

**Policy name:** Management Oversight Policy Framework

**Reference:** N/A

**Issue Date** 13 October 2025

**Implementation Date:** 13 October 2025

**Replaces the following documents which are hereby cancelled:**

1. Touchpoints Model Guidance
2. OASys Countersigning Framework

**Introduces amendments to the following documents:**

- Case Transfer Policy Framework.
- Domestic Abuse Policy Framework
- Probation Service Management of MAPPA level 1 Cases Policy Framework
- Sentence Management in the community Policy Framework
- HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework
- Home Visit Policy Framework

**Associated documents** – See Annex 1 – **Management Oversight Framework Guidance**

**Action required by:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	HMPPS HQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Sector Prisons	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heads of Group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contracted Prisons	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 18 Young Offender Institutions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Probation Service (PS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	HMPPS-run Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	HMPPS Rehabilitation Contract Services Team	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other providers of Probation and Community Services

### **Mandatory Actions**

All groups referenced above must adhere to the requirements section of this Policy Framework, which contains all mandatory actions.

**How will this Policy Framework be audited or monitored:**

- Probation and Prison Service compliance is monitored by Area Executive Directors in their areas.
- The Central Operations Support Team will evaluate and support regions to embed the framework over 12-month period. Following this period, the policy will be owned by the HMPPS Community Sentence Management Team, and this policy document will be amended to reflect the revised ownership.
- Quality assurance is provided by HMPPS Performance, Assurance and Risk Team.

**Resource Impact:**

This policy framework seeks to reduce the mandate of existing guidance and provide practitioners with more autonomy about where to apply their resource outside of the required activity. There is an expectation that time saved through the reduction of countersigning will be redirected to reflective practice supervision. It allows regional or local discretion to process, design, and resource deployment within the scope of the framework. In this regard, this policy framework is resource neutral.

**Contact: Probation:** COS@justice.gov.uk

**Deputy/Group Director sign-off:** Mary Strong

**Approved by OPS for publication:** Helen Judge, OPS Chair, Operational Policy Sub-board, September 2025.

## Contents

1. Overview	4
1.1 Purpose	4
1.2 Evidence	4
1.3 Outcomes	5
1.4 Requirements	5
1.5 Guidance	5
Summary	6
2. Definition of management oversight	6
3. Principles of the management oversight framework	6
4. Minimum required activity for management oversight	7
5. Countersigning	7
5.1 Purpose	7
5.2 The OASys Countersigning Framework	8
6. Reflective Practice Supervision Standards	9
7. Professional Registration	9
8. Operational delivery of management oversight	9
Annex A – Management Oversight Framework Guidance	11

## **1. Overview**

### **1.1 Purpose**

- 1.11 This Policy Framework presents the HMPPS approach to management oversight. It makes clear the principles that the Probation Service will adhere to and sets out a framework in which Probation regions should work to achieve quality outcomes and effective management oversight. It establishes a clear framework for ensuring that oversight is proportionate to the risks and complexities of cases while promoting professional development, reflective practice, and critical thinking. It outlines the roles and responsibilities associated with delivery and provides easy access to supporting operational guidance.
- 1.12 There has been no single document that brings together the key principles that underpin management oversight in one easily accessible place. Management Oversight is referenced in numerous policies and operational practice guides and this framework aims to consolidate this information into one place under a unified approach which aligns with HMPPS strategy.
- 1.13 This policy officially decommissions the Touchpoint Model and sets out minimum mandate of required activity for management oversight in sentence management, courts, unpaid work, Offender Management in Custody (OMiC), approved premises, victim liaison units and national security division. It provides operational guidance and tools which can be used to support staff in their professional autonomy when making management oversight decisions outside of required activity.
- 1.14 The policy framework also introduces a new Offender Assessment System (OASys) countersigning framework which moves from a position of assurance of cases to the assurance of staff, providing a more holistic approach to quality.

### **1.2 Evidence**

- 1.21 The evidence derived from the evaluation of the Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (SEEDS) model shows us that a focus on reflective practice is needed with protected time and space for scheduled 1:1 sessions, providing opportunity for the articulation of professional values, exploration of emotional challenges and application of learning. Where fully implemented, Reflective Practice Supervision Standards have the potential to reduce the amount of direct support practitioners require from their line manager. It has been shown to produce further positive outcomes; case practice improvements; supporting staff to do their job effectively; improved well-being and motivation; improved retention; and promotion of practitioner autonomy.
- 1.22 The development of the approach to management oversight adhered to evidence that effective management oversight is relational and a co-produced, shared task between practitioners, their managers and senior managers. Practitioners need ownership and empowerment in decision making and the approach should facilitate this. The approach should also contribute to the organisation's desired goals of becoming a learning organisation, by encouraging peer discussion and review, and self-managing teams.

- 1.23 The implementation of the Management Oversight Policy Framework has been supported by user centred design methods to enable co-production and involve staff in key decision making. User centred design shows that staff and key stakeholders require an approach that is less prescriptive, and allows practitioners more professional autonomy, especially as they develop and exhibit greater competence and skill.
- 1.24 Effective management oversight is a key part of probation delivery to achieve the aims of protecting the public and prevent victims by changing lives. This framework is aligned to wider HMPPS principles of providing an open learning culture and enabling staff to be their best.

### **1.3 Outcomes**

- 1.31. The policy framework is intended to improve the quality of probation delivery through the provision of effective management oversight which supports staff and empowers them in effective decision-making. Reducing the required volume of OASys countersigning will create capacity for line managers to reinvest in staff development via Reflective Practice Supervision which supports translating learning into practice across a caseload.
- 1.32 The changes will manifest into improved outcomes for people on probation, victims and the public. This will support HMPPS outcomes of high-quality sentence management, enabling people to be their best, protecting the public, reducing reoffending and becoming an open learning culture.

### **1.4 Requirements**

- 1.41 All Probation Service staff subject to or required to deliver management oversight activity must familiarise themselves with this Policy Framework to understand their roles and responsibilities. All staff should also be aware of the key policy documents referenced in the Management Oversight Policy Framework Guidance ([Annex A](#)), as this sets out the expected required activity for delivery. Probation Service Regional Probation Directors (RPDs) and other senior managers must ensure that all relevant staff are aware of and comply with, the mandatory requirements within this policy framework.
- 1.42 Outside of the required activity, regions have the discretion to assure the quality of operational delivery based on the principles within the framework and with use of the operational tools identified.

### **1.5 Guidance**

- 1.51 This policy framework is supported by the Management Oversight Framework Guidance (Annex A) which provides additional detailed guidance as to the minimum required activity for staff, recording instructions, recommended practice examples and advice on the use of operational tools to support management oversight.

## Summary

This policy framework is divided into parts:

- Definition of Management Oversight.
- The principles of the Management Oversight Framework.
- Minimum required activity for Management Oversight.
- Countersigning.
- Reflective Practice Supervision Standards.
- Operational delivery of Management Oversight.

## 2. Definition of management oversight

- 2.1 Management Oversight in the Probation Service is how managers assure the quality of the work for operational delivery to agreed standards. It contributes to the best outcomes for staff, the person on probation in the community or custody and victims by supporting the aims of reducing reoffending and protecting the public. This can be achieved through leadership, guidance, a coaching style and providing opportunities for continued professional development. This approach promotes professional curiosity and critical thinking to enable effective decision-making. Staff and managers work together proactively to secure effective management oversight which is responsive to the unique demands of an individual case, and the skills, knowledge, and experience of the probation practitioner.

## 3. Principles of the management oversight framework

- 3.1 The following key principles underpin the Probation Service approach to management oversight:
- **Recognition of professional responsibility** - Professional autonomy and accountability sit with the practitioner and aligns with Probation Professional Registration Standards to be responsible and accountable for their quality of practice and decision making. Oversight of cases is a shared responsibility, and practitioners are responsible for bringing cases to the attention of their line manager as changes in risk/circumstances dictate.
  - **A minimum mandate for required management oversight activity** - Although required activity is set out in this framework, managers should take other opportunities to assure the quality and standard of work.
  - **An open learning culture environment** - HMPPS strategy states that staff are enabled to be their best by creating an inclusive, open learning culture. This leads staff to feel supported and trusted to make effective decisions by creating an environment where we openly share mistakes and errors, where we seek to learn and understand why things go wrong.
  - **Organisational assurance** - Responsibility for assurance of quality is not solely the responsibility of the line manager and sits within the three tier levels

of assurance. Professional registration provides personal and organisational assurance that individuals have fitness to practice.

- **Area and regional discretion** - The framework provides an opportunity for system wide learning with discretion being given for regional delivery as long as the required activity as detailed in the guidance framework is adhered to.
- **Professional curiosity** - Professional curiosity can be defined as *“a process of always questioning and seeking verification for the information you are given rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value”* ([HMPPS, 2020](#)). Being professionally curious as both practitioners and managers is crucial to effective management oversight.
- **Reflective practice and a person-centred approach** - Reflective practice increases capability and opportunities for development that translates across the caseload. Reflective practice methods are covered in Skills for Effective Engagement, Development and Supervision (SEEDS2).
- **Exercising professional judgement** - Practitioners and managers are empowered through professional judgement. The required level of management oversight in a case aligns with Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR) principles by being in proportion to the risk and complexity of the case, and the experience and competence of the practitioner. Management information (MI) informs the need for management oversight.

#### 4. Minimum required activity for management oversight

- 4.1 The Management Oversight Framework Guidance collates the required activity for management oversight where directed by wider probation policy, guidance and legislation. This provides staff with an understanding of the minimum requirements for oversight in probation delivery. **Staff must adhere to all instances of required activity as stipulated in the Management Oversight Guidance Framework.**
- 4.2 This is a **minimum mandate** for required management oversight activity and does not mean that in cases where an Operational Manager wishes to assure the quality and standards of work, this cannot be done at other opportunities outside of the framework. Operational structures should be put in place by regions to support practitioners and managers by using their professional judgement to determine when management oversight is required beyond the minimum standards.

#### 5. Countersigning

##### 5.1 Purpose

Countersigning of OASys assessments and reports is a significant and core management oversight activity. Countersigning is required in three key areas: parole reports; recall reports (all staff); and OASys assessments (identified staff). It serves the purpose of endorsing the assessment, risk management plan and sentence plan and/or the recommendations made by the probation practitioner. Countersigning

confirms these elements are robust and fit for purpose and meet the organisation's expected standard of quality.

## **5.2 The OASys Countersigning Framework**

Detail and guidance on the OASys countersigning framework, including the criteria for assigning to Assessor roles, is contained within the accompanying Annex A - the Probation Service Management Oversight Guidance Framework.

There are two Assessor roles available in this framework. Countersigned staff are those within the following criteria and require all their OASys assessments to be countersigned to assure quality standards:

- New Probation Services Officer (PSO) starters within their first 6 months of role who have yet to complete their core curriculum and probationary period.
- PQiP (Professional Qualification in Probation) Learners
- Any practitioner subject to any kind of formal performance improvement plan
- Any practitioner at the Senior Probation Officer's discretion where they may require greater oversight of their work due to reasons such as return from maternity, long absence or a move into a new role or function.
- All National Security Division (NSD) practitioners unless determined by the Senior Operational Lead (SOL) that countersigning is no longer required.
- Prison Offender Managers (POM) who have yet to complete their required learning for role or any other prison POM where the Head of Offender Management Delivery (HOMD) may require greater oversight of their work.

5.3 All other practitioners should be assigned to the non-countersigned Assessor role and will not require line managers to countersign their assessments. (N.B. This framework makes the assumption that cases will have been allocated to staff appropriately based on the [Unified Tiering Case Allocation Framework](#)).

5.4 The framework sets the minimum requirements for countersigning of assessments. However, this does not mean that in cases where a line manager wishes to assure the quality of work this cannot be performed using other tools such as the Regional Case Audit Tool (RCAT) or reflective practice to consider a case, including the OASys assessment. Where concerns arise about the quality of a practitioner in the non-countersigned role's assessments, this should be discussed with them, and consideration given to support that may be needed. Line managers have discretion to change countersigning roles where they consider they need to have greater oversight of a practitioner's assessments. This should be part of performance management discussions.



## **6. Reflective Practice Supervision Standards**

- 6.1 The Reflective Practice Supervision Standards (RPSS) were issued within the Probation Service in 2021 and form part of the required activity for management oversight within the framework. As an activity they are part of the first tier of quality assurance, in that they 'build in quality at or nearest to the point of delivery' to be carried out at regional level.
- 6.2 Reflective Practice Supervision (RPS) is a formal process of facilitated reflection on cases within regular planned 1:1 sessions between the practitioner and their line manager. RPS is a person-centred activity providing protected time for reflection by practitioners on their most challenging and complex cases, and supporting ongoing professional development. RPS is underpinned by SEEDS2 principles. SEEDS2 training is mandatory for staff eligible for Professional Registration.
- 6.3 For courts and sentence management, RPSS mandate six reflective discussions per year between a practitioner and manager, two of which must follow observations of practice. The second observation and associated RPS session can be done by a Quality Development Officer (QDO) or experienced Probation Officer. There are some variations to this minimum mandate dependent on role and function. The standards set out clear requirements for RPS classified by job role and hours worked per week.
- 6.4 RPS sessions are also mandated for line managers of eligible practitioners. The minimum mandate is three sessions per year which should be provided by the relevant Probation Delivery Unit Heads/Prison Governors.
- 6.5 Line managers should evidence that the RPS session has taken place by updating the Reflective Practice Supervision Session Record template and logging the session on the Single Operating Platform (SOP).

## **7. Professional Registration**

- 7.1 The purpose of the Professional Register is to recognise the competence and commitment of probation qualified staff to high standards of professionalism and provide assurance that individuals authorised to assess and manage people on probation have the right qualifications, knowledge and skills to do so. Line managers have a responsibility as set out in the Probation Professional Register Policy Framework and Management Oversight Framework Guidance to provide oversight which assures these standards are adhered to.
- 7.2 From September 2025, eligible staff will have to evidence how they have met these professional standards, using existing tools such as the national supervision template, performance reviews, records of RPS sessions, and RCAT as evidence of their practice.

## 8. Operational delivery of management oversight

8.1 The Management Oversight Policy Framework Guidance outlines a selection of the operational tools and approaches that regions can use in the delivery of effective management oversight within HMPPS. RPDs are responsible and accountable for implementation of the policy framework in their region with autonomy in how these tools are used to drive quality at a regional level:

- **Psychological safety to enable effective management oversight -** Psychological safety within the workplace refers to the shared belief among all team members that they feel respected and accepted and won't experience negative repercussions if they are willing to speak their minds, take appropriate risks, share ideas, admit mistakes or ask for support. The development of psychological safety is fundamental to organisational effectiveness and improved performance. Management oversight will be more effective if it takes place in psychologically safe teams and promotes practitioners seeking oversight when it is needed.
- **Leadership and effective management oversight -** Leadership is not just about instruction but working in a collaborative style which recognises the skills, knowledge and innovation of others. The eight standards of the [HMPPS Leadership Code](#) (2020) -personal awareness, professional knowledge, compassion, collaboration, communication, inspiration, innovation and integrity support the positive relationships which enable effective management oversight to be sought and delivered.
- **Management Information (MI) -** MI is the data which is used to inform management oversight, and which can direct the user to the need for focus on specific areas of practice, or to specific cases for discussion. It is the combination of MI with oversight that drives performance and quality.
- **Supervision as a tool for management oversight -** Staff supervision refers to the formal one-to-one meetings which line managers hold with probation practitioners. These meetings are used for reviewing cases, addressing performance issues, and dealing with staff wellbeing. The key supporting tools for supervision are RPSS, the Performance Management Framework and the review of cases for management oversight.
- **Ring-fenced time to provide effective management oversight -** Building dedicated ring-fenced time into calendars daily, can help prevent a constant flow of queries throughout the day and enable managers and staff to have uninterrupted quality conversations and ensure actions and decisions are made without distraction and in a timely manner.
- **Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation (SBAR) -** SBAR is a widely available structured communication tool, which can help structure

communication when a decision is required or there is a need to have an action endorsed.

- **Case Audit Tools** - The Regional Case Audit Tool (RCAT) is an assurance tool intended to support tier one assurance within the three tiers of quality assurance model, also commonly known as the 'three lines of defence'. The Court Case Audit Tool (CCAT) follows the same principles for the assurance of court work. RCAT is based on the Performance and Risk Sentence Management audit methodology and is designed to give a broad view of local sentence management quality and an indication of where development work is required across teams, Probation Delivery Units and regions. Although not its primary purpose, RCAT findings can be used to inform constructive feedback to probation practitioners on practice alongside a range of information from other sources.
- **Development to support managers oversight decisions** - The Probation Service is an organisation of continuous learning and development, encouraging individual responsibility for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The [CPD framework](#) sets the expectation in terms of activities to focus on as an individual develops in their role and through their career. Alongside the current mandatory learning, all staff should be supported by their line manager to ensure they are up to date with any required learning for the role that they are currently working in.

## **Annex A – Management Oversight Framework Guidance**

The management oversight guidance framework accompanies this policy. It includes the detail of the required activities which enable the principles of the policy framework and examples of best practice which staff should consider in order to deliver good quality management oversight. As stipulated, all instances of 'required activity' within the guidance framework must be adhered to in order to meet the mandate of the policy framework.