



BCJB Annual General Meeting

19th December 2023

Teams Meeting

Name	Organisation
Festus Akinbusoye (FA)	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Dave Collins (DCS)	Luton Borough Council
Doug Charlton (DCN)	Probation Service
Francoise Julian (FJ)	Bedfordshire OPCC, Criminal Justice Projects & BCJB Mgr
Gemma McCormack (GM)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Ian Dalgarno (ID)	Bedfordshire Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Matt Thompson (MT)	Hertfordshire Police
Kate Somarakis (KS)	HMCTS Magistrates
Susan Childerhouse (SC)	Central Bedfordshire
Tony Hirst (TH)	HMCTS Crown Court
Zara Brown (ZB)	Bedfordshire Police
Ian Miller (IM)	HMCTS Crown
Nicola Bayliss (NB)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Rose- Marie Franton (RMF)	Crown Prosecution Service
Pat Jennings (PJ)	Bedford Borough Council
Anna Villette (AV)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Ian Dalgarno (ID)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Dinh Padicala (DP)	East London Foundation Trust Mental Health Services

Item No.	Topic
1.	<p>Welcome & Introductions:</p> <p>FA welcomed everyone to the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice AGM and advised that this was a good way to engage with the public, in that it offered an additional layer of transparency and provides the public with an opportunity to become more familiar with the work of the BCJB and Criminal Justice agencies working in Bedfordshire. We have representatives attending today from the CPS, Bedfordshire Police, NHS, Youth Offending Service, Probation, Courts and OPCC.</p> <p>FA explained that the Criminal Justice Board is a bringing together of all the Partners to deliver effective and efficient criminal justice service to a local area. We get updates on how things are going in each area and we get updates from each other as well. It is a</p>

	<p>really good top level board where we address issues and ensure that we are delivering the right level of service to our residents.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>BCJB Annual Report & 2023/24 Highlights:</p> <p>a) 2022/23 Annual Report:</p> <p>FA read through some key highlights from the Annual Report which will be published and made available for the public to view.</p> <p>A lot has been achieved so far and there is a lot more for us to do as a partnership.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Victims and Witnesses Subgroup:</p> <p>ZB introduced herself as the Head of Crime and Public Protection in Bedfordshire and currently the Strategic Lead for Victims and Witnesses.</p> <p>ZB advised that the Victims and Witnesses Subgroup is chaired by the Detective Superintendent. We are currently looking at the Terms of Reference and Delivery Plan given some of the changes that are happening in terms of the Victims Code of Practice, some are already in place and others need more levels of concentration. Through this Board there are a number of different mechanisms that this Board deals with i.e. surveys, RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) victims through the SARC (Sexual Abuse Referral Centre), BVCS (Bedfordshire Victim Care Services) and we also look at how we feed in to the criminal justice system.</p> <p>When we receive a report of a victim of crime, sexual violence or domestic abuse we look to deploy an officer or staff member to that victim, these officers are trained to deal with the first approach of a victim and how they engage with them.</p> <p>Op Syteria is our response to victims of rape and serious sexual offending and it started as a Home Office funding piece with research and a change programme. Part of the change project is to embed rape investigators skills development programme across the organisation. That will look at how we engage to ensure that existing investigators receive the training.</p> <p>FA asked in terms of the victims engagement, what is the percentage in Bedfordshire? ZB advised we are looking to measure the 12 rights and as a starting point our contacts with victims hit 100% last month. A lot of that is not only around the officers in the case but the victim engagement officers and IDVA's to keep the victim on board and updated. We are trying to achieve that our victims and witnesses get the best possible service from us. We are working alongside our partners to make sure we are reducing the level of action plans and ensuring that victims get justice.</p> <p>FA asked what the goal will be for next month? ZB advised that we will be trying to sustain this figure.</p> <p>FA asked when victims of exploitation, sexual violence etc are willing to engage and give intelligence to the police, CPS and in the courts, how can the case be</p>

prioritised whereby the officer allocated can safeguard the victims vulnerability to prevent possible re-traumatisation?

