The Ministry of Justice has successfully restructured the probation landscape, but there is more to do to stabilise and improve the performance of Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and the National Probation Service (NPS).

New arrangements for offender supervision

- Reorganising prisons to give more offender support ‘Through the Gate’ into the community from 1 May 2015.
- 21 providers took ownership of CRCs on 1 February 2015. Providers own between 6 and 11 CRCs.
- 35 providers took ownership of CRCs on 1 February 2015. Providers own between 6 and 11 CRCs.
- For the full timeline of the reforms, see Figure 3 of the report.

Long standing operational challenges still exist

- Legacy of severely inefficient ICT being replaced in CRCs but continued, with planned improvements, in NPS.
- Data available on the CRCs volume reduction estimated between 6% and 36% which risks affecting transformation plans.
- NPS staff views about organisation reform programme:
  - Negative 16%
  - Neutral 18%
  - Positive 49%
  - Improvements needed for truly national service.

Performance remains unclear

- There are limitations in data quality and availability.
- Data on the impact of the new arrangements on reoffending rates not available until late 2017.
- Impact of reforms for short-term prisoners and ‘Through the Gate’.

There are risks to successful transformation

- CRCs volume reduction estimated between 6% and 36% which risks affecting transformation plans.
- NPS staff views about organisation reform programme:
  - Negative 16%
  - Neutral 18%
  - Positive 49%
  - Improvements needed for truly national service.
- Payment by results represents around 10% of total predicted payments to CRCs...
- which limits the incentives to focus on what reduces offending.

Recommendations

- The Infrastructure and Projects Authority should ensure that its guidance to departments outsourcing complex transformed services considers how to mitigate or reduce risk and uncertainty from concurrent changes, including through differing contracting.
- NOMS should combine its ongoing analysis of the CRC supply chain, with feedback from voluntary organisations, to identify and address gaps in provision in consultation with CRCs.
- NOMS should map out the trajectory of its investment in contract transformation and service delivery plans.
- The Ministry should regularly review the composition of the fee for services contract and performance management of CRCs and the NPS.
- The Ministry should, as a matter of urgency, ensure data is available to support the contract and performance management of CRCs and the NPS.
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