

## BCJB Board Meeting

8<sup>th</sup> February 2022  
Teams Meeting

Name:	Organisation:
Festus Akinbusoye (FA)	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Sharn Basra (SB)	Bedfordshire Police
Wayne Humberstone (WH)	Bedfordshire OPCC
Dave Collins (DC)	Youth Offending Service, Luton Borough Council
Thomas Moreton (TM)	Probation Service
Jaswant Narwal (JN)	Crown Prosecution Service
Dee Perkins (DP)	Bedfordshire Police
Layla Allen (LA)	Citizens Advice
Ian Miller (IM)	HMCTS
Catherine Sharp (CS)	The Legal Aid Agency
Susan Childerhouse (SC)	Central Bedfordshire Council
Pat Jennings (PJ)	Youth Offending Service, Bedford Borough Council
PJ Butler (PB)	HMP Bedford
Gemma McCormack (GM)	Bedfordshire OPCC

### 1. Introductions & Apologies

FA welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Terms of Reference

FA advised that the Terms of Reference had been circulated ahead of the meeting with the Agenda and as these have not been reviewed for a while, asked for any comments.

SB commented that the DCC is down as senior representation from the Force and informed the Board that either he or the DCC will be attending these meetings in future. ToR to be updated to include both the DCC (Deputy Chief Constable) and ACC (Assistant Chief Constable).

JN shared that it is important to have as core membership, a defence representative who attends the Courts regularly. JN advised that she will provide a recommendation on who to invite based on the percentage of work undertaken by a defence firm. JN advised that as these are voluntary arrangements it can sometimes be difficult to get people in but it is important for us to try.

JN further highlighted that in the ToR it states 'annual elections for the chair' and suggested that as we do not have that many meetings it might be more effective if the Chair is elected every 2-3 years. In addition, the Board should also consider that most PCC's are chairing the Criminal Justice Boards now and there is also the matter of

funding and the need for partners to remain independent. FA agreed and stated that he would like to retain chair as the Justice Secretary and Policing Minister, have recommended that PCC's should chair these meetings. FA advised regarding Deputy Chair, he would be very keen if we could have a vote or volunteers from anyone who is interested. All agreed for FA to continue chairing these meetings. All agreed to remove 'annual elections for chair' from the ToR.

SB asked for the DCS Head of Crime for Bedfordshire, to be included under Membership, as someone who will also be invited to attend meetings. SB asked if the ToR could be updated to directly reference performance and for the Board to consider a greater holistic focus on certain aspects of performance? FA agreed, adding that we are going to move to a more thematic agenda moving forward; it will be good to get some performance analysis or input around a particular theme and agreed for this to be included in the ToR.

CS shared regarding a member of defence attending, I am the Contract Manager for Bedfordshire and I would be happy to co-ordinate in terms of seeking a defence rep who would be prepared to attend these meetings, JN was in agreement.

**Action – CS to invite a member of defence to attend these meetings.**

IM advised that in the core attendance, it would be me rather than Head of Crime as they are for the Region and they will attend as and when required. IM advised that he covers the Crown area but would be useful to also have someone attending to cover the Magistrates.

TM advised that under membership, the reference to the 'Community Rehabilitation Company' can be removed and 'National Probation Service' changed to 'Probation Service'.

FA thanked everyone for their comments and confirmed that the Terms of Reference will be updated to include the amendments discussed and will be circulated to the group.

**Action – Terms of Reference to be amended.**

### **3. Representation at Future Meetings**

FA advised in terms of future meetings, it would be good for us to look at what is going well in the criminal justice system across the County, but also to look at areas where we can actually start solving problems/closing any identified gaps. FA asked the group for comments and/or suggestions.

SB advised that this is a really top level strategic meeting discussing what is best and how to improve the service for victims of crime and witnesses through the criminal justice journey. SB asked for partners to ensure that performance metrics or matters that we are going to talk about, to be shared beforehand with Agenda's to facilitate the discussion as this would give everyone the opportunity to prepare questions as the aim is problem solving and improvement. FA agreed adding that the purpose of the Board is to look for areas where we can support one another and to help make the journey of victims and witnesses as supported as possible. Our aim is the same i.e.; a whole system approach and I am happy to encourage everyone to be comfortable with having out of meeting conversations with one another. With this in mind, please feel free to use me as a resource as I would be happy to facilitate discussions if needed or to ask some of those difficult questions if needed .