ZB shared that any intelligence that is provided to the police will be assessed and acted upon with considerations to the individual that is reporting and there is always a balance to wider public safety. One of the key priorities in Bedfordshire Police is to protect the public. Prioritising cases within the teams does happen, we use the threat, risk, harm, thrive risk assessment tool which is used to make an assessment around which cases need to be prioritised first. When victims are going through a crime investigation journey with Bedfordshire Police, they are open to a number of special measures and some of that is how we engage with our victims, this also provides provisions for vulnerable or intimidated victims to give their evidence to courts.

RMF introduced herself as the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Thames and Chiltern. RMF advised that the CPS will only come in once the criminal investigation has started and once we are looking to ensure that it will go to court. The more serious the case, the more likely it is that it will go to crown court.

The video recording for victims enables each victim to give their best evidence and that means if you feel vulnerable, intimidated or even if you need a better environment in which to tell your story. There are specialist police officers who are trained to provide that first step when you come forward. Once the CPS have the video evidence, they start making preparation for trial or to serve it to the defence. We look to ensure that the victim/witness feels as comfortable as they can in the court room.

These measures are to ensure that we are doing everything that we can to provide reassurance on what is going to happen. We make a request to the Judge for TV screens, a link, for children it could be that the Barrister is not wearing a wig etc, all of this things can be put in place to make the victim/witness feel more comfortable. After conviction the police will have obtained a victim personal statement and this focusses on the impact the person has felt about the crime that has been committed against them. If the charge is changed at all through the process then the CPS and Police will keep the individual updated.

FA asked who makes the decision on the special measures? RMF advised that the prosecutor makes the application and the Judge makes the decision.

KS advised in relation to the magistrates court, we have the same facilities to support victims and witnesses, we have witness liaison officers and case progression teams, we can find alternative ways into the court building as well.

FA asked do we still have defendants cross examining a witnesses in court? KS advised there are provision to stop the defendant from doing this.

FA asked in the event where the prosecution or Judge were not making special measure requests, can the victim request this themselves? KS shared that we can

	<p>make directions without notice for if something happens throughout the course of the trial.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Reducing Reoffending Subgroup:</p> <p>DC introduced himself as the Head of Probation for Bedfordshire and provided an update on the Reducing Reoffending Board.</p> <p>The Board includes Probation, Police, OPCC, Health, Housing, Voluntary Sector and the Prison. This is about pulling together and looking at ways and means that can best support the partnership to reduce reoffending. The primary focus is looking at pathways to support people out of their life of crime Two of the key areas are lack of accommodation and lack of employment or education.</p> <p>In terms of accommodation, we are well supported by the local authority to look at means and methods of housing people. The Probation Service has a housing strategy and we have means to house them in temporary accommodation for up to 84 days whilst seeking support. We ensure we work closely with the DWP to support those with benefits and support those to get back into the workplace.</p> <p>The Partnership work links in with the community groups who can support with individuals, this is a massive support to what we do. Going forward we are looking to identify some of the future need areas to capture some of trends we have learned.</p> <p>FA asked in terms of substance misuse, how well is the support to get people out of that habit of addiction? SH introduced himself as Deputy Chief Nurse for the Integrated Care Team. SH advised that the drugs, alcohol and additions service is commissioned through public health and the local authority and therefore is unable to provide a response. Going forward we will ensure that a representative is available to attend these meetings. DC shared that we are very much aware of those coming out of prison who have drug and alcohol related additions and we are working with health colleagues to provide key support.</p> <p>FA asked, with ever increasing activity on county lines involving ever younger victims of coerced, forced involvement what is being done to address the bigger players and to protect the young people of Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton?</p> <p>DC introduced himself as the Head of Youth Justice in Luton. We have a Strategy that is based around the early identification of drivers of exploitation with young people. We have a partnership approach which is called MAGPAN (Multi Agency Gangs Panel) this is for young people who are mapped to known organised crime and those young people who are most at risk. There is a very specific issue in Luton where over 90% of the people who are referred into that panel are yet to commit an offence. That means that by the time a referral is made for them to receive intervention they are already entrenched in these types of behaviour. Youth justice is about working with Police colleagues, education, health and working with</p>



