

CENTRE FOR CRIME
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Criminal justice resources staffing and workloads

An initial assessment

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Introduction

This initial assessment of criminal justice resources, staffing and workloads was carried out during October and November 2008 by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at King's College London for a group of professional bodies and trade unions representing those who work in the criminal justice system. Those bodies are: Napo, the professional organisation and trade union for probation officers; POA, the union for prison officers; PCS, the union for a variety of staff in the justice sector; UNISON, representing a wide variety of police and probation staff and the Police Federation, representing the professional interests of police officers up to the rank of Chief Inspector. The authors received helpful advice and guidance from a number of representatives of these organisations. However, the research and analysis was carried out independently of these bodies. The analysis and conclusions remain those of the authors alone.

Following a number of years of significant budget increases across the criminal justice system (Solomon *et al* 2007), the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review signalled a period of much tighter departmental budgets (HM Treasury 2007). Press reports in October 2008 suggested that the Ministry of Justice was facing a real terms cut in its budget of 1.7 per cent between 2008-2009 and 2010-2011. The Ministry was reported to be drawing up plans to save £900 million over that period, with nearly 10,000 jobs going across the various criminal justice agencies (Sherman 2008; Sherman *et al* 2008). The 2008 pre-budget report, which was published just as this initial assessment was being finalised, does not appear to alter this picture in any significant manner (HM Treasury 2008).

The aim of this initial assessment is to provide a short retrospective analysis of key current data relating to budgets, staffing and workloads in the criminal justice system, particularly in relation to prison, probation, the police and the courts. The assessment is intended to highlight changes to the criminal justice system from 2001 to 2007. The assessment draws on work carried out by the Centre over recent years; in particular:

1. A critical analysis of Labour's criminal justice reforms, published in January 2007 (Solomon *et al* 2007);
2. A review of Probation Service resources, staffing and workloads, published in April 2008 (Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008).

In addition, the authors have reviewed official data and recent reports from a variety of governmental and other sources, which will be referenced during the course of this assessment.

There are some inherent limitations to this assessment that should be highlighted at the outset.

First, it was conceived, researched and written to a very tight timescale. Inevitably this means that the authors have not been able to review all the material that would have been possible had the research stretched over several months. During 2009 the Centre plans to return to the issues examined in this initial assessment, producing in-depth analyses of budgets, staffing, workloads and the impact of the prison, probation, police and court services.

Second, it has not always been possible to identify reliable and consistent data that might enable a clear assessment of changes in budgets, staffing and workloads across the key criminal justice agencies examined here. The authors are aware that this might simply be a result of the tight turnaround of this analysis that more extensive research would have remedied. Feedback and thoughts on this would be welcomed by the authors.

Third, the work is necessarily desk-based and quantitative. Future research might be on the adequacy of the measures but also more qualitative, to get a 'feel' for the issues. The measures chosen here focus on the resources available to the criminal justice system and its component parts in terms of monetary and human resources (here called staffing) and the workloads expected of those staff. The processes involved and the outcomes achieved are touched on but present

greater difficulties to the researcher in terms of visibility. They also may lead to potential disagreements about the nature and appropriateness of outcomes. It is, of course, axiomatic that the outcomes of one sub-system of the criminal justice system may mesh with the processes of others and be the input for those or others. Here, for analytical purposes, the parts are treated separately.

Scope, starting point and measurement

The main focus of the report is on criminal justice in England and Wales. The date of 2001 has been chosen as a baseline to give a sufficient run of numbers for analysis and to coincide with the date used in a major piece of work by the Centre on budgets, staffing and workloads in the Probation Service (Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008). Moreover, 2001 marks the start of the second Labour government and major initiatives within the criminal justice field (Solomon *et al* 2007).

