffending levels. Across all inspected cases, the judgement regarding early outcomes was positive in 61 per cent of those cases where the delivery was deemed to be effective, compared to 22 per cent of cases where it was not deemed effective.

Figure 8: Positive early outcomes by effective support of others' safety (and likelihood of reoffending level)

% positive early outcomes

Likelihood of reoffending	No	Yes
Low	26%	72%
Medium	21%	46%
High/Very high	13%	33%

■ Implementation and delivery effectively supports the safety of other people = No
■ Implementation and delivery effectively supports the safety of other people = Yes

More specifically, inspectors were significantly more likely to judge that reasonable progress was being made and that the early outcomes were positive when sufficient attention was given to protecting actual and potential victims (see Figure 9). In all cases, we expect probation practitioners to identify whether there is a previous victim or other identifiable potential victims who could be at risk of harm. This is often the situation in domestic abuse or child protection cases. Inspectors look for active management in the case that gives priority to victim safety, including monitoring of any licence conditions or other orders (such as restraining orders, sexual harm prevention orders, and domestic violence prevention orders). Evidence could include active liaison with police, children's services or other agencies; the use of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Violent and Sexual Offender Register (ViSOR) to access and share information; and minimising contact through, for example, appropriate consideration of unpaid work placements, reporting times, and programme allocation.

Figure 9: Positive early outcomes by sufficient attention given to protection of victims
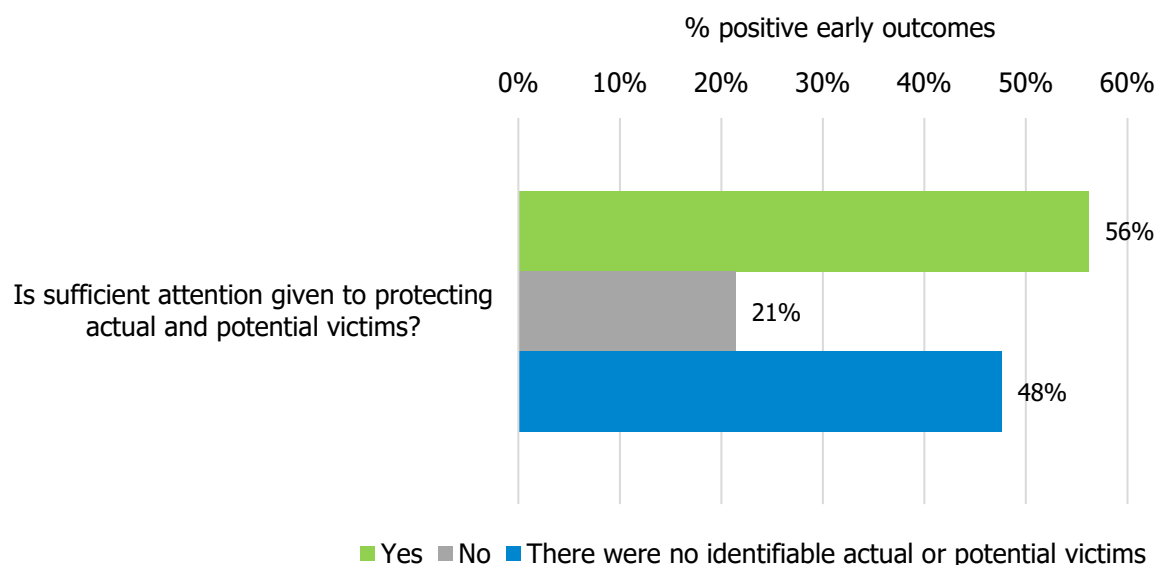
3. Conclusion

Beck and McGinnis (2022) state that 'supervision's effectiveness in reducing offending is well established, yet the effectiveness of the type and quality of the prescribed supervision is less known'. The analysis in this bulletin contributes to filling this evidence gap by examining the relationships between inspectors' judgements regarding the quality of differing aspects of delivery and their judgements regarding early outcomes. When considering outcomes, inspectors took into account what progress it was reasonable to expect in each individual case at the point of inspection; many of the individuals who come into contact with probation have a range of complex needs, often resulting from traumatic life experiences, and one of the key points set out within the desistance literature is the need for realism. It may take considerable time for supervision and support to help change entrenched behaviours and the problems that underlie them, and the desistance process can involve a number of false starts and 'relapses'.

