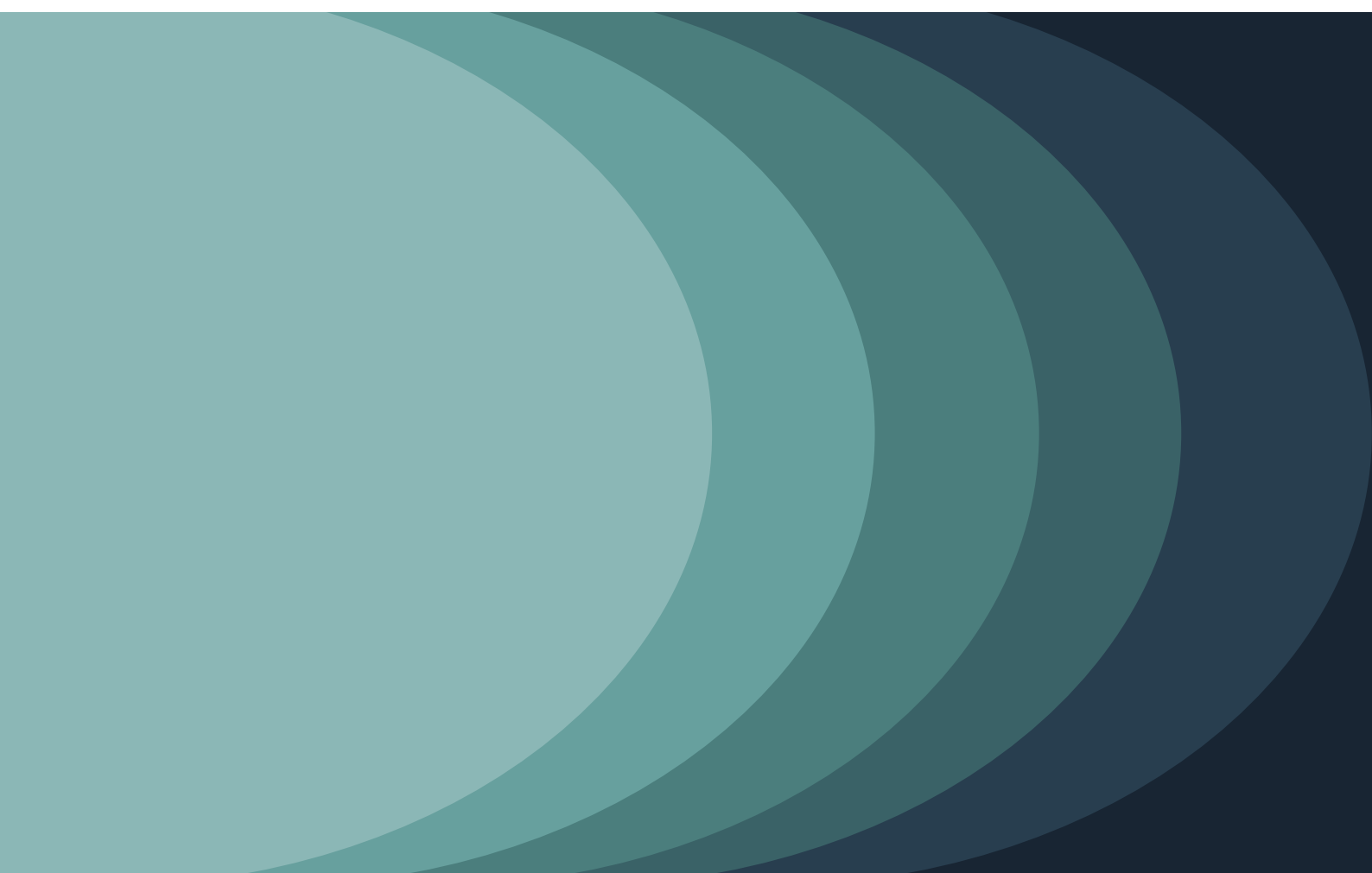




Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

# HM Inspectorate of Probation Corporate Plan 2020-2023



A portrait of Justin Russell, Chief Inspector of Probation, a middle-aged man with grey hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred office interior with large windows.