There are number of measurement problems associated with any research on criminal justice agencies. This is particularly the case with the measurement of workloads. An apparent increase in workload, for instance, might be offset by improvements in ICT or organisational restructuring. A reduction in workloads might be more apparent than real if the remaining work places greater demands on staff. It has not been possible, in an assessment of this length, to engage in the complexity of these issues. For the purposes of this initial assessment, therefore, the authors have used proxy measures to assess workload. They are set out below. The authors remain aware of the limitations of such proxy measures and welcome feedback on their usage.

Table 1: Workload proxy measures used in this report

Sector	Workload proxy measure	Data source
Police	Recorded crime	Kershaw <i>et al</i> 2008
HM Court Service	Defendants proceeded against	Ministry of Justice 2007b
HM Prison Service	Prison population	<i>Hansard</i>
National Probation Service	Probation caseloads	Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008

Criminal justice resources, staffing and workloads

In this short assessment the criminal justice system is examined briefly as a whole with an emphasis on the resources available to it before examining the police, courts, prison and probation in turn.

The criminal justice system

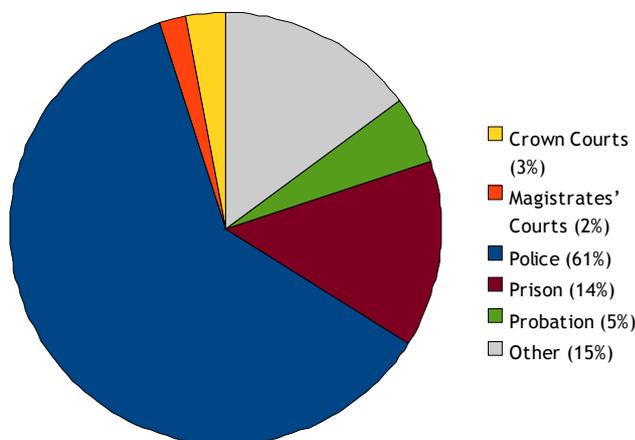
In 2007–2008 the criminal justice system was expected to receive £22.7 billion. This is over a third more than it received ten years previously. Since 1997 each year's total spending on criminal justice in the UK adds up to around £187 billion.¹

Overall, between 1997 and 2005 there was a five per cent average annual real terms increase in spending on law and order. Only health and transport had higher increases. The highest increase in real terms expenditure was during Labour's second term in office. By 2004 the UK was devoting a higher proportion of its GDP to 'public order and safety' than any other country in the OECD. According to the 2008 Pre-Budget Report 'spending on public order and safety has increased by 50 per cent in real terms' since 1997 (HM Treasury 2008: 108).

Table 2: Real terms changes in criminal justice expenditure in England and Wales, 1998-1999 to 2004-2005 (billion £s)²

	1998-1999	2004-2005	real terms increase/decrease
Police	8.0	10.1	21%
Prison	1.8	2.4	15%
Legal Aid	1.5	2.0	15%
Probation	0.3	0.9	160%
Magistrates' Courts	0.3	0.3	-13%
Crown Courts	0.2	0.5	116%
Criminal Injuries Compensation	0.2	0.2	-13%
Crown Prosecution Service	0.3	0.5	44%

Figure 1: Breakdown of criminal justice expenditure 2004-2005, England and Wales³



The four sectors of the criminal justice system that are the focus of this analysis – the police, courts, prison and probation – between them account for the majority of criminal justice expenditure in any given year. In 2004-2005 they accounted for 85% of expenditure. At 61%, the police accounted for the majority of this.

¹ See Solomon *et al* 2007 for a detailed assessment of criminal justice expenditure under Labour. A detailed assessment of youth justice expenditure is offered in Solomon and Garside 2008.

² Solomon *et al* 2007: page 21, table 1.

³ Adapted from Solomon *et al* 2007: page 21, figure 4.

Police

The police account for the greater part of criminal justice expenditure. The most highly visible and iconic representative of the police is the 'bobby on the beat'. But the modern police force encompasses a highly varied set of occupations, buildings and equipment. This section focuses exclusively on the public police service. However, it is worth noting that the private security industry, which performs a range of quasi-policing functions, is much larger. Its specific size is difficult to gauge, but a recent estimate suggests that the numbers working in the private security industries surpassed those working in the police in 1971 (Jones and Newburn 2002).