As shown by the analysis, positive progress was significantly more likely when probation delivery was of a high-quality nature. The judgement regarding early outcomes was positive in 72 per cent of those cases where our inspectors had concluded that the delivery (i) engaged the person on probation, (ii) supported their desistance, and (iii) kept others safe, compared to just eight per cent of those cases where all three judgements were negative (see Figure 10). Differences were found across the assessed likelihood of reoffending levels (calculated using demographic and offending variables).

Figure 10: Positive early outcomes by number of positive responses to the three implementation/delivery key questions
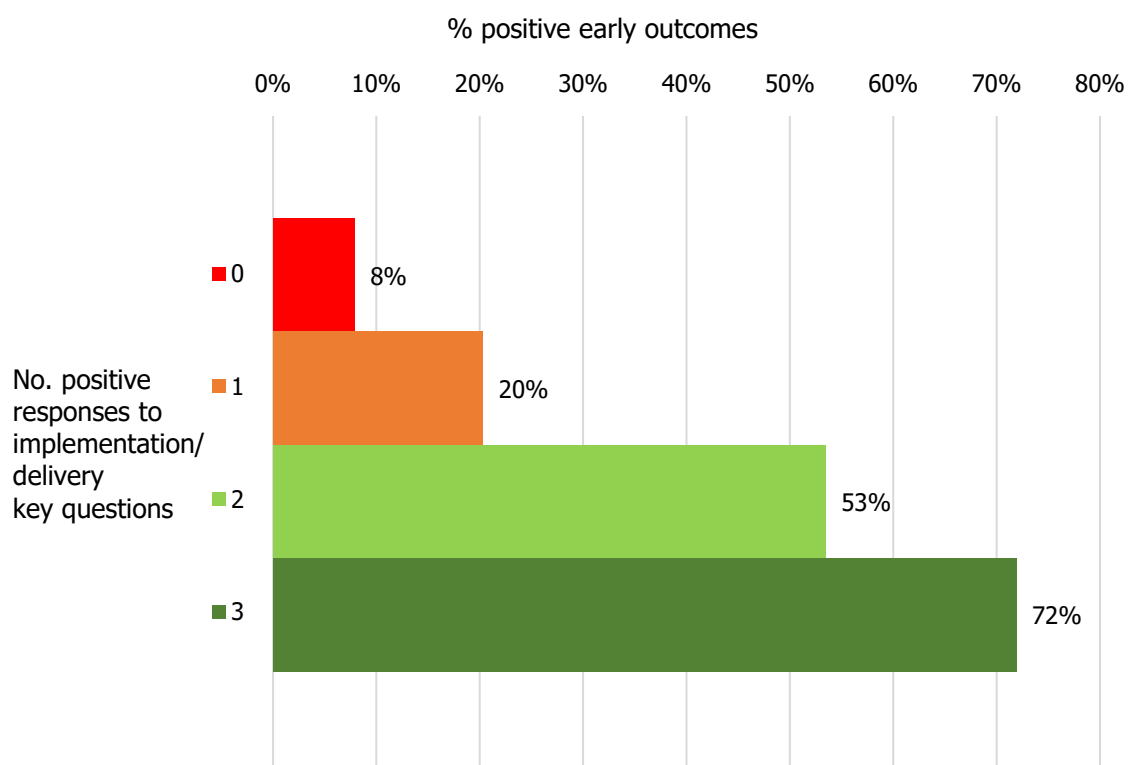
This clearly supports the blended approach outlined by Kemshall (2021) which integrates practice to enhance desistance and manage risk, supporting the safe reintegration of individuals into the community. Through this approach, there is a focus on both protecting the individual from further failure, isolation and stigma, and on protecting the community from further harm. The key task for practitioners is to act in transparent, defensible and evidential ways, seeking an appropriate balance in each individual case between risk and rights, protection and integration, desistance supportive work and control. To support this blended approach, probation practitioners need to focus upon engaging each individual and establishing positive, secure, consistent and trusting relationships.
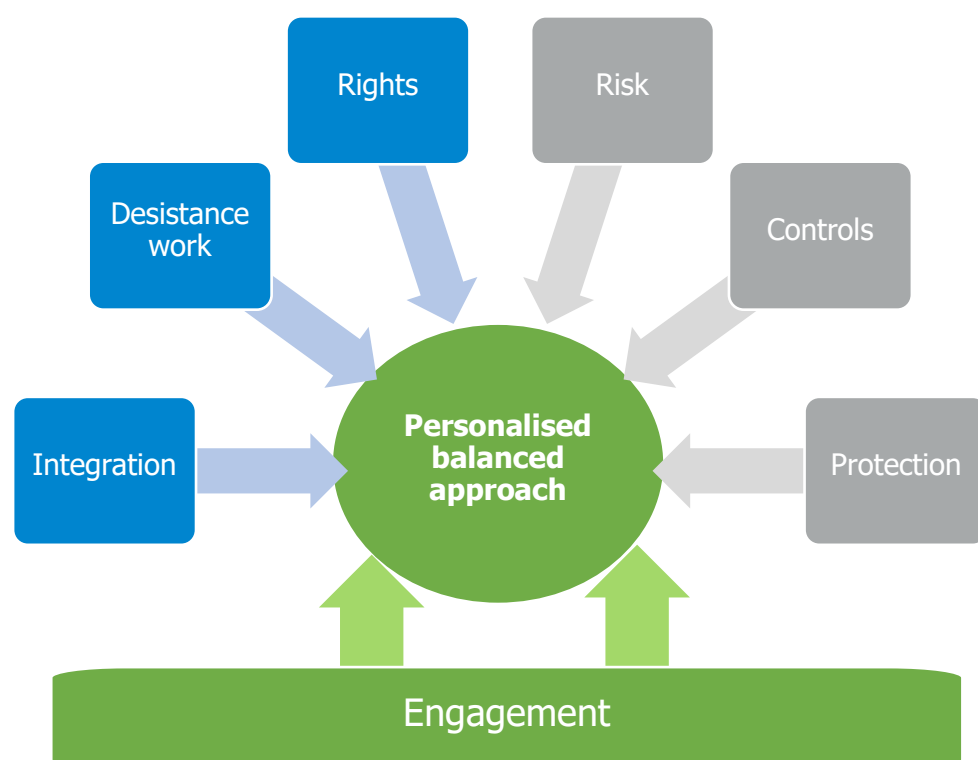