	<p>the community. As a service we commission over 30 services within the community to help us with this journey. We have been working around inclusion within schools from years 5's and above.</p> <p>FA asked regarding the 90% who had not committed a crime, what is the delay in young people being referred to MAGPAN? DC advised that there has to be high level intelligence to be referred to MAGPAN. We have to look at how children are being raised at home, in schools, in communities etc, we need to have eyes everywhere. Working with year 5's is showing that this is where some are starting to have issues within school and we are looking at identifying these children earlier and putting in support where required.</p> <p>PJ introduced himself from the Bedford Youth Offending Team. PJ agreed that Bedford are working very similar to Luton and have the Serious Youth Violence Panel where we work with partners on a multiagency approach to look at what we can do for those on the cusp of serious youth violence. We have multiagency response and we work with the guns and gangs until at Bedfordshire Police. When a person is referred we look at the whole picture, their lifestyle to help them to not get involved in the criminal justice system. Sometimes we look at children in the system and they are not always looked at as victims, we do work around this to help them understand what they are doing and in terms of exploitation.</p> <p>FA advised that Bedfordshire Police don't always go after the big players on the streets, Op Costello and Boson deal with those who are higher up in the crime world and gang leaders and a lot of work goes into identifying and catching them. There is a lot that is going on Nationally.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Performance and Programme Management Subgroup:</p> <p>KS introduced herself as the Business Crime Senior Legal Manager from the Courts Service. KS advised the primary task of the Subgroup is to support the Board and look at various works that have been set by the Board. We are very much as a group going to be looking at the support we can give to the youth justice teams so that we can help to turn these young peoples lives around in a positive way.</p> <p>The Subgroup meets four times per year, we work in partnership with each other and we also look at themes and areas that may need improving including; file quality build, pre-charging decisions for court hearings, making sure there is sufficient evidence for the defence, ensuring that every hearing courts and getting guilt pleas at the earliest opportunity. We do analyse data and it is important that we scrutinise each others data. We have looked at absent witness prosecutions, whether evidence can come in through a different route (999 calls, body worn camera footage etc), we have looked at police file quality build and Bedfordshire Police have worked extremely hard over improving this over that past few years. Other Police Forces are now looking at Bedfordshire to see how they can improve</p>



	<p>their own file quality build. FA agreed that this is a huge achievement as when FA came into post the file quality was not in a good place.</p> <p>There is some backlog in the crown court, especially with rape and serious sexual offences, this has been affected by the bar strikes in the summer but work has been completed to get these cases back through. The conviction rate for rape in Bedfordshire was 100%. A lot of work goes into this to ensure there are high success rates within the courts. This shows in the more complex and serious cases that there is a lot of support out there which can have some positive outcomes. Going into 2024 we are looking at youth work, rape and serious sexual offences, file quality and women in the criminal justice system amongst a number of other topics.</p> <p>FA asked ‘A national problem but particularly one within Bedfordshire is shoplifting, how are the various agencies tackling this problem to ensure that offenders are caught, brought to justice and don’t reoffend? Another question that has been received is ‘Robberies, street snatching, burglaries and neighbourhood crimes there is now no real deterrent’.</p> <p>RF advised regarding shoplifting and street robberies, in terms of prosecuting them or proving the case, as long as we have good evidence we can usually secure a conviction. In terms of the sentencing this is to do with the sentencing guidelines which is down to the Judge and they will look at the mitigation of the individual as to what sentence is received. FA asked who does the charging? RF advised it is either the Police or CPS who carries out the charging. Once the charging decision is made the CPS take the evidence from the Police and serve this evidence to the prosecutors and courts. This is then decided on how to best resolve the case either a guilty plea or a trial.</p> <p>KS shared that there is the HMCTS court personnel who support the judiciary but does not make the decision on sentencing. Judges look at the sentencing guidelines and they have to work within those and that is to ensure that everyone has the same level of bar that has to be reached. The Court then has the professional input from Probation who provide the court with some recommendations as to what the most appropriate sentence could be.</p> <p>DC advised that those who are shoplifting could be victims of crime themselves, cost of living crises etc, with street robbery more likely this is to bring about a prison sentence, we would then put in a wraparound service and surveillance when they are released to try to support with reducing the risk of reoffending.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Merry Christmas & Close:</p> <p>FA thanked everyone for participating in the AGM today and thanked the partners for the amazing work that has taken place this year and wished everyone a very Merry Christmas.</p>