

Highland & Islands Criminal Justice Board
Annual Report and Work Plan
2010/2011



*Building the confidence of communities
serving the people of Scotland*

Scottish
Court Service



The Local Criminal Justice Board

The Local Criminal Justice Board is chaired by Sheriff Principal Sir Stephen Young and its members are made up from the Scottish Court Service (SCS), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Northern Constabulary (NC) and the Northern Community Justice Authority (NCJA).

The Board's primary objective is to:-

*“provide a criminal justice system in which every member of the public in
Highland and Islands has confidence”.*

It seeks to achieve this objective through collaborative working and by influencing the work of each of the member organisations.

Why is this objective important?

Ensuring that people have confidence in the Criminal Justice System in the Highland and Islands reduces the fear of crime and can generate public reassurance. While each organisation represented on the Board has its own objectives this joint priority encourages partnership working and promotes opportunities to deliver Criminal Justice services in a more effective and efficient way.

In the last year the Board has been working to strengthen performance and has continued to build on previous successes in order to improve the process for all involved.



Sheriff Principal Sir Stephen Young

Priorities for 2011

This year the Board has been considering business priorities in the context of its primary objective, national priorities and in light of the efficiencies that all public sector agencies are expected to achieve.

The Board decided that the key priority was to:-

*Increase the percentage of criminal cases in Highland and Islands
dealt with within 26 weeks from 82% to 85% by April 2012*

Why is this priority important?

Around 4,300 criminal court cases in Highland & Islands are dealt with in the Summary (non-jury) Sheriff Courts annually and while this does represent a reduction over time we need to ensure that justice in those courts is efficient and effective. This will save time and expense, avoid wasted effort and reduce the demands made on victims and witnesses. Swift action in our Summary Courts will help make a clear link between the offence and punishment; something which may reduce the likelihood of that offender going on to commit further crimes.

What will influence this priority?

A wide variety of factors influence this, including:

- Timely and well formed reporting of cases by the Police to the Procurator Fiscal
- Timely decisions taken in cases by Procurators Fiscal
- Cases being dealt with at the correct level
- Sufficient capacity in courts to deal with the volume of cases
- Well prepared prosecution and defence
- Accused persons and witnesses attending court when required
- Crime patterns, crime levels and detection rates



How will we influence this priority in the coming year?

Of summary cases that came to court in Highland and Islands last year almost 95% resolved without going to trial. The Board have considerable concerns that many of these cases did not resolve until very late in the process, and only after being called in court on a number of occasions.

Currently about 22,000 witness citations are sent out annually across the area but given the high number of cases resolving without evidence being led many of these witnesses are not required.

The Board would like to reduce the inconvenience to these individuals and the costs involved in calling them to court.

If we can make better use of limited court time and reduce the number of witnesses and victims that are required to attend court this will result in a more efficient system for all those involved and should also reduce the length of time cases take to be resolved.

The Board are also aware that about half of all cases that come to the Summary Courts are dealt with in Inverness and these cases account for around 50% of the witnesses cited annually.

Ensuring that Inverness Court is working as effectively as possible will make the biggest difference to the overall performance and lessons learned in Inverness can be shared across the Sheriffdom.

With this in mind the following activities have been identified:-

OF CASES THAT
CAME TO COURT IN
H&I LAST YEAR
ALMOST 95%
RESOLVED
WITHOUT GOING
TO TRIAL

How will we influence this priority in the coming year - cont.

Make Full use of non-court based measures

There are a number of ways in which we can take action which does not involve people coming to court. These include fixed penalty notices and fiscal fines. The Board is also prepared for the arrival of community payback orders (CPOs). These new orders replace a variety of existing community sentences including probation and community service. The main aim for these measures is to achieve speedier and more effective justice.

NCJA, COPFS, NC

Correct Case in the Correct Court

It is important that cases are dealt with in the correct court. There will be a review to ensure that cases are dealt with at the most appropriate level. This may involve ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of courts available to hear the business.

COPFS and SCS

Cases are dealt with at the earliest possible stage

A key factor in making sure cases are dealt with at an early stage is to ensure that existing procedures are adhered to by all who are involved in the case. To do this the Board's Implementation Group will work with Sheriffs, Prosecutors and Defence Agents to minimise adjournments in summary cases where possible. This will include good preparation by all, agreement of evidence wherever possible and ensuring that the accused and witnesses attend court as required. We will initially focus on the Intermediate Diet Court in Inverness.

