

Introduction

Working Links will operate an effective quality assurance framework with associated quality assurance arrangements, which will enable the delivery of high quality services and promote practice improvement across Wales. We have extensive experience of successfully applying our Quality Assurance framework across all contracts, ensuring high quality, compliant and continuously improving services that support all service users effectively. We will work with, Innovation Wessex (IW) the Dorset, Devon and Cornwall mutual, to support with Quality Assurance, ensuring that risk is effectively managed and services are delivered to the required standards. IW will bring a depth of experience of probation practice and an independent rigour to all of our QA activity.

Working Links' Quality Assurance Arrangement as per Schedule 9 paragraph 5.1

Our Quality Assurance arrangements will be supported by our Quality Management System, Quality Excellence in Delivery (QED) which incorporates best practice from external standards - ISO9001 (Working Links has been accredited since 2002) and Merlin (latest audit from April awarded us 77%, 'good' rating). QED is senior manager led and will use a balanced scorecard to monitor performance and quality of service across the CRC. Each area will be assigned a senior manager responsible for monitoring service quality and performance and reporting monthly to the CRC Board. This will enable us to identify best practice, specific areas for improvement and implement targeted improvement plans.

Aligned with HMI Probation Inspection Programme and NOMS National Standards for the Management of Offenders, our Quality Assurance arrangements will incorporate four key principles identified as best practice by the MoJ: [1] Being based on evidence; [2] Linked to targeted outcomes; [3] Concentrating on the entire organisation; and [4] Leading to practice improvements over time. Our arrangements will include proven best practice already in place in the CRC such as the Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS) and existing Working Links' Quality Assurance arrangements developed to support large scale contracts and service users with complex.

Our Quality Assurance Arrangements attached in Appendix 1 comprise:

CRC Quality Assurance Team (QAT): aligned with industry best practice and will include experienced probation practitioners to apply and monitor our delivery against nationally recognised benchmarks. The QAT will work with Senior Probation Officers and Responsible Officers to set quality benchmarks to monitor against daily, weekly and monthly quality checks and annual quality reviews. They will conduct observations of Responsible Officers, monitor complaints to identify potential trends and analyse offender feedback to identify best practice to share with our supply chain and roll out across the CRC.

Case Auditing: using audit tools based on the HMI Probation Inspection regime, our experienced Internal Audit Team will check offender files on the Dynamic Case Management System (DCMS) to ensure contract compliance, adherence to best practice and provision of the required levels of protection to the public. A summary of the audit findings will be provided to all levels of the CRC to enable effective implementation of service improvement measures. This will ensure the services provided are evolving in accordance with identified best practice. Audits will take place at least twice a year (or more regularly if required), enabling immediate implementation of identified improvements or areas of best practice.

Observing Practice: in accordance with best practice we will observe all probation staff at least twice a year to monitor their interaction with offenders and review their quality of service. Observations will be carried out by experienced practitioners, a line manager or a member of the QAT who has SEEDS training. Case Managers will be given immediate feedback based on evidence obtained from the observation.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD): this will be a reflective process that supports staff through individual development plans. During mobilisation we will review the existing CPD processes and practices and depending on what currently exists we will either adapt or implement a Performance and Development Review (PDR) process. A PDR enables line managers to assess performance, discuss skills, competencies and learning required to achieve objectives for career progression and agree objectives and development activities for the next six months.

Stakeholder Feedback: will be used to enhance our understanding of stakeholder priorities, gauge how our services align with those priorities, deliver qualitative data on areas for improvement and development and provide tangible evidence to assure providers, offenders and MoJ of the quality of services. Feedback will be sought from all stakeholders including offenders, staff, sentencers and court staff, victims, supply chain partners, community representatives, LAs, PCC and IOM partners through offender surveys, supply chain forums, stakeholder feedback and the Complaints Process.

Continuous Practice Improvement: will be directly overseen by the Senior Management Team. Our continuous improvement cycle follows four stages:

- **Plan:** senior CRC managers and staff plan business operations in accordance with contract requirements and performance targets.
- **Do:** the planned operations and processes are implemented and managed by operational teams with the aim of exceeding contract requirements, where feasible.
- **Check:** QAT in partnership with senior managers checks service quality and identifies areas for improvement using a balanced scorecard approach.
- **Act:** required improvements will be identified, owned and tracked using an internal audit log, which will be managed and owned by the CRC senior management team. Our continuous improvement process will help drive efficiencies and quality assure delivery through implementation of evidence-based best practice which will be rolled out across the CPA and supply chain partners. Annex 1 describes our continuous improvement practices in more detail.

Vision for Knowledge Generation and Management

Our vision is to share information and best practice across the stakeholder network to support the probation profession in delivering a high quality, continuously improving service to all offenders. We will implement a Knowledge Management (KM) function within the CRC to: [1] Capture information from a range of internal and external sources; [2] Interrogate and analyse performance data and stakeholder feedback; and [3] Produce detailed statistical and trend analysis reports for the Senior Management Team. KM outputs will support our commitment to continuous improvement by identifying performance trends, good practice and areas for improvement based on performance data and offender feedback. This will ensure that any decisions made and services introduced are evidence based and are aligned with local requirements and needs. We have developed our KM approach over 14 years of delivering large scale services to ensure productive KM across all our contracts including the Work Programme, which we deliver for all of Scotland, all of Wales and in the South West.

Generating knowledge: senior operational managers will share data relating to their area of responsibility with the KM function and the QAT and Internal Audit Team will be required to provide the latest audit, inspection and observation reports. Case Managers will ensure performance data within the DCMS is up to date and Partner Managers will share the latest supply chain performance data and inspection reports. KM analysts will be responsible for researching current and future government policy relating to probation and offender management and analysing national and international offender management best practice. Stakeholder and offender feedback will provide the KM function with valuable intelligence on the efficacy of services. We will conduct annual stakeholder feedback sessions to highlight 'what works' and understand any issues arising at a local level. Offender feedback will be gathered through monthly forums, online questionnaires, quarterly surveys and ad hoc feedback provided to Case Managers during probation appointments. Complaints will be treated as a valuable source of feedback, highlighting potential areas for improvement.

Using Knowledge: reports produced by the KM function will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team and other senior managers who will review good practices that have been identified and operational areas where specific refinement is required, before these are implemented by local operational teams. The resulting re-designed or developed service solution will be tested in a sample of our probation offices within the CPA and evaluated in accordance with our Continuous Improvement Processes. A finalised service solution will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team and rolled out across the rest of the CRC. Should we deem it more appropriate for a refined service solution to be delivered by a supply chain partner we will commission the required services from our framework of pre-approved supply chain partners. To support innovation, we will set up an Innovation Grant Fund, which is available to the supply chain to develop and pilot new approaches or additional services. Applications will be assessed against knowledge and evidence held within the KM function, with grants being awarded where there is a demonstrable need for the proposed service. Where grants are awarded, our QAT will monitor the new services to identify and quantify performance improvements and elements of best practice.

Inspection, Audit and SFO Review Findings

Findings from inspections, audits and reviews provide an opportunity to learn from an independent source on what has worked well and what needs addressing to further improve outcomes for rehabilitating offenders, reducing reoffending and protecting the public.

Inspections: we will work with HM Probation Inspectorate to ensure inspection findings, advice, recommendations and good practice inform ongoing service delivery. Our process for using inspection findings is:

- Review by the Senior Management Team;
- Developing an action plan for implementing required recommendations including deadlines and agreeing review dates; and
- Further review to ensure effective implementation of recommendations and resulting service improvements.

Audits: reports following contract compliance audits conducted by the MoJ will highlight issues regarding non-compliance and overall service delivery with an action plan to address deficiencies. The action plan will allocate clearly accountable senior managers to drive and ensure delivery of the action plan. Reports from both external and internal audits, which will also be provided to the MoJ if required, will be reviewed and analysed by the CRC operations managers, senior managers and the Audit Committee to identify best practice, ensure contractual compliance and agree mitigating actions to offset potential risks.

Serious Further Offence (SFO) reviews: findings from SFO reviews will provide valuable learning, specifically regarding risk assessment, risk management and offender management. We will use this learning to improve our service delivery, focus on weaknesses in risk management and public protection and, where necessary, to improve individual practice and performance. Our response to SFOs will, in particular:

- Be owned and led by a nominated senior manager, with the authority to implement operational changes, where necessary, across the organisation;
- Be reviewed regularly at senior management level, to ensure recommendations are implemented and followed through;
- Be communicated clearly across the organisation to encourage and sustain a culture in which risk management and public protection are afforded the highest priority.

The findings from inspections, audits and SFO reviews will inform our Continuous Improvement and Service Development Processes. All findings will be provided to operational managers for identification and implementation of actions through performance improvement plans (PIP). These detail:

- The area of delivery needing improving;
- The service improvement measures to be implemented;
- Deadlines for improvements;
- How the PIP will be measured and evaluated; and
- Who is responsible for managing service against the PIP.

Inspection, audit and SFO review findings will be analysed by our KM function to identify best practice and recommendations for improvements. This will feed into our Continuous Improvement practice, which involves development and refinement of pilot provision, prior to roll out across the rest of the CRC. All findings will be provided to the CRC Board for review and discussion of potential service delivery and operational strategy changes. Any recommendations for change from the CRC Board will be discussed with the MoJ through the Relationship Management Group.

Management Information as per Schedule 20

Our methods for capturing MI as identified in Schedule 20 will be to collect it directly from the NPS using the allocated offender information which comprises: offender personal identification number, contact details, details of offence, details of court appearance, sentence date and length and details of sentence requirements. This MI will be captured by the Service Operations Centre (SOC), which provides a centralised administration and information exchange (and single point of contact for interfacing with the MoJ). When an offender is allocated the SOC will upload all the MI (as identified in the Draft Data Exchange Requirements document) onto the DCMS, which will securely store it in accordance with the Data Protection Act and all relevant security standards, enabling Case Managers and relevant supply chain partners to access pertinent information using secure and encrypted logins.

Case Managers will support the SOC to collate the required MI by updating offender files on the DCMS after every offender interaction, on referral to specialist provision and on receipt of intelligence from an external stakeholder, such as the police, prison or Electronic Monitoring Provider. This will enable collation of relevant data for MI reports required by the MoJ and as highlighted in Schedule 20, e.g.

- MI for delivering the sentence of the court (updating offender records to include: confirmation of commencement of sentence requirements; confirmation of sentence completion; attendance records to support any potential non-compliance or breach proceedings and records of face-to-face offender contact);
- MI for public protection (updating offender files with confirmation of completion of risk assessment, risk review and actions taken in relation to offender risk reviews); and
- MI for reducing reoffending (updating the DCMS with details of settled accommodation, offender employment status, and progression onto an education or training course). The SOC will support this process by engaging with providers who do not have direct access to the DCMS to update offender files. This approach guarantees that the MI stored on DCMS is accurate, up to date and readily available to the MoJ. ICT access will be at an appropriate level for our partners depending on their existing ICT capability, so some will have secure access at our hubs, some will have access through a secure web portal and others will be able to contact the SOC or the SOC will contact them to obtain an update.

We will make MI available to the MoJ through monthly and ad hoc reports as required in Schedule 20, generated and reviewed prior to submission by the Performance Management Team and operating independently within the SOC. We will agree with the MoJ a standardised format for MI reports that will be delivered within the contracted timescales.

Assuring and Improving the Quality of Services

We need to continuously improve the services we deliver particularly interventions and activities that have a demonstrable effect on reducing reoffending. The MI provided to the CRC board will show the latest figures for offenders who have completed their sentences and are for example, in settled accommodation, employment and education or training. Trend analysis will identify those interventions and activities that are having a significant impact on offender behaviour. Where the impact is positive we will review the interventions, with the intention of rolling them out across the CPA, as appropriate. Underperforming partners will be supported by their Partnership Manager through a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) highlighting the required areas for improvement. Further analysis of supply chain MI will be undertaken following the implementation of a PIP. Should a supply chain partner continue to underperform, we will initiate the process to replace them with a pre-approved partner from our supplier framework or go to market to source a new supplier.

Where we identify that our own delivery is not having the impact on reducing reoffending anticipated we will invite the team managing our supply chain to review the intervention or activity as they would do with any of our suppliers. As this team would not have day-to-day contact with our own delivery they would have enough objectivity to advise on how we could improve.

WSA 5.1 - Annex 1

