



BEDFORDSHIRE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

Date: Monday 15 July 2024

Venue: Bedfordshire Police HQ / Hybrid Meeting

PRESENT	ORGANISATION
John Tizard (JT) - CHAIR	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
John Murphy (JM)	ACC Bedfordshire Police Service
Lisa Ramsarran (LR)	Chief Crown Prosecutor
Dave Collins (DCS)	Luton Borough Council
Craig Austin (CA)	Housing
Anna Bruce (AB)	Interim Head of Probation
Nick Titchener (NT)	Lawton's Solicitors
Kerry White (KW)	HMCTS (Crown Court)
Matt Thompson (MT)	Hertfordshire Police
Kate Somarakis (KS)	HMCTS Magistrates
Susan Childerhouse (SC)	Central Bedfordshire Council
Zara Brown (ZB)	Bedfordshire Police
Pat Jennings (PJ)	Bedford Borough Council
Ian Miller (IM)	HMCTS (Crown Court)
Nicola Bayliss (NB)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Richard Vaughan (RV)	Youth Justice Board
Stuart Firth (SF)	Prison Service
Toni Montgomery-Johnson (TMJ)	Legal Aid Agency
Layla Allen (LA)	Citizens Advice Bureau
APOLOGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jolene Jefferson (LBC) Sarah Ball Sarah Bott

Item No	Topic	Action
1.	Welcome, Introduction and Apologies: <i>Chairs opening remarks</i> JT welcomed all to the BCJB meeting.	

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	<p>JT set out his expectations and requested where possible all members of the BCJB attend in person, as agreed at the June Board.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting and Action Log</p> <p>Minutes from the previous meetings; 19 December Board, AGM and 3 June were agreed as accurate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A small number of actions outstanding (in amber), will be progressed in Q2. 	
3.	<p>Performance Updates</p> <p><i>HMCTS Update by IM/KW</i></p> <p>IM provided information regarding the overarching figures.</p> <p><u>Crown Court Outstanding Cases:</u> Luton currently has 812 trials outstanding, 223 custody and 589 bail. Priorities remain with 'Custody Time Limits' (CTL) cases.</p> <p>Action: ZB asked HMCTS to provide a breakdown of the types of offenses involved as the issue of outstanding trials relates to victim care. IM/KW</p> <p><u>Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO):</u> A high priority. Older cases are monitored and listed to be heard as soon as practicable. Sittings are at maximum capacity with 8 to 9 courts across multiple sittings.</p> <p>RASSO cases being pushed through the courts due to backlog, possibly a lot of Domestic Abuse (DA) cases some over two years. ZB to report on moving forward, KW to provide additional info.</p> <p><u>Crown Court Listings:</u> The courts are working with Judiciary regarding contact with defendants at pre-trial reviews (PTR), to deal with anything out of court where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Various challenges impact on listings including, extension requests, CPS shortage, Doctor reports (fitness), prisoners refusing to attend from prison, achieving best evidence (ABE) disclosure and non-compliance issues. – Currently looking at efficiency to run effective trials. Biggest issues are non-attendance by defendants for bail cases (possibly due to the age of the case). <p>PCC asked how does the 812 outstanding trials compare with other courts nationally? What is the trajectory and what time scales are we looking at?</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – KW - Advised that compared with Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, Luton is mid table within the region and going up, however on par with other areas. <p>ZB asked about the reason for the increase and the evidence base. IM responding stated that nothing stands out; KS responded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Magistrates are seeing an increase in remands in the Magistrates' Courts; Cases coming through which are new to the system but also seeing improvements in days to complete cases. – There are concerns regarding case disposal rates; Figures are going down and getting more cases coming through. – There is the need to improve our effective trial rate. National guidance is 50%, ours around 39%. <p>ZB asked if the courts had identified the reasons for the low effective trial rate. KS responding stated that there are a number of reasons, such as high cracked rate (around 30%) and tactical decisions for defendants, changing pleas on the day of trial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One of the challenges for HMCTS is Legal Advisor retention but there will also be the increase in Court listings in Magistrates' Court from October. <p>JT noted that it would be useful to have a breakdown in terms of how we compare regionally and nationally. What are some of the challenges. As a system there is a need for a better understanding of where we are.</p> <p>KS asked for caution when looking at comparative data as the landscape for Bedfordshire is very different to our neighbours Herts and Thames Valley. JT agreed, adding that comparison is an indicator and encourages questions.</p> <p>Action: IM/KW to provide a more detailed court report for the next meeting, to address the concerns discussed above. IM/KW</p> <p><i>Victims & Witnesses Subgroup by ZB</i></p> <p>PCC invited ZB to give an update on the Board's Victims and Witnesses Workstream.</p> <p><u>Rape & Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)</u>: RASSO child trial readiness meetings taking place 12 weeks before hearings.</p> <p><u>Bedfordshire Victim Care Service (BVCS)</u>: BVCS have a detective inspector in post specifically working on Victims and Witnesses along with 3 others looking at Witness Care with BVCS.</p>	

