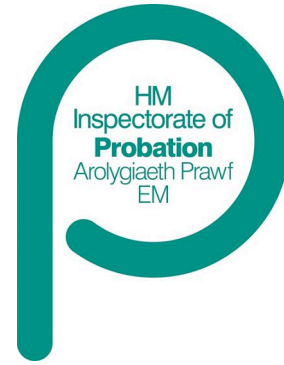




# Inspection of Adult Offending Work

Arolygiad o Waith Troseddu Oedolion



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21 July 2014

**To: Secretary of State, Chris Grayling**  
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## **HM Inspectorate of Probation:** Workload Audit Report Probation Trusts April 2013 to February 2014

### **1. Background**

In March 2014 the Secretary of State asked HMI Probation to investigate whether, as a consequence of the proposed Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) changes, the workload of staff in Probation Trusts had increased during the period leading to the TR go live date of 01 June 2014. This has been achieved by conducting a desk-top inspection of the caseloads being managed by Probation Trusts in February 2014, in comparison with those held twelve months ago in April 2013, and an examination of Human Resources data held by Trusts and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) relating to posts and vacancies.

### **2. Summary**

Out of 35 Trusts examined, caseload per staff member over the period April 2013 to February 2014 had increased by 2.4%. Average caseloads per Trust over that period, increased by 0.2%. The reasons for the increase in individual caseloads are, in the majority of cases, a combination of increased caseloads and reduced staff numbers. Although it is important to note that this finding is limited as a consequence of issues with the data supplied, which did not make it possible for us to sufficiently interrogate the reasons for variations or to understand which operational staff sub group experienced the rise or fall in staff numbers, or why.

Despite that issue we were provided with sufficient information to conclude that overall the increases in workloads were minor and were not statistically significant.

### **3. Key findings**

Information requests were made to the National Offender Management Service Performance and Analysis Group (NOMS PAG). Whilst staff were helpful they were also under considerable pressure to deliver significant change and it was sometimes not clear who owned or was

responsible for which information. It was also clear that the quality of the data supplied by Probation Trusts to NOMS PAG was variable, limiting the reliability of centrally collated data.

Certainly there is a need to focus on developing the quality of human resources data to support future work. For example, the data concerning the number of staff in post and average caseloads was not particularly refined. It could not be broken down by different types of operational post. Furthermore we were unable to clarify vacancy levels in Trusts. That reality significantly limited our ability to draw conclusions related to workload. Specifically we were unable to deduce from the information supplied how many of the staff vacancies were Senior Practitioners (SP's), Probation Officers (PO's) or Probation Service Officers (PSO's) rather than support functions, like administration staff or managers.

Caseload in April 2013 stood at 234,027 cases, compared with 234,535 in February 2014. Whilst not a direct year on year comparison, it is clear that caseload figures are very similar and show only a 0.2% increase over this period.

Whilst there were some regional variations in Trusts, data received from NOMS PAG indicated that the average caseload per probation staff member across all Trusts increased over this period from 23.5 cases to 24.1, an increase of 0.6 per probation staff member or a 2.4% increase in caseload per staff member.

The average percentage change in operational staffing levels for all Trusts was a decrease of 2.2%. There were some notable variations, for example between an increase of 22% of Senior Practitioners, Probation Officers and Probation Service Officers in Dorset, to a decrease of 25% for the same group in West Mercia. The limitations of the data supplied meant that it was not possible to further interrogate the reasons for those variations or to sufficiently understand which staff sub group experienced the rise or fall in numbers, or why.

As a consequence of the increase in staff, Dorset saw a fall in average caseload per Probation staff member over the period 1st April 2013 to 1st April 2014 from 23.6 to 18, a decrease of 5.6, or fall in workload per staff member of 31%. In West Mercia we found an increase in caseload per probation staff member over the same period from 18.2 to 22.8 (still lower than the national average of 24.1 cases), 4.5 per staff member or a 20% increase in caseload per staff member.

A decrease in staff numbers over the identified period did not necessarily lead to a large increase in caseload per staff member. For example Essex saw a decrease of 6% in staff over the year but also a fall in caseload from 6,099 in April 2013 to 5,834 in February 14 of 4.5%, leading to a statistically insignificant increase in caseload per staff member of 2%.

Ten Trusts have experienced an increase in staff caseloads of over 5%, in three Trusts this has been over 10%. Most of these Trusts have seen an increase in caseload between 0.5% and 8%, which has generally been matched by similar individual caseload increases. However in two instances where overall Trust caseloads reduced, individual caseloads have still risen.

Overall we have been presented with a mixed picture. Some Trusts have experienced caseload decreases coupled with staffing increases which have led to reductions in caseloads. Others have seen caseload increases with staffing decreases and rises in individual caseloads.

As we have indicated in this report, it is important to note that in the absence of sufficient relevant data it has not been possible to evaluate the impact of vacancies and temporary staff on caseloads, or to examine whether Trust's as a result were disproportionately experiencing changes in individual caseload numbers. But when taken as a whole increases in workloads were minor and were not statistically significant.

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