

Moving ahead with the justice “agenda”

Presentation to Probation Board for
Northern Ireland

9th October 2009

Working to deliver a new justice agenda will require a new way of working...

- There are clear expectations about a new approach to policing and justice in Northern Ireland. These expectations come from evolutionary change and external pressure. This pressure will increase – the status quo is not an option in the delivery of policing and justice
- Experience from elsewhere shows that a critical requirement moving forward will be a focus on “outcomes” – what is the justice system achieving and how does this relate to the costs of delivery
- CJI work in 2009 has highlighted the difficulties many organisations have in achieving real and sustainable changes in outcomes – question arises of what needs to be done differently ?
- My argument is that the justice organisations – individually and collectively – need to build a common view on the nature of the challenges facing the justice system and working to build a new justice agenda – start being proactive rather than reactive in delivering a new agenda ?

The focus on “professional boundaries” should not be at the expense of service delivery...

- Clear and important focus on standards and practices – but can lead to “a successful operation but the patient died”
- Need for a clear and unambiguous focus on “outcomes” as well – what are we trying to achieve (collectively and individually)
- Professional ethos and culture can be “precious” and protectionist
- Comfort factor in doing what organisations know best – can hinder debate about the art of what is possible
- Joining up the justice system difficult – professional independence inhibits progress

Develop governance and accountability arrangements that support and enable delivery...

- Organisational independence is also problematic leading to some “fuzzy” accountability arrangements – who can drive a joined up approach ?
- Custom and practice points to some imperfect delivery
- VFM not always been a driver for change
- Management agenda not always focused on delivery – clear linkages between strategic intent, delivery and outcomes
- nor is there clarity about what a successful outcome looks like

Deal directly with the issues that are disabling the development of a new approach...

- Culture and behaviours can be focused on the way things have been done around here
- Often supported by an allocation of resource that is based on history rather than the future
- No shared view as to what the future looks like – need to develop the art of what is possible across the system
- Need to be proactive rather than reactive demands clarity about what success looks like

Is this relevant to the Probation Board...

- recognise the importance of clarity in improving governance and accountability
- Evidence of strong partnership arrangements
- Attention to detail in application of standards and practices
- Excellent feedback to Inspectorate on range of issues
- Responsive to feedback and focused on how to improve
- Setting the agenda for public protection

There are some challenges...

- Interface issues with other justice organisations
- Selling the message to a sceptical public
- Motivation and leadership for a changing staff profile
- resources
- Assessing risk and managing appropriately sex offenders - on-going
- Correctional v social work focus ?
- Is there a clear view as to what is a successful outcome

What does a new approach to delivering justice look like...?

- What do we want our justice organisations to deliver ?
- Have we the right allocation of resources to deliver on this agenda ?
- Do we have in place the mechanisms for ensuring success ?
- Do we know what success looks like ?
- Is there support for achieving change both within and outside the system ?