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	<p><u>Hestia</u>: Hestia offers confidential Support for victims in crisis, being introduced in beds 12-month pilot linked with Blue Bell.¹</p> <p><u>Out of Court resolutions for Domestic Abuse (DA)</u>: Starting to look at conditional cautions. Trevor Davidson agreement for CARA (funding accepted for Beds and Herts).</p> <p>Victim Support (VS) Survey; 8 out of 10 satisfaction; Only 2 felt Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) explained - (needs more work through the current process). All knew who the Officer in Case (OiC) was but none knew much about the Victim Engagement Officer process.</p> <p>Action: Deep dive needed into some of the surveys, with a need to concentrate on the delivery plan moving forward. ZB to report on progress at the next meeting. ZB</p> <p><u>Government Metric Survey</u>; In place for volume of crimes, burglary, robbery, theft, including motor vehicle ,16 out of the 25 surveys conducted were positive, better than the previous month. Survey frequency – work in progress.</p> <p><u>Victim support survey for high harm crime</u>; Procurement and question sets have been agreed for rape, domestic abuse, stalking and vulnerability crimes. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) are in the early stages.</p> <p><u>Victim Code of Practice (VCOP)</u> Compliance being tracked through investigation standards delivery board. 100% compliance for rape and serious sexual offending.</p> <p>Action: CID have seen a slight drop in VCOP compliance; ZB will pick this up through Investigation Standards and report back at the next BCJB. ZB</p> <p>Patrol are sitting at a healthy 92.5%. Emerald (Domestic Abuse team) sitting at 98.8%. 38% of BVCS referrals had a DA element to them. 100% had a contact attempt within 5 days and 100% evicted surveyed, which was 21 in BVCS – fully satisfied with the service received.</p> <p>Action: JT thanked ZB for a detailed report and asked ZB to provide her notes for circulation. ZB</p> <p>Action: JT noted that it would be useful to have the Board's reports ready for circulation prior to the meeting as it would be helpful to have them in advance. All</p>	

¹ Blue Bell is the force's dedicated support group for colleagues who have experienced or witnessed inappropriate sexual behaviour in the workplace.

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	<p><i>Reducing Reoffending Subgroup by FJ</i></p> <p>PCC invited FJ to give an update on Youth Offending.</p> <p>The Reducing Reoffending subgroup has had a bumpy journey. Good presentations at the BCJB, delivered by the Police Service and Youth Offending have generated work which is being progressed via this group. However, for various reasons, including the focus on the Serious Violence Duty last year, there has been little consistency with this subgroup which needs a refocus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Transitions Group</u>: A subgroup of the RRB started a pan Beds service mapping project with the OPCC leading. This work was transferred to the Serious Harm Partnership Board and very capable lead, tasked with completing this item. This individual has now moved on but unfortunately, as part of her handover, she noted very little progress, highlighting a lack of information provided by partner agencies. - FJ has arranged a meeting (23-Aug) with key partners incl., new Chair from Probation, Youth Offending, Police and LA's to look at progress on behalf of the partnership and to review the aims, objectives, and membership of the RRB. - Members of the RRB, DC and PJ agreed with this assessment of the group's status. A meeting has been scheduled with key partners to review the function of the Board. <p><u>Transitions of young people from youth offending into the Community or Probation</u>: Meeting facilitated by Charlotte Ball and actions taken away. Youth offending will be leading on this project.</p> <p>DC - This is an important piece of work and needs picking up. The Board looked at 18/20-year-old custody rates for Bedfordshire between April and July (38 young adults in custody). The cost of young adults finding themselves in custody, previously known to services in the CJS is huge.</p> <p>PJ - Concurred with the above, emphasising the need to expediate this project with Probation, with a cushioned service and softer landing for this age group, to share advice, insight and advice for workers and reduce reoffending.</p> <p><u>To Note</u>: JT noted, if there is going to be a sub-group, it needs commitment from all with clear objectives, outcomes and recommendations to make change in the systems.</p>	