# An interrupted year

## Justin Russell, Chief Inspector of Probation

Just as I approached the anniversary of my first year in post the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the resultant impacts are still being felt as I write this; they will, undoubtedly, still be felt for some significant time to come. We stopped face-to-face inspections in March in line with government guidance. And while we initially attempted to complete our inspection and thematic fieldwork remotely at this time, it was clear that probation and youth offending services' attention needed to be elsewhere and so I took the decision to halt all inspection activity and enable my staff to return to the frontline for three months to support service delivery.

This was a time of interesting introspection for us. What role does an Inspectorate have in such exceptional times? How does one find the balance between public assurance during what is potentially a risky period while also providing the space for the service inspected to make sure those risks are mitigated? While I concluded that core local inspections would need to be a lower priority during this immediate period (apart from completing the outstanding inspections that were halted) I was keen that we provide the service with a lens through which they could view and learn from the application of their exceptional delivery models. To that end, we conducted two national thematics, one on adult probation services and one on youth services, on how the exceptional delivery models were being applied in practice. In addition, we will conduct a themed inspection on the route to recovery for adult probation services.

Despite us being unable to complete our second cycle of inspections of adult probation services against our new standards and having to also halt our programme of youth inspections, my team have made significant progress in delivering against our other business plan 2019-2020 objectives which I describe in summary in this document.

I am particularly pleased with progress against our [service user engagement strategy](#) which we published in September 2019, and also the introduction of our effective practice products. Both were key objectives for me when I took up post. In addition, I am pleased to

report that, following the publication of our thematic inspection on Serious Further Offences reviews, the Secretary of State asked me to take on an additional role for the Inspectorate in the quality assurance of Serious Further Offences reviews and we will start this from April 2021.

My strategic objectives remain the same and we will continue to deliver against these over the next three years. The format of this report, therefore, takes a slightly different structure: the first part sets out these strategic objectives again; the second part turns these into business plan priorities for each of the three years of this strategic plan. These will be added to as each year's forward plan is developed. This will provide a coherent view of the Inspectorate's progress against my strategic objectives over that defined period.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

**Justin Russell**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Probation**

**October 2020**

## Statement of Purpose

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending 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.

While our Statement of Purpose continues to provide the overarching description of what we do, I committed us in last year's plan to revisiting our values to better capture what our organisation is about and what binds us as members of this organisation. I am pleased to include our new values here.

### Values

#### **Influential**

We care about making a positive impact on the organisations we inspect and the individuals they work with.

#### **Independent**

We ensure that the judgements we make are supported by evidence, are fair and impartial.

#### **Professional**

We work in a respectful, transparent, professional way, listening to and sharing learning internally and externally.

#### **Inclusive**

We will work as 'One HMI Probation', valuing and respecting each other's viewpoints and skills, so that everyone feels a part of what we do.

#### **Diverse**

We are passionate about diversity and the value that comes through giving everyone a voice in our inspections and the chance to succeed in our organisation.

## Our strategic objectives for 2020-2023

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### **Strategic objective 1:**

Apply clear standards and robust inspection and rating to encourage the delivery of high-quality services

We will continue to inspect the quality of probation and youth offending services through our programme of core inspections in order to drive improvement. We will continually quality assure and apply the learning from our inspection approach to improve the way we inspect adult probation and youth offending services. We will be mindful of the unification of probation services in 2021 and will respond accordingly following consultation with stakeholders and interested parties, reviewing our inspection approach to best deliver public assurance under the new arrangements.



### **Strategic objective 2:**

Further develop the inspection regime to flexibly respond to changes in the probation and youth justice landscape

As the probation service prepares for further radical reform in 2021, we will revisit our approach to inspection, designing a set of standards and methodology that responds to the changing way that probation is delivered and continues to be effective in judging the quality of service delivery. We will keep our youth inspection approach under review, incorporating learning and making sure it is transparent and adequately reflects the youth delivery environment.