COPFS, SCS, NC

Witness inconvenience is kept to a minimum

The minimum number of witnesses necessary for court will be cited in each case and as many as possible of these will be cited by e-mail. Being a witness in any case can be a traumatic experience, but statistics show that the majority of cases do not proceed to trial. For those that do, we are committed to providing to all witnesses information and support where appropriate. Where cases resolve or do not proceed to court, we are looking to improve our communication of that information to witnesses wherever possible.

NC, COPFS

Board priorities are clearly understood

The Board want the Judiciary, staff in partner organisations and stakeholders to have a clear understanding of its role and priorities.

To do this the communication plan agreed earlier in the year will be implemented and Sheriffs will be given the opportunity to discuss Board priorities.

SCS, COPFS, NC

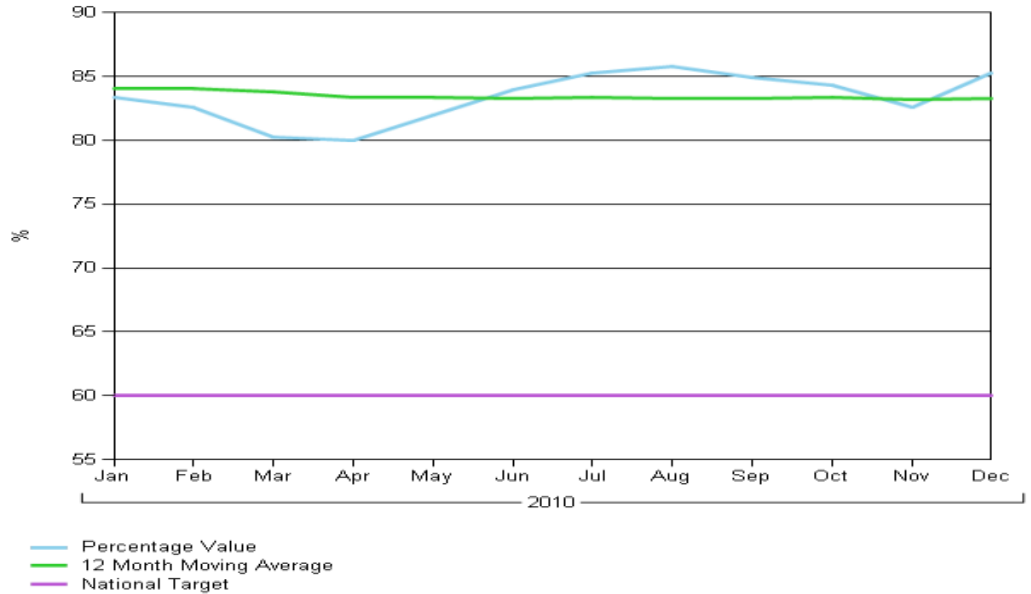
“THE BOARD
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Percentage of cases dealt with within 26 weeks

HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS ROUTINELY EXCEEDED THE NATIONAL TARGET BY OVER 20%

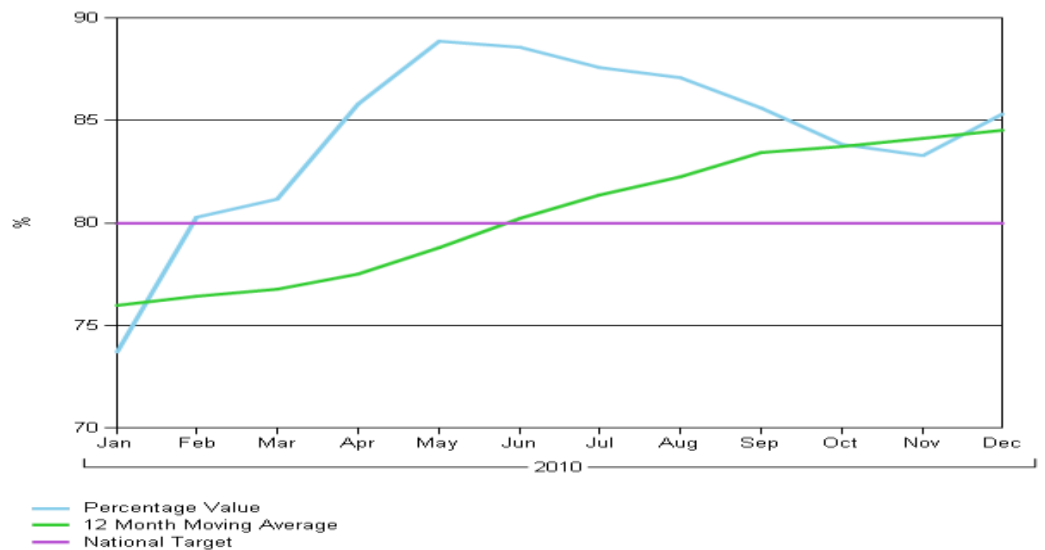


The national target is 60%

The annual average achievement remains consistently high at 83.7% and H&I routinely exceed the national target by over 20%.

Percentage of cases received by COPFS within 28 days

FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE YEAR H&I EXCEEDED THE NATIONAL TARGET

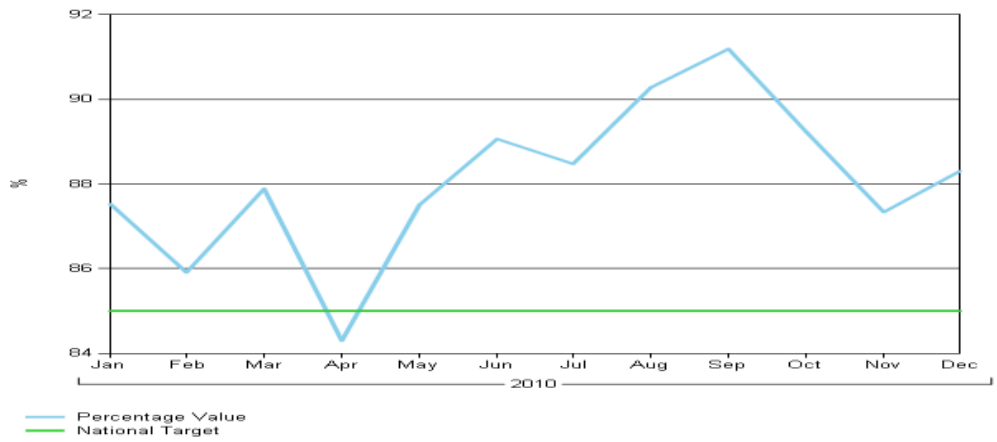


The national target is 80%

This year the average achievement against target has risen from 76% to 84% and for the majority of the year H&I exceeded the national target.

Percentage of summary cases disposed of within 20 weeks

H&I EXCEEDED THE NATIONAL TARGET BY 4%



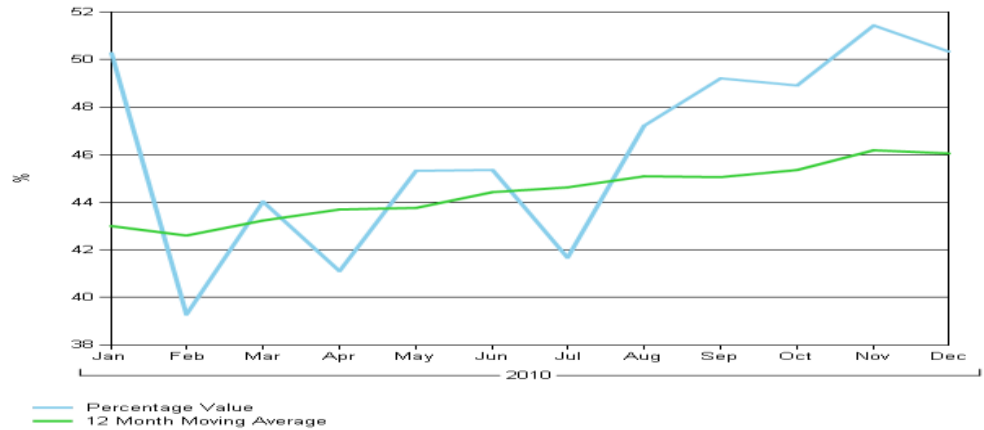
The national target is 85%.