JN added that many partners already have meetings with each other on different topics and events and the Police and CPS also hold different meetings in relation to performance. We have always worked in a collaborative way so it shouldn't be an issue for any of us. What we do need to do is have an understanding, background and context in which we have these discussions to understand what the challenges are so that we do not have to go into too much detail at the strategic Group. We also have to understand the national performance indicators in terms of Bedfordshire and how we are going to deliver on all aspects. There are some key measures that are used as we are going to have National and Regional scorecards which will be produced at the end of March for every Police Force. We need to look at what that will mean and understand that we have to bring some of that performance and context here to this board to be able to discuss it as we cannot make decisions without it. The other things we will need to see is post pandemic COVID recovery, we have to understand where the bottle necks are and what the future looks like so that we can reduce court backlogs, ensure that we are charging and prosecuting in the right way, reducing reoffending and increasing public confidence.

PCC asked regarding national performance data going forward, will the methods for collating this data be the same across all areas?

JN advised that the CJS scorecards came out nationally but they are going to be produced regionally and if that is the case then that is what will be held in the mind of the public, so we need to understand what that means for Bedfordshire and have that in advance.

PJ – how can I best contribute to this meeting? I work to national HMPPS metrics as well as own local priorities and they don't always dovetail with nation issues. Is there anything more specific that may not have been asked of me in the past that can be asked of me now?

FA responded that as we are here overall to cut crimes in the county, safeguarding victims of crime, supporting witnesses etc., you do have an important role to play given the fact that we are trying to make sure that those who come to the prison service do not return. I am sure that there will be some that cross over with Tom and what he does in his area in Probation. There is a lot of joined up working between you, Probation, Courts, OPCC and Bedfordshire Police and as such, you have a very valuable role to play.

SB advised we have just had to reply and respond to the initial release of the score card data to check the accuracy, that we are able to extract that data and also so that we can make sense of it.

DP advised that the main advantage of CJB being quarterly is that a number of meetings that will feed into this one, sit quarterly, for example the joint meetings between CPS are quarterly and Victims and Engagement Board is quarterly as well, if your preference is 2 monthly it would just mean that there may be less of an update coming into the Board.

All agreed for future meetings to be quarterly.

#### **4. HMCTS Update**

IM provided updates regarding Magistrates Court and Crown as follows:

IM advised that we are listing as much as we can and we have new legal advisors coming in and are being trained so hopefully they will be coming online within the next quarter.

JN updated, there is a place for digital technology in order to ensure we get more throughput into the courts. We are having engagement outside of the court room so that we are not using the court rooms for routine types of hearings. People are working very hard in the magistrates' courts at the moment and we are getting through quite a lot but we still have a lot in the pipeline still coming through. Overall, we have come down and settled down. We will continue to monitor performance in the magistrates and crown courts.

IM advised the common platform is hopefully coming in within the next couple of months, that will hopefully help things. The sentencing review will hopefully reduce what is coming through the Crown Court. The recruitment drive is ongoing.

#### Crown Court:

All the court rooms are open for trials in Luton, we are using Huntingdon again as a trial hub and we have also got the old Bedford magistrates court that we can use but they would be for low level trials due to security. At the moment the real issue is finding recorders to back fill for the hearings when our judges are on leave, sick etc. As soon as we get judicial capacity, we will start using the Bedford office. We have done as much as we can at the moment with getting everything open and are just managing the intake of work. We are getting a lot of guilty pleas at the last minute, some of them on the day but that appears to be across the board. A lot of people were putting off the plea due to COVID because they thought the delay in getting a hearing would take many months.

JN agreed it does seem quieter than it has been previously. We are now listing for 2023 for crown court trials.

IM shared that HMCTS have a recovery plan and all justice boards have been sent the plan. The operational manager, Kerry White for HMCTS will be in contact to have a meeting to look at the recovery plan at an operational level and will update quarterly at these meetings.

IM stated that recruitment is ongoing for new Judges and recorders but unfortunately, they do take time to get in place because of the training, the interview process and successful candidates having to serve notice periods.