### **Strategic objective 3:**

Identify and disseminate effective practice to contribute to national policy thinking with a view to improving service delivery and impact

We will look to define, identify and disseminate examples of effective and replicable practice, helping us to guide frontline staff and policy makers on what 'good' looks like. This will be supported by our programme of thematic inspections and research projects that seek to inform both the policy and practice evidence base from a strategic perspective.



### **Strategic objective 4:**

Increase the impact of the Inspectorate by expanding our reach into areas where independent scrutiny would add value

We will start our new role in the quality assurance of a sample of Serious Further Offence Reviews from April 2021. We will keep under review other areas of probation and youth justice practice that are not currently the subject of independent scrutiny, but which might benefit from it. We will review the relative merits of each area of work and assess the reach of our remit. Where we consider there to be a robust argument for independent scrutiny, we will submit our case to the Secretary of State for Justice.

## Our achievements in 2019-2020

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Progress against some of my key priorities for 2019-2020 are summarised below.

### 1. Maximising the quality and impact of our inspections

Over the course of 2019-2020 we published 50 inspection reports of local youth offending and probation services and a range of national thematic inspections. Our second cycle of probation inspections have been conducted against a new set of inspection standards, we have changed the format of our reports to make them much more data rich, including comparisons of performance over time and with other services, and have made available an online tool that people can use to split our data in different ways. For the services we have inspected a second time we found that at least some progress had been made on 78 per cent of the recommendations we made first time round. We have also significantly tightened our quality assurance processes through increased auditing of individual inspector assessments and regular benchmarking events for our inspectors to promote consistency of judgements. We've also agreed a new area of responsibility with the Ministry of Justice, our sponsor department, which involves the independent quality assurance of Serious Further Offences reviews, which will start from April 2021.

### 2. A stronger voice for service users in our methodology

We published a [Service User Engagement Strategy](#) in September 2019 and will shortly be appointing a service user engagement lead who has lived, as well as learned, experience of probation supervision and the criminal justice system. They will help develop and expand our methodology for gathering service user feedback during inspections and incorporating this evidence into the judgments we make. All of our core inspections now involve interviews with service users and meetings with Service User Councils. We have also moved to employ a consultancy, staffed by ex-service users, to help us engage with service users as part of our thematic reviews. This approach was successfully applied to our thematic inspection of accommodation provision for probation service users where lived experience consultants worked alongside our inspectors as a core part of the team.

### 3. A stronger focus on effective practice

While the Inspectorate's statement of purpose includes a commitment to highlight good as well as poor practice, this had become less salient in the work of the Inspectorate in recent years. In the last year, we have revived our investment in this area. We have appointed an effective practice lead who has started to produce a suite of effective practice products alongside our thematic reviews. This is supported by a formalised structure of 'subject leads' across our team of inspectors who lead on the creation of each of these products and keep their colleagues up-to-date on developments in their subject area. Our first effective practice guide, on Integrated Offender Management, was published alongside our thematic report on the same subject in March 2020, with another on Serious Further Offence reviews in September 2020. Two important new HM Inspectorate of Probation guidance manuals for frontline probation and youth practitioners on what effective case management/supervision against our standards looks like, will be published by the end of 2020.

### 4. Preparing for the future

Probation reform and the new unified arrangements from June 2021 will mean significant changes to our probation inspection methodology and standards. We established a

programme to lead this development work and we published an initial outline proposal for consultation in July 2020. Key proposed changes to our methodology include:

- a switch to the 108 local probation delivery units (PDUs), which will be in place from June 2021, as the key unit of inspection, rather than through the lens of the much bigger regions alone. This will give ministers and HMPPS senior leaders a much more granular, and therefore informative, view of how the quality of probation work varies across England and Wales
- less frequent inspection – every two years rather than every year – to provide time for us to inspect each PDU in a region and for areas to respond to recommendations
- a new inspection standard looking at intermediate outcomes for service users during the time they have been supervised, for example in relation to accommodation, employment or substance misuse
- an enhanced input from service users which will feed into our judgements.

## Our objectives 2020-2021

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### Strategic objective 1:

Apply clear standards and robust inspection and rating to encourage the delivery of high-quality services

#### Adult inspection programme

- COVID-19 has prevented us completing our full cycle of inspections but we will conduct a small number of outstanding inspections of adult probation providers in spring 2021.
- We will conduct a national inspection of probation providers' road to recovery in autumn/winter 2020.
- We will conduct a national inspection of the strategic readiness of the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies for transition to unification in winter 2020-2021.

#### Youth inspection programme

- We will complete 14 small YOT inspections based on our piloted approach between August and November 2020.
- We will restart core YOT inspections from April 2021 and will incorporate the new standards on resettlement work and out of court disposals policy and practice developed and consulted upon in 2020.



### Strategic objective 2:

Further develop the inspection regime to flexibly respond to changes in the probation and youth justice landscape

#### Youth inspection development

- We have published our response to our youth standards review consultation and will introduce the new elements to our approach as part of our core inspections starting April 2021.

#### Probation inspection development

- We will continue to develop our inspection approach to be applied following the unification of probation to include:
  - agreement on inspection standards and methodology development summer/autumn 2020
  - pilot winter 2020
  - review and revision early 2021
  - possible further pilot spring 2021
  - further detailed consultation spring 2021.



Our new approach will have a particular focus on increased service user engagement, an assessment of intermediate outcomes and an improved and more robust approach to assessing services for black, Asian and minority ethnic service users.

### Digital implementation

- Future inspections will be supported by new digital tools for our inspectors and headquarters staff which will be piloted alongside our future inspection approach. This is designed to reduce the burden on inspected bodies, improve our efficiency, reduce the planning cycle for inspections and improve the quality of our analysis and reporting.
  - Pilot November 2020.
  - Introduce for youth inspections from April 2021 and adult PDU/regional inspections from autumn 2021.



### Strategic objective 3:

Identify and disseminate effective practice to contribute to national policy thinking with a view to improving service delivery and impact

### Thematic reviews

#### Adult

- We conducted a thematic review of probation delivery under their exceptional delivery models spring/summer 2020 and will publish this in autumn 2020.
- We conducted a thematic review of recall culture – the second part of the commission from the Secretary of State for Justice for the Inspectorate to investigate the circumstances surrounding the Joseph McCann case – in summer 2020 and will publish this by the end of 2020.
- We will conduct a thematic review of probation service delivery to black, Asian and minority ethnic service users in autumn 2020.
- We will conduct a joint thematic review with the Care Quality Commission of support for people under probation supervision with a substance misuse problem in early 2021.

#### Youth

- We conducted a thematic review of youth offending service delivery under their exceptional delivery models spring/summer 2020 and will publish this by the end of 2020.
- We will conduct a thematic review of youth offending service delivery to black, Asian and minority ethnic children in spring 2021.
- We will conduct a thematic review of Youth Offending Service to adult probation transitions spring 2021.
- We will publish a joint Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors State of the Nation report in early 2021 which details our collective findings across the criminal justice system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Research

### Secondary analysis

- We will undertake secondary analysis of existing inspection data to develop the evidence base underpinning our inspection standards, at both the organisational level and individual case level. Key topics for analysis include:
  - the quality of pre-sentence information and advice provided to courts (published in September 2020)
  - probation delivery: links between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes
  - tailoring delivery to children's needs and strengths (youth)
  - arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies (youth)
  - delivery of out of court disposals (youth)

We will compare findings for different sub-groups (for example, by age, gender, ethnicity) where possible.

### Primary research

- We will undertake new primary research in the following areas:
  - the research and evaluation activities of probation providers
  - caseloads and workloads in probation services
  - knife crime and young people – exploring promising strategies, interventions and casework
  - staff experiences of supervising service users at risk of self-harm and/or suicide
  - working with trauma: an exploration of current probation service approaches.

### Academic Insights

- We will continue to commission leading academics to present their views on specific topics, assisting with informed debate and aiding understanding of what helps and what hinders probation and youth offending services.

### Evidence-based resource

- We will produce a modular, web-based resource that sets out the evidence base underpinning our adult probation inspection standards in winter 2020-2021.

