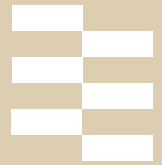


# Hampshire Probation

## Improving Performance in the Offender Management Basket of National Standards



NATIONAL  
PROBATION  
SERVICE

### FROM POSSIBILITY...

Following a diagnostic exercise conducted by Ad Esse, the senior team at Hampshire Probation initiated a performance improvement exercise to address specific elements of the Integrated Probation Performance Improvement Framework (IPPF). The IPPF is the tool used to measure the performance of Probation Areas across England and Wales. It assesses four areas of competence: Offender Management, Interventions, Public Protection and Operational Capability, Resource Use and Strategy. Hampshire Probation was achieving 'passable' performance in each element and was looking to achieve good to outstanding across all four.

A team of Senior Probation Officer's (SPOs) from the Central Region was asked to work with their Area Manager to make a step change in performance in the Offender Management (OM) basket of National Standards. The basket consists of around 40 measures which cover issues like arrangement and meeting of appointments, achievement of processing timescales as well as some qualitative assessment.

Hampshire's performance in the OM basket has switched between Red and Amber, and was Amber (74% compliance) at the commencement of the exercise. For individual questions within the basket, 33 out of 42 were rated Red, including Red performance in all 8 key questions identified as highly weighted. The team recognised that this performance level was not acceptable and could impact negatively on any future application for Trust status.

### OUR APPROACH

Ad Esse believe we develop the best solutions with clients when we involve the people working on the ground throughout the process. As a result we believe very strongly in equipping our clients with performance improvement and problem solving skills so that they can work effectively with us. We also believe that successful change is brought about through a combination of technical process improvement skills together with the ability to engage, motivate and manage people.

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consulting

### Our approach therefore had two components:

- Firstly, we conducted 3 days of preparatory training with the team with one day spent on issues of team management, leadership, engagement and managing change, and the remaining 2 days as a case-study led introduction to the DMAIC problem solving methodology;
- Secondly, we worked with the team to improve performance in the Offender Management basket using DMAIC, running 5 day-long sessions spread over a 6-week period.

DMAIC is a problem-solving methodology from the Six-Sigma toolkit and stands for Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control. It works because it is a structured, data-driven approach and avoids the pitfall of jumping straight to a solution before fully defining and understanding the problem and its' root causes.

One of the challenges of this assignment was the number of different measures (42) which make up the OM basket. Would it be possible to develop a solution that would cover all areas sufficiently to produce the required overall performance improvement? One possible approach was to focus only on the most highly weighted measures (8 of 42). The team had reservations about this because they did not want the project to be perceived as an exercise in "playing the numbers". They wanted to achieve real improvement which would be recognised by Offenders, the Courts and Probation staff involved in the process. We therefore ran a "what-if" analysis with assistance from the Performance Improvement Unit to quantify the impact of this approach.

Interestingly, the potential impact was lower than expected. Even under our most optimistic assumptions of improved staff compliance and changes in Offender behaviour, performance in the overall basket remained below the required Green\* level. From this point it became clear that a broader solution would be needed to achieve significant improvement. While this involved more work, the team were happy with the result as it ensured a more comprehensive solution.

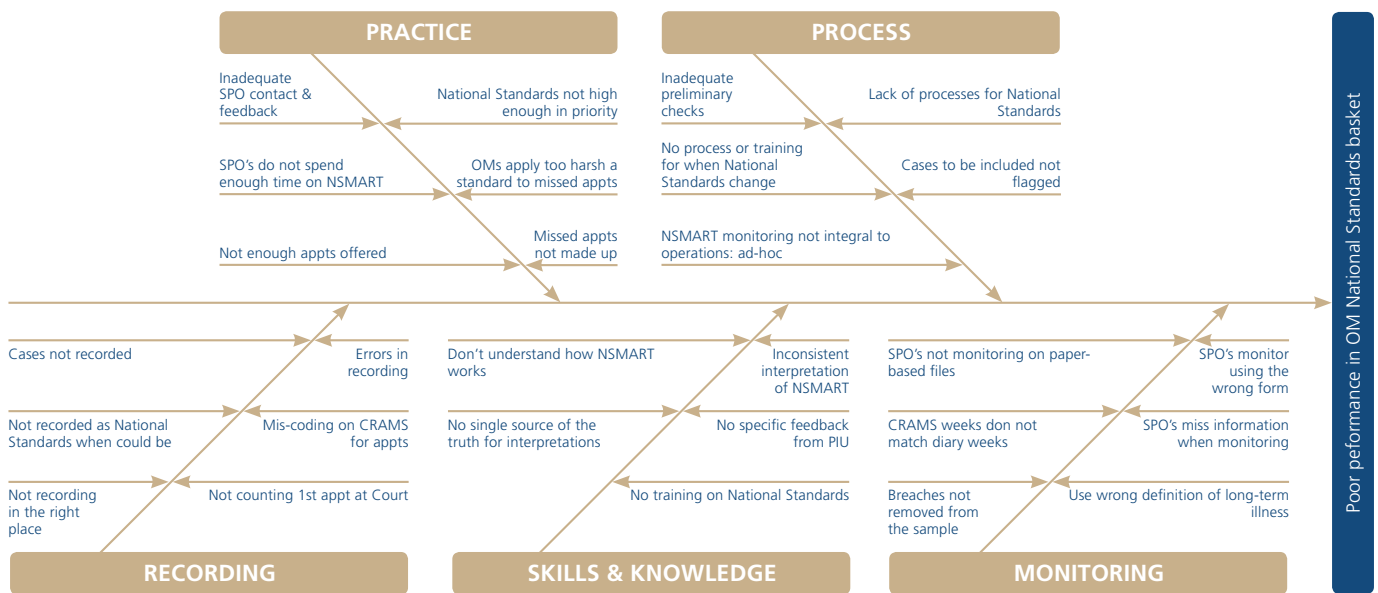
### OTHER KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS WERE:

- 16% of staff conducted no preliminary checks before commencing NSMART monitoring;
- 75% of staff did not count the first appointment at Court for NSMART purposes;
- 75% of staff had no system in their teams for providing 16 weeks of appointments to Offenders;
- Staff generally rated their own knowledge of NSMART and recording processes as average to poor;
- In only 11% of cases sampled had the correct number of appointments even been offered to the Offender, but in 33% of cases the discrepancy was only 1 appointment;
- Significant incidences of recording errors on CRAMS were observed.

The analysis enabled the team to identify a list of possible root causes to the problem. To assist them they used classic Fishbone or Ishikawa Analysis, which grouped the root causes into 5 categories:

- Practice - included factors such as inadequate supervisor contact and feedback, poor practice such as not making up missed appointments and National Standards not being prioritised;
- Recording - included recording errors or cases not being recorded;
- Process - lack of a formal National Standards process, and NSMART not being considered integral to the way people work;
- Knowledge & Skills - inadequate understanding of NSMART and no consistent interpretations;
- Monitoring - inadequate monitoring and support from supervisors.

Having understood and quantified the problem, we were now ready to develop solutions.



## TO ACTUALITY...

We needed to take a broad approach, and address fundamental aspects of culture, people, process and practice. The team developed options for a solution based on the root cause analysis which included the following elements:

**Process Design** - A process was designed for how cases are selected for NSMART purposes, and for how cases could be flagged as potential future NSMART cases and given priority attention.

**NSMART Definitions** - The team agreed to work with the Performance Improvement Unit to define an agreed set of NSMART interpretations for consistency. They also identified the need to make some changes to existing CRAMS codes to cater for the new definitions and process.

**Best Practice Guide** - This would cover guidance on correct recording practices, such as recording the first appointment at court, implications of certain responses on the overall NSMART score, use of correct forms and formally scheduling time to catch up missed appointments.

**Training** - to ensure that staff were clear that this would be a new way of working, part of the solution involved a relaunch of NSMART. This would include formal training days for operational staff and management and would be run by the project team.

**Roles & Responsibilities** - No-one felt responsible for NSMART, so the team decided to establish a dedicated role with responsibility for NSMART Monitoring, compliance and queries.

**Supporting Tools** - the team came up with some creative ideas to support successful NSMART processing, including a sticker system for flagging NSMART case files, appointment cards to ensure correct scheduling, auto text with NSMART codes, checklists, posters and even NSMART mouse pads!

Much of the material for these solutions was designed and developed in the workshops, reducing the additional time needed from the team when they got back to their day-to-day roles.

## PLANNING THE IMPLEMENTATION

Good ideas only bring results if they change the way people in an organisation behave, so the final crucial activity involved planning the implementation. From a broad range of potential tools, the team chose a number that they believed were most applicable. These included:

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**Stakeholder Analysis** – all key stakeholders were classified as Positive Supporters, Critics, Blockers or Passive Bystanders. Actions were defined to manage the relationship with each of these groups.

**Force Field Analysis** – the team identified all the forces that would support the implementation, and those that would hinder it, and assessed their relative strengths;

**Failure Prevention Analysis** – the team tried to think of all the ways they could make the project fail, and then designed actions to prevent those possibilities from happening.

Finally a detailed Project Plan was developed for the implementation setting out and sequencing activities and assigning responsibility. The solution will be piloted in the Central Region before being refined and rolled-out to the entire County.

### THE BENEFITS

Because of the way the OM basket of National Standards is measured, the benefits of this solution will not be fully measurable for some months after implementation. However, managers have already reported a 5% improvement in NSMART accuracy since the end of the workshops. This is purely due to raising the profile of NSMART monitoring, and placing a focus on the way people work – a positive indicator of potential future benefits.

However, the solution offers a number of benefits to Hampshire which we feel confident will bring tangible performance improvements in the coming months. These include:

Getting full credit for work that is done – we encountered examples where national standards had been met, but due to poor practice or recording errors this was reflected as “not met” in NSMART;

Becoming more active in identifying and correcting non-compliance – actively managing the achievement of NSMART metrics rather than passively waiting for the score to be reported.

Above all, we believe the solution will succeed because it addresses the fundamental causes of poor performance rather than trying to manipulate the measurement system, or address symptoms in an ad-hoc manner. And most importantly, operational staff have been involved every step of the way.