The findings in this bulletin provide one source of support for the probation delivery logic model, identifying links between high-quality activities and more positive early outcomes. Bearing in mind the economic and social costs of reoffending (Newton et al., 2019) and that about 170,000 were supervised in the community by the probation service at the end of 2022,[6] the potential benefits for individual people and society as a whole are clear. Crucially, practitioners need to be supported and empowered to deliver their best practice and given the time and space to develop secure and trusting relationships, building understanding of individuals in the context of their lives and discovering what is important to them. Furthermore, practitioners need to be able to access appropriate interventions, resources and opportunities. As highlighted by the social-ecological framework (see Academic Insights paper 2022/10 by Kemshall and McCartan), responses need to be holistic and person-centred, paying attention to the individual, interpersonal (family and peers), community, and societal levels. A whole systems approach recognises the need for a range

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[6] The total probation caseload was about 240,000 when including pre-release supervision. More than 135,000 people started court order and pre-release supervision during 2022.

of different activities at these various levels, especially when rooted in a strengths-based, trauma-informed way that works with individual need.

A key outstanding question raised by this bulletin is whether the positive early outcomes observed by our inspectors then endure over a longer time period. To help answer this question, our [Research & Analysis Bulletin 2023/04](#) examines the relationships between inspectors' judgements on the quality of delivery and later output/outcome measures in the form of sentence completion and proven reoffending.