This year H&I achieved an average of 89% which has again exceeded this target

The challenge facing the area in the coming year is to continue to build on this performance

Percentage of accounts paid in full

“PAYING FINES IS NOT OPTIONAL WE WILL CONTINUE TO FOCUS RESOURCES IN THIS AREA TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED A FINE DO PAY IT”



Much work has been done to ensure that those who have been fined actually pay the fine they have been given and payment has improved with action being taken against persistent non-payers.

Where information is available on an offender that allows an enforcement sanction then options including earnings arrestments, bank account arrestments, car seizures and deduction from benefits are used. In the last year 1032 individual enforcement sanctions were taken in respect of fines imposed in Highland & Islands both by the courts and as direct measure penalties by Procurators Fiscal and Police.

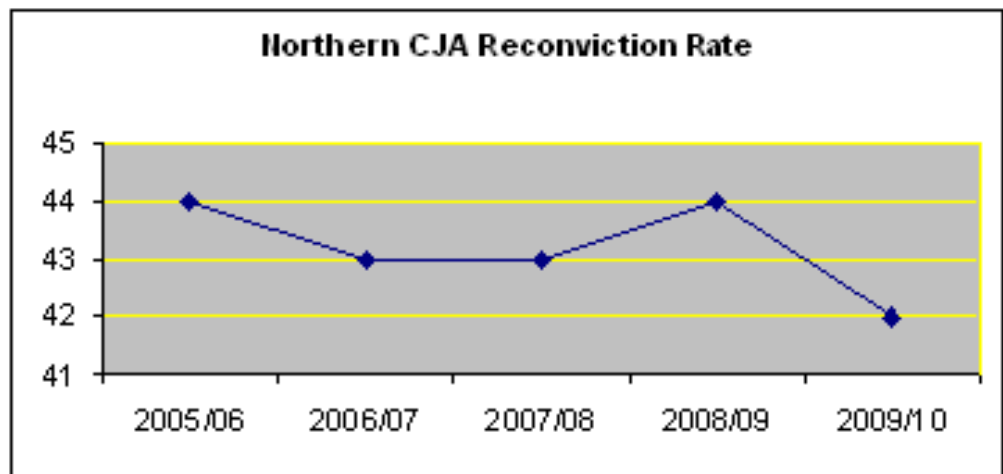
Amongst the many successful enforcements there has been a fully paid earnings

AT THE END OF 2010
OVER 50% OF
ACCOUNTS WERE
PAID IN FULL

arrestment order in respect of one offender in Inverness who had accumulated 17 unpaid police registered fines whilst an offender in Alness had to pay £400 to have his bank arrestment order lifted. Another resident of Boat of Garten has had £1,766 deducted from his wages by his employer to pay four outstanding Court, Fiscal and Police imposed penalties.

At the end of 2010 over 50% of accounts were paid in full. This is an area to build on in the coming year.

Northern CJA Reconviction Rate



NORTHERN CJA ON
COURSE TO MEET
NATIONAL TARGET OF
REDUCING
RE-OFFENDING BY
2%

In 2006 all Community Justice Authorities in Scotland were set a national target of reducing re-offending by 2% to be achieved by 31st March, 2011.

Northern CJA is on course to achieve this.



If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or another language, or further information,
please contact

Catriona Maclean, Summary Justice Reform Coordinator,
Highland and Islands Criminal Justice Board, 6 Ardross Terrace, Inverness. Tel: 01463 251961
e-mail: cmaclean@scotcourts.gov.uk.



Members of Highlands & Islands Criminal Justice Board

Sir Stephen Young Bt QC

Sheriff Principal

Grampian Highlands and Islands

Sheriff Principal's Chambers

The Sheriff Court

The Castle

Inverness

IV2 3EQ

Ian J Latimer QPM MA

Chief Constable,

Northern Constabulary

Old Perth Road, Inverness

IV2 3SY

Gordon Ellis MBE

Sheriffdom Business Manager

Scottish Court Service

6 Ardross Terrace

Inverness

IV3 5NQ

Andrew Laing

Area Procurator Fiscal

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

2 Baron Taylor's Street

Inverness

IV1 1QL

Philip English

Chief Officer

Northern Criminal Justice Authority

Woodhill House

Westburn Road

Aberdeen

AB16 5GB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ORGANISATIONS IN HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS HAVE A TRADITION OF WORKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP TO MAXIMISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE AREA. THE LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THEIR EXISTING ACHIEVEMENTS TO SERVE COMMUNITIES IN HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS

