



HM Prison & Probation Service

OFFICIAL

Mixed Caseloads Staff FAQ October 2021

Our journey to mixed caseloads

The Probation Service's [Target Operating Model](#) defines an end state where former CRC and NPS caseloads are unified, enabling Probation Practitioners to hold mixed and varied caseloads, in accordance with our [Unified Tiering Model](#); please see our Staff Guidance and Tiering and Case Allocation Framework in [EQuIP](#) for details.

Achieving unified caseloads will deliver many benefits, including supporting improved outcomes for people on probation, and help us to:

- Improve continuity for our Probation Practitioners and people on probation
- Enhance staff wellbeing by reducing the emotional burden of managing particular cohorts
- Develop a more skilled, knowledgeable and flexible workforce, with greater opportunities for career satisfaction
- Unite our organisation

Our shift to mixed caseloads and structural integration depends on enabling functions such as [Digital, Data and Technology](#), which is managing our digital migration, and [Estates](#), which is delivering key milestones on a phased regional basis. Wales leads the way in relation to our journey to mixed caseloads, having started the process in 2019, and all 11 regions in England will commence from September 2021, with regions progressing at different paces, subject to programme and regional milestones being met. The aim is that all regions will be managing mixed caseloads by December 2022.

In our end state model, every Probation Practitioner will have the right vetting and learning and development, with administrative integration, digital tools and Probation Delivery Unit structures in place, supported by our [Unified Tiering Model](#) and a new Workload Measurement Tool, to enable them to manage mixed caseloads.

Staff FAQ

These staff FAQ support the first stage of mixed caseload implementation in our 11 regions and Wales.

Your Regional Probation Director, senior leadership team and manager will keep you informed about what these changes mean for you on a regional, local and team level. Staff

working in regions serviced by administrative hubs need to be aware of potential dependencies regarding the case allocation process and ongoing case administration. If you have a question that isn't addressed in this document, please email: mixedcaseloads@justice.gov.uk. Thank you.

Q. What does mixed caseloads mean?

A. Mixed caseloads refers to the combination of former CRC and NPS caseloads into unified caseloads operating in accordance with our [Unified Tiering Model](#); please see our Staff Guidance and Tiering and Case Allocation Framework in [EQuIP](#) for further details. Mixed caseloads involve high risk Tier A and B cases being managed by any Probation Officer grade staff; Tier C cases being managed by a mix of any Probation Officer grade staff and any Probation Service Officer grade staff; and the majority of Tier D cases being managed by any Probation Service Officer grade staff.

Q. What does mixed caseloads mean operationally?

A. Following our unification, former NPS staff have continued to manage high risk cases and former CRC staff have continued to manage medium and low risk cases. Given the imbalance in some caseloads and operational capacity issues, we are keen to distribute cases more evenly across our Probation Service. Initial steps have been agreed to mix caseloads through new case allocations and the movement of existing cases where agreed criteria are met. This will support regions to begin to mix caseloads gradually and to address operational capacity issues.

Q. What will change by mixing caseloads through new case allocations?

A. Regions now have the flexibility to allocate new cases to staff in line with our [Unified Tiering Model](#); there are no data migration dependencies related to this. However, this should only take place after staff complete the required learning and development activity and their readiness has been assessed and confirmed by a Senior Probation Officer.

Q. I work in a region supported by the Professional Service Centre (PSC). Will this change how mixed caseloads are approached in my region?

A. The Professional Service Centre is an administrative hub providing a range of administrative services to the Greater Manchester, North West, East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber and South Central regions.

Regarding existing cases, regions serviced by the PSC may transfer cases across former CRC and NPS staff, with administrative services continuing to be provided for cases held by former CRC staff.

Regarding mixing caseloads through new case allocations, the PSC may only allocate former CRC cases to former NPS members of staff; allocating former NPS cases to former CRC staff is currently not possible due to technical and information access constraints. When this occurs, the region needs to assume responsibility for ongoing case administration, with the exception of scheduling the induction appointment and Unpaid Work attendance management.

Decisions to allocate former CRC type cases to former NPS staff will be led by discussions with the region, taking account of Workload Measurement Tool levels. As part of the transfer of PSC activities back to regional responsibility, plans are in place for the case allocation function to be prioritised and for this to become a regional responsibility from 18 October 2021. This will provide complete control for regions to determine how cases should be allocated. After this date, and until the PSC ceases operations, the PSC will continue to provide administrative support to

legacy CRC staff and their cases. If you have any questions, please email: mixedcaseloads@justice.gov.uk.

Q. What are the implications for the London and South Central regions, which are supported by an administrative hub?

A. The London Service Centres in Bromley and Norwich provide a range of administrative services to the London and South Central regions, including initial case allocation to the relevant PDU for both legacy NPS and CRC cases. This means that PDU Senior Probation Officers assume responsibility for case allocation to the appropriate responsible officer. This process is unaffected by the move toward mixed caseloads, although Senior Probation Officers will need to determine each staff member's readiness when making allocation decisions. The allocations process should be simplified locally by the move to mixed caseloads, and by the digital migration to new PDU structures, as legacy CRC and NPS system workarounds will not be required.

Q. May cases be mixed through the movement of existing cases?

A. Yes, existing cases may be reallocated across staff groups following digital migration, which will be completed across all regions on a rolling basis by December 2021, providing the individual staff member's readiness has been confirmed by their Senior Probation Officer.

Q. What impact will the digital migration of Probation Delivery Unit structures have on mixed caseloads?

A. As part of our unification, we need to move legacy CRC caseloads on Authority systems into Probation Service regions, to enable the movement of staff within teams and mixed caseloads to support our [Target Operating Model](#). Following digital migration, which will be completed across all regions on a rolling basis by December 2021, existing cases may be reallocated on nDelius across staff groups, provided individual staff member readiness has been confirmed by their Senior Probation Officer.

Q. Due to workload pressures we need to move existing cases between CRC and NPS staff prior to digital migration. Is this possible?

A. Where workload concerns and pressures are present, existing cases may be moved across former staff groups in advance of migration, in accordance with a number of controls:

- PDU and team structures must remain the same
- Cases move, not staff
- Moves are coordinated by a Regional SPOC, to ensure the correct process is followed
- People on probation are not moved multiple times
- The regional SPOC will keep a record of any moves of existing cases ahead of migration; this will ensure that if there is an issue identified in migration testing the Digital, Data and Technology team can refer to the SPOC to check if that case has been moved

These controls will also ensure that, if an issue is identified in migration testing, the Digital, Data and Technology team can refer to the SPOC to check if that case has been moved. Any such moves should only be undertaken where other dependencies have been addressed, such as learning and development.

Q. Digital migration is scheduled for December in my region. May I move cases in line with the controls outlined above until that point?

A. The following change periods have been determined to ensure that regions have the flexibility to move cases where necessary pre migration, whilst mitigating against any risk to the success of migration activity:

- Green period: up to four weeks before the region's migration date; any caseload moves may be made as per the controls, above
- Amber period: four to two weeks before the region's migration date; caseloads may be moved if there is a clear business need and the SPOC must inform the Delius team
- Red period: two weeks before the region's migration date; only business critical caseloads may be moved and the SPOC must inform the Delius team

Q. What learning and development activity is in place to enable staff to take on mixed caseloads?

A. A range of learning and development activity is available for all former NPS and CRC staff to support their ability to take on mixed and varied caseloads; please see the [Probation Hub](#). We expect Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) learning and development to be available in the coming weeks. Staff may begin to take on the management of more mixed and varied caseloads after they have completed and are applying the learning and development modules relevant to the type of case. Line manager assessment of previous experience and the application of learning and development modules is essential for all staff taking on the management of more mixed and varied caseloads. Staff will be required to complete learning and development in accordance with regional plans and timescales.

Q. Will I need to undertake ViSOR vetting?

A. ViSOR is a secure national database that supports Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and is used in the joint management of individuals posing a risk of serious harm. The work required to ensure all relevant staff have undergone ViSOR vetting and have access to ViSOR remains a priority for the programme. A ViSOR vetting and training plan will be released by 24 October 2021, setting out our approach to ensuring staff are appropriately ViSOR vetted, have received training and have access to the system. Our initial national priority nationally is to ensure all Senior Probation Officers are ViSOR vetted and trained. Heads of Public Protection will receive further information soon.

Q. I have not yet undertaken ViSOR vetting – will I be able to hold MAPPA cases in the interim?

A. Given operational pressures on staff groups and our need for regions to have the ability to mix and smooth caseloads, we have agreed to deploy mitigations to support mixing of caseloads in a safe and secure manner as a transitional arrangement.

As such, all non ViSOR vetted and non ViSOR trained staff who hold a MAPPA or other relevant ViSOR case must be able to access ViSOR information via a vetted and appropriately trained member of staff within their PDU or dedicated regional ViSOR team, where established. Work is underway to seek approval from the Home Office and roll out solutions to enable ViSOR access from transferred in (former CRC) sites. Until these solutions are deployed, no access to ViSOR is sanctioned to take place from transferred sites.

Q. What mixed caseload lessons were learnt from Wales?

A. The main learning was to consider the benefits of former CRC and NPS Senior Probation Officers allocating cases jointly. By allocating cases daily in tandem, on a rota, Wales ensured the appropriate management of staff available and best placed to take new allocations, including an awareness of training commitments, staff readiness to take on particular cohorts and knowing where staff had already experienced a high volume of new allocations. Wales used allocation trackers to retain oversight of allocation activity across particular days, in conjunction with information on whereabouts and training commitments, etc.