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Annex A: Methodology

The findings presented in this bulletin are based on data from 32 inspections of probation services completed between October 2021 and May 2023 (fieldwork weeks). The 32 Probation Delivery Units are spread across 11 of the 12 probation regions across England and Wales.

Table A1: Inspections of probation services, October 2021 – May 2023

Probation Delivery Unit	Month of report publication
Gwent	February 2022
Swansea and Neath Port Talbot	January 2022
West Kent	May 2022
West Sussex	May 2022
Essex North	May 2022
Northamptonshire	May 2022
Birmingham North, East and Solihull	August 2022
Staffordshire and Stoke	August 2022
Warwickshire	August 2022
Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	October 2022
Ealing and Hillingdon	October 2022
Lambeth	October 2022
Lewisham and Bromley	November 2022
Newham	November 2022
Barking, Dagenham and Havering	November 2022
Redcar, Cleveland and Middlesbrough	December 2022
South Tyneside and Gateshead	December 2022
Derby City	February 2023
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland	February 2023
Kirklees	March 2023
Sheffield	March 2023
Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire	March 2023
North and North East Lancashire	March 2023
Manchester North	May 2023
Tameside	May 2023
Wigan	May 2023
West Cheshire	June 2023
Blackburn and Darwen	June 2023
Knowsley and St Helens	June 2023
Liverpool North	June 2023
Cumbria	July 2023
Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight	July 2023

Case assessments

The cases inspected were those of people on probation who had started community sentences (community orders and suspended sentence orders) with an unpaid work, rehabilitation activity, and/or accredited programme requirement, and those cases starting post-release supervision, including licence and post-sentence supervision cases.

Rather than take a sample of cases, a cohort approach was used across the inspections, examining cases drawn from two separate weeks in the period between 27 and 32 weeks before the fieldwork, including all cases commenced (or released from custody) in each of those weeks. However, potential exclusions were as follows:

- cases where the same person has more than one sentence in the eligible period

- cases where the order or licence has terminated within seven days of commencement

- cases where there was a current serious further offence (SFO) investigation, serious case review, child practice review, or other similar investigation.

All cases in the cohort were allocated to individual inspectors. To support the reliability and validity of their judgements against our standards framework, all cases were examined using standard case assessment forms, underpinned by rules and guidance,[7] and further reinforced through training and quality assurance activities.

Analysis

In this bulletin, the percentages presented in the tables and charts relate to the inspectors' judgments within their case assessments. Logistic regression modelling has been used to further analyse the case assessment data, examining which sub-group differences were significant when accounting for the relationships between the variables. The dependent variable was the key question for the outcomes standard: 'Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?'

In all the regression models, the independent variables were divided into two blocks for analysis, with the first block consisting of the person on probation's demographics (age, sex and ethnicity), length and type (community or post-custody) of sentence, previous convictions, and risk levels (both likelihood of reoffending and risk of serious harm). Age, previous sanctions, and sentence length were all entered into the regression models as interval data to avoid losing precision; however, the frequencies are reported within categorical groups in the tables in Annex B. All other variables in the regression models were categorical.

The independent variables in the second block were those relating to the quality of probation delivery. This allowed us to see how much the questions relating to the quality of delivery added in terms of predicting the outcome variable. When interpreting the findings, it should be remembered that probation delivery may be one amongst many influences on the often-complex lives of those being supervised, and this study does not seek to isolate the effect of probation delivery from all other potential influences.

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[7] The rules and guidance can be accessed here: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-hmi-probation/about-our-work/documentation-area/probation-inspection/.

The first three regression models looked at the summary judgement questions (also referred to as key questions) within the implementation and delivery inspection standard. These key questions relate to engaging the person on probation, supporting their desistance, and supporting the safety of other people. The fourth logistic regression model looked at the prompts under all of these key questions, further examining the main drivers of positive early outcomes. The associations highlighted in the bulletin are those which were found to be statistically significant within the regression models; the significance level used was five per cent ($p < 0.05$), meaning that there is a 95 per cent certainty that the difference did not occur randomly or by chance.

