

UK Justice Policy Review: a new resource about criminal justice in the UK

With an online archive of over a hundred documents and featuring over a thousand individual data entries, **Helen Mills** introduces a new project from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

Last month the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies published the first volume in a new annual series about criminal justice. The UK Justice Policy Review series – as the title suggests – explores key developments in criminal justice policy in the UK. The series begins with the formation of the coalition government in May 2010. Hence this first volume's focus is on setting out the agenda for criminal justice that took shape in the first year of the coalition. By the end of this first year the following emerged as major areas of proposed criminal justice reform:

- Reconfiguring police governance and accountability
- Reforming the courts system and legal aid provision
- Establishing new financial and delivery arrangements for interventions with convicted lawbreakers

Each of these issues is explored in more detail in the review. Every year in a concise review we'll be following these agendas as well as providing an account of emerging policy developments in relation to the major criminal justice institutions of policing, the courts and access to justice, prisons and probation, as well as the significance of changes in the welfare system. The review series isn't intended to provide detailed examination of particular policy decisions and their implementation. But it does provide an authoritative introduction to contemporary criminal justice policy in the UK. A 'what happened, when' of significant developments, in an accessible, reasonably up-to-date volume.

Openly accessible data

The *UK Justice Policy Review* series also aims to provide a second important function; access to robust data about criminal justice. Data has been brought together on a UK wide basis, often, to our knowledge, for the first time, regarding:

- criminal justice spending (in recent years and future planned spending)
- the number of people subject to the main types of criminal justice sanctions
- staffing trends and outsourcing
- and welfare and wider social circumstances

The data in each volume always covers the given year under review. When available, this data is also put in the context of the data trend for the preceding period. Whilst data about criminal justice abounds, it is rarely available

on the UK-wide and year-on-year comparative basis it is in the *UK Justice Policy Review* series.

With this in mind, we've made all the figures in the review also available as spreadsheets. So if a reader is particularly interested in comparing police officer numbers in Northern Ireland with probation staffing, or wants to know how the trend in the use of fines in the last three years compares across the three UK jurisdictions, they need just go to spreadsheets to find this information. The spreadsheets can be accessed through links in the online *UK Justice Policy Review* publication or by visiting the project website (www.ukjusticepolicyreview.org.uk). Future volumes will update the figures using the most recently available data as well as feature data of particular interest to the year under review.

We've also set up an archive of all the government documents – white papers, strategy documents, speeches, and government commissioned reviews – that are referenced in the report. Because it's often been our experience that, when you happen to need it, locating *that* white paper can prove to be an elusive trail of 'dead' internet links.

At last count, this totals over a hundred references and original sources of data and over a thousand individual data entries gathered for the first volume in the series. There's also a regularly updated blog on the project site where the *UK Justice Policy Review* team share their thoughts, the things that they couldn't fit into the published annual review, and their reflections on policy developments as they emerge.

The next *UK Justice Policy Review* follows hot on the heels of the first volume in late February 2013. Two further volumes will be produced on an annual cycle up to 2015. For practitioners, campaigners, students and educators, indeed anyone with an interest in contemporary criminal justice, we hope the *UK Justice Policy Review* series provides a good starting place for information about issues and trends in criminal justice policy in the UK. ■

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The *UK Justice Policy Review* series is funded by The Hadley Trust. The first volume in the series for the period May 2010 – May 2011 is available to download from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies' website. A blog by the *UK Justice Policy Review* team and archive of resources collected in the series is available through the project website: www.ukjusticepolicyreview.org.uk