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	<p>Joint Beds/Herts Performance & Programme Management Group by LR</p> <p>JT welcomed LR to the meeting.</p> <p>LR informed the Board that she had received an email from the Chair of the Performance Group which outlined the key points to be flagged and noted at the BCJB. Going forwards LR suggested that it would be helpful for the Group to submit a written report which could then be shared in advance of the BCJB with the agenda.</p> <p>To Note: FJ responding, advised that Performance reports are usually tabled however the Board lost its data lead in the last quarter. Data is an essential for the function of the Performance Board, and so it was agreed that this should be escalated to the BCJB as concern for this group.</p> <p>As a temporary solution, FJ will look at providing performance reports on behalf of the Board until a data lead can be sourced.</p>	
4.	<p>Themed Item Partnership Working (A whole systems approach)</p> <p>HMP Bedford Update by SJ on behalf of Sarah Bott, Governor</p> <p>SJ read the following statement prepared by Sarah Bott, Governor of HMP Bedford:</p> <p><i>“HMP Bedford received an urgent notification in November 23. The establishment has been addressing issues identified following the inspection.</i></p> <p><i>The Prison is in a better position now, making progress in key areas. Staff are hard working and dedicated, facing multiple and complex challenges daily and “I’m proud of what they deliver under extreme circumstances”.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>– Three new key priorities – Safety, Decency and Relationships, encouraging prisoners to have a voice.</i> <i>– Five new key values - Integrity, fairness, respect, compassion and inclusivity aligned to the key priorities.</i> <p><i>I’m a strong believer that if you feel safe and you’re treated with decency, relationships will improve naturally. I recognise this hasn’t always been the case at the prison and the statistics are clear that violence is very high, particularly against staff. Therefore, I’ve been focusing on giving prisoners a voice. Getting to understand what is driving the violence and frustrations. This is building positive relationships”.</i></p>	

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	<p><u>To Note:</u> <i>The Government’s Early release scheme has put pressure on Offender Management Units resulting in higher recalls and prisoners being released without accommodation and Lost opportunities having secured employment due to no housing or home on release has led to some prisoners being placed on constant watch, assessed as at immediate risk of self-harm or suicide is a major concern.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Lack of housing:</u> <i>for prison leavers is a risk that the Board needs to consider.</i> - <u>Revolving doors:</u> <i>Concerns relating to short sentences where prisoners are turned around and released within 14 days, not allowing time for issues, concerns or accommodation to be addressed.”</i> - <u>FJ noted finances as another major area of concern for prison leavers, with the potential to lead to reoffending.</u> The DWP attend the Reducing Offending Group. We need to ensure that the DWP are involved in all meetings apart from the Board, which relate to prison leavers. <p>JT thanked SF for the report. The Board only has value if it brings together all the agencies and professionals around the table to be focused and look for solutions (even if it is one at a time).</p> <p>What can we do as a team of professionals to join efforts? The partnership needs to look at how to fill these gaps?</p> <p>JT suggested a small working group, members of the board to put together an interim view and concrete proposals by the next meeting to include colleagues from Housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CA –There are statutory limitations impacting on the ability to house prison leavers; Bedford current has 830 in temporary accommodation, some waiting over a year. - Bedford have designated case workers supporting prison leavers but there are significant issues. Agreed that a working group is needed; The earlier we know about people coming out of prison, we can do our best to support but must recognise the issues. <p>JT concluding acknowledged the complexity of the problem and asked for volunteers to join a working group to support ex-prisoners coming out of prison and actively put in place measures to ensure that fewer people get into the system.</p>	