## Effective practice

- We will continue to publish effective practice products alongside all thematic inspections.
- We will publish effective practice guides on case management and supervision for probation and youth justice practitioners in winter 2020-2021.
- Will we extend our 'subject lead' coverage amongst our inspection staff to ensure we have a single point of contact for all key inspection topics.



#### **Strategic objective 4:**

Increase the impact of the Inspectorate by expanding our reach into areas where independent scrutiny would add value

##### **Independent assurance of Serious Further Offences reviews**

- During 2020 we will develop our approach to quality assuring a sample of serious further offence reviews, alongside the role of the HMPPS quality assurance team, which provides a coherent, transparent and effective form of feedback and learning for probation practitioners to begin April 2021.

## Provisional plans for 2021-2022

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A final workplan for 2021-2022 will be added to this document in advance of the financial year. However, early priorities include:

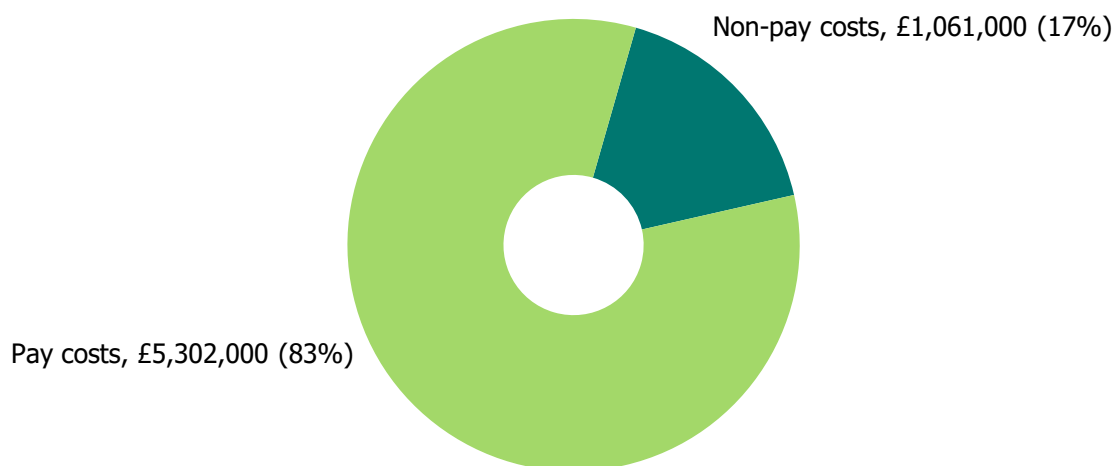
- joint thematic of mental health service provision across the criminal justice sector with the other inspectorates and CQC in spring 2021
- joint thematic with HM Inspectorate of Prisons on the new Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) arrangements in both prison (summer 2021) and community (winter 2021)
- joint inspection with HM Inspectorate of Prisons on custody and resettlement arrangements for girls leaving custody in spring 2021
- implementation of our new inspection methodology, following probation unification, from autumn 2021.

