

OFFCUTS



The Audit Commission has painted a stark picture of the **inadequacies of adult drug treatment** provision after studying community drug services and primary care drug treatment in eleven drug (or drug and alcohol) action team areas in England and Wales. They found wide variations in the availability of different services, in working practices, and in how effectively agencies worked together. Weak commissioning practices and the absence of management information and effective performance monitoring contributed to the problems. Often drug misusers struggled to get the help they needed when they needed it. Long delays and under-developed care management allowed too many to 'fall through the net'. Some of the problems stemmed from constrained resources, but also factors were poor service planning, different views about 'what works', and poor collaboration between treatment services, GPs, mental health services and prisons. For the Commission, the starting points for improvement are better intelligence about local needs and about the performance of existing services. Developing more flexible approaches and improving care coordination and joint working are also priorities. Parallel improvements in the national framework are required, spear-headed by the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse.

► **Changing habits** (Audit Commission 2002) can be downloaded from www.audit-commission.gov.uk, or order stating stock code HNR2696 from: Audit Commission Publications, PO Box 99, Wetherby LS23 7JA, freephone 0800 502030, price £30.