Resources

Police budgets are composed of a complex web of Home Office and local government funding arrangements, supplemented by other sources including one-off grants and income the police generate through their activities. It has not been possible to examine these complex budgets in depth for this initial assessment. The authors have instead looked only at the Home Office resource budget allocations to the police. This inevitably means significant amounts of police funding are excluded from this analysis. However, Home Office resource budget allocations give an indication of central government priorities in this area and do, in the view of the authors, provide a reasonable guide to trends in overall police funding.

Table 3: Police resource budget allocations, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007⁴

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2001-2007 % change
Annual budget allocation (£000s)	4,748,569	5,011,913	5,625,121	5,691,432	6,180,516	6,412,717	35%
Real terms (£000s) ⁵	5,426,824	5,548,904	6,055,221	5,964,420	6,346,991	6,412,717	18%
Real terms annual growth rate		2%	9%	-1%	6%	1%	

Between 2001 and 2007 police resource budget allocations registered a cash increase of 35 per cent, or 18 per cent in real terms. The most substantial real terms increase came in 2003-4, although this was followed by a real terms decrease of one per cent the following year.

Staffing

Table four gives a breakdown of full time equivalent police service strength between 2002 and 2007.

Table 4: Total police service strength in England and Wales at 31 March, 2002-2007⁶

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	02-07 % change
ACPO ranks ⁷	204	195	208	214	216	206	1%
Superintendents (incl. Chiefs)	1,256	1,256	1,380	1,456	1,467	1,453	16%
Chief Inspectors	1,550	1,659	1,755	1,841	1,847	1,840	19%

⁴ Home Office 2007: page 106, table 5.2.

⁵ Calculated using HM Treasury figures as at 30 September 2008 at 2006/7 prices. Figures calculated from the Resource DEL table under 'People are and feel more secure in their homes and daily lives'. The budget lines 'Crime reduction', 'Criminal Records Bureau' and 'Firearms compensation' have been excluded from the calculations.

⁶ Bullock and Gunning 2007, table 3.

⁷ Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables and equivalents.

Inspectors	6,195	6,269	6,411	6,760	6,923	6,999	13%
Sergeants	18,574	18,612	18,828	20,183	20,899	21,715	17%
Constables	99,487	103,435	108,524	109,037	108,279	107,819	8%
Total (excluding secondments)	127,267	131,426	137,105	139,491	139,631	140,032	10%
Police staff (excluding PCSO, TW and Des Off)	58,909	62,172	67,581	70,869	73,243	73,793	25%
Police community support officers (PCSO)	-	1,176	3,417	6,201	6,737	13,438	n/a
Traffic wardens (TW)	2,233	2,067	1,652	1,252	1,036	751	-66%
Designated officers (Des Off)	-	-	-	1,128	1,323	1,601	n/a
Special Constables ⁸	11,598	11,037	10,988	11,918	13,179	14,021	21%

With the exception of traffic wardens police service strength has increased across all levels apart from the ACPO ranks, which have stayed stable. The most notable areas of growth, however, have been among police staff (up by 25 per cent) and the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO).

Growth of police ranks has been much slower, increasing by only 10 per cent between 2002 and 2007. Much of the growth being concentrated among more senior and supervisory ranks. The number of Sergeants has grown faster than the overall increase in police ranks. The growth in Constables, by contrast, has been much slower. Constable numbers fell in 2006 and 2007.

Workloads

For the purposes of this initial assessment, police recorded crime data has been used as a proxy measure of police workload. Police data does not offer an accurate or reliable measure of crime, whether in its totality or in relation to particular offences. It does offer a useful measure of levels of police activity in relation to suspected or perceived crime.

Table five details police recorded crime data between 2001-2002 and 2006-2007. On the second line police recorded crime data is represented as a ratio of the number of 'frontline' police officers. 'Frontline' police officers are here defined, in an admittedly rough and ready manner, as serving police officers between the rank of Constable and Chief Inspector. The third line presents the same data, this time including PCSOs in the calculation.

Table 5: Incidents officially recorded as crimes by the police, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2001-2007 % change
Total police recorded crime ⁹	5,525,024	5,974,960	6,013,759	5,637,511	5,555,174	5,427,559	-2%
Total recorded crime per 'frontline' police officer	44	46	44	41	40	39	-11%
Total recorded crime per 'frontline' police officer and PCSOs	44	46	43	39	38	36	-19%

Overall police numbers have risen during a period of falling recorded crime, so it is no surprise that the proportion of police recorded crime to 'frontline' police officers has fallen. The much steeper fall in the level of recorded crime in relation to 'frontline' police officers and PCSOs is another

⁸ Headcount figure.

⁹ Kershaw *et al* 2008: Table 2.04.

indication of the way in which the Home Office has relied on the recruitment of less qualified and lower paid auxiliary staff to boost the visible policing presence. More broadly, the experience of many police officers, in terms of greater demands being placed on their time, suggests that using recorded crime as a proxy measure of workload tells far from the full story.

More broadly, the significant growth in police service strength has been achieved on the back of relatively generous budget settlements since 2001-2002. As the police service enters a period of tighter budgets, questions remain over whether these record numbers can be sustained.

HM Court Service

The courts comprise higher and appellate courts as well as civil courts. Despite the iconic image of the Crown Court and jury, the main workload in criminal cases falls to the magistrates' courts. Since April 2005 the courts have been administered by Her Majesty's Courts Service, an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice.

Resources

Table six sets out the main resource budget allocations for the Court Service between 2001-2002 and 2006-2007.

Table 6: HM Court Service resource budget allocations, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007¹⁰

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2001-2007 % change
Annual budget allocation (£000s)	760,516	805,826	789,438	796,180	913,166	922,247	21%
Real terms (£000s) ¹¹	869,143	892,165	849,799	834,369	937,763	922,247	6%
Real terms annual growth rate		3%	-5%	-2%	12	-2%	

The courts received a 21 per cent cash increase between 2001 and 2007, although this only amounted to a six per cent increase in real terms. The notable 12 per cent increase in one year in 2005-2006 coincided with the establishment of HM Courts Service.

Staffing

Reliable staffing data in relation to some courts has proved difficult to draw together in the time available. Table seven sets out the data the authors were able to identify. The roughly 30,000 magistrates and around 3,500 members of the judiciary are not included in the data in table seven.

Table 7: Staff working in various capacities in courts in England and Wales, 2002 to 2007¹²

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2002-2007 % change
Magistrates' courts	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7,830	7,435	n/a
County courts	4,690	4,387	4,355	4,392	4,762	4,533	-3%
Crown Court	2,338	2,253	2,319	2,375	2,540	2,304	-1%
Civil appeals	62	56	61	62	68	67	8%
Criminal appeals	150	146	156	169	110	102	-32%
Royal Courts of Justice	1,032	1,004	1,007	1,030	1,193	1,068	3%
HQ including judges lodgings	991	1,213	403	386	487	553	-45%
Other staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,999	3,924	n/a
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20,989	19,986	n/a

¹⁰ Department for Constitutional Affairs 2007: page 130, table 2. HM Courts Service became operational on April 1, 2005. Budget allocations for the years 2001-2002 to 2004-2005 inclusive are a combination of the local authorities magistrates' courts grants and the Court Service allocations.

¹¹ Calculated using HM Treasury figures as at 30 September 2008 at 2006/7 prices.

¹² Court Service 2003: page 53, note 4.1.2; 2004: page 60, note 4.1.2; HMCS 2006: page 65, note 4.1.2; 2007: page 48, note 4.1.

The staff in table seven work on a variety of criminal and civil matters. It has not proved possible to disaggregate this for the purposes of this initial assessment. This limitation, and the fact that the data remains incomplete, means that the authors have decided against making general comments on the data in table seven. More detailed work will be undertaken in 2009 on this issue.

Workloads

This section explores workloads in the criminal courts. For the purposes of this initial assessment the number of defendants proceeded against at both magistrates' courts and the Crown Court are used as a proxy measure of workload.

Table 8: Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' court and the Crown Court, 2002 to 2007¹³

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2002-2006 % change
Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' court	1,925,000	2,001,000	2,023,000	1,895,000	1,779,000	-8%
Defendants tried at Crown Court	76,000	80,000	80,000	76,000	77,000	1%

The numbers of defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts have fallen in recent years. The growing resort to Penalty Notices for Disorder and other 'summary' instruments has been contributing factor in this regard (Solomon *et al* 2007). This apart, and given that staffing data are incomplete, it has proved difficult to draw significant conclusions at this point.

However, it is worth noting that the magistrates' courts and Crown Courts have operated within the context of modest budgetary increases over recent years. The significant rise in the 2005-2006 financial year coincided with the establishment of HM Courts Service. It seems reasonable to conclude that much of this additional resource was therefore used for the purposes of structural change. The implications of tighter budgets from 2008-2009 on, and potential staffing reductions, for the administration of justice would benefit from serious consideration.

¹³ Ministry of Justice 2007: Table 1.1.

Prison

Resources

Table nine shows the annual resource budget allocation for the Prison Service in the financial years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007, indicating a six per cent cash increase. This represents a decrease in real terms of seven per cent. The most substantial real-terms decrease was in 2005-2006 when the budget decreased by 17 per cent. The rise of eight per cent in 2006-2007 still places the real terms prison budget below where it was in 2001-2002.

Table 9: Prison resource budget allocations, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007¹⁴

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2001-2007 % change
Annual budget allocation (£000s)	2,119,470	2,281,036	2,302,484	2,409,313	2,034,435	2,254,115	6%
Real terms (£000s) ¹⁵	2,422,202	2,525,433	2,478,533	2,524,875	2,089,234	2,254,115	-7%
Real terms annual growth rate		4%	-2%	2%	-17%	8%	

Budget allocations for the 2007-08 financial year are £2,189,844, or £2,124,806 in real terms at 2006/07 prices. This equates to a further real terms reduction in budget over 2006-2007 of six per cent.

Staffing

Table 10 gives a year on year breakdown of staff working for the Prison Service between 2002 and 2007. It does not cover staff working in the private prisons estate.

Table 10: HM Prison Service staff, 2002 to 2007¹⁶

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2002-2007 % change
Administration	6,076	6,533	6,953	7,540	6,765	7,202	19%
Industrial	2,908	3,027	3,162	3,295	3,341	3,410	17%
Unified and Operational Grades ¹⁷	30,805	31,484	32,537	33,144	32,847	33,263	8%
Specialist	4,296	4,375	4,572	4,628	4,057	3,872	-10%
Total	44,085	45,419	47,224	48,607	47,010	47,747	8%

All categories of staff apart from 'Specialist' staff have grown between 2002 and 2007. Overall the increase in staff has been eight per cent. At a time of contracting real terms budget this increase in staffing, along with the increase in prison numbers (detailed below), is an indication of the pressure faced by the Prison Service in recent years. It is also notable that the fastest growth in staffing has been among administrative, rather than operational, grades.

A different set of data, covering a narrower group of operational staff, was released earlier this year

¹⁴ Home Office 2007: page 106, table 5.2.

¹⁵ Calculated using HM Treasury figures as at 30 September 2008 at 2006/7 prices.

¹⁶ HMPS 2003: page 58, note 2b; 2004: page 67, note 2b; 2006: page 66, note 3; 2007: page 69, note 3.

¹⁷ Includes all officer grades, operational managers and operational support grades.

in response to a parliamentary question in May 2008. This data is set out in table 11. It covers prison officers, senior officers and principal officers within the public sector Prison Service and custody officers and senior custody officers within private prison establishments, where this information was available. Unfortunately the data are not disaggregated. However, they offer a reasonable measure of 'frontline' staff engaged in direct work with prisoners.

Table 11: Prison officers in public and private sector prisons, 2002 to 2007¹⁸

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2002-2007 % change
Officers	23,324	23,842	25,664	26,480	26,935	27,346	17%

Workloads

There are number of ways in which workloads in prison can be assessed. For the purposes of this initial assessment the authors have used the average annual prison population as a proxy measure of workload. Table 12 gives a breakdown of the average annual prisoner population, comparing this with the ratio of prisoners to prison officers as given in the parliamentary question in May of this year.

Table 12: Prisoner to prison officer ratios, 2002 to 2007¹⁹

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2002-2007 % change
Prisoners	67,633	71,498	73,658	74,808	76,564	78,880	17%
Prisoners per officer	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	

There has been a gradual increase in the ratio of prisoners to prison officers since 2002. This is part of a longer term trend. In 1997, for instance, the prisoner to prison officer ratio was 2.4. These figures would also benefit from further disaggregating so that, for instance, the relative composition of experienced and less qualified and experienced prison officer can be compared.

The Prison Service is probably facing the greatest pressures of the criminal justice agencies examined in this report. It has experienced real terms cuts in its resource budget since 2001. Such budgetary cuts could have been part of a coherent prisons policy had the government reduced prison numbers and scaled back the prisons estate in line with budgetary cuts. Prison reformers and other campaigners have urged the government to do just this.

As it is, government policy on prisons is mired in contradiction. Staffing levels have increased, though at a slower rate than the growth in the prison population. Real terms budgets, in contrast, have shrunk. It is difficult to see how such a contradictory policy can be sustained in the longer term.

¹⁸ *Hansard*, May 13, 2008: Col 1511W.

¹⁹ *Hansard*, May 13, 2008: Col 1511W.

Probation

This section summarises some of the key findings from the Centre's detailed analysis of probation resources, staffing and workloads, published in April 2008 (Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008).

Resources

Table 13 shows the annual resource budget allocation for the Probation Service in the financial years 2001-2002 through 2006-2007, indicating a 39 per cent cash increase, or an increase of 21 per cent in real terms. The most substantial real terms increase was in 2003-2004 when the budget increased by 29 per cent. This coincided with the major structural change involved in the setting up of the National Offender Management Service. For the last two years in the series, there has been a decline in the real terms budget compared with 2004-2005.

Table 13: Probation budget allocations, 2001-2002 to 2006-2007²⁰

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2001-2007 % change
Annual budget allocation (£000s)	596,395	609,976	810,071	881,071	821,024	827,300	39%
Real terms (£000s)	683,148	677,503	875,226	925,495	844,579	827,300	21%
Real terms annual growth rate	-1%	-1%	29%	6%	-9%	-2%	

The announcement of a flat line budget, accompanied by expectations of ongoing efficiency savings for the coming three years, would seem to indicate that the period of budgetary growth has ended and that services will encounter a decline in its financial resources over the next few years.

Staffing

As of December 2006 the Ministry of Justice estimates that the overall staff complement in the National Probation Service was 24,966. This included 541 Probation Board members (Ministry of Justice 2007a).

Many of these will be in senior, managerial, support or central office roles rather than being engaged in frontline duties. Table 14 provides a breakdown of the number of staff employed by the Probation Service engaged in posts involving work with offenders for the period 2002-2006. Senior probation officers are included in the table but have been excluded in calculations that pertain to the numbers of staff available to work directly with offenders – the 'frontline staff' contingent – because the post has become increasingly managerial.

In order to understand the composition of the frontline workforce, the number of main grade probation officers – that is, the total of trained officers and trainees (again, excluding senior probation officers) – have been calculated.

Table 14: Probation staffing, 2002-2006²¹

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2002-2006 % change
Senior probation officers	1,100	1,130	1,173	1,240	1,793	63%
Senior practitioners	218	227	336	439	345	58%

²⁰ Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008: page 12, table 1.

²¹ Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008: page 14, table 5.