FA advised that I always try to be as open as possible with our residents as I think it helps to manage the expectation. I think it is always good to be able to put people in the picture of what is happening and where the pressures are coming from. I have found that if you explain to people what is going on, generally speaking they are understanding.

JN informed the Board about the issues regarding wages which may lead to the possibility of strike action by the criminal bar which would impact the COVID recovery plan.

## **5. Individual Performance Updates**

### Probation

TM advised that Probation visits are being undertaken are on a face to face basis which is one of our key safeguarding indicators. We have a cap on the numbers of people our officers can visit but our partners are attending our offices so the co-working, co-location has returned which is really positive for everyone involved.

One of the key areas of development over the next month or two is increasing the level of home visits we are undertaking but also ensuring that everyone is seen on a face to face basis at least monthly. Our staffing levels are fluctuating at the moment, we have been very successful with starting trainees with us, the trainees then graduate but that creates vacancies at other grades. TM to provide an update at the next meeting.

We have recently focussed on safeguarding training, ensuring that everyone has their training up to date and there is positive progress that we are making. We have been working closely with partners and OPCC regarding commissioning strategy, we are particularly focussed on alcohol rehabilitation and we are trying to focus our efforts around cannabis users – the younger cohort 18 – 25 year olds. We are having ongoing conversations with colleagues locally and we are engaged in the assessment that is being undertaken as to what the needs actually are. There is also regional work around finance, benefit and debt and we are now looking at having a regional service provision around this.

TM has taken over chairing the Reducing Reoffending Board, we are finalising the strategy moving forward and it concentrates on Housing and Case Management. The work moving forward is around pathways and supporting the IOM cohorts. My focus will be on feeding in from the Reducing Reoffending Board and coming to this Board to talk about potential gaps in provision and looking at co-commissioning to fill some of those gaps with partners.

PCC asked what is the average case load for the team at the moment? TM advised that it fluctuates depending on grade of the worker. If you are a Probation Officer who previously worked for the Probation Service you therefore manage the very highest of risk cases and your caseload could be sat at around 25, if you are a Probation Officer from the Legacy CRC it could go up to 30 – 35 cases, PSO's range would be 45 – 55 subject to variation. Our workload management indicates our staff are working and operating at 100%, we are not at our target staffing levels but are working to achieve that. We balance things out with agency staff and we offer overtime to relieve some of the pressures.

TM highlighted that if someone is released from HMP Bedford, they need to be seen within the first 24 hours and there is nothing in terms of the capacity that we have that is affecting our ability to provide that support and nothing is affecting our frequency of contact. Previously every contact would have been face to face but we can now use telephone calls and video calls as well to maintain that frequency of contact. We now have a scheme in place through MoJ COVID funding; when a prisoner is released into an eligible area, they are entitled to 84 nights accommodation. We have a lot of bed space across Bedfordshire and we have dedicated officer resource to make sure the referrals are submitted in a timely manner.

### Youth Offending

DC advised in terms of performance YOS reports nationally on first time entrants, use of custody and also reoffending, which gets reported to the YOS Performance Board and the Community Safety Executive in Luton. DC suggested that if required, this could be reported to the CJB annually in future.

### Bedfordshire Police

SB updated that one of our priorities in the Annual Plan is to improve the victim experience. Last year the Government produced a Beating Crime Plan and as part of the

national crime and policing measures one of the elements there was to improve victim satisfaction. There are three elements to it and talking about the criminal justice world and not performance in general, in terms of general performance they wanted to reduce crime with a focus on neighbourhood crime, within the criminal justice arena they wanted to increase reporting especially around those areas including children and male violence against women and girls. The second part was they are seeking for us to improve criminal justice outcomes and this is where this Board should really stand tall and our relationship with the CPS. The third part is victim support. Some of these tie in nicely with the Police and Crime Plan in terms of breaking the cycle of reoffending and putting victims at the centre of all Policing priorities.

At the moment there is a mixed bag from Policing, there is the good as well as some areas of challenge. In terms of increase, we need to look at this in two ways; It does improve confidence within the community of they are reporting some of these crimes but, by the sheer nature of these crimes being reported there is a victim at the end and somebody has suffered. We have seen an increase in some of those hidden harm crimes – rape, serious sexual assault offences, stalking offences and harassment and we have had a lot of focus on these and from a children’s perspective, child abuse and child neglect which is positive news and developing the victim satisfaction arena is ongoing; we use some staff on a part time basis to complete some victim satisfaction surveys but have also started looking at using an IT tool. We are getting into the build stage of what those questions will look like, at what point will they go out to victims of crime and what is the mechanism going to be to bring that information back in and share it more widely. That should be going live within the next two months but I will continue to report on progress.

DP updated regarding the Victims and Witnesses Engagement Board which met yesterday, as part of that Board and wider meetings with the CPS we look at information in relation to cases that have been unsuccessful through victim or witness reasons. What we have established so far is that there does not seem to be any particular trends or themes but we will continue to review and report on any identified trends. The cases are reviewed monthly with the CPS looking at domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences and quarterly looking at wider crime for assurance. At these meetings, we also review workloads within the Courts, both Magistrates and Crown as a number of them will have witnesses and victims attached to them which impacts on victim care levels. We are working through some changes in terms of how we extract data from initial reports of crime that we can push into the new Victim Care Service to make sure that we are able to provide access to as many victims as possible and signpost them on to alternative care sites. We have also increased our number of Victim Engagement Officers and they play a pivotal role in terms of keeping our victims and witnesses engaged. We have developed a substantial external facing microsite as well for victims where they can find all of the information that they need in terms of the whole journey.

We need to keep an eye on the Victims Bill, the consultation closed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022, part of the Victims Bill will introduce accountability measures for Police, CPS and the Courts in terms of how they treat victims and the level of service they provide. They are also looking to mandate in Law the 12 rights in terms of Victims Code of Practice and we are finding ways as a Force on how we can measure compliance in an automated fashion. It will also see the introduction of special measures for all victims of domestic abuse.

A current area of focus for Policing is Victim Personal Statements; We are looking at piloting a scheme which we have taken from New South Wales Police in Australia, where they are asking victims to write out their own personal statements. We need to consult with CPS so this is very much in the early stages however, the findings from Australia really do show that it helps victims in their whole journey and finding closure. It would be good to have AOJ at these meetings and they are currently using Herts Echo Platform which is an automated service to gather information in terms of feedback, they are looking at this in terms of victims and witness attrition and they are happy to feed Bedfordshire data into it as well. We have a lead Officer within the Force, who is our Victim Lead Officer, she has now been selected as the National Lead in terms of supporting victims of serious sexual offences and rape which will help us as a Force to access some key funding.

In terms of prevention work we are looking at children in particular that are coming into the criminal justice system and we are in the negotiation stages of developing a pilot with the Local Authorities in terms of children that are subject to special education needs just to see if Police can perform more of a role within some of the risk management of these children, especially when these children are on the cusp of being excluded from school, just to see what we can do and help form that risk assessment.

We are also looking at partnership working with YoS and out of court disposals, we very much want to make sure that we are entering into dialogue with YoS before any youth out of court disposals are given. We had our first out of court disposal scrutiny panel at the end of January 2022. We are also looking at disproportionality in terms of women that come into the criminal justice system as well and looking at what alternative pathways can be put in place for those.

DP updated regarding Court performance and advised the joint meeting with CPS was at the end of January 2022.

## **6 . Local and National Updates**

TM advised that he had nothing further to add.

PB updated regarding the Prison Strategy White Paper and advised that it was published in December 2021 and said that it is a 10 year vision for the Prison system. This includes a number of things in relation to new generation Prisons such as Five Wells in Wellingborough which is greatly impacting recruitment in this area. There is a lot in the Paper which talks about things like targeted safety and security interventions, providing the right support, safer stay, drugs and deaths, bringing back better Prison regimes, behaviour management and also creating safe and stable Prisons for the future.

My priorities include COVID-19 management and recovery and our plans are well advanced; We are led by a Gold Commander in London for Prisons and that means that it is very much a National direction which can push us back from one stage to another very quickly.

## **7. Future Meetings**

12/05/2022 – 10am – 12Noon

18/08/2022 – 10am – 12Noon

17/11/2022 – 10am – 12Noon