Some demographic information and some prompts were excluded from the analysis. This was usually because the data was insufficiently complete. Notably, some prompts were not answered in all cases, relating solely to post-release cases or not applying to unpaid work cases, while some were closely linked to earlier prompts, such as questions around enforcement/recall following on from questions around non-compliance.

Annex B: Analysis outputs

Table B1: Individual/case characteristics

		Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	
		n	% Yes
All Cases		1,539	35.7%
Age group	18-25	281	34.5%
	26-35	579	34.7%
	36-55	584	34.2%
	56+	87	55.2%
Sex	Male	1,299	35.1%
	Female	195	39.5%
Ethnicity	White	1,143	37.0%
	Mixed	58	31.0%
	Asian	94	40.4%
	Black	112	24.1%
	Other	112	31.3%
Type of case	Post-release	513	35.3%
	Community	1,023	36.0%
Length of sentence	Up to and including 6 months	174	23.6%
	Over 6 months; up to and including 12 months	694	36.6%
	Over 12 months	662	38.1%
Number of previous sanctions	0	259	49.8%
	1	154	47.4%
	2-5	334	39.5%
	6-10	240	32.5%
	11-20	256	27.3%
	21+	283	21.2%
Likelihood of reoffending	Low	867	43.8%
	Medium	346	28.9%
	High/Very high	253	19.4%
Risk of serious harm	Low	315	43.2%
	Medium	872	33.7%
	High/Very high	248	37.1%

N.B. Shaded cells indicate that the sub-group differences were significant ($p < 0.05$; based upon the logistic regression model which included these characteristics and the inspection prompts).

Table B2: Engagement key question and prompts

		Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	
		n	% Yes
Key question: Is the sentence/post-custody period implemented effectively with a focus on engaging the person on probation?	Yes	866	53.3%
	No	672	12.8%
Do the requirements of the sentence start promptly, or at an appropriate time?	Yes	917	48.3%
	No, and should have done	461	20.4%
	No, due to non-compliance	160	7.5%
Is sufficient focus given to maintaining an effective working relationship with the person on probation, taking into account their diversity needs?	Yes	1,041	45.9%
	No	496	14.1%
Are sufficient efforts made to enable the individual to complete their sentence, including flexibility to take appropriate account of their personal circumstances?	Yes	1,226	42.3%
	No	308	9.7%
Are risks of non-compliance identified and addressed in a timely fashion to reduce the need for enforcement actions?	Yes	687	39.7%
	No, and should have been	466	14.8%
	There were no risks of non-compliance	384	53.9%

N.B. Shaded cells indicate that the sub-group differences were significant (p<0.05; based upon logistic regression analysis).

Table B3: Desistance key question and prompts

		Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	
		n	% Yes
Key question: Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the person on probation's desistance?	Yes	689	64.0%
	No	847	12.6%
Are the delivered services those most likely to reduce reoffending and support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	Yes	691	60.5%
	No	844	15.2%
Wherever possible, does the delivery of services build upon the individual's strengths and enhance protective factors?	Yes	746	59.4%
	No, and should have done	588	11.6%
	No, there were no relevant strengths or protective factors	201	17.4%
Are the level and nature of contact sufficient to reduce reoffending and support desistance?	Yes	792	56.1%
	No, mostly due to non-compliance	283	8.8%
	No, insufficient or inappropriate contact arranged	460	17.0%

N.B. Shaded cells indicate that the sub-group differences were significant (p<0.05; based upon logistic regression analysis).

Table B4: Safety key question and prompts

		Do early outcomes demonstrate that reasonable progress has been made, in line with the personalised needs of the person on probation?	
		n	% Yes
Key question: Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	Yes	544	60.7%
	No	990	21.9%
Is sufficient attention given to protecting actual and potential victims?	Yes	470	56.2%
	No, and should have been	855	21.4%
	There were no identifiable actual or potential victims	210	47.6%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing and minimising the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	Yes	460	53.0%
	No, and should have been	753	22.6%
	Other agencies not involved	321	41.4%

N.B. Shaded cells indicate that the sub-group differences were significant (p<0.05; based upon logistic regression analysis).