Qualified probation officers	6,214	5,358	5,610	5,824	5,964	-4%
Trainee probation officers	1,566	1,784	1,732	1,407	1,098	-30%
All probation officers²²	9,098	8,499	8,851	8,910	9,200	1%
All main grade officers²³	7,780	7,142	7,342	7,231	7,062	-9%
Probation services officers	4,083	5,648	5,644	6,800	7,247	77%
Psychologists	-	23	18	19	21	-
Other operational	-	1,081	1,377	1,507	1,543	43%
Operational staff, excluding probation officers	4,083	6,752	7,039	8,326	8,811	116%
All operational	13,181	15,251	15,890	17,236	18,011	37%
Frontline staff²⁴	12,081	13,017	13,322	14,470	14,654	21%

There was a one per cent increase in all probation officers between 2002 and 2006 and a 21 per cent increase in the number of 'frontline' staff. Notable increases have been concentrated in senior positions, and in the probation services officers. The number of qualified probation officers declined, by four per cent. The number of trainee posts declined by 30 per cent.

Workloads

There are a number of possible ways of calculating probation caseloads. A simple way of thinking this through is to consider the ratio of offenders to staff. Table 15 shows that the ratio of offenders to qualified probation officers increased by 28 per cent between 2002 and 2006 and by 35 per cent if trainee probation officers were included.

Table 15: Average number of offenders per frontline member of staff, 2002-2006²⁵

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2002-2006 % change
Qualified probation officers	31.1	37.5	37.7	38.9	39.8	28%
All main grade officers ²⁶	24.8	28.2	28.8	31.4	33.6	35%
Frontline staff ²⁷	16.0	15.4	15.9	15.7	16.2	1%

The Probation Service appears to have been the major winner over recent years. Real terms budget increases have been the largest of the four criminal justice sectors examined here. However, workloads have grown significantly. There has also been a notable decline in qualified probation officers and trainees. The Service has had to cope with significant structural upheaval. With budgets set to shrink in the coming years, the capacity of the Service to respond effectively to the demands it will inevitably face must be in some question.

²² Includes senior probation officers, senior practitioners, qualified probation officers and trainees.

²³ Includes probation officers and trainee probation officers.

²⁴ Includes senior practitioners, probation officers, trainees and probation services officers.

²⁵ Oldfield and Grimshaw 2008: page 19, table 10.

²⁶ Qualified officers and trainees.

²⁷ All senior practitioners, main grade officers and probation services officers.

Conclusion

During Labour's period in government criminal justice has been one of the fastest growing areas of government expenditure. Between 2001 and 2007 three of the four criminal justice agencies examined in this report had real terms increases in their resource budgets: HM Court Service (six per cent); the Police (18 per cent) and the Probation Service (21 per cent). Placed alongside a consideration of structural change, staffing levels and workload pressures, however, these budget increases where in reality less generous than they at first appear.

The Prison Service was the main loser over recent years. It experienced a real terms decrease in its resource budget of seven per cent. Against the background of increases in staffing and a fast-growing prison population, this has resulted in predictable strain and pressure.

A number of budgetary, staffing and workload pressures have therefore built up across the four agencies examined in this report. These pressures have built up against the background of apparently generous budgetary settlements since 2001. As the government looks for ways of trimming budgets in the coming years and reducing staff complements, the criminal justice system faces a period of great uncertainty.

If the government continues to increase the demands it places on the criminal justice system, and the staff working in it, the coming period of budget cuts will be an exceedingly challenging one. It is difficult to see how service quality will not decline in such circumstances. In particular, reductions in staffing seem almost inevitable if budgets are to be balanced.

In the Centre's audit of Labour's criminal justice reforms, the authors concluded that 'the time is right for ministers and their advisers to take stock and to reflect on what the criminal justice agencies can realistically achieve in reducing crime and increasing public safety and on what the appropriate level of resourcing should be' (Solomon *et al* 2007: 75). This conclusion seems as relevant now as it did then.

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