

BCJB Board Meeting

21st March 2023
Teams Meeting

Name	Organisation
Alysha Patel (AP)	Bedfordshire OPCC (Restorative Justice)
Cara Gavin (CG)	Bedfordshire OPCC (Early Intervention, Reducing Reoffending)
Anna Villette (AV) – Chair	Bedfordshire OPCC (Chief Executive)
Dave Collins (DC)	Luton Youth Offending Team
Dee Perkins (DP)	Bedfordshire Police (Crime & PPU Command)
Bernie Merchant (BM)	Bedfordshire Police (Review and Inspections)
Kerry White (KW)	HMCTS
Emma Harwood (EH)	Legal Aid Agency
Francoise Julian (FJ)	Bedfordshire OPCC (Criminal Justice & Victims, BCJB Manager)
Gemma McCormack (GM)	Bedfordshire OPCC (taking minutes)
Jaswant Narwal (JN)	Crown Prosecution Service
Kate Somarkis (KS)	Courts & Tribunal Services
Lorna Carver (LC)	Central Bedfordshire
Matthew Thompsom (MT)	Beds, Herts and Cambs AOJ
Nick Titchener (NT)	Defence – Lawtons Law
Sharn Basra (SB)	Bedfordshire Police
Simon Hardcastle (SH)	NHS Bedfordshire Luton & MK (Commissioning)

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1.	<p>Welcome, Introduction & Apologies</p> <p>AV welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised, with permission from the Board, that she'd be chairing the meeting today in the absence of the PCC and Deputy PCC. Apologies were noted from Festus Akinbusoye, Layla Allen, Stuart Betts and Simon Smith.</p> <p>AV notified that the meeting today will be recorded and asked that if anything raised is not to be included in the minutes, to please make this known at the time of the discussion.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting & Action Log</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.</p>



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	<p>FJ discussed the Action Log;</p> <p><u>22/23-17 HMCTS - FA to have a discussion with David Lloyd regarding Prosecution Barristers</u>: JN updated the barrister fees were the defence fees and a decision has now been reached.</p> <p>22/23-18 PPMG: JN agreed for this to be closed.</p> <p><u>22/23-22 MH thematic</u>: FJ advised we have received a great response from the CPS and also from the Force but not from other partners. FJ has attached a document for future guidance, and this will be used at the away day that is being planned. This piece of work has been recirculated for all Partners to comment but as part of the planning we will be looking at mental health as a theme for 23/25 in view of responses.</p> <p>LC asked for a steer to any commentary to help provide a response as this is quite a broad topic, also what is the intention and what action will follow? FJ advised that this is about partners using the circulated tool to identify the gaps in their respective organisations in terms of raising awareness and training needs around how to deal with individuals they are involved with, who are going through the CJS with mental health concerns.</p> <p>This is a good opportunity for all of us to really start working together and pressing on with getting the work done. The document circulated is a RAG rated document and this highlights where Partners are not working all that well together and what we can do to support this going forward.</p> <p>SH raised regarding the process and mapping, where does this sit in line with all the other mental health programmes, how can we link in with these? There is a lot of work going on with mental health, drug and alcohol strategy and SNA and we don't want to be duplicating this. AV advised the intention is not to duplicate but to identify where there may be any gaps. FJ updated that mental health partners are invited to the Board but unfortunately are not here today.</p> <p>There is a presentation on this Thematic on the agenda, which will help us in terms of direction and how to progress this action item.</p>
3.	<p>HMCTS and BCJB Workstream Highlight Reports</p> <p>HMCTS Report – Ian Murray</p> <p>IM informed the Board that the Courts Recovery Plan has been circulated to the and this Plan will be updated ahead of every meeting. Overall, the courts are maintaining the workload, 750 over the past 3 months and we are still sitting 7 courts. In Bedford we are looking at IT to increase the number of hearings that can be held virtually but the building is a listed building so this is being looked in to.</p>

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	<p>There are no issues with the Judges at the moment and we have a sufficient number of Clerks in place. Better case management (BCM) is trying to cut down the number of hearings per case and the warned list is being changed; this will be replaced by fixtures to hopefully support with getting the numbers down and hopefully support the CPS with reviewing their files ahead of the hearings. We are doing as much as we can and are using the Magistrates Courts, as much as we are able. At the moment, everything is 'steady'.</p> <p>JN noted that one of the purposes of BCM, is to help the confidence of victims and witnesses to know their cases will be heard in courts and manage their expectations and to maintain public confidence.</p> <p>Action: IM to provide a detailed report on the work being done to address the issues relating to Court listings at the next Board meeting.</p> <p><u>Victims & Witnesses Engagement Board – Dee Perkins (VWEB Chair)</u></p> <p>DP provided a VWEB Q4 activity update report. the headline document was shared ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>9 cases failed due to victim and witness reasons. We are listing at the crown court into the summer of 2024. The workload fluctuates due to resourcing issues, once backlogs are cleared more work is pushed to the CPS. Focussing on the internal work which is included in the report, we have seen a real benefit in the meetings between domestic abuse and the CPS around the trial ready meetings. The performance figures show 5 unsuccessful cases, 6 being the national average.</p> <p>In terms of the victims and witness issues, nothing has come to light relating to common themes. Often, we are dealing with victims and witnesses who do not want to attend court, a decision is then made on whether they should be summoned. Concerning the increase in Victim and Engagement Officers; The Force, now have 7 permanent Engagement Officers across the Force, 5 for domestic abuse and 2 for the rape team, they really do help and are invaluable. We have also been doing a lot of work on the victim site and have been making it as visual as possible. We have undertaken a number of 2 minute videos to show to victims, which explains what special measures look like, from the use of wigs, screens and the layout of courts. A number of Forces are linked in with us to replicate our victims site and to borrow our videos, the College of Policing included.</p> <p>FJ asked regarding the victims and witnesses who do not want to attend court, how are we in terms of using pre cross evidence examination videos? DP advised that nothing has been flagged. We need to get better at understanding victims that are entitled to enhanced rights under the VCOP but nothing to suggest that we need to do further work in that space.</p>

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	<p>Action: DP to look at the last data set to see how many victims and witnesses who did not attend court were a) entitled to special measures and b) offered special measures including the pre-cross evidence examination video as an option.</p> <p>Internally, the Force are looking at ways to increase referrals into the Victims Care Service. We are linking in with Athena to try and remove some of the consent issues and this work is ongoing.</p> <p>We have also set up meetings with Probation, three CSP's and our domestic abuse team looking at notