HM Prison & Probation Service

Experiencing Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) in Prison:

A case study approach in four closed male English prisons

Laura Pope
HM Prison & Probation Service

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The author

Laura Pope is a social researcher working for HM Prison and Probation Service and has been seconded into the National OMiC Team as the Performance and Evaluation Strategic Lead for OMiC. The purpose of the role is to deliver a robust and independent research and evaluation programme to support the ongoing development and improvement of OMiC delivery across prisons in England and Wales.

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1. Summary

Introduction

Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) is a transformational programme of work across His Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to make improvements to prison safety. The model has two key elements, which are interdependent and complimentary. The first is Key Work which is delivered by Band 3 prison officers to strengthen and build positive and purposeful relationships in prison. The second element comprises the newly created role of the Prison Offender Manager (POM), introduced in 2019 in male closed prisons within Offender Management Units (OMU), to manage the custodial part of prisoners serving longer sentences.

Methodological approach

A qualitative case study approach was used to examine the OMiC experience at four male closed prisons in England, and to explore the contextual factors associated with delivery of OMiC. Data were collected from several sources and triangulated to provide a detailed description within, and across, the four prisons. A total of 76 members of staff and 48 men in prison were interviewed between June and September of 2022. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data to generate themes of how participants experienced and understood OMiC.

Limitations and interpreting findings

Whilst a qualitative case study design enables the exploration of rich, in-depth information it is difficult to generalise the findings and to explore causal relationships. Each of the four sites had their own unique experiences of OMiC, alongside collectively shared experiences. The learning within and across prisons may not be generalisable or relevant to all staff working in, or men residing in the four participating prisons, or other prisons, due to variation in prison populations, regimes and staffing profiles. Due to the focus on OMiC delivery, particular roles were targeted for inclusion so the sample of participants may not be fully representative of the prison and staff population from which they were drawn. As with any research, there may be some bias introduced by prisons and individuals within each prison who were more willing to participate in the research study.

In reporting research findings below, all references to men refer to male prisoners residing in the four participating prisons, alongside staff and senior leaders working in those prisons who participated in interviews and focus groups for the research study. Findings are qualitative and report participants perceptions and experiences.

Summary of key findings

Six overarching themes were generated from the accounts of participants.

1. ‘System pressures’, describes system wide factors and interdependencies influencing OMiC integration and delivery at all four prisons, with lack of staff being reported by participants as the single biggest barrier to successful delivery. The response to, and impact of, staff shortages were experienced and reported differently and were linked to the next two themes.
2. ‘Organisational misalignment’ describes tensions between operational priorities and practices, conflicting narratives and contradictory practices that were perceived to be impacting on quality of OMiC delivery. This was complicated by a lack of clarity among staff on roles and responsibilities.
3. ‘Cultural misalignment’ describes the more nuanced, relational tensions experienced through misaligned perceptions, processes, practices, and people that participants reported as hampering effective partnership working among staff within prisons and out into the community.
4. ‘Outcomes for staff’ describe the views and experiences of staff interviewed, in a variety of roles delivering OMiC activity. The research has revealed blurred boundaries, dilution of roles, and diminishing responsibilities which have left staff feeling unsupported, deskilled, and devalued. Staff across all roles, shared an unease around the quality of the service on offer and described a system that was ‘failing men’ in prison.
5. ‘Outcomes for the men in prison’, describes the experiences of male prisoners located within the four prisons who participated in the research. The majority of men felt unsupported and unseen by staff, with limited options available to request contact with their POM or Key Worker. They report feeling stuck and frustrated by the lack of progression through their sentences. For some of these men this was reported to be impacting on relationships and undermining their trust in staff and prison processes.

6. ‘Commitment to, and the potential of OMiC’ are revealed through the accounts of staff and prisoners who participated, and whose experiences have offered up insights into the potential of OMiC and the benefits it can bring. Despite the wide-ranging and enduring challenges staff were reportedly navigating on a daily basis, there were numerous examples of relational practice being both positive and transformative for men residing in, and staff working in prison.

Conclusions

The findings suggest there are a complex set of challenges that pose significant barriers to successful integration of OMiC in prisons, and these are evident at the whole-system, prison and individual level. The findings indicate that leadership, prison culture, and the availability of stable and sufficient staffing numbers who are skilled, motivated, and empowered are key factors affecting delivery of OMiC. Strong leadership has been established as a critical driver for culture change in prison, as have relationships as the foundation for safe and decent prisons. This study has provided a richer, more nuanced understanding of staff and men’s experiences of OMiC, yet the learning extends beyond OMiC to implementing wider organisational change within a complex whole system.

There are a number of operational considerations arising from this qualitative study that focus on strengthening areas of weakness identified by participants which include greater investment in staff support and training across all grades, consideration of the recruitment pathways and support available to staff transitioning into new roles, a focus on improving procedural justice and communication, both nationally and within prisons to enhance knowledge and clarity around roles and responsibilities. Lastly, learning is central to any change process, regardless of its scale and size. Learning and reflecting on what doesn’t work well is just as vital as what does work well, to understand how to do things better. Gradual and incremental changes that are tested, refined, and evaluated will help to ease the challenges that are associated with implementing large scale complex change.

2. Context

2.1 Offender Management in Custody

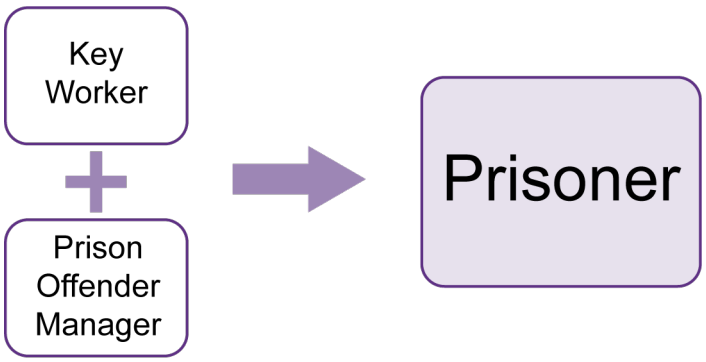
Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) is a transformational programme of work across HMPPS to make improvements to prison safety, which was first introduced in 2018. Prisoners need to feel safe, secure and settled in prison. OMiC aims to bring together the skills of prison and probation staff working together as one team, with new roles, dedicated time, and clear responsibilities. The model is fundamentally a relational one, which aims to:

- engage prisoners – evidence tells us that quality relationships can make a huge difference, and improved relationships between staff and prisoners will help them to take responsibility for their own rehabilitation and bring about positive change (Bowen, 2022)
- improve rehabilitation and public protection in prison – by focusing on delivering improvements in sentence planning that will ensure better rehabilitative interventions and services which will have a greater impact, and
- support our front-line staff – in making a difference by professionalising roles, including better training and support for prison staff.

OMiC was the result of a review that took place in 2015, following the findings of a report (HMIP, 2013) which raised ongoing concerns in the way that offender management was being delivered in both prisons and probation. The OMiC model was designed with a specific focus on the custodial period, including the transition between custody and community.

The model has two key elements, which are interdependent and complimentary. Key Work is delivered by Band 3 prison officers, this is protected time allocated regularly and by the same officer where possible, to allow for positive and trusting relationships to be developed.[1] Key Work was introduced for all prisoners in male closed prisons in 2018.

A new role of Prison Offender Manager (POM) located in Offender Management Units (OMU) was introduced in 2019 in the male closed estate. These are prison and probation staff who manage the sentences of prisoners who are serving longer sentences. Any individual with more than 10 months to serve will follow the OMiC framework within custody. Prison staff working as POMS can be a mix of operational and non-operational staff and means that operational staff can be redeployed at any time to ease operational pressures within prisons.



Supporting this role is the Head of Offender Management Delivery (HoMD), a Senior Probation Officer (SPO) in each establishment, who oversees sentence management quality and delivery. The OMiC model operates differently in male open and women's prisons in England and Wales (see Appendix A).

[1] Band 3 Prison officers are one of several key operational grades in public sector prisons. They consist of band 3 prison officers, band 4 officer specialists, which includes the Prison Offender Manager role, band 4 supervising officers, and band 5 custodial managers, who are the most senior uniformed staff.

2.2 The impact of COVID-19 on OMiC delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting introduction of Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) significantly reduced Key Work and sentence management delivery across the prison estate, which inevitably impacted the realisation of expected benefits in the short-term.[2] Post-pandemic there has been a renewed focus on the implementation and integration of OMiC into operational practice. There remain significant current and projected resource pressures in prisons and probation, including a high staff turnover and absence rate. Progress to re-establish OMiC delivery in prisons has been varied, and there are both unique and shared factors influencing progress at prisons locally and nationally.

2.3 Research aims

The aim of this qualitative research study was to better understand and identify the facilitators and barriers to implementation and quality delivery of OMiC. More specifically the study sought to:

- provide contextual information on how OMiC has been delivered and experienced in different prisons,
- explore the barriers and facilitators to implementation and quality delivery,
- explore how staff and prisoners have understood, and experienced OMiC, and
- capture learning and identify practical recommendations to support the ongoing development of the OMiC framework and strengthen delivery of OMiC and its integration into operational practice.

[2] Exceptional Delivery Models set out baseline and desirable regime requirements to assist prisons in planning and sequencing regime activity during the pandemic. The four levels included Level 4: Lockdown, Level 3: Restrict, Level 2: Reduce and Level 1: Prepare.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

Four male closed prisons participated in the study. Five initially agreed to take part, but one subsequently withdrew due to staffing pressures. Sites were selected purposefully to ensure that together they included different operational functions (local/ training/ long term high secure), geographical spread across England, and variation in the delivery of Key Work pre-pandemic (Apr 2019–March 2020) using Key Work delivery data to shortlist sites.[3] This enabled the identification of factors/ experiences that may be unique to a particular prison and to explore any shared factors influencing the implementation and delivery of OMiC across prisons. Appendix B provides a detailed description on the research sample and methodological approach.

3.2 Data collection

A qualitative case study approach was used to examine the OMiC experience at each prison and to explore the contextual factors associated with delivery of OMiC. A case study approach involves the 'detailed examination of single examples' (Abercrombie et al., 1984), and is most often used when a comprehensive and contextualised in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon is required.

Multiple data sources were utilised and included prison performance and administrative data, OMiC specific management information, and a range of scrutiny documents which enabled a detailed description of each prison to be developed. The researcher visited each prison for two consecutive days between June and September 2022.[4] Interviews (one to one and focus groups) with staff, senior leadership teams, and male prisoners located within each prison (referred to as 'men' for the remainder of the report) were carried out with the aim of exploring staff and

[3] Prisons with consistent Key Work delivery below 40%; prisons with consistent Key Work delivery between 40–60% and prisons with consistent Key Work delivery over 60%.

[4] Prison A was visited for a third day, one week later to carry out interviews with one particular group of staff who were unavailable during the initial visit.

men's understanding and experiences of OMiC. Appendix B presents the case data gathered for each prison and the methodological approach used.

Sampling for interviews and small focus groups was based on availability; with the aim of speaking to staff in designated key roles within the OMiC framework. Table 1 provides more information of those who took part. The researcher spoke with as many people as possible during each visit and the type of interview (one to one or small groups) was dependent on what was the least disruptive for each prison to facilitate. For one visit (Prison B) the lead researcher was supported by a second independent researcher; for all remaining visits the researcher was unaccompanied. There was no involvement from OMiC national team members so as not to introduce bias, which may have impacted on participants' disclosures.

Table 1: Breakdown of total number interviews for each prison

Number of interviews	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D	Total
No. of one-to-one interviews	7	5	11	6	**29**
No. of small focus groups	5	5	11	8	**24**
Men in prison	12	12	12	12	**48**
Senior managers with responsibility for OMiC delivery (including Governing Governors, Heads of Offender Management Service (HoMS); Heads of Offender Management Delivery (HoMD); Heads of Residence (HoRes) and Heads of Reducing Reoffending (HoRR))	6	6	4	4	**20**
Prison staff working as POMs	3	2	4	4	**13**
Probation staff working as POMs	2	4	3	3	**12**
Custodial managers (Band 5 uniformed officers)	1	2	2	1	**6**
Key Workers (Band 3 uniformed officers)	4	2	5	5	**16**
Case administrators[5]	0	0	2	7	**9**
Total	**28**	**28**	**32**	**36**	**124**

[5] Case Administrators are vital to efficient, streamlined and focused Offender Management Units in prison. They are a critical interdependency to OMiC sentence management delivery, but do not sit with the OMiC resourcing model. At the request of case administration teams, several small focus group discussions took place at two prisons, based on availability.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the interviews, with some questions tailored to the different roles. This was piloted and then refined following the first site visit. The questions were loosely structured to allow participants to set the direction and share their views and experiences of OMiC. Participation was voluntarily and all participants gave verbal (for groups) or written consent (for one-to-one interviews) following an explanation of the research study and its aims by the lead researcher. Handwritten interview notes were typed up and added to an Excel study database for analysis.[6]

3.3 Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was used to analyse the qualitative data gathered from interviews to generate themes (patterns of meaning) on how participants articulated their experiences and understanding of OMiC. Reflexive thematic analysis is an open and iterative process with theoretical flexibility so analysis can move from inductive to deductive and works well for use by a single researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The method of analysis was chosen to gain a rich understanding of participant meaning to generate contextualised and situated knowledge about their realities of living and working in prison.

Due to the complexity and scope of OMiC, and the range of designated roles delivering OMiC activity, data were analysed separately by participants' role. In keeping with reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) which moves away from prescribed sample sizes to achieve data saturation, the data within groups was sufficient in detail and has provided a richer and more nuanced understanding among staff carrying out different roles, within and across the four prisons.

Following an initial stage of data familiarisation through reading and re-reading data, the initial coding process took place to look for single meanings and concepts. Code labels were used to generate initial themes from the data, an active process which

[6] The logistics, availability, and location of participants in staff offices and on wings, whilst allowing better access to staff and men to be interviewed with minimal disruption to the prison regime, prevented interviews from being audio recorded and only basic demographic information was captured. Handwritten notes were added to a pseudonymised Excel study database, generating 975 separate rows of data for coding.

involved ongoing coding and interpretation of the data to develop and review themes. Refinement of themes or patterns of shared meaning were united or underpinned by a central organising concept, to provide an analytic and compelling narrative account (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Appendix C presents the visual thematic maps, summarising the central organising concepts, themes, and sub-themes for each group of participants. The additional information gathered (prison-level data, OMiC management information, HMIP and IMB reports) was triangulated to produce a case description of each prison (see Table 5, Appendix D3), and to explore and generate hypotheses about potential differences across and between prisons and participant groups.

In reporting research findings below, all references to men refer to male prisoners residing in the four participating prisons, alongside staff and senior leaders working in those prisons who participated in interviews and focus groups for the research study. Findings are qualitative and report participants perceptions and experiences.

Qualitative research is often criticised for lacking quality and rigour. Drawing on a similar approach used by Wakeling & Lynch (2020), the research has set criteria that promotes transparency, use of a clear and appropriate sampling strategy, triangulation, and thick description using quotes, (Bauer & Gaskell, 2003) to help appraise the quality of the study and enhance the validity of the findings. Two independent researchers (within the HMPPS Evidence-Based Practice Team) carried out an initial peer review of the themes generated to ensure the coding and triangulation process was appropriate.

3.4 Limitations

A qualitative case study approach whilst providing in-depth and rich information relating to a small number of prisons, does have its limitations. Each of the four sites had their own unique experiences of OMiC, alongside collectively shared experiences. The learning within and across prisons may not be generalisable or relevant to all staff working in, or men residing in those prisons, nor to all other prisons, as they too may run somewhat different regimes with different staffing profiles and prisoner populations. As with any research, there may be some bias

introduced by prisons and individuals within each prison who were more willing to participate in the research study. A fifth prison withdrew from the study which would have provided case information on a second reception prison. Therefore, the breadth of information gathered within reception prisons was limited to one, which will compromise the generalisability of findings that may be relevant to other reception prisons. Due to the focus on OMiC delivery, particular roles were targeted for inclusion so the sample of participants may not be representative of the prison and staff population from which they were drawn. Careful consideration was given to the contextual and operational factors influencing data collection to minimise disruption and access participants which led to interviews not being audio-recorded. To minimise any loss in data quality and detail, interview notes were typed up immediately following each fieldwork visit (Rutakumwa et al., 2020).

4. Research findings

4.1 Key themes

Six prominent themes (Figure 1) emerged from the qualitative analysis and illustrate the views and experiences across all four prisons in regard to OMiC delivery.

Figure 1: A summary of the overarching themes generated from participants' accounts

Whole system pressures

- Competing pressures, including acute staff shortages, reconfiguration of services and prisoner populations
- Operationalisation of OMiC
- Lack of perceived investment in staff at all grades

Organisational misalignment

- Leadership – setting the vision and direction
- Conflicting narratives and contradictory practices impacting quality of delivery
- Organisational silos
- Widespread misunderstanding across roles and responsibilities

Cultural misalignment

- A cultural dichotomy between prison and probation – purpose and ethos
- Cultural and professional differences – identities, skills and working practices
- Cultural tensions hampering effective partnership working

Outcomes for staff

- Key Workers lack confidence and capability in their role
- Prison POMS felt unsupported and undervalued
- Probation POMS felt unsupported, deskilled and devalued
- The psychological strains experienced by staff

Outcomes for men in prison

- Feeling stuck and unable to progress – sense of powerlessness within the process
- Empty promises – contradictory communications and practice/ lack of procedural justice undermining trust
- Moving forward – accessing support and positive relationships with staff

Commitment to, and potential of OMiC

- The perceived value of the Key Work role
- Optimism and hope for the future
- Staff as enablers of change
- The benefits of meaningful Key Work

Each prison had its own set of unique strengths and challenges, prison culture, leadership style, and prisoner population so the range of factors influencing OMiC delivery is context specific. Table 5 (in Appendix D3) provides a detailed description of each of the prisons through triangulation of all the data sources, including prison performance data presented separately in Tables 3 and 4 (Appendix D), and scrutiny documents. It presents the key differences and factors specific to each case with the aim of drawing out the differences to determine where to focus efforts to develop and improve national integration and delivery of OMiC and consider ways to make it more responsive to each prison's local operating context.

The remaining sections present each theme, generated from participants accounts, triangulated with additional prison and performance data and scrutiny documents. The themes are closely interconnected, and there are parallels and some overlaps between subthemes that have been generated for different participant groupings. Appendix C presents a visual thematic map for each participant grouping that includes Men in prison (C1); Key Workers and Custodial Managers (C2); Prison (C3) and Probation staff working as POMS (C4); and Senior leaders (C5). The comprehensive analysis of participant groupings has provided further validation of the six overarching themes, whereby similar issues were raised across participant groups, despite differences in roles, positions and perspective and strengthened the

research findings. Where participant accounts differ this has been drawn out in the relevant sections, as have subthemes that were more prominent or pertinent to one particular prison. Participant quotes have been included throughout the sections and demographic information has been excluded to prevent any jigsaw identification of individuals and ensure participant anonymity.

5. Whole system pressures

5.1 Competing pressures

Most senior leaders described numerous and enduring demands that required constant redirection and juggling of staff detailing and resources to fill gaps and respond to immediate needs. They described an uneasy and constant conflict of trying to protect their workforce and deliver a service. Whilst competing priorities and the specific operational demands were unique for each prison, the wider impact on senior leaders in responding to significant and enduring system pressures generally was evident across all four prisons.

Staff shortfalls created a daily tension for all prisons between delivering Key Work and running a purposeful prison regime, particularly in Prisons A and D where the number of non-productive staff (see Table 2, Appendix B3) were particularly problematic.[7]

> 'I have never had a day when the profile was fully met – no reliability in staffing numbers. Key Work hours are eaten up by non-effectives [non-productive]; reception prisons have a high number of non-effectives and resources are absorbed by this issue… which has not been factored into the OMiC model of delivery.' (Senior leader in Prison A)

The reconfiguration of prisoner populations, and a lack of provision to address those needs was compounding pressures on already deficient staffing profiles. Staff in all four prisons described a vacuum created by the removal of 'through the gate' resettlement services and had increased pressures on prisons to redirect POM resources to 'plug' the gap. This was particularly marked in Prison A and D, with prisoner populations with a greater demand for pre-release services. This has generated further confusion among staff as to who is responsible for which pre-release tasks.

[7] The overall non-productive staff as a % is the combined number of staff on annual leave, sick, training, Officer Apprenticeship, and additional non-productive elements. A national non-productive rate of 20% is built into all staff profiles.

A change in prison population was felt most acutely in Prison B, where a national directive to increase the number of Category C prisoners with less than 3 years to serve had intensified the demands on a notably under-resourced OMU (see table 2, Appendix B3) and inadequate pre-release provision for those with less time to serve. The change in prisoner profile was impacting on a previously stable population including reallocation of programme start dates for men, increasing frustration among men, with increasing complaint rates (see table 3, Appendix D1) and much poorer perceptions among men, reflected in their accounts (see section 9.2) and a growing mistrust in staff.

5.2 Operationalisation of OMiC

Explicitly linked to the pressures in the system, were the challenges they presented to the operationalisation of the OMiC model. There was a clear sense among senior leaders interviewed that resources and system pressures were driving delivery of OMiC, and the consequences of this were a diminishing purpose of the wider aims and benefits and why it was introduced in the first place (see section 6.1).

Views on the quality of service being delivered, specifically linked to Key Work was a source of tension for some senior leaders who described feeling uncomfortable with the compromise in quality. Others were conflating quantity with quality, linked predominantly to the performance measure as a key driver of delivery. They too reflected on the entrenched and often negative perceptions held by staff in relation to the model, and also expressed their own reservations.

> ‘This should all be about outcomes but it’s not, it’s about targets so you fudge the targets.’ (Senior leader in Prison C)

There was a prevailing view that the Key Work delivery model was too rigid, overly structured, and lacked flexibility to be responsive to prisons with different resourcing pressures, and prisoner groups with differing needs. Some senior leaders were cynical about the achievability of Key Work given the ongoing pressures, and this evoked views about the quality of Key Work being compromised by unrealistic expectations around delivery. The frustration for this group was borne out of ongoing

criticism for not delivering, without baseline expectations to help them identify where best to direct their limited resources.

> ‘Staff perceptions are it’s a PO [Personal Officer] scheme – but it’s totally different. If we continue to hold that view, we will never get to deliver it.’ (Senior leader in Prison B)

> ‘The allocated hours has made it unattractive. Taken away the organic-ness of it and now seen and feels a bit clinical as time on wings.’ (Senior leader in Prison C)

There was a clear operational focus from some senior leaders, including Heads of Residence, some of whom had direct oversight of Key Work delivery. They described wanting greater autonomy and flexibility in the model, to remove detailed, allocated time to sessions which would enable more delivery – essentially describing a scheme akin to the previous Personal Officer scheme.[8] These views revealed a delivery intent, understandably to drive improvements in the Key Work delivery measure but also exposed a lack of understanding/ and or intent to consider the quality of Key Work and its fundamental difference in purpose to the PO scheme (see Section 6.2 which presents views on the quality of Key Work being delivered).

> ‘Glad they have bought back the PO scheme back.’ (Senior leader in Prison A)

The lack of Key Work delivery (Prisons B & C) had also contributed to negative perceptions towards the OMU, and specifically towards probation staff. Perceptions were predominately linked to the men’s limited interactions with POMs and their perceived inaccessibility – as a result of probation staff shortages. These perceptions appeared to be further reinforced to the men by operational prison staff. Senior

[8] The Personal Officer scheme operated in prisons prior to the introduction of OMiC and Key Work. The previous PO scheme had caseloads that were higher, there was no dedicated training for personal officers and support would take place as part of wing duties. Key Work was designed to ensure caseloads were smaller and time for sessions is protected through profiled time. Key Workers receive bespoke training and take a more active role in a prisoner’s sentence management activity, working collaboratively with the POM.

leaders in both prisons were cognisant of the unhelpful narratives, placing strain on POMs with unmanageable caseloads and further cementing cultural divisions where they existed between prison and probation staff. There was a shared view among senior leaders that prevailing perceptions of OMiC had become a barrier in itself.

Staff profiling, and associated detailing of Key Work activity, was the single most commonly cited barrier to Key Work delivery, followed by staffing shortages which led to chaotic and continual change in the allocation of Key Workers. The detailing of Key Work on any given day was inconsistent and infrequent, and many reported the expectation to carry out all six Key Work sessions in a single morning or afternoon shift as unrealistic. On larger and split sites this was further compounded by the additional time needed to physically move locations in between sessions. Other aspects of the physical environment posed challenges, including access to suitable spaces to hold Key Work sessions and limited access to IT to record Key Work sessions.

> ‘Normally should be doing a session every two weeks – but often taken off it and don’t get told when the next Key Work session will be.’ (Key Worker in Prison D)

> ‘I log on and see a different list of prisoners to talk to every time. The allocation process (of changing) makes it tricky and often doesn’t work.’ (Key Worker in Prison C)

Key Workers identified a number of strategies to improve Key Work delivery including wing based Key Work to enable rapport to be established more quickly, Key Work detailed for a full day to allow Key Workers sufficient time to carry out sessions, and for a smaller number of dedicated, full time Key Workers to improve consistency and quality of delivery. Wing based Key Work as a suggested improvement from Key Workers, whilst demonstrating a desire to simplify the model and make it more operationally viable, is akin to the old PO scheme, something that is familiar and known to more experienced staff. This poses challenges for Key Workers to remain boundaried, manage expectations, and to ensure the demarcation of a Key Work session is distinct from other interactions – which does not currently reflect the

experiences of men receiving it (see section 6.2). These views again reveal a lack of motivation/ and or understanding of the purpose of Key Work, why it was introduced, and the fundamental shift away from previous schemes to a more collaborative and rehabilitative approach towards interactions that support individual behaviour change. This was mirrored in the accounts of several Custodial Managers (CMs) who either lacked motivation and/or understanding of the intended value and purpose of Key Work. Their views were also closely tied to the PO scheme, viewing Key Work as an extension of that scheme but with the added complexity of detailing sessions. They felt this was a 'nice to have' but due to constant tension with the regime and staffing pressures, delivery was always going to be challenging.

5.3 Lack of perceived investment in staff

There was an overarching view shared among all participants of a perceived lack of investment in staff at all levels. This was linked to a combined lack of capability among staff, in part driven by a lack of opportunities to develop and strengthen skills, in addition to a lack of motivation and/or understanding among some staff members. Senior leaders described how skills had faded among staff during the pandemic and perceived this to be a combination of large numbers or new staff joining the service during the pandemic, high attrition rates among staff, and both and new and experienced staff having been unable to practice and apply skills for a protracted period of time. Senior leaders had witnessed an 'apathy' among some staff following the lifting of restricted regimes, and this 'apathy' had also been raised by the men in prison (see section 9.2).

All four prisons had a high number of new and inexperienced staff, many who had joined during the pandemic, who had become 'normalised' to restricted regimes and the resultant views were of a staff group that required significant input and support to upskill and build capability within and across roles. The lack of perceived investment in staff was inferred within the accounts of POMs and Key workers, articulated in their experiences of feeling unsupported and undervalued (see section 8, Outcomes for staff).

> ‘Some new staff don’t understand their role and we need to upskill staff. Values are there in staff but not giving them the environment to make the difference. [Staff are] turn keys at the moment.’ (Senior leader in Prison C)

> ‘Some apathy among Band 3’s – not across the board but in a significant few. They need pushing as there are lots of performance issues that need challenging. CM’s [Custodial Managers] are not up to the challenge… they switched off a little since the restrictions have eased and the PPT [Prison Performance Tool] was switched off. They have taken their eye of the ball.’ (Senior leader in Prison D)

Linked to this were senior leaders’ reflections on the availability of adequate formal training, including national Officer Apprenticeship training which many felt did not equip staff with the basic knowledge and skills needed to be prison officer, and the criticality of experiential learning and continuous improvement to building a confident and capable workforce.

Key Workers did not perceive Key Work training to be helpful in terms of the purpose of the role, setting it within the wider context of OMiC and the overarching aims of the Service, or providing them with the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills needed to carry out the role. Their accounts suggested both the content and delivery of training could be improved, with more bitesize e-learning packages available as a ‘refresher’. Key Workers would also welcome more bespoke training to increase their knowledge and skills on how best to meet the needs of different prisoner populations.

> ‘Key Work training was tagged onto FMI [Five Minute Intervention] training and didn’t find it overly helpful. Didn’t cover why we were doing it and what we are trying to do… achieve. For us the message was do Key Work to get SPEAR.’ (Key Worker in Prison C)

6. Organisational misalignment

6.1 Setting the vision and direction

There is evidence to suggest that setting the vision and direction for the prison is a critical enabler to OMiC delivery, as revealed in the contrasting views of senior leaders interviewed. There were clear demonstrations of purposeful communication, providing clarity to staff and men in contrast to confused and unclear messaging, generating conflicting narratives around OMiC. Some prisons had more dominant narratives than others (see Table 5, Appendix D3) and were also reinforced in the accounts of some senior leaders, which was an influencing factor linked to staff's understanding of, and commitment to delivery of OMiC.

For some, the conflicting narratives around OMiC were found to be pervasive and unhelpful and undermined the prisons wider aims and objectives. The perceived ongoing tension between intended practice and actual delivery was understandably challenging some senior leader's views of the long-term success and achievability of OMiC. Problematic information flows and ineffective communication channels within, and between prisons and probation was impeding effective partnership working and the coordination of activities. The reported misinformation and widespread confusion around OMiC and demarcation of roles, including senior leadership roles (specifically between the HoMD and HoMS) had further compounded the negative perceptions surrounding OMiC, and greater clarity, clearer guidance and baseline expectations around delivery in the short, medium and long term are needed.

> 'There has been no consistent message about expectations… the ask is unrealistic so it's not helping when trying to drive something. The importance and value then diminishes, and we are being set up to fail with a performance target. Some clear assurances and messages about what is realistically achievable and realistic. Perceptions are often more important than reality for prisoners, so perceptions and culture is what needs to change.' (Senior leader in Prison B)

Senior leaders reflected on their relationships with local union branches and the role they play in shaping staff's perceptions on practice and delivery. At the forefront are senior leaders establishing and communicating a clear vision and purpose to tackle negative perceptions and dominant narratives and give staff greater clarity and shared ownership of goals. However, senior leaders' knowledge around OMiC was mixed. There were very committed, pro-active and knowledgeable senior leaders, attempting to set a clear vision and build on opportunities to join up and align activities, whilst others appeared more siloed in their thinking and approach. The lack of strategic oversight and join up between different functional heads, poor information flows and weak assurance processes were also raised as significant barriers to delivery (see section 6.3).