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	<p>Action: JT Called for volunteers from relevant agencies such as Housing, DWP, Probation, to look at sentencing. FJ with the Restorative Justice (RJ) team to carry forward. FJ/NB</p> <p>HMP Bedford Assertive Outreach Programme:</p> <p>This service starts in the Prison on 4 August. There is a considerable amount of violent disruption in the Prison, being perpetrated by a small cohort, there are also concerns relating to self-harm as noted above.</p> <p>The OPCC has provided ringfenced funding for a prison officer to work with a prison psychologist and mental health nurse as part of a designated multidisciplinary team to work with this identified group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SF would like the service to follow through to probation and in the community to support prison leavers at the point of release. A whole system approach will help. <p>JT stated that the Prison report was positive and encouraging. Important for the Board to give support if and where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – FJ noted that it would be useful for the prison to have a lead contact for the relevant agencies. Charlott Ball leads on drug and alcohol group which has key partners around the table, and youth offending board has a lot of important partners. <p>Action: FJ to approach Charlotte to request that members of the Drug and Alcohol group, forward details of a lead for each agency who could liaise with HMP Bedford on prison releases. SF to provide the Board with an update at the next meeting. FJ/SF</p> <p>Early Prison Releases:</p> <p>SF – This is a national response to prison capacity, currently at 1%.</p> <p>JT - If prisoners are released prematurely without accommodation, what are the implications for police, health service etc.? Are police custody areas going to be taken up. Are we confident that all agencies are going to be supported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – JM informed the Board that he has picked up issues relating to prisoners going into the prison estate and ‘Op Safeguard’, where prisons go beyond their 450 space capacity, requiring the Police to hold prisoners in police cells longer until a space becomes available. – A multi-agency Gold Group led by the Police are looking at arrangements in view of the Government’s announcement about early prison releases. 	

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	<p>The aim is to use analysts to determine the risks and plan for the announced releases which commence in September.</p> <p>We are currently not sure how many will be released into the Bedfordshire area, possibly 29 in the first tranche of releases commencing in September.</p> <p>Action: FJ to add Housing and the early prison releases to the Board's risk log.</p> <p><i>The Bedfordshire Police & Crime Plan – A Whole Systems Approach</i></p> <p>Please see attached, presented by JT.</p> <p>JT noted the importance of ensuring that the victim is at the heart of the system. Safety, social justice, criminal justice and human rights matter. The new Police and Crime Plan highlights these issues, but we need a partnership, whole system approach to address them.</p> <p>We know that there are financial and legal constraints. We know the issues that we need to focus on and the people around the board and wider group can help.</p> <p>JT - What can we do collectively, change locally rather than wait for the government? Working groups need a ToR and reporting mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ZB sits on the strategic oversight group, 3 JOIMs, sit below that. We have DA and RAZZO groups in place, specifically dealing with some of the issues discussed today. We have to be mindful that we are not duplicating efforts. <p><u>To note:</u> JT agreeing and asked for blockages in the system or gaps to be reported back to the BCJB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – FJ asked for TOR from ZB re the strategic oversight group. – JM expressed the view that the purpose of the BCJB is to add strategic support. What are our collective objectives we want to achieve; how will this be delivered and how do we hold people to account. Should be more benefit when we are working together. – JT The Police and Crime Plan will help to shape things. My message to the board is to step up and bring together people. Solution focused. 	
5.	<p>Partner reports by exception</p> <p>JT asked for reports.</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – JM mentioned the prison issue. Courts delay – Crown Court cases waiting for significant time to go to court. – ZB DA cases waiting for over 2 years. Conviction rate is good. Lot of work going into that. – JT for the victim having to re-live it is not good. More detailed report needed. – FJ Health service integrated care, a duty to share information. Partnership working. 	
6.	<p>PCC Report</p> <p><i>Police and Crime Plan 2024 - 2028</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To coincide with PCC's 4 years in office. Consistent with the electorate and public consultation on the key objectives talking to the Police and Crime Panel for publication in September. – There will be a 9 month and 3 year plan to have a better understanding of national direction of Government, resources needed to tackle crime. Reduce VAWG and reinvigorate and strengthen local policing. – We will get direction from the Home Office regarding targets and possible funding. – The key focus will be to ensure that victims are supported, offenders rights are protected and excellence within the police service. <p>Note: JT asked partners to look out for the consultation and forward to others. Looking for the partnership to share ownership of the Police and Crime plan so input from all is important.</p> <p>PCC invites residents to give their view on police plan - Bedfordshire PCC</p>	
7.	<p>AOB</p> <p>JT Thanked everyone for their attendance and asked where possible they attend in person.</p> <p>JT - Looking forward to receiving your comments on the draft Police and Crime Plan. Please forward to staff and your respective client focus groups.</p>	
<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>15 October 2024 – 10:00 – 12:00 hrs</p>		