

## **CJA Annual Report 2008/09**

### **Evaluation**

#### **Overall summary**

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the findings of the evaluation of the CJA annual reports 2008/09 carried out by the National Advisory Body on Offender Management. The individual CJA evaluations have been designed to provide helpful comments that can be incorporated into the next round of annual reports.

#### **Who we are and our focus**

The majority of the reports are clear and comprehensive, with cross reference to the National Strategy outcomes. Using the various sections to pull out different aspects of the work of the CJA to demonstrate the important role they have in helping to ensure local partners deliver a more effective system for managing offenders across different agencies.

However, several annual reports too easily read as a publicity document for the CJA. A clearer distinction between reports for Ministers and those for wider consumption will be required. The former can be more detailed, more candidly self-evaluative and less presentational. The confusion between these may be deterring CJAs from focusing on areas of improvement or evidencing progress more rigorously.

#### **How we are making a difference**

The reports highlight the progress that each CJA has made against their area plan. It is encouraging to see the many examples of good practice across a range of different areas highlighted in the annual reports. There is clearly a lot going on and the reports provide a sense of a positive direction of travel. These examples gave the CJA the opportunity to demonstrate the quality of what has been achieved.

However, these examples also gave CJAs the opportunity to show where value has been added as a result of the investment in the CJA, demonstrating that CJAs are proving to be a catalyst for change and developments would not have happened without the expense of CJAs. This appears to be a lost opportunity in many reports.

#### **How we manage our resources**

This is clearly one of the biggest challenges for the CJAs. Establishing best value in the provision of offender services, and doing more for less remains a key challenge and will require some radical re thinking as to how resources can be used and how they are accessed. CJAs have only recently made some progress in examining and challenging the cost of services supplied by Local Authorities and the Third Sector.

It is clear that some CJAs are further forward than others in developing new methodologies for the allocation of funds between local authorities. The pace of change overall has been slow and there is little evidence that Chief Officers have made much impact in the reallocation of funds to date.

#### **How we work with others**

The reports highlight the role CJAs have in terms of streamlining work with offenders so that assessments and information can be shared, and that partner agencies are brought into the planning arrangements and feel ownership of the wider agenda. The success of CJAs is likely to depend, to a large extent, on its ability to build effective local partnerships between the many partner bodies which can provide access to the wider services which offenders need.

However, it would be useful to see some assessment of the difference partnerships are making. There is still a great deal of work to do around establishing appropriate and robust means of monitoring and reporting on the work of their partners and the different approaches taken by the CJAs will provide a selection of good practice examples.

The annual reports provide a very coherent statement of how CJAs would wish to work in partnership with the key planning structures, for example Community Planning Partnerships, Offender Management Programme Board. When achieved this will be a sound platform from which CJAs will be able to truly influence the integration of 'reducing re-offending' into mainstream planning and governance mechanisms.

### **Where we need to improve**

One key issue remains for all the CJAs, the implementation of a local performance framework to improve the collection of qualitative and quantitative data that demonstrates impact of offender services and providers. Effective communications will be essential to improving public confidence in offender management services, and improving the quality of service delivery and value for money.

Finding new ways of partners working together and strengthening local partnerships to support the key planning structures will be a key challenge for the forthcoming year.