## About HM Inspectorate of Probation

### Our budget 2020-2021

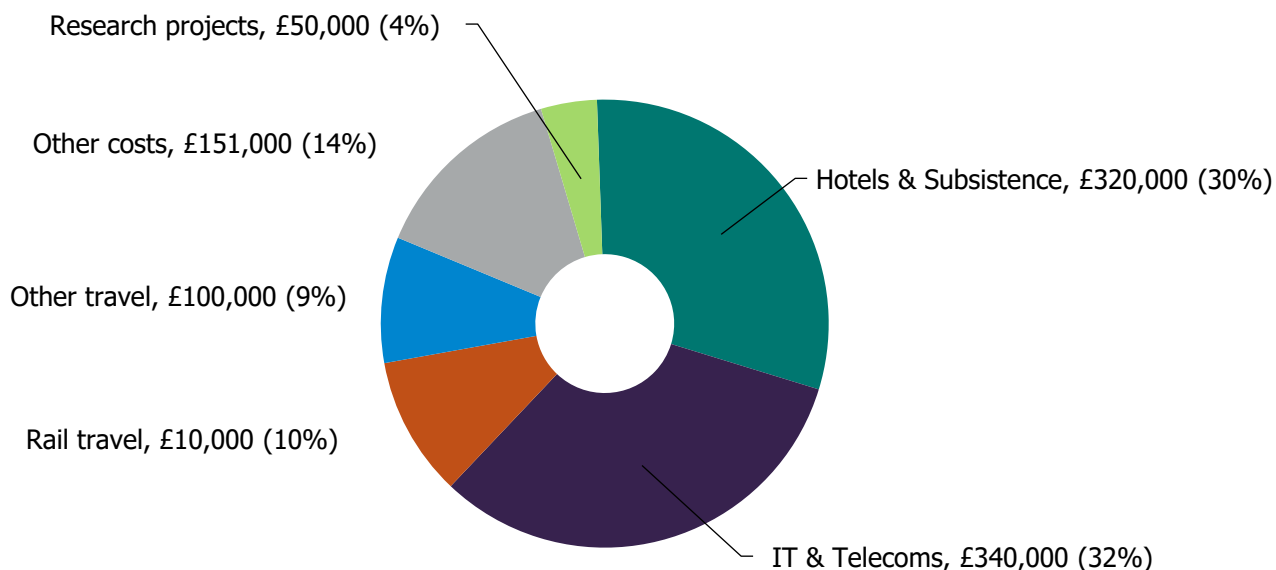
HM Inspectorate of Probation receives a delegated budget from the MOJ which, for 2020-2021, is £6.36m. At its highest level our budget can be separated into pay and non-pay costs, as shown below.

#### Pay vs. Non-pay costs



Less than 20 per cent of our budget is spent on non-pay costs, and a breakdown of these is given below. Over half of our non-pay costs relate directly to inspection activity – hotels and subsistence; rail travel and other travel costs. (Given the switch to a remote inspection methodology for much of 2020-2021 we expect actual spend this year to be significantly less than this budgeted amount).

#### Breakdown of non-pay budget 2020-2021



## Our structure

HM Inspectorate of Probation is an organisation of up to 90 staff, divided into two directorates, the Strategy and Research Directorate and the Operations Directorate. Each is headed by a Director, who report directly to the Chief Inspector.

HM Chief Inspector of Probation	
Operations Directorate	Strategy and Research Directorate
Training and development	Thematics and joint working
CRC inspections	Inspection standards & policy
NPS inspections	Effective practice
Youth inspections	Research
Inspection methodology and assurance	Communications
Operations management	

Our **Strategy and Research Directorate** has responsibility for leading the Inspectorate's ongoing development. It ensures that our inspection approach both maximises the impact of inspection on the quality of probation services and drives improvements in their provision; and that it can adapt to changes in the way probation services are provided and to changes in the oversight model or any extension of remit. Five main areas of work are delivered by the Directorate covering effective practice, thematics and joint inspections, inspection approach including standards and policy, research, and communications.

Our **Operations Directorate** has responsibility for leading the delivery of our annual programmes of inspection and rating of providers. The Directorate encompasses six different strands of work: inspection of Community Rehabilitation Companies; inspection of the National Probation Service; inspection of Youth Offending Services; inspection methodology and assurance; training and development; and operations management.

The majority of our HQ staff are permanent civil servants. Our inspection staff are drawn from across different backgrounds, though the majority have worked at some time in probation or youth offending services. We maintain an approximate 50:50 split in permanent and fixed-term or seconded staff across our Inspector group and 30:70 in our Assistant Inspector group to ensure that we retain up-to-date operational experience in our inspection teams.

We are committed to increasing the ethnic diversity of our inspection staff to reflect better the ethnicities represented in the services we inspect. We have set ourselves a target of at least 15 per cent of our inspectors (HMIs and AIs) being from an ethnic minority by 2022. We will launch a shadowing scheme for black, Asian and ethnic minority staff from adult probation and youth offending services in autumn 2020 to help create a pipeline for appropriately skilled ethnic minority staff to join the Inspectorate. We are also reviewing our recruitment process and setting up a mentoring scheme for applicants. Our next recruitment campaign for inspection staff will be in spring/summer 2021.