Q. What management oversight expectations need to be fulfilled to support mixed caseloads?

A. Any decision to allocate former NPS cases to former CRC staff, or vice versa, through new case allocations or the movement of existing cases, should be agreed by a Senior Probation Officer grade member of staff or above, and endorsed through a management oversight entry on nDelius. This can be supported by completion of the [SPO Assurance Considerations checklist](#) on the [Probation Hub](#), which Senior Probation Officers are strongly recommended to complete to inform their assessment of staff readiness.

Q. There are a small number of cases currently managed by former CRC Probation Service Officers which, under the [Unified Tiering Model](#), should be managed by Probation Officers. What will happen to these cases?

A. Regions have been asked to consider prioritising the reallocation of cases not held in accordance with the [Unified Tiering Model](#) from Probation Service Officers to Probation Officers. In circumstances where, following review, the Senior Probation Officer or above determines that the case should remain with the Probation Service Officer until expiry, the decision and rationale should be clearly evidenced as management oversight in nDelius.

Q. I am working in a former CRC office. Will I see former NPS cases in this location?

A. We are [investing in our estate](#) to ensure that all [Probation Contact Centres](#) are safe and secure, to enable the majority of our offices to deliver mixed caseloads. New security standards are currently in development and, following consultation, all sites will be surveyed against these standards to identify those which can support mixed caseloads and those where further work may be required. Regional approaches to support mixed caseloads in existing sites will vary where sites are assessed as unsuitable to accommodate higher risk people on probation. Your manager will provide you with further information about what this means for you and your site.

Q. Are there any offender management in custody (OMiC) implications in relation to mixing caseloads?

A. Only cases meeting the legacy NPS allocation criteria for OMiC – a sentence of 20+ months and / or more than 10 months left to serve at the point of sentence – should have ‘yes’ ticked on the CAS question, which asks whether the case is OMiC eligible; otherwise, the CAS defaults to NPS allocation criteria and the POM / COM handover point will incorrectly be calculated at 7.5 months, rather than 12 weeks pre release.

Staff should be aware that changes to the risk level of a person on probation should be managed through the risk escalation process set out in the Case Transfer Policy Framework; the Case Allocation System should be updated to ensure that the offender management in custody model draws on accurate data.

Q. OMiC cases are currently reflected differently in the Workload Measurement Tool for former NPS and CRC staff. How will this be resolved?

A. Current caseloads between former NPS and CRC staff may not be directly comparable on the Workload Measurement Tool: legacy NPS OMiC cases sit within a shadow OMiC team and do not attract a weighting on the Workload Measurement Tool; CRC OMiC cases are, in many cases, allocated directly to an officer, resulting in a Workload Measurement Tool weighting despite case responsibility resting with the POM. This may be addressed as follows:

- Pre migration: for newly sentenced cases, all legacy CRC cases must first be allocated to a legacy CRC team on the Delius teams list and a CAS must be completed that identifies the case as 'Allocated / Normal Resource'. Only after this initial allocation may an application for case transfer to the NPS be made, where the case is identified as being OMiC eligible – a sentence of 24+ weeks and / or more than 12 weeks left to serve at the point of sentence – and might therefore be placed into the NPS shadow OMiC team.
- Post migration: MIS reports may be run on legacy CRC teams to identify cases which are OMiC eligible; these cases may then be bulk transferred to the relevant PDU shadow record. It would be beneficial for this exercise to be run before any wider case reallocation is undertaken. The OMiC digital solution will automatically generate an email to the relevant functional mailbox at the appropriate time to trigger COM allocation.

Q. Are any changes anticipated for former NPS and CRC Case Administrators in the regions as we move toward mixed caseloads?

A. Our move toward mixed caseloads means that some Case Administrators will provide administrative support to staff managing case types which they may not have previous experience of working with. A range of learning and development is available on the [Probation Hub](#) to support Case Administrators with this change.

Q. How do mixed caseloads fit with the Probation Operational Delivery model?

A. In our [Target Operating Model](#) regions will implement a Probation Operational Delivery model involving small teams resourced by a mix of Probation Officers, Probation Support Officers and Case Administrators, to support better outcomes for people on probation and improved continuity for Probation Practitioners. Regions will have flexibility in implementing the Probation Operational Delivery model within national principles. Implementation timescales will vary by region, depending on resourcing and the regionalisation of administrative hubs.

Q. How will I be supported to take cases I have not previously held?

A. Your Senior Probation Officer will work with you to understand your experience, learning and development requirements, etc., supporting you to discuss and agree what this means for your journey to managing a mixed and varied caseload and what ongoing support you might need to achieve this.

Q. When will I be expected to take on cases which differ to those I am used to managing?

A. This will vary regionally, subject to dependencies such as our digital migration and site readiness to support mixed caseloads; it will also depend on the type of case and your individual experience and readiness.