> 'We are driving Key Work delivery from the OMU but out of frustration as no one else is driving it from elsewhere. We have set up a steering group now with residential to try and coordinate and get it up and running.' (Senior leader in Prison D)

> 'Res [residential] should be in the centre of the prison and all other functions (Offender management, security) feed in to manage a core group of people'. (Senior leader in Prison C)

6.2 Conflicting narratives and contradictory practices

The unrealistic prospect of delivering weekly Key Work, coupled with the challenges of detailing and prescribed timing of Key Work sessions had garnered negative staff perceptions towards Key Work. These perceptions were evident and embedded among staff at all four prisons. Negative Key Worker perceptions were heavily influenced by the conflicting narratives around Key Work, both locally and nationally, and unhelpful reinforced through an absence of robust quality assurance processes. The ongoing disparity between expected delivery and practice appears to have eroded confidence and commitment among staff that Key Work is realistic and achievable. Implementation of Key Work continues to be perceived as complex, rigid and difficult to implement, more so in Prison A as a reception prison facing constant pressures from a shortfall in staffing and constant change in the prisoner population.

> ‘Respect the intent but in practice it doesn’t work here.’ (Key Worker in Prison A)

> ‘In principle it’s great, in practice the quality of the sessions and write up is variable – so numbers wise it may look good but doesn’t mean it is.’ (Key Worker in Prison D)

> ‘Should have 16 [Band 3 prison] officers on my wing and I have 7 due to long term sick. Key Workers have up to 10 men allocated to them and they try to aim for once monthly.’ (Custodial Manager in Prison B)

Quality of Key Work was problematic in all four prisons, demonstrated by a quality assessment of Key Work sessions (see table 4, Appendix D2), where the majority of sessions notes were assessed as insufficient or of poor quality, or inaccurately recorded as a Key Work session. Both senior leaders and staff, who participated in the study, described unhelpful practices emerging (inaccurate recording of Key Work sessions) and unhelpful narratives developing. There was a dominant view (most evident in Prison C) of any contact with men being captured and recorded as a Key Work session with the aim of increasing delivery data, and at the expense of any distinct and meaningful sessions.

For some senior leaders, the expectations around quality were low as the quote below illustrates. There were several prisons trying to encourage basic interactions between staff and men, before even attempting to focus efforts on addressing the quality of delivery. This reaffirms participants widespread views on the lack of capability and motivation among some staff, and evident in men’s recent experiences of Key Work, or lack thereof.

> ‘Quality of sessions is just not there. We need to focus on getting them to talk to men first before addressing quality.’ (Senior leader in Prison B)

Men’s experience of Key Work was found to be superficial and indistinguishable from other day to day interactions on the wing. Whilst some men found these short

interactions helpful, these were described by some as ‘welfare checks’ and similar to the old PO scheme.

> ‘I have never knowingly had a “Key Work” session.’ (Sentenced man in Prison C)

> ‘Can’t fault my Key Worker but don’t see them enough. Mainly talk to you about basic daily stuff but they don’t get back to you… conversation is very different if 5 minutes on the wing compared to 25 minutes in a room just the two of you.’ (Sentenced man in Prison D)

For the majority of men interviewed, if they had met their Key Worker, it was a short conversation lasting several minutes, often taking place on the wings, or through the cell door, with little opportunity for a meaningful and confidential interaction. For many men they were often not aware of when a Key Work session had actually taken place. Whilst men recognised the ongoing staffing challenges, they also described an apathy among wing staff following the pandemic where they were less inclined to want to spend time in conversation with men (see section 9 outcomes for men). The lack of distinct, meaningful engagement that is the cornerstone of Key Work suggests further improvements are needed to embed the Key Work principles (see Appendix E) into practice, and to demarcate the difference between routine day to day interactions with staff and focused quality engagement with men.

Perceived Quality of Key Work delivery

The was little reported evidence of Key Workers setting clear expectations around sessions in a procedurally just way or establishing and maintaining boundaries with men. It was clear from talking to men and staff, that for many Key Work is largely understood though the lens of the previous PO scheme which may, in part, explain the transactional nature of interactions. Despite the growing number of prison officers new to the service, this appeared to be a prevailing view even among those with no prior experience of the scheme. The cultural shift required for embedding quality Key Work to support safety alongside sentence management with a rehabilitative focus is still needed at both the local and national level.

Band 5 Custodial Managers (CMs) with line management oversight of Key Workers are critical to the quality assurance process of Key Work in prisons, but there were contrasting views on their role and the challenges they faced. CMs interviewed (n=6) spoke openly about the lack of Key Work, both quantity and quality, and found and that quality was undermined when Key Workers relied on structured and prescriptive checklists. These resulted in sessions that were repetitive and a 'one size that fits all' type of approach, which hampered individualised and responsive interactions, and was flagged as a particular concern (in Prisons B & C) for men serving long sentences.

Some senior leaders, CMs, and Key Workers believed the CM role is pivotal to counteracting some of the negative views around OMiC, and when the role was utilised effectively, it could positively influence Key Workers' views and abilities to deliver good quality and meaningful Key Work sessions. In reality, there were perceived to be too few CMs to establish and maintain robust quality assurance processes or provide feedback to Key Workers on areas for improvement. Knowledge and motivation among CMs to support good quality Key Work was mixed, and senior leaders also raised concerns of over-stretched, and in some cases apathetic CMs, who then provided little direct oversight of Key Work delivery and ignoring quality entirely. Whilst the potential for the CM role was recognised as an enabler to improving quality delivery, it requires further investment and bespoke support for this group of staff.

6.3 Organisational silos

There was a perceived lack of strategic alignment at both the system- and prison-level. Senior leaders were frustrated with the lack of clarity around organisational priorities from the centre following the lifting of exceptional delivery models. There was a perceived misalignment between overarching prison and probation priorities, and the join up between custody and community considered inadequate. Handovers, whilst seen as an OMiC design strength, were in reality experienced as a practice weakness. Within prisons there appeared to be little strategic join up of OMiC related activity between functions with limited information flows, and little to no established connection between POMs and Key Workers.

Siloed working was raised consistently raised as a perennial barrier to delivery by staff and senior leaders, both across prison functions and within OMUs. There were (in Prisons A & D) notable divisions arising from differences in ethos and working practices and demonstrates the pervasive reach of culture that is interlaced throughout all six themes. One particular area of weakness raised by senior leaders was the resourcing and role of case administrators within the OMU. The difficulties raised were also shared directly by case administrators in two prisons (C & D) and POMs. Structurally, the case administration resource is external to the OMiC resourcing model, which has resulted in a misalignment of resources and inefficient working practices. There was some reported friction around the responsibility of tasks and adequate resourcing to meet the demands of the OMU and there had been some confusion around the case administrator function which operates differently in prison compared to the community and had led to boundaried and siloed ways of working, exacerbating divisions in some OMUs.

From the accounts of Case administrators in two prisons (Prisons C & D), they felt the significance and value of the function was not recognised or factored into the model. The time-bounded nature, and wider implications of their responsibilities meant they felt the pressure acutely. They described being asked to do tasks outside of their remit by probation POMs which had caused some tensions and the lack of engagement with COMs meant they spent a disproportionate amount of time chasing paperwork from COMs, and this was hampering men's progression.

In all four prisons the OMU remains on the periphery of the prison and for some senior leaders, their views echoed that of POMs who described the OMU as an island in the prison (see section 7.3 below) largely misunderstood by those operating outside of it. In only one prison (Prison D) was there a clear articulation of the vision and purpose which was supporting an operational and cultural shift to place OMiC and the OMU at the heart of the prison. Despite some ongoing tensions within the OMU, the prison culture and perceptions of staff indicated a collective understanding of the whole prison approach towards improving outcomes for men, and they had implemented robust quality assurances processes to help drive and embed targeted delivery to support those aims (see table 5, Appendix D3 for a detailed description of Prison D).

6.4 Widespread misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities

The lack of clarity around roles and demarcation of responsibilities within and across a range of job roles was an enduring issue for staff in all four prisons. Senior leaders described seeing first-hand the unintended effects of the ongoing system pressures, highlighting the blurring of boundaries across roles as staff tried to absorb additional work, and the depletion of staff experience and skills following the pandemic. The extent to which senior managers understood OMiC roles and responsibilities was ambiguous, hampering their ability to provide clarity and support their own staff. In Prison A, local processes were being developed which probation POMs described as unhelpfully duplicating existing processes and increasing workload pressures. Prison POMs (in Prison A) reflected on their role and the lack of information and clarity provided to them when OMiC was first introduced. For some, the lack of clarity from the outset meant they have never fully understood their roles and the wider aims and purpose of OMiC – which is another factor influencing the successful transition from the previous Offender Supervisor role to becoming a POM (see section 8.2).[9]

> ‘Not sure we do understand why the model was introduced and the principles have never been explained to us.’ (Prison POM in Prison A)

Prison and probation POMs were united in their frustrations of the lack of engagement from COMS and the overall disconnect they experienced to the community. There was shared view that COMs had little understanding of the POM role, evidenced through the ongoing push back from COMs on activity they were responsible for, with accommodation arrangements on release being cited as particular area of weakness in COMs’ work.

> ‘It happened quickly [removal of resettlement services from the prison] and there is a lack of understanding with COMs who push back to us to do DTRs [Accommodation referrals].’ (Prison POM in Prison C)

[9] With the introduction of OMiC, the new Prison Offender Manager (POM) was introduced to replace the Band 4 Offender Supervisor role in prison who provided sentence management to individuals serving 12 months or more in custody.

For many Key Workers, alongside men in prison who participated, the Key Work role was predominantly described and understood through the lens of the previous PO scheme and this frame of reference has obscured the fundamental differences of Key Work, beyond the detailing of Key Work sessions. This appears to have impacted on Key Workers' understanding of the role and the shift to a more rehabilitative and relational approach, involving men and their POMs. Some Key Workers described the role as an 'add on' to their duties as a prison officer, and in some cases as a 'means to an end'. Key Workers (in Prisons A & C) directly linked a recent drive in Key Work delivery to the introduction of PAVA (synthetic pepper spray) and SPEAR,[10] and had little understanding of the purpose and wider aims of Key Work. This was reflective of the wider culture and direction set by senior leadership teams within these prisons (see table 5 in Appendix D3). In Prison C, Key Workers described process-avoidant behaviours, a lack of understanding, and inaccurately recording Key Work sessions to increase the national delivery measure. The quotes below are indicative of a wider lack of understanding around the purpose of Key Work and what good quality Key Work should entail.

> 'We are constantly doing Key Work here… five-minute sessions count but there is confusion around the role.' (Key Worker in Prison C)

> 'It's no different from the PO scheme with the exception of profiled time.' (Key Worker in Prison B)

[10] Spontaneous Protection Enabling Accelerator Response (SPEAR) training and PAVA spray are part of a personal safety package for prison staff. SPEAR and PAVA have been rolled out together nationally to ensure that staff have a range of skills to resolve situations effectively. Key Work delivery was one criterion to assess prisons readiness for implementation.

7. Cultural misalignment

7.1 A cultural dichotomy in purpose and ethos

This was most notable in the shared accounts of Probation POMs, who talked of a clear cultural dichotomy between prisons and probation, which in essence they described as 'discipline versus rehabilitation'.

> 'Culture in prisons is discipline versus rehabilitation and there is a real tension. Not always swearing but it's the attitude, tone and use of language and delivery behind it that is inappropriate, and it goes unchallenged.' (Probation POM in Prison C)

> 'The culture and ethos of probation is very different to prison. Prison staff ensure compliance to GOOD [Good Order & Discipline] and there is the rub as we focus on rehabilitation and risk. OMU have a bad rep here… OMiC is seen negatively due to [lack of] Key Work.' (Probation POM in Prison D)

The physical prison environment, particularly issues with access to interview rooms and IT, alongside facilities that are not conducive to therapeutic work with men, further exemplified this tension.

> '…have had to interview men in the gym or association, with constant noise, radios going… or in rooms with broken chairs so no one can't sit down.' (Probation POM in Prison B)

> 'Safety of rooms – we have to give knock backs and bad news to high risk men who get very distressed and angry… seems there is little regard for us and them at times. No alarms in some [rooms]… and had to have a difficult conversation with one man that had recently put a member of staff in hospital.' (Probation POM in Prison C)

The dichotomisation between prison and probation as two distinct and professional entities, characterised by differences in their purpose and approach, appears to have situated staff into two opposing groups: one that is focused on rehabilitation and risk management, and the other on managing behaviour through compliance and discipline. Probation POMS described a prison-wide lack of understanding around risk and sentence management. In three of the four prisons, POMs recounted incidents where operational staff had often and sometimes unintentionally undermined their work with men through their language and behaviour. POMs had witnessed prison staff not challenging problematic or offence-paralleling behaviours,[11] and reflected on a lack of rehabilitative focus by some prison staff. This highlighted the wider purpose and intent of the two professions, that when unaligned perpetuates silo working and hinders effective partnership working.

The notion of primacy between the two was a source of unease and raised by senior leaders, who situated the tensions in the wider context of unrelenting whole-system change programmes, where cultural dynamics could be more carefully considered within the design of organisational structures. Prisons were perceived as exhibiting more vertical, hierarchal structures in contrast to probation adopting a more lateral approach. These structures, in turn influence leadership and management styles, working practices, and attitudes and behaviours of staff.

> ‘Prison Service culture there is a clear rank structure rooted in military and there is a direct response from each layer. Probation is much softer, and the culture feels very different.’ (Senior leader in Prison B)

> ‘A prison culture shift is needed – no level of discussion in prison – decisions are not communicated and fed back which is at odds with how probation work.’ (Senior leader in Prison C)

[11] Offence paralleling behaviour (Jones, 2004) is any form of offence related behaviour (or fantasised behaviour) pattern that emerges at any point before during or after an offence. It does not have to result in an offence: it simply needs to resemble, in some significant respect, the sequence of behaviours leading up to the offence.

Senior leaders felt many of the systems and processes required to support better alignment of prisons and probation were felt to be absent. Examples included differential access to case management systems, differences in working practices and HR and performance management processes which hamper efforts to reduce silo working and limits information flows. In two prisons, (Prison A & C), HoMDs were not line managing prison POMs which introduced differences in supervision and support being offered to prison POMs. As some senior leaders reflected, the lack of supporting structures only serves to amplify the differences between the two organisations, both culturally and structurally.

> ‘There is a perception of elitism towards us [Probation staff] from prison grades both up and down the ranks. That has been directly said to me… that they think we are cleverer – we are elitist. Rather than use the knowledge and skills we bring their perceptions reinforces the separateness between roles and disciplines. They want to bring us together, but they don’t… some have access to nDelius and others don’t.’ (Senior leader in Prison D)

> ‘The [OMiC] model ignores professional and cultural differences between prison and probation [like professional education levels] and there is a lack of respect for these differences. Both have spent years carving out their own territories.’ (Senior leader in Prison A)

Senior Probation Officers (SPOs), as Heads of Offender Management Delivery in prisons described experiences paralleling that of probation POMs (see section 7.2 below). HoMDs described an increasing disconnect to probation as their ‘parent’ organisation, with the added pressure of supporting probation POMs who were feeling overwhelmed and excluded. SPO line management moving to the prison operational line under the Governing Governor had only just been introduced so it was too early for HoMDs to critically reflect on their experiences and whether this could alter their link with community probation.

This has serious and widespread implications for One HMPPS[12] and how best to achieve a balance that acknowledges and protects the professional identities and skill sets of both prison and probation staff, whilst working in conjunction to deliver a seamless and effective service for people in custody and supervised in the community.

7.2 Cultural and professional differences between prison and probation practice

Probation POMs' accounts evoked a strong sense of disconnect from both their community counterparts and their colleagues in prison. POMs described being uncomfortably 'sat in the middle' of two distinct and separate professional organisations – in 'no man's land.' As one POM described it 'we are the dog with two masters.' The disconnect felt from probation was exposed by the conflict with the COM role and the demarcation of responsibility for cases. POMs were frustrated by being the 'conduit' between COMs and prisoners. POMs perceived their knowledge of the men they were case managing to be far superior to that of the COMs, yet their decision-making in relation to these cases was perceived to be often side-lined or overridden by the COM when their views did not align. The perception that COMs did not understand the prison environment and the role and responsibility of POMs was widespread, mirrored in the views of prison staff working as POMs also. The effective join up of prison and probation staff, and handover of information to support men transitioning from custody back into the community remains an area of weakness. Staff perceive this to have been exacerbated by staffing pressures in the community and the lack of pre-release and resettlement provision to support this transition period.

POMs described being 'forgotten about' when working in prisons and also included men in prison within this forgotten group alongside them. Information flows to support probation staff working in prisons was considered non-existent, and POMs felt training and policy updates were community-focused, with a lack of recognition of the nuances of the probation role in prison.

[12] The One HMPPS programme was announced by the MoJ in 2022 as a new leadership model with the aim of refocusing the agency on core operational business making sure Probation and Prison frontline staff have the right support to be able to deliver the very best services.

> ‘COMs change like the weather – had five different COMs in one prisoners parole window and they failed to attend the parole hearing. If they are not outside [men in prison], they are out of mind.’ (Probation POM in Prison C)

Feeling like an ‘outsider’ in prison was another key contributor to POMs feeling disconnected and unsupported. The sense of exclusion was greater in certain prisons (Prison A & D) where particular tensions were evident in their working relationships with other staff in the OMUs. For most POMs, the sense of ‘exclusion’ was predominantly tied to the wider cultural dichotomy between prison and probation values and working practices.

> ‘We are in their playground, you either play by their rules or get out.’ (Probation POM in Prison D)

> ‘Staff tell us that we [probation staff] use big words – it’s a very macho culture on the wings.’ (Probation POM in Prison B)

For POMs, this sense of being on the ‘out’ was evoked also through a prison hierarchy of roles, where operational experience and ‘jailcraft’ afforded greater respect and credibility among prison staff.[13] POMs felt they were treated with suspicion by wing staff (Prison B) but wanted to be seen and treated as equals (Prison C & D). As ‘outsiders,’ POMs felt the emphasis was on them to ‘fit in’, yet differences in working practices, for example home working and access to IT systems, were reinforcing perceptions of inequity and unhelpfully amplifying differences. Several POMs talked about feeling unsafe, linked to the prison environment and the physical space in which they were having very difficult conversations with men, and noted a lack of consistency in practices.

> ‘When it suits them [prison staff] they will allow us to go unescorted to collect prisoners or parole hearings and at other times won’t allow it.’ (Probation POM in Prison C)

[13] Jail craft is often described as the knowledge, skills and set of tacit practices which allow prison officers to maintain order and establish relationships with prisoners, where authority and respect are maintained to increase safety in prisons.

For prison POMS, the option for probation staff based in OMUs to work from home was a commonly cited source of contention, but other differences, including access to IT systems, line management arrangements, support, supervision, and training opportunities also exposed notable differences between the two groups. For some POMs this has intensified disparities in how they believe staff are treated and managed and has reinforced a divide between prison and probation colleagues bought together into one team within OMUs.

> ‘Perception of them [Probation POMs] not helped as they send emails when working at home telling us to do things they can’t because they are not in the prison.’ (Prison POM in Prison D)

7.3 Cultural tensions hampering partnership working

There was a collective view shared by senior leaders and prison and probation POMS working in OMUs, that it operates as a distinct and separate function within the prison – akin to an island cut off from other areas, hidden away with limited visibility or accessibility, and with little to no understanding of what takes place within the OMU, by those external to it. Across all four prisons, OMU and sentence management activity was reported as being poorly understood and received little strategic prioritisation from senior leadership teams and other departments.

> ‘We [OMU] are not respected or supported as a function. Every department is fighting one another as the most important.’ (Prison POM in Prison C)

Strategic alignment of departments (see section 6) was often undermined by a lack of understanding about the wider purpose of OMiC and the role of effective risk and sentence management, including its contribution to safety, rehabilitation, and public protection. These views were linked to the broader cultural tension between the purpose and ethos of prisons and probation as two connected, yet distinct, professional entities. POMs described heavily siloed working practices, characterised by a lack of information flowing into, and out of, the OMU and further reinforced

through POMs' experiences of feeling unsupported and undervalued with increasing workload pressures.

> '…a lack of value placed on the OMU. It's talked about as the main hub of the prison but no action to actually support that.' (Probation POM in Prison D)

> 'We [OMU] are always an afterthought. We are rarely invited to pre-release boards or ACCT reviews and have to fight tooth and nail to get information from others and to be informed… one of my cases was sectioned and no one told me.' (Probation POM in Prison C)

As a result, this has led to instances where inaccurate and unhelpful information was shared with prisoners, impacting negatively on their perceptions of OMU. POMs were acutely aware of the reputational damage this was having, with prisoner accounts confirming poorer perceptions of, and infrequent contact with POMS, and a growing mistrust and sense of powerlessness among the men in prison. This was particularly notable in Prisons B & C, holding men serving longer sentences and where perceptions of procedural injustice were more prominent.

Cultural tensions, coupled with the daily pressures staff are facing within their roles was perceived as one of the biggest barriers to collaborative and effective working relationships, and in reality, as one POM stated it feels like 'we are working against one another'. Competing pressures within prisons and the community, and a shortage of staff has created conflict between roles and compounded by a lack of understanding of each other's work and the demarcation of responsibilities.

8. Outcomes for staff

8.1 Key workers felt they lacked confidence and capability in their role

Key Workers described a desire to be confident, knowledgeable, and credible in their role, and they cared about how they were perceived by the men in their prisons. The reported lack of knowledge in particular areas – namely sentence management and the work of OMU – and being new to the role seemed to have impacted on their ability to be responsive to individuals and to be seen as credible. This was a significant issue for staff in Prisons B and C working with long-term sentenced men, with a large proportion going through the parole process.

> 'New to Key Work and they ask a lot of questions which I don't know the answer to, and it's embarrassing sat there in front of them. Prisoners then don't have the confidence in you.' (Key Worker in Prison C)

Key Workers need to be able to draw on a multitude of skills and apply them in practice, and to have a breadth of knowledge about the system in which they are operating. Many Key Workers described lacking in skills or having the confidence to facilitate meaningful conversations, partly as a result of the infrequent and limited opportunities for them to work directly with men through Key Work sessions. The more challenging aspects of the role and associated skills raised included:

- Building rapport with prisoners – particularly for those who do not want to engage with staff. The chaotic nature of the allocation of Key Work was cited as of the main barriers to establishing relationships.
- Conflict resolution and challenging difficult and inappropriate behaviour, while encouraging accountability and ownership of their behaviour and actions.

Key Workers responses were mixed in terms of how they would deal with complex and challenging men. Some described perseverance to build trust and rapport and wanted to develop more skills to try and engage, whereas others appeared conflict-avoidant and felt the allocation process should be more flexible to manage personality clashes. This again reveals a lack of intent/ and or understanding about

the purpose of their role as Key Workers and their ability to situate themselves and their contribution within the aims of the prison and HMPPS more widely.

> ‘Some won’t talk to you and don’t care – they don’t want a relationship with staff. I am not going to force them to speak to me.’ (Key Worker in Prison D)

8.2 Prison POMs felt unsupported and undervalued

For the majority of prison POMs, who participated in the research, the sense of being unsupported and undervalued, was largely attributed to their ongoing redeployment to operational duties, which created further pressures for non-operational prison and probation POMs and other staff in the OMU. As a result, POMs felt the role was not prioritised or protected. Redeployment and the number of operational POMs at each prison differed, but where redeployment was more common (Prison A & D), this impacted negatively on OMiC delivery. Some POMs also talked about the sense of loss they experienced with the creation of the POM role and felt a diminishing sense of responsibility and recognition of their skills and experience in managing high risk cases as previous Offender Supervisors.

There were reported inconsistent practices across all four prisons in relation to line management of prison POMs which has appeared to result in differing levels of supervision/ support and development opportunities for these staff. Communication was described as problematic, and feedback for continuous development was limited. Prison POMs reported feeling neglected, receiving little positive reinforcement or recognition of their contribution in the face of increasing caseloads and pressures to pick up activity that COMs were responsible for.

Prison POMs being managed through the operational line (in Prisons A & C) did not always receive case supervision from the HoMD, if at all. For many POMs there remained a lack of clarity around the demarcation of roles and responsibilities with the COM, and specifically the supporting role with high-risk cases, which was a real cause for concern for some POMs (Prison A).

POMs in prison A, were particularly mistrustful of senior leaders, which was linked to poor communication around roles and responsibilities when OMiC was first introduced and felt the absence of any supervision from the HoMD was perpetuating a 'separateness' between prison and probation staff in the OMU.

> 'We recognise managers don't always have good news to share with us [on supporting high risk cases] but they can take a collegiate approach when doing it which helps to deliver the message and for people to process the news.' (Prison POM in Prison A)

> '…not had supervision in a year – it's very hit and miss.' (Prison POM in Prison C)

In Prison D, POMs were managed by the HoMD and were positive about the supervision received but felt unsupported by the HoMS, wanting additional support to limit their redeployment back onto the wings.

The experiences shared by several POMs new to the role, and who had previous experience in operational posts, has highlighted the need to carefully consider the pathway to becoming a POM, and the support and training required to aid transition into the role. POMs new in post felt unprepared and overwhelmed. One described being mis-sold the role to ease resource pressures and fill vacancies in the OMU. Prior operational experience was assumed to be beneficial, but in reality, this has not always been advantageous for some. The POM role requires a shift from what POMs described as a predominantly discipline-focused role, to one which is more supervisory, rehabilitative, and support-focused. This was also reflected in views of senior leaders and of men who had previously formed relationships with officers who have then moved into the POM role. It is recommended that the recruitment of POMs needs to be values-based, where candidates properly understand what the role entails, are motivated to do the role rather than being allocated to it, and they receive appropriate training, support, and supervision to enhance their confidence and capability.

8.3 Probation POMS felt unsupported, deskilled and devalued

Probation POMs also described feeling unsupported on an individual and collective level. Individually, supervision from HoMDs varied in frequency and quality across the four prisons. The workload pressures for POMs were described as acute and cumulative, and they perceived there to be little intervention or protection from senior managers to ease unmanageable and overwhelming caseloads, alongside the mounting pressures that come from absorbing additional tasks to fill resource gaps.

> ‘We put huge effort into our role and we get no recognition within the OMU]. None of us have routine supervision.’ (Probation POM in Prison C)

> ‘Supervision – externally for us is once a year and its useless.’ (Probation POM in Prison B)

POMs perceived there to be a strong dissonance between the views and messaging of senior leaders and their subsequent actions, with the OMU in prisons operating on the periphery with no active prioritisation or alignment to other departments. Collectively, the perceived lack of strategic prioritisation of risk and sentence management by senior leaders (linked to the wider themes of cultural and organisational misalignment) in prisons signalled to POMs a lack of professional recognition of their expertise and skills.

> ‘The prison does not see me as professional individual, with skills that are not recognised. We all [x 3 POMs] have professional pride and for the last 3 years the prison doesn’t see or support you to continue to do that.’ (Probation POMs in Prison C)

Probation POMs described feeling deskilled and devalued, linked to two interconnecting factors. The first was a diminishing sense of responsibility, and for POMs working with longer term sentenced prisoners (Prisons B, C & D) this came

about from a change to the parole process.[14] Despite some POMs recognising the rationale to streamline the process, there was a shared consensus that this 'side-lined' POMs' professional opinions, intensified friction between the POM and COM, and hampered their ability to exercise professional discretion, ultimately deskilling them.

> 'It's insulting – the COM doesn't know them like we do.' (Probation POM in Prison C)

> 'Both men and POMs feel underrepresented and the [parole] process is deskilling us. Taking us out of the process entirely so what's the point of having us.' (Probation POM in Prison D)

For probation POMs in Prison A, where the requirements of working in a reception prison presented very different priorities, they too felt deskilled through a loss of professional discretion and autonomy over their input into the MAPPA process.[15] A combination of national and local directives around MAPPA to manage increasing workloads had resulted in some misallocation of work within the OMU, leading to both prison and probation POMs feeling devalued.

The second factor was in the value of the POM role as intrinsically linked to the participants' professional identities. They described a loss of identity through a combination of factors that included the diminishing of responsibilities from misalignment between roles, misalignment between national and local policies with OMiC delivery, and a lack of support and recognition from their prison and community counterparts.

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[14] Prison offender managers were no longer permitted to provide recommendations or views on a prisoner's suitability for release or transfer to open conditions in the reports they provide to the Parole Board.

[15] Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The purpose of MAPPA is to help to reduce the re-offending behaviour of those convicted of sexual and violent offences in order to protect the public, including previous victims, from serious harm. It aims to do this by ensuring that all relevant agencies work together effectively.

‘We are either responsible for a case or we are not under OMiC. It’s confusing and frustrating at times. If we are responsible, we should make the decisions… We are overridden when the COM is responsible, yet we are working with the men in here.’ (Probation POM in Prison C)

8.4 The psychological strains experienced by staff

Staff across all roles, who participated in the research said they were feeling the effects of system pressures and operational demands, albeit in different ways dependent on the local prison context. Prison POMs’ spoke of the increasing and at times overwhelming pressures, placed upon them. They spoke of growing caseloads and additional tasks to fill the gaps created by resource pressures elsewhere. Prison POMs described their day-to-day experiences as ‘fire-fighting’, responding to the immediate tasks which has displaced much of the POM activity they should, and wanted to be focused on. For some POMs (in Prison A & C) they had no idea what their normal role should look like, as a result of the constant push back from COMs. For those newer in post, they felt overwhelmed and unable to meet these growing demands, which in turn placed further pressure on these individuals who lacked adequate support or supervision.

‘Can’t concern myself unduly about the timings for supervision. Just trying to keep head afloat and will learn along the way.’ (Prison POM in Prison C)

‘Should we be more flexible about what we take on… some of us do it… impacts on the prisoners otherwise and some of us are more rigid and won’t do the referrals.’ (Prison POM in Prison D)

There was a greater resistance in some prisons (A & D) to take on more work, related in part to the lack of guidance, support, and communication POMs received, and where relationships between prison and probation staff were problematic. There had been an active resistance from POMs (in Prison A) to support COMS with high-risk cases. Poor communication, a lack of clarity around the designated responsibilities on these cases, and recent experiences of COMs’ lack of engagement, had heightened POMS anxiety and resistance. The emotional and

psychological toll for Probation POMs was most apparent in Prisons B & C, but evident among all. Staff shortages and increasingly unmanageable caseloads were placing huge pressures on probation POMs and they were feeling a heavy weight of responsibility.

> ‘I wake up and am filled with dread. I can’t do my job so what is the point in me coming in. Can’t go in and spend time with the men as I have four parole reports to do. Now I don’t know who my cases are.’ (Probation POM in Prison B)

There was a growing discomfort among POMs on the decisions and ‘trade-off’s’ made in prioritisation of tasks and the immediacy of men’s needs which often resulted in decisions to prioritise resettlement over risk-based activity. Probation POMs in all four prisons spoke openly about the role having changed to a reactive one, to respond to current pressures within the Service, rather than it being the role they had initially applied for and been trained to carry out. POMs routinely cited ‘form filling’ and paperwork dominating their time and were frustrated by their inability to carry out meaningful one to one work with men.

> ‘We [probation staff] were sold OMiC as something that is engaging with prisoners – it’s not.’ (Probation POM in Prison A)

> ‘Our role has become a report writing role… This is not what I signed up for and have been in the job 20 years. The Service has become very risk averse, and we are now placing restrictions on people and not bringing out their internal motivations. Probation culture is changing and OMiC has exacerbated it – relational skills are no longer valued or recognised, its reactive to staff pressures which is a different job entirely.’ (Probation POM in Prison B)

POMs described the immediate and actual priorities running counter to what they perceived to be the right priorities, which was impacting on the quality of service that they could provide. In Prisons B & C, where men’s perceptions of the OMU were profoundly negative, POMs were fully cognisant of how they were perceived, and

several talked openly about avoiding wings due to the backlash they would experience from the men, and some operational staff too. It was evident in accounts from all POMs that their motivation and ability to do a good job mattered to them and being unable to do this only exacerbated the psychological strains they were experiencing. POMs expressed an increasing unease about the quality of the service on offer and a system that they described as 'failing' men in prison.

> 'At the moment we are choosing the least worst option for cases and it's not right. Even if we were fully resourced the lack of programmes and lack of resettlement services breaks the model. Without resource challenges still wouldn't work.' (Probation POM in Prison C)

> 'COMS should get involved sooner – the window is too short and for parole they end up being interviewed by someone they have never met and they are nervous and it's a difficult process for the prisoner. We are failing them massively at times.' (Probation POM in Prison D)

Similar strains were experienced among some senior leaders, referring to the constant 'juggle' to 'fire-fight', and react to immediate and ongoing pressures, which was dictating delivery. This was intrinsically linked to the issues around quality, and evoked a greater sense of losing sight of the bigger picture and what they as senior leaders within prisons were trying to achieve. Like other staff working in prisons, there was growing discomfort and unease of 'failing men' and their staff.

As the quote from one senior leader illustrates, they too have felt immense pressure to redirect limited resources and are frustrated by their inability to be able to be more responsive to better support people residing and working in their prisons.

> 'The recent self-inflicted deaths in custody are among this cohort… often long-term remand prisoners are not given enough support. Key Work prioritisation should be local prison specific. Long term remands are disengaged from activity and will be in receptions for a while. They are a lost group vulnerable to falling through the gaps.' (Senior leader in Prison A)

9. Outcomes for men in prison

9.1 Feeling stuck

The prevailing experience for the majority of participants was one of feeling stuck. The frustration among men was clear and evoked a sense of powerlessness from the perceived inaccessibility of POMs, infrequent contact and the lack of provision on offer, namely programmes and pre-release and resettlement support. Unpredictable and infrequent interactions with Key Workers, compounded men's frustrations in trying to seek out information and support.

> 'Resettlement is a joke, the housing help at [Prison A] is non-existent and there are no progression opportunities.' (Man in Prison A)

> 'POM I don't really see. Don't feel supported or like I am progressing as I was refused my Cat D. I was told by wing staff it was refused – they never put it in writing or explained the decision for it.' (Sentenced man in Prison D)

For many men, they felt unsupported and unseen by staff to help them progress during their time in custody and/or their sentence. Men reported little face to face engagement time with POMs, resulting in growing frustrations and increasing requests to see their POMS. The men described having little sense of autonomy or control over their situation, and the lack of information sharing, left them confused and frustrated, with no clear expectations or understanding about their ongoing support and supervision. The men described the limited options available to seek support, clarify decisions, or contribute to their progression pathway, leaving them powerless.

> 'Wing staff are helpful and will help you with any issues but different when you want to speak to OMU. Need to put an app in and no response so it's just a cycle of app [application] after app and nothing.' (Sentenced man in Prison D)

> ‘Nothing on offer here and no one to complain to or escalate issues and no one cares so no one will do anything for you, and we have nowhere to go with it.’ (Sentenced man at Prison C)

9.2 Empty promises

Participants experiences of OMiC were one of ‘empty promises’ and procedurally just perceptions were lacking in their accounts. This was exacerbated by staffing pressures which resulted in frequent changes in both Key Worker allocations, and the frequency with which prisons could delivery Key Work sessions. The confusion and lack of clarity around OMiC was most prominent in men in Prison A.

> ‘You never see people, and the officers change a lot… staff don’t know who their men are… all the staff are new and can’t answer your questions…’ (Male in Prison A)

Expectations around OMU support and contact with POMS was more problematic for men due to the significance of POM support to enable progression. For some long term sentenced men, who were knowledgeable about the system and about OMiC, the ongoing dissonance between what was being promised and what is delivered, had begun to undermine their trust in prison processes and the wider justice system. The conflicting and contradictory practices were also preventing trust from being established among those new into custody.

> ‘Was given a booklet about Key Work and what the sessions would cover. It was really clear in terms of what we should expect and a helpful resource but have never received a Key Work session.’ (Man serving a life sentence at Prison C)

Participants spoke about the lack of communication flowing from the OMU and information, when it was shared, often being vague and providing little insight into processes and how decisions had been made. Men spoke of decisions affecting their sentence progression not being communicated and lacking transparency. Options to seek clarification, query or challenge information was problematic due to the

perceived inaccessibility of POMs and a lack of response to applications and complaints procedures, which was a source of frustration for many (see Table 3, Appendix D1). Perceptions were much poorer among men in prisons where there were acute staff shortages in the OMU, and where communication channels were largely absent (Prisons B & C). Assault and self-harm rates were beginning to rise in these prisons, where relationships were viewed more negatively, and men's growing frustrations were evident.

The level of mistrust in staff and the wider system was particularly stark among men serving long and indeterminate sentences at Prison B. Men reported some concerning practices where Key Work session entries were recorded on the system, yet they had not received them. Men were anxious about negative entries being placed on the system when no conversation had taken place, and the implications for their progression. Several men reported Key Work session entries being used within parole hearings.

> 'They can write whatever they want about you [Key Workers] and we can't do anything about it.' (Sentenced male at prison B)

> 'Where does it leave us? They [POMs] write parole reports on us having met us once for 10 minutes two weeks before the [parole] hearing. How can we trust them or the system?' (Life sentenced male in Prison B)

Similar issues were raised at Prison C, where recording practices were also at odds with the experiences of the men. Key work quality assessment data (Table 4, Appendix D2) provides corroborating evidence of questionable recording practices with a high percentage of sessions at Prison B & C assessed as invalid, so not meeting the criteria of being a Key Work session, and 30% of sessions that did meet the criteria were assessed as poor.

Some wider cultural and relational issues had also been raised at Prison B in regard to the treatment of men by a group of uniformed wing staff. Men described the use of aggressive and derogatory language towards them, with some men being more vulnerable to stigmatising behaviour from staff. This was reaffirmed in the accounts

of probation POMs in Prison B, who reported that they too had witnessed the use of disrespectful and inappropriate language and behaviour towards men and had concerns around the stigma towards men convicted of sexual offences. They found the culture in the prison to be predominantly punitive and undermining of the rehabilitative and risk focused activity they were trying to undertake with men.

> 'I have been here 12 years and it used to be us vs them because the prisoners made it that way – now the staff are making it us vs them.' (Male in Prison B)

9.3 Moving forward

There was a small group of men in all four prisons that shared positive experiences, of a relationship with a Key Worker/ and or their POM, who had provided support that was helpful through routine contact with the same staff members. For some, help was focussed more on immediate preparations for release, and for others this was working through a much longer custodial journey. This included POMs assisting with pre-release activity, including tagging and Key Workers providing a valuable information 'bridge' for men in following up actions and sharing regular updates from the OMU.[16]

At all four prisons, participants talked about a notable group of staff that stood out. Men's accounts revealed some characteristics and behaviours of staff that they valued the most. Staff that took the time to talk to them, even if it was small talk for a few minutes on the wing, which men experienced as a clear indication of effort. The men valued 'being listened to' and this is where the exceptional few really stood out for them.

> '… you just want someone to listen to you.' (Male in Prison A)

> 'Its general conversation but nice to engage and have some small talk as they are making an effort.' (Male in Prison C)

[16] Electronic monitoring (known as 'tagging') is used in England and Wales to monitor curfews and conditions of a court or prison order.

Within each prison there were small pockets of staff that had established good relationships with men and had made the effort to engage. Men would seek out these more pro-active and supportive members of staff which they acknowledged led them to being overburdened. The men valued staff who were knowledgeable, and noted new staff were often keen to assist but lacked the knowledge and expertise of the system so were unable to respond to their queries. Similar to staff accounts, many of the men's understanding of Key Work had been framed by the previous PO scheme, but they had a more comprehensive understanding of how Key Work differed to the PO scheme. The lack of infrequent Key Work, however meant the requests directed at Key Workers were more immediate and have contributed to the more transactional nature of interactions, in lieu of routine contact and protected time for more quality sessions to take place.

10. Commitment to, and potential of OMiC

10.1 Perceived value of the Key Work role

The perceived value attached to the Key Work role was intrinsically linked to Key Workers understanding and desire to undertake the role. There was a clear recognition among Key Workers that not all officers have the motivation or necessary skills to carry out this type of work. Officers who were 'advocates' of the role, were motivated to work with men and wanting to be active participants in helping men to change. These Key Workers had a good understanding of the role and were cognisant of the multiple skills required in, and demands of, the role. It was the value that 'advocates' attached to the role that made them stand out as champions of Key Work and see the potential benefits for not only men in prison but for themselves as professionals also. There was a shared view that Key Workers who wanted to take on the role should be prioritised and trained accordingly. This suggests motivation and the intrinsic value of the role, as well as the right set of skills, were perceived as critical factors to being an effective Key Worker.

> 'When they engage with you and see their lives change… when things go well for them. They have a glow and that's the rewarding part. You see them want to change.' (Key Worker in Prison D)

Those who were advocates of Key Work experienced benefits gained from performing this role. Whilst acknowledging the challenges, particularly around establishing rapport and working with men who actively don't want to engage (see section 8.1), they believed Key Work should not be a 'negative interaction'. The benefits for both parties were considered more tangible when both sides were active participants. That said, Key Workers recognised that even the more challenging sessions could offer up useful insights about the individual, their frustrations, their triggers, as well as intelligence into the wider cultural and prison dynamics.

> 'They start to see you as an individual and not just a uniform.' (Key Worker in Prison C)

> '…personally think it will help me to have other conversations with prisoners, it helps you to understand people and their experiences and understand their point of view and develop more skills and tools to work with them.' (Key Worker in Prison A)

Several Key Workers raised the lack of professional recognition given to the Key Work role as a missed opportunity to promote the benefits of this work for staff. One Key Worker suggested the national Key Work training for all new officers could provide a better balance in promoting the professional and personal benefits for staff in undertaking the role, as well as the intended benefits for the men. Every opportunity within national and local training packages to reinforce and champion the wider benefits of the Key Work role, and its contribution to the wider aims of the Service should be exploited to help Key Workers to understand and recognise the value and impact of the role.

> 'They need to push the benefits for us more – there is an unbalanced perception for staff – what about us.' (Key Worker in Prison C)

Several CMs also reflected on Key Work as an opportunity for change, and to engage staff who were less familiar with previous ways of working. One CM recognised the challenges for longer serving staff and their affiliation to the PO scheme, but also highlighted the influential position they themselves hold as enablers of change.

> 'For newer staff who have never done it they are not sure what they are doing. Can be an advantage with new staff as culturally we can influence it… we can be the cultural carriers.' (Custodial Manager in Prison C)

10.2 Optimism for the future

Despite the challenging and concerning experiences that probation POMs recounted, there was some optimism and hope for the future, and they reflected on some of the benefits of working in prisons. This included greater autonomy to work with men when they were able, and the camaraderie and sense of community that comes from being located within a prison. One probation POM valued the multi-disciplinary input

in prisons as opposed to the sense of 'it just being you' at the centre of managing a case in the community.

> 'There is an all in this together feeling in prison.' (Probation POM in Prison A)

There was a shared view that the underlying principles of the OMiC model were the right ones, and a design strength of OMiC lies in probation establishing earlier contact with men in custody. The optimism and hope for the future was tied to the potential of the role and the benefits that they as probation staff could bring if they were better supported and enabled to deliver. POMs felt this would only be achievable with a stabilisation of the workforce.

Whilst acknowledging a current lack of join up between OMU and Key Workers in all four prisons, there was an acknowledgment that COVID-19 had derailed some previously established working relationships between POMs and Key Workers (Prison D). Probation POMs noted some exceptional wing staff and recognised the value of shared experiences which had helped them to establish positive relationships with some prison staff and feeling part of a multi-disciplinary team.

> '…culture of prison and probation, dealing with the same acute issues. Prison POMs coming in to help us and under the same pressure. We all have the common enemy. As long as we are all willing to help out there is good camaraderie.' (Probation POM in Prison B)

10.3 Staff as enablers of change

For some senior leaders, there was a clear drive and commitment to empower and enable staff, and to facilitate learning and development opportunities that would build confidence and capability within roles. Some senior leaders had begun to develop local training packages for staff pre-pandemic, which they were unable to re-establish later due to ongoing staff shortages. Plans to develop local training packages were aimed at supporting Key Workers to better respond to their local prisoner population,

while for others the focus was on identifying more flexible and targeted approaches to improve delivery.

> ‘Want to empower Key Workers to make decisions and build confidence in their skills and help the prisoner. They can do this by actually leading reviews as they know the prisoner best and know the triggers. Huge feedback for them too in the role.’ (Senior leader in Prison C)

> ‘We would like to upskill Key Workers and support them – so they can sit with POMs and learn. They are unsure what to do with those denying offences – new and less experienced officers find these aspects challenging.’ (Senior leader in Prison B)

There was an appetite and motivation to instigate change, and a small number of senior leaders who had clearly articulated a vision and approach to actively prioritising and aligning activities to support a whole prison approach to OMiC.

> ‘Some see it in silo’s whereas need to see how OMiC can shape other departments/ functions and the links and wider benefits between them. It’s recognising and making the links and exploiting them.’ (Senior leader in Prison D)

In contrast there was a small group of senior leaders, whose priorities were not necessarily aligned to OMiC, and who held prevailingly negative views which have permeated through the different approaches at each prison. This has demonstrated the importance of strong and visible leadership as both an instigator, and enabler of sustained organisational and cultural change.

10.4 Case study: the benefits of meaningful Key Work

Ian is an IPP prisoner and over tariff. He has been at Prison C for several years. He has had periods of sobriety whilst in custody following periods of heavy drug use. Ian also has a history of self-harm, which has been prolific at times. Ian has been involved in a number of escalating incidents where control and restraint has been used in response to Ian's behaviour.

Owen is a Band 3 prison officer, currently based in the segregation unit. Prior to this he was a Key Worker on the residential units and was Ian's Key Worker. At the time of interview with Ian and Owen this was over two years ago. Owen is no longer Ian's Key Worker, but they formed a strong connection and established a relationship over time which has continued despite the change in Owen's role.

Ian on Owen

> 'This jail kills you with kindness. It's about letting them (staff) help you'. It took me ages to get used to it but now it's really nice and helpful. Owen comes to all the meetings with my POM even though he is not my Key Worker anymore – he comes to everything he is always there'.

Mary is a probation practitioner and Ian's POM. Ian was positive about his relationship with Mary and the support he receives from her. He recognised that his behaviour could be challenging at times but valued the continued effort and perseverance shown by staff to continue to help and support him.

Ian on Mary

> 'She is always positive when she comes to see me and always wanting to help and I shut her down and refuse […] and make her look like an idiot'. But she still tries to really help me'.

Owen on Ian

Prior to coming to this prison Ian was very closed off, would self-harm prolifically and would find himself in debt linked to periods of substance use.

Owen recounted an earlier incident where staff were planning to enter Ian's cell to restrain him. Owen attended the wing in an attempt to help deescalate the situation with Ian. On hearing Owen's voice, Ian said 'is that you Owen, you don't need the shield's?'

Owen was a strong advocate of Key Work and through his experiences with Ian he has seen first-hand how it can directly impact on safety outcomes. Owen's tenacity and skills in addressing challenging behaviours has allowed him to build a trusted relationship with Ian, which has over time positively shaped the experience for both of them.

11. Implications

The case study approach has provided a rich and detailed picture of the OMiC experience of staff and prisoners in four male closed prisons. Triangulation from a range of data sources has generated insights into the unique and context specific factors influencing delivery of OMiC, alongside wider whole system factors. Six overarching themes were generated. The first, 'System pressures', describes system wide factors and interdependencies influencing OMiC integration and delivery at all four prisons, with lack of staff being perceived as the single biggest barrier to successful delivery. However, a more complex set of challenges indicates there are other significant barriers to successful integration, evident at the whole-system, prison and individual level. Themes two and three indicate an organisational and cultural misalignment between prison and probation as two separate organisations, with their own identities, values, purpose, processes and practices. Efforts to align prison and probation staff working in prisons has magnified the differences and hampers effective partnership working within prisons and out into the community. The remaining three themes provide a rich and detailed understanding of how those living and working in prisons have experienced OMiC, and the wider factors affecting delivery.

11.1 Leadership

The findings indicate that leadership, prison culture, and the availability of staff that are skilled and motivated are key factors affecting the delivery and integration of OMiC. These same factors were also identified as conditions for successful implementation of OMiC in women's prisons (Pope, 2023). The lack of staff was perceived to be the single biggest barrier in all four prisons to successful operationalisation. Wider literature suggests that while sufficient resource will increase the likelihood of successful implementation initiatives, it does not in and of itself necessarily guarantee success (Damschroder et al, 2009). The response to, and impact of staff shortages were experienced differently across all four prisons, and it is here that leadership and culture exert their influence.

A strong and engaged leadership team and a rehabilitative focus on outcomes appear to be factors that are central to successful integration. This was most notable in Prison D, which was more rehabilitative in its focus, with visible leadership, and a distinct and clear purpose, regime and culture which focused on men's progression and preparing them for release. Strong leadership has already been identified as one of the critical markers for success in prison (Mann et al, 2018, 2019; Pope, 2023) and is also a critical driver for culture change in prison (Fitzalan Howard et al., 2023).

The findings have also highlighted the missed opportunities to better engage and utilise middle managers and supervisors within prisons to support cultural change (Fitzalan Howard et al., 2023; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2023). They can be pivotal influencers to staff attitudes and behaviours, to baseline standards and assure quality, and provide feedback and ongoing support to staff.

11.2 The importance of relationships

There is a well-established evidence base that relationships are the foundation for safe, decent and rehabilitative prisons (Mann et al., 2018, 2019). The findings have demonstrated the significance of relational practice to the success of OMiC. Relational practice places priority on interpersonal relationships, and the research findings support its prioritisation within the wider organisational and cultural context, and how this is experienced by staff and prisoners at the individual level. A recent evidence review (Bowen, 2022) has helpfully identified the characteristics of professionals and the effective ways of working with individuals to bring about positive behaviour change. Nine evidence-informed Key Work principles have been developed (see Appendix E), which reaffirms the value-base, skills, and behaviours required to effectively engage with prisoners and deliver high quality, meaningful Key Work in prisons. Many of the interpersonal skills identified were those were Key Workers felt largely unskilled and wanted greater support and training to help them build and develop their capability.

We can learn from existing prison environments that prioritise a relational practice approach, with promising results (Kuester et al., 2022). Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs) that support the progression of individuals with

complex needs and personality related difficulties as part of the Offender Personality Disorder pathway focus on the environment and actively recognise the importance and quality of relationships and interactions. The perceived lack of investment in staff was a prominent theme throughout, so it is important to acknowledge in the design of these enabling environments, there is investment in appropriately trained and supported staff, through supervision and reflective practice (Kuester et al., 2022).

There was a perceived lack of procedural justice throughout staff and men's accounts, most notable in Prisons B & C, where strengthening perceptions is fundamental to establishing trust in relationships and prison processes. Procedurally just communications, policies and processes are vital to a prison's culture and its relationships. There is strong evidence that when staff and prisoners feel treated in procedurally just ways, this evokes greater respect and adherence for systems and processes. For prisoners, this is associated with lower levels of misconduct, increased wellbeing and lower rates of reoffending after release (Beijersbergen, et al, 2014, 2016; Fitzalan Howard & Wakeling, 2020). For staff, this can lead to less stress and burnout, greater job satisfaction and support for rehabilitation (Wakeling & Fitzalan Howard, 2022).

11.3 Cultural and organisational change

A failure to recognise and work towards changing the less tangible organisational assumptions, thinking, or culture at the system and prison setting level will be detrimental to any efforts to embed OMiC (Mann et al., 2018; Pope, 2023). There are system wide implications for the One HMPPS change programme to consider how to support ongoing change an address some of the significant cultural and organisational differences between prison and probation.

The tensions raised in this study are not new (Tidmarsh, 2020) and will have been exacerbated by the extent and velocity of organisational changes experienced by staff, especially among probation staff (Cracknell, 2021). Valuable lessons can be learnt from literature on organisational change and resilience and from staff's previous experiences of change programmes to be able to apply learning.

The study has provided a richer, more nuanced understanding of staff and men's experiences of continuity and change in periods of uncertainty and disruption. The learning extends beyond the parameters of the OMiC model. The findings have shown considerable variation in how individuals adapt and respond to change. The research has shown widespread confusion, dilution of roles, and diminishing responsibilities have left staff feeling unsupported. Staff's inability to be able to support men's progression was felt deeply and placing undue strain on them professionally and personally. At all levels staff have shared a growing unease around the changing focus of delivery, comprising the quality of the service they individually and collectively can provide. Men's experiences have reflected the concerns of staff. Staff have worked to relieve immediate pressures but in the medium- to longer-term, what is the cumulative impact of enduring staff shortages and organisational change. Staff are our biggest asset to be safeguarded. To fully realise the wider aims and objectives of the Service, to improve outcomes for people in prison and on probation, reduce reoffending and protect the public, a collective investment in people, capacity and systems to deliver the right services to the right people at the right time by a capable and committed workforce is needed.

12. Operational considerations

1. Greater investment and support for senior leaders across the organisation is required to enable them to navigate and lead prisons and probation through ongoing organisational change. Through strong, stable and engaged leadership, cultural change can be facilitated. Prisons and probation need a clear and compelling vision for change, and shared goals to strengthen positive relationships and enabling environments that support effective partnership working to bridge the gap between different services.

2. Greater investment is needed within prison senior leadership teams to work in partnership to join up and align activity that improves information flows within and between functions, taking a whole prison approach to support implementation and integration of OMiC delivery.

3. Investment in operational staff requires skills-based training that offers a solid foundation in which individuals can build and strengthen their skills. There will be some staff that need additional support to develop their rehabilitative skills and behaviours.
    a. A review and revision of the national and local Key Work training packages should be undertaken, drawing on existing evidence to develop a skills-based package.
    b. Bespoke training models should be revised/ and or developed, related to boundary setting and conflict resolution to better equip staff to have difficult conversations, challenge problematic behaviours, and employ strategies and behaviours that establish rapport with prisoners who are reluctant to engage.
    c. Key Work training should be aligned to and complemented by the national prison officer training package to increase knowledge around sentence management, as well as skills-based training including FMI skills to enhance relational practice.
    d. Supervision should be provided to staff across all roles to make space for reflective practice to support continuous professional development and encourage an open learning environment.

4. Recruitment of operational staff and the pathway into different roles should be carefully considered.
    a. Much like the rehabilitative focus and commitment needed among senior leaders, recruitment of staff at all levels should also be value-based, where intrinsic motivation to do the role is considered alongside skills and strength-based assessments of suitability. Individuals should be knowledgeable about the role and want to apply, rather than be manage moved into roles. Staff transitioning between roles and on promotion should receive appropriate training, support, and supervision to enhance their confidence and capability.
    b. Middle managers are supported and empowered to facilitate change through performance management structures and quality assurance processes.
    c. Prisons should utilise staff who are advocates of their role, to establish a network of OMiC champions.

5. Within prisons, decision making processes need to be fair, transparent and clearly communicated so staff and prisoners feel treated fairly.
    a. The organisational vision and greater clarity of purpose and values of OMiC should be explicit and accessible to all prison and probation staff
    b. Baseline expectations of delivery, taking into account operational realties should clearly defined in the short-, medium-, and long-term. This should also include a definition and assessment of quality.
    c. The demarcation of roles and responsibilities for staff involved in sentence management activity should be streamlined to provide greater clarity for staff and strengthen alignment between roles.

6. Learning is central to any change process. Learning from what doesn't work well is just as vital as what does work well, to understand how to do things better.
    a. Ongoing staff and prisoner participation and reflective practice at national, regional and local levels should be central to the implementation of any changes, however small they may be.

b. Implementation of any revised processes or change should be incremental and gradual to test and refine processes and apply learning. Transitional change that is small scale and piloted, can provide greater flexibility at the local level and can help to sustain more complex change in the longer term through evidence-based learning and evaluation.

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Appendix A
OMiC in the male open and women's prison estate

OMiC in the open prison estate

The OMiC framework delivered in the open estate, which commenced on 31st March 2021 is different to that in the male closed estate. The main differences are:

- There is a greater focus on resettlement and reintegration into the community and therefore the relationship between the POM and Community Offender Manager (COM) is a critical part of effective delivery.
- Key Work is not delivered in the male open estate, so Governors continue to deliver a personal officer (PO) scheme, or other support such as peer led schemes for prisoners, where these are already in place.

OMiC in the women's prison estate

In recognition of the differing needs of women and the challenges they face in custody, a bespoke integrated offender management model has been developed and implemented in the women's estate. In women's prisons, both Key Work and sentence management time is allocated to all sentenced women based on their level of need in addition to their risk of harm. All sentenced women entering custody are assessed using a tool specifically designed to identify additional needs. Women assessed as 'high' and 'medium' need are resourced to receive additional time for sentence management activity (30% for high and 15% for medium). For women assessed as 'high' need they will then receive an enhanced sentence management service – that is additional engagement time of up to 45 minutes per week, with their POM, which is in place of Key Work with a Band 3 prison officer. This time is in addition to supervision they receive from their POM as part of their ongoing sentence management.

All other women, including those on remand, and not assessed as 'high complexity' receive Key Work with a Band 3 prison officer. This differs from the OMiC model in male closed prisons, whereby men do not receive an additional service from POMs

based on need and all men receive Key Work. Implementation of the women's model went live in April 2021.

Appendix B
Sample and methodological approach

B1: Sample

Four male closed prisons participated in the study. Five initially agreed to take part, but one subsequently withdrew due to staffing pressures.

Figure 2: The four participating prisons that took part in the research study

Prison A

A large Category B reception and resettlement prison holding adult men and some young adults. The prison has an operational capacity of 1,273. It serves the courts and holds individuals who are awaiting trial and those who have been convicted but have not yet been sentenced. Pre-pandemic Key Work delivery was consistently below 40%.

Prison B

A large Category B training prison and part of the long-term high security estate. The prison is predominantly for prisoners convicted of sexual offences, with a small local remand function. The prison has an operational capacity of 1,009 and is in a geographically remote area. Pre-pandemic Key Work delivery was consistently between 40%–60%.

Prison C

A Category C training and resettlement prison for adult men located in a rural area in the South of England. The prison has an operational capacity of 491. Pre-pandemic Key Work delivery was consistently below 40%.

Prison D

A large Category C resettlement prison for adult men located in the North of England. The prison has an operational capacity of 1,062.

Prisons holding women were excluded as the women's prison estate operates its own bespoke OMiC model which went live in April 2021. Category D prisons in the male open estate have also been excluded due to differences in OMiC delivery, where there is no Key Work provision in place.

B2: Data sources

A range of data were gathered for each of the four prisons, including:

1. **Prison performance and administrative data** enabled a description of the prisons' populations (e.g., offence type, risk and sentence length), drawn from the Segmentation Tool and other prison-level information provided by the HMPPS Performance Hub which includes population figures, safety data (assault and self-harm rates) and other performance metrics.[17,18] The Performance Hub also contains the performance measure for Key Work delivery.
2. **OMiC-specific management information** gathered by the National OMiC team, including target and actual staffing figures, OASys backlog information, alongside Key Work information.[19] A Key Work quality measure allows for a more rounded assessment that considers quantity and quality of Key Work sessions being delivered. Key Work statistics for each prison at the time of each research visit were also accessed via the Digital Prison Service (DPS).[20]

[17] The Segmentation Tool presents data on the risks, needs & responsivity characteristics of people in prison and probation. Data presented is a snapshot taken of the population annually and data presented in Table 3 is at 30 June 2022.

[18] The HMPPS Performance Hub is a reporting service that provides staff from prisons, probation, MoJ and associated organisations with data collection, validation, collation and reporting of prison and probation management information.

[19] The Offender Assessment System (OASys) is a standardised assessment of the risks and needs of people in prison and supervised by probation in the community. Once identified, it can be used to develop and deliver sentence plans.

[20] The Digital Prison Service is a digital service for staff to allocate and manage cases to Key Workers and POMS and record key work and sentence management activity with prisoners.

3. **Scrutiny documents** provided a contextual description of what was happening at each prison and build a picture of each prison's OMiC journey so far. This included recent HMIP and IMB reports, alongside recovery and regime information, and other notable documents linked to prison management and OMiC delivery at the time of the research visit.[21,22]
4. **Interviews** (one to one and focus groups) with staff, senior leadership teams, and male prisoners located in each prison. Interviews and small groups were carried out with the aim of exploring staff and men's understanding and experiences of OMiC, and to explore the factors influencing delivery.

[21] His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales (HMI Prisons) is an independent inspectorate which reports on conditions for and treatment of those in prison, young offender institutions and immigration detention facilities.

[22] Independent Monitoring Boards are made up of unpaid volunteers operating in every prison in England and Wales, and every immigration detention facility across the UK. They report on whether the individuals held there are being treated fairly and humanely and whether prisoners are being given the support they need to turn their lives around.

B3: Case data

Table 2 presents relevant OMiC data at the time of each research visit. The data presented begins to provide a more contextualised picture of the factors affecting delivery for each case, with a focus on staff resources.

Table 2: OMiC resource data for each prison

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Month of research visit	Sept 2022	Sept 22	June 22	Jul 22
Prisoner population	1102	979	459	952
No. of active key workers	260	229	94	47
Number of recorded Key Worker sessions	71	741	166	324
% of prisoners who had a Key Work session	1.44	17.86	8.44	7.85
Average time from reception to Key Work allocation (days)	28	19	16	7
Average time from reception to first Key Work session (days) [23]	82	78	22	37
% Overall non-productive staff [24]	34.39	27.32	26.78	32.42
HoMD vacancies	1	0.5	0	0
Probation POM Target Staffing Figure	4.5	16.5	4	9
Probation POM Staff in Post	4	6.5	4	9.5
Average caseload	25	130	45	45
Prison POM Target Staffing Figure	12.5	4	6	11.5
Prison POM Staff in Post	11.5	4	6	12
Average caseload	28	70	70	55
EQuiP usage % (within the last month)	10%	23%	23%	16%
OASys backlog (no.)	31	53	44	38

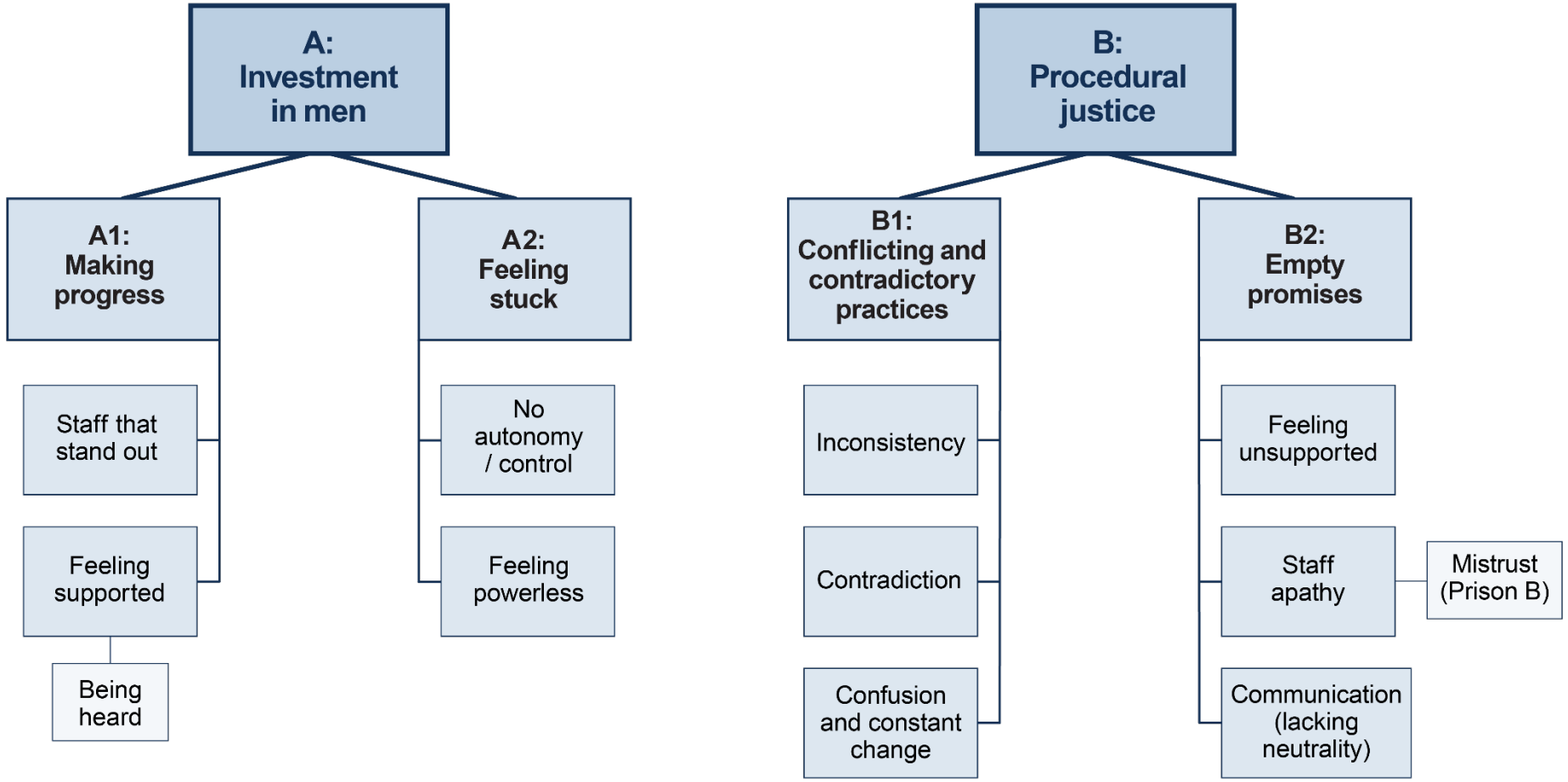
[23] Key Work statistics for each prison have been taken from the Digital Prison Service (DPS).

[24] The overall non-productive staff as a % is the combined number of staff on annual leave, sick, training, Officer Apprenticeship, and additional non-productive elements. A national non-productive rate of 20% is built into all staff profiles. Monthly figures have been taken from the HMPPS Prison Resource Analysis Dashboard (InVision).

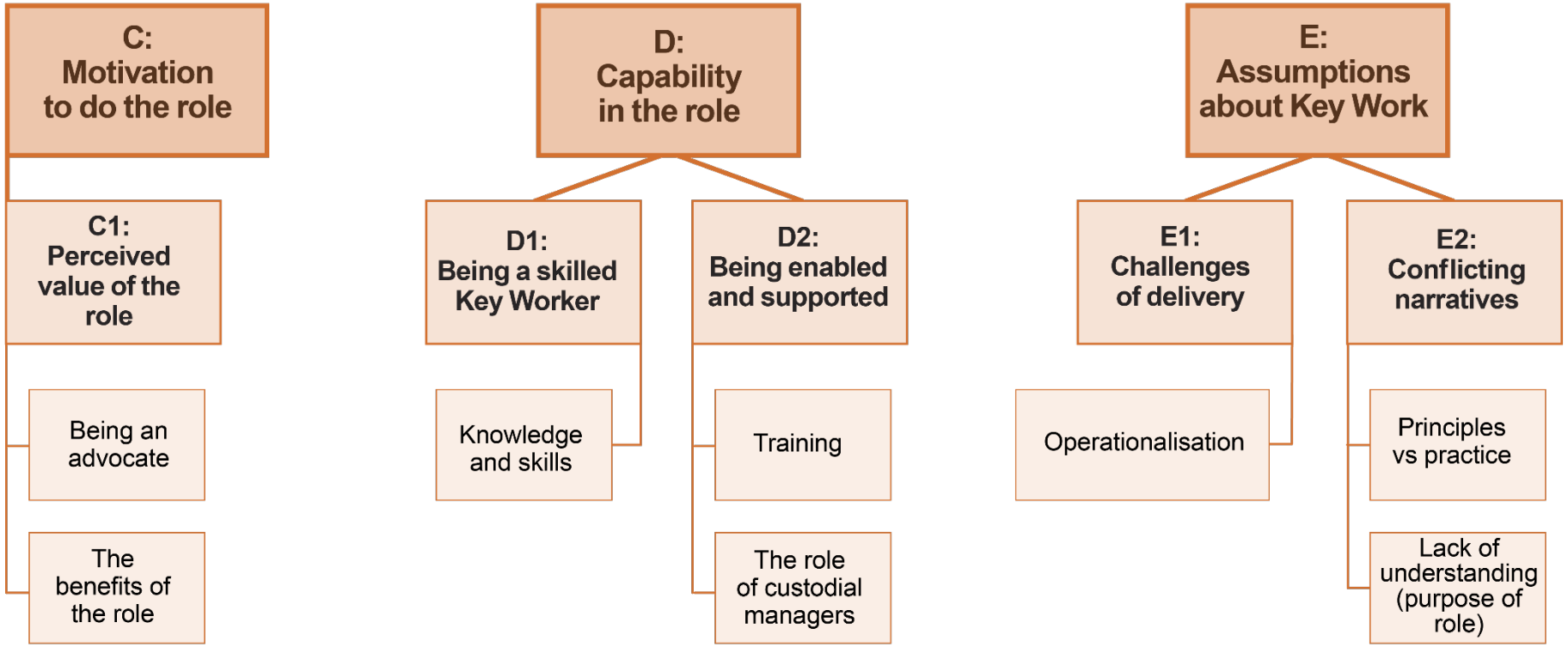
Appendix C

Thematic maps summarising the accounts of participants

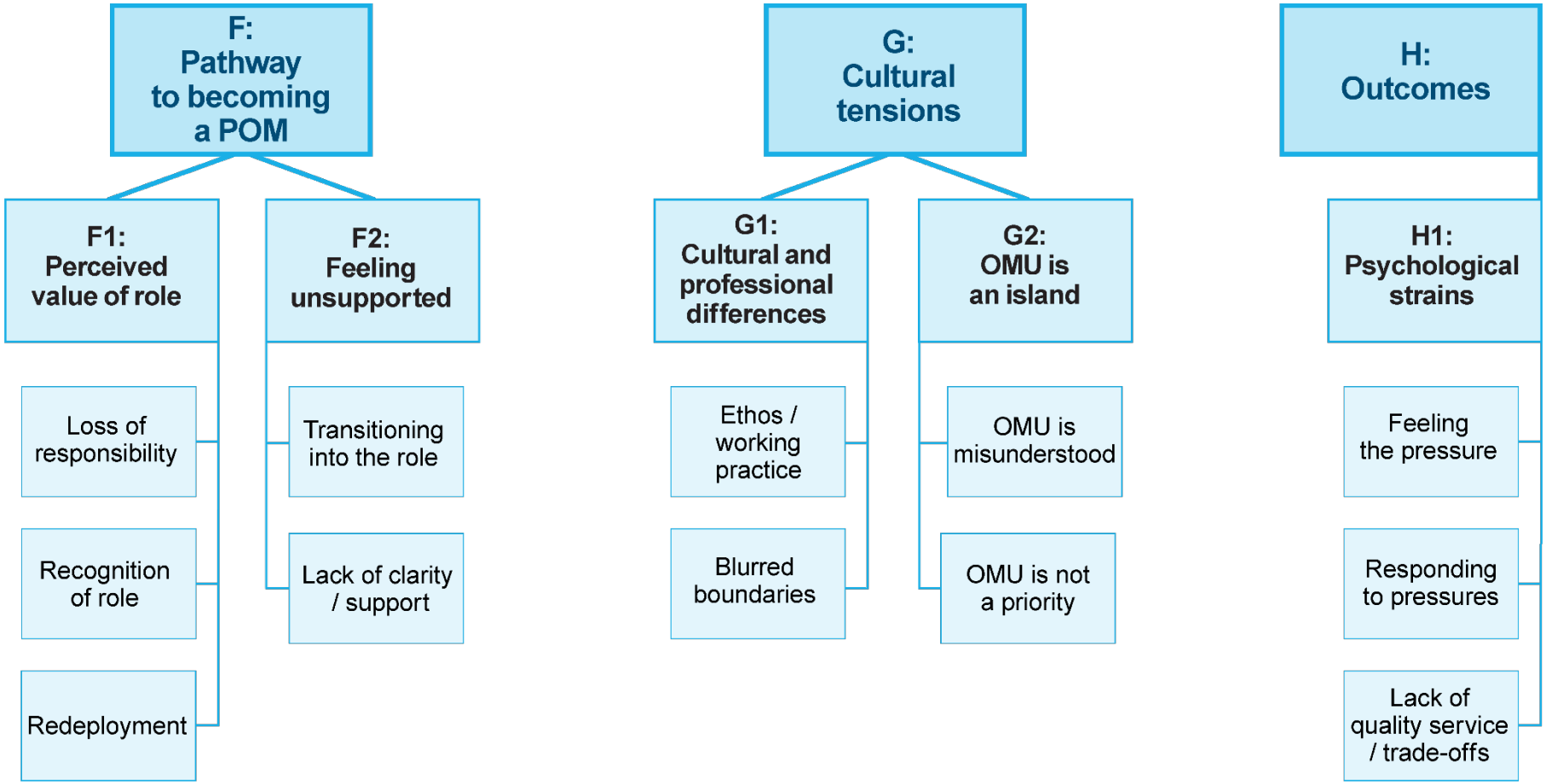
C1: Men in prison



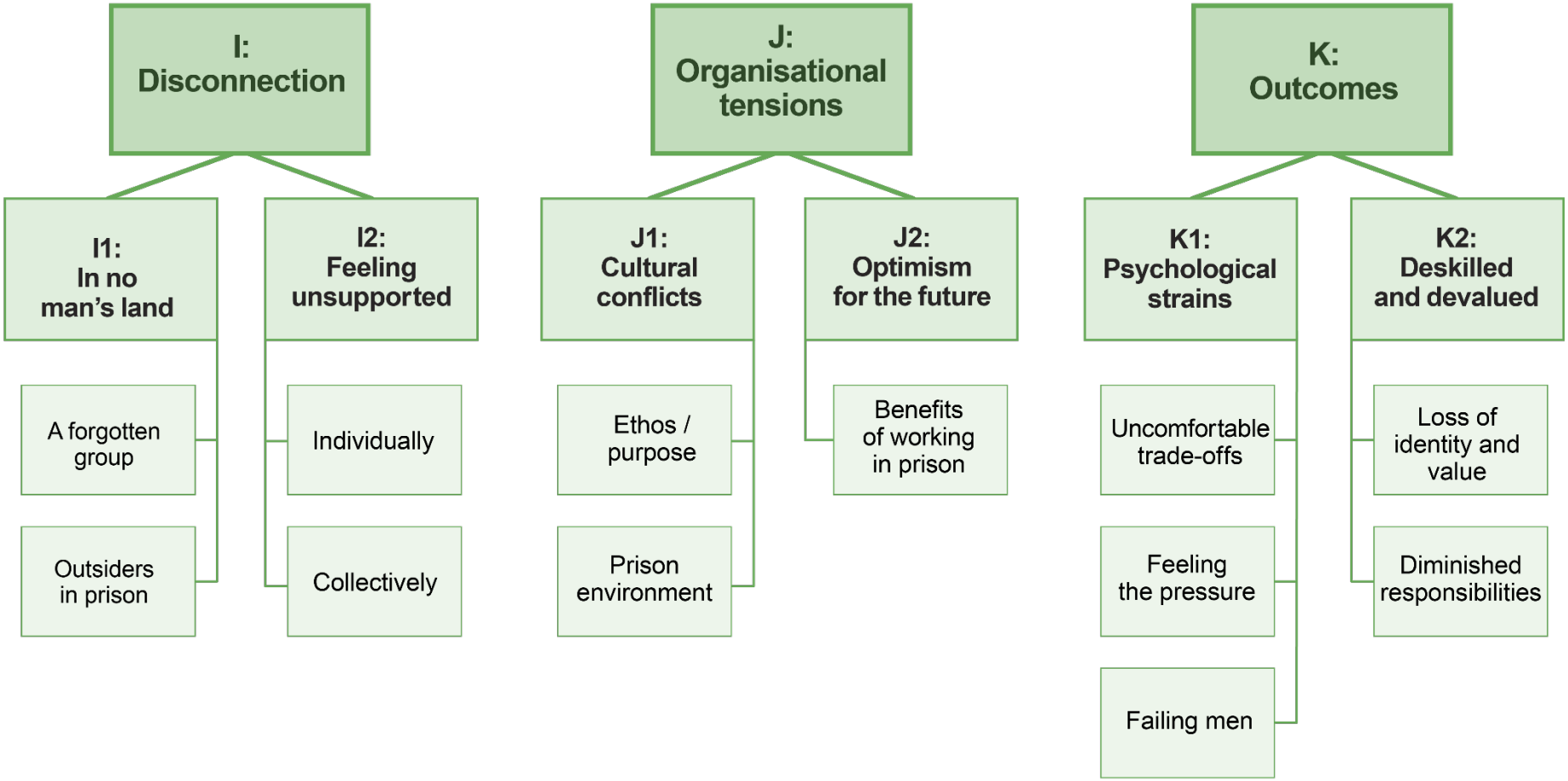
C2: Key Workers & Custodial Managers



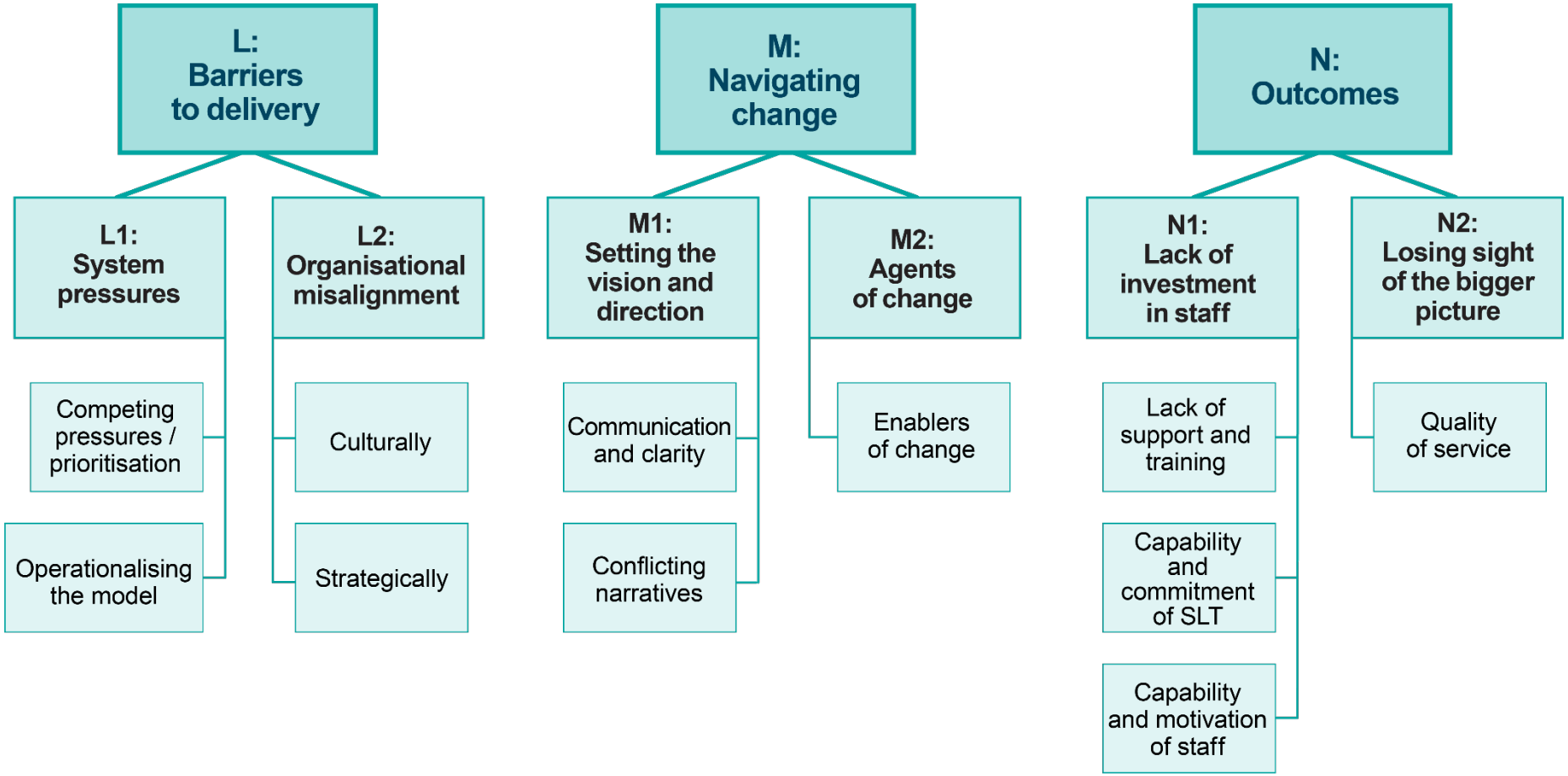
C3: Prison staff working as POMS



C4: Probation staff working as POMS



C5: Senior leaders in prison



Appendix D

Case data and detailed description of each prison

D1: Prison performance data

Table 3: Data for each prison, as averages based on the four-month period in which fieldwork took place (June to September 2022)

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Prisoner population	1160	948	475	946
Key Worker session delivery rate % (June to Sept 2022)	2.34	16.76	7.53	12.79
Key Worker session delivery rate %- (June to Sept 2019, pre-pandemic)	8.05	42.67	10.88	68.82
Staff sickness absence %	16.30	17.86	9.21	19.58
Band 3–5 prison staff resignation rate %	5.48	6.35	11.27	11.43
Prisoner complaints (per 1000 prisoners) %	2644.29 (n=1025)	3933.92 (n=1246)	2896.26 (n=460)	1958.98 (n=619)
Prisoner OASys/ Offender Management complaints (per 1000 prisoners) %	10.32 (n=4)	268.37 (n=85)	176.29 (n=28)	50.64 (n=16)
Self-harm incidents (per 1000 prisoners) %	407.61 (n=158)	792.47 (n=251)	1196.28 (190)	303.82 (n=96)
Assaults on staff (per 1000 prisoners) %	134.15 (n=52)	97.87 (n=31)	214.07 (n=34)	31.65 (n=10)
Prisoner on prisoner assaults (per 1000 prisoners) %	126.41 (n=49)	69.46 (n=22)	516.29 (n=82)	66.46 (n=21)

D2: Key Work quality data

Table 4: Sample of Key Work session entries assessed for quality for each prison between June and September 2022

	June 22–Sept 22					
	4	3	2	1a	1b (invalid)	Total Rated
Prison A	0	3	10	21	6	40
Prison B	0	1	20	22	30	73
Prison C	0	2	12	17	21	52
Prison D	0	6	36	23	7	72

The Key Work quality measure was developed to allow for a more rounded view of performance. The Key Work delivery measure assesses whether expected Key Worker sessions were delivered irrespective of the quality of delivery creating a risk that the measure provides false assurance that Key Work is being delivered to the quality standard.

An assessment of quality is based on a single Key Work session case note. Two elements are considered in assessing quality, the first is evidence of an individualised approach with each prisoner that is reflective of their personal circumstances and needs. The second considers continuity of Key Work reflecting a continuing relationship and coordinated information sharing and communication with other departments and each prisoner.

Quality assessment criterion has been developed, using a 1–4 scale where:

Score	Descriptor
4	Provides evidence of good quality Key Work session
3	Provides evidence of reasonable quality Key Work session
2	Provides evidence of an insufficient quality Key Work session
1a	Provides evidence of a poor-quality Key Work session
1b	Where entry is not actually a Key Work session

D3: Detailed description of each prison

Table 5: Detailed case description of each prison

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Prison and population	Remand & short sentenced Unstable and constantly changing Large site 60% Remand 12% Recall 39% serving sentences for violence 23% Drugs 15% Acquisitive 84% <6 months to serve 64% BAME 41% Learning disability/ and or challenges (LDC) [25]	Long term sentenced Stable and static until recently Large split site 82% 4 years + determinate 13% indeterminate (IPP/ Lifers) 92% serving sentences for sexual offences 7% violent offences 31% BAME 38% LDC	Long term sentenced Stable and nearing release Small site 46% 4 years + determinate 19% 20 months to 4 years 21% Recall 37% <6 months to serve 20% <12 months to serve 30% BAME 38% LDC	Long term sentenced Preparing for release Large split site 30% serving 20 months to 4 years 29% 4 years + determinate 47% violent offences 18% Acquisitive 49% <6 months to serve 28% <12 months to serve 15% BAME 39% LDC

[25] The Learning Screening Tool is not a comprehensive assessment of learning disability and/or learning challenges. It is a screening tool, not a diagnostic tool and only available for individuals with a valid OASys. Data is presented as part of the Segmentation Tool.

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Risk profile (Segmentation data 30 June 2022)	38% of population with OASys. Of those with an OGRS score, 28% were assessed as medium risk and higher for reoffending	95% of population with OASys. 88% assessed as high and very high risk of serious harm (ROSH), and lower risk of general reoffending (18%) with OGRS score medium risk or higher	88% of population with OASys. 60% assessed as high and very high risk of serious harm (ROSH), 58% with OGRS score medium risk or higher	84% of population with OASys. 58% assessed as high and very high risk (ROSH), 58% with OGRS score medium risk or higher
Key Work delivery	Wing based Key Work Poor delivery (pre & post pandemic) Not profiled Lack of oversight Recent drive linked to Use of Force incentive Short, transactional and carried out by different Key Worker	Wing based Key Work Reasonably good delivery pre-pandemic Recently profiled Lack of oversight	Wing based Key Work Poor delivery (pre & post pandemic) Not profiled Lack of oversight Recent drive linked to Use of Force incentive	Wing based Key Work Good delivery pre-pandemic High quality delivery on Progressive regime wing Profiled Robust oversight of Key Work delivery/ lines of accountability to embed daily practice
Sentence management (OMU activity)	Unallocated cases (n=85) Mix of operational and non-operational prison POMs Regular redeployment of operational POMs Siloed working within OMU/ cultural tensions	Unallocated cases (n=85) 72% in parole window Poor perceptions among men Mix of operational and non-operational prison POMs Regular redeployment of operational POMs	Poor perceptions among men and wing staff Newer/ inexperienced POMS needing support and supervision Mix of operational and non-operational prison POMs Operational POMs no longer redeployed	All operational prison POMs Siloed working within OMU/ cultural tensions

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Challenges to delivery	Staff profile and availability of staff on a daily basis (% non-effectives well exceeding 20% on daily basis) Constant change in prisoner population and short stays	Population management directive had increased recent intake of Category C prisoners (64%) and with <3yrs to serve No resettlement function at prison Destabilising population – Cat C men prioritised for programmes over long-term Category B men Eligibility window for programmes impacting parole and resettlement opportunities for men Lack of resettlement spaces for men convicted of sexual offences	Prison culture and perceptions of staff were not aligned to overarching aims of OMiC, despite being an early adopter site when initially implemented. Prevailing view that all interactions are Key Work, reinforcing unhelpful cultural and operational practices and undermining delivery.	Staff resource to meet the needs of the population – diverting OMU resource to plug the gap in pre-release provision
Vulnerabilities	Remand population (risk in early days in custody & preparation for release)	Key Workers knowledge and skills working with long term sentenced men/men convicted of sexual offences	Key Workers knowledge and skills working with long term sentenced men/ understanding the sentence planning process	Population nearing release Staff resourcing to match resettlement demands of prison population (risk post release from prison)

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Prevailing OMiC narrative	Wing based Key Work to enable delivery Unrealistic and unachievable in reception prisons Remove prescription around allocation and detailing	Wing based Key Work to enable delivery Capture all interactions as Key Work OMiC has a 'branding issue'	Wing based Key Work to enable delivery Capture all interactions as Key Work OMiC has a 'branding issue'	Wing based Key Work to enable delivery Greater flexibility to respond to needs of different groups of prisoners
Resourcing	High no. of Non-productive staff Too few Band 3 officers High volume of new/ inexperienced staff	Too few Band 3–5 officers Too few probation POMs Temporary promotions to fill gaps across all grades High volume of new/ inexperienced staff Staff attrition linked to geographical location	Too few Band 3 officers High volume of new/ inexperienced staff	High no. of Non-productive staff Too few Band 3 officers High volume of new/ inexperienced staff
Relationships	Respectful relationships Limited interactions Wing staff and POMS not visible or easily accessible Siloed working within OMU and across departments	Poor relationships High levels of frustration among men Limited interactions POMs not visible or accessible Silo working	Respectful relationship but some poor perceptions among men linked to OMU Wing staff and POMS not visible Limited interactions	Respectful relationships Visible and supportive wing staff and POMS Silo working /division with OMU Active join up across other departments

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Prison culture	Punitive Little to no time out of cell Requests not acted on – staff inexperienced and lack knowledge Lack of confidence in complaints system	Punitive Lack of procedural justice Requests not acted on Poor information flows/ high no. of complaints	Punitive Lack of procedural justice Requests not acted on Poor information flows/ high no. of complaints	Rehabilitative (Focusing on outcomes for men) Shared vision and aims among staff
Leadership	Change in leadership team No coordination and drive to integrate OMU Management challenges within OMU	Lack of rehabilitative focus or vision No coordination and drive to integrate OMU Newly promoted staff at senior manager level	Lack of rehabilitative focus or vision No coordination and drive to integrate OMU	Strong and stable leadership Clear focus and vision on progression and rehabilitation

	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D
Findings from the most recent HMIP inspection and IMB annual report	HMIP – 2021; IMB – 2021-22. Key Work delivery remains patchy and inconsistent, having never been properly implemented Little to no time out of cell A slow return to normal regime following the pandemic A sizeable no. of B3 officers having never experienced a full regime Significant no. of non-effectives impacting daily regime delivery Poor complaints system Demand for resettlement services outstripping provision available Concerns around morale in OMU and leadership/ support on offer for POMS Previous cluster death site (2021)	HMIP – 2022; IMB – 2021 Deterioration in outcomes – particularly for men's progression, rehabilitation and release Relationships were mixed Poor delivery and quality of Key Work Acute staff shortages, particularly in the OMU has hampered 1:1 intervention work and limited contact between POMs and men National & local issues impacting men's progression and increasing frustration levels Volatile and vulnerable population, with increases in assaults and self-harm Previous cluster death site (2021)	HMIP – 2022; IMB – 2022 Poor delivery and quality of Key Work Concerns raised about the lack of resettlement provision and the considerable efforts made by prison staff to fill the gap Safety concerns raised, increase in assaults linked to high drug use and debt, increased use of force, and low-level use of BWVC Staff shortages and retention – lack of case admin support hampering delivery Lack of contact between men and POMs and corresponding increase in complaints	HMIP – 2020; IMB – 2022 Positive relationships, clear focus and vision on progression and rehabilitation. Safe and respectful prison pre & post pandemic Staff shortages and retention – hampering the reintegration of consistent key work delivery Concerns raised about the loss of resettlement provision, following unification and fractured service for those nearing release Issues with complaints system

Appendix E
Evidence-informed Key Work Principles

Principles for delivering good quality Key Work

1. Consistency
A consistent key work presence wherever possible, whereby prisoners keep the same Key Worker. The model is relationship driven and so is based on individual, rather than group-based working.

2. Regularity
Interactions are regular and the time for sessions is protected so a Key Work session is clearly distinguishable for prisoners and Key Workers.

3. Collaboration
A collaborative relationship is created, within a procedural justice framework and drawing on FMI skills. The relationship between the Key Worker, Prison Offender Manager and prisoner is fundamental.

Principles for Key Workers to apply during sessions

4. Boundaries are clearly set and actively managed in a procedurally just way. Boundaries will be reinforced through consistent and regular interactions and behaviours, role modelled by Key Workers.

5. Expectations are clearly set and managed. Engagement comes through a perspective of possibility and providing support to prisoners that they have within themselves the resources that can lead them to achieve whatever goals are set.

6. Goals focused
Goals are co-created and agreed together. They are realistic to the individual and personal context of the prisoner and meet where they are in terms of sentence, location, constraints and ability.

7. Emotions are actively managed. Being able to identify, acknowledge and shift negative emotions to positive insights through ongoing interactions. There will be groups of prisoners requiring more active emotional regulation due to risk and personality factors.

Principles for supporting and developing Key Workers

8. Training
Key Workers require additional skills to help them create and maintain relationships. This includes responding to conflict, setting goals, challenging and holding prisoners to account as well encouraging and reinforcing behaviour change. Training is experiential so opportunities to deliver sessions are essential for continuous learning.

9. Support
The role requires staff to work in a supportive way with prisoners. Key workers also need support to meet the demands of the role. This will enable Key Workers to grow in confidence and in their abilities and will increase their job satisfaction and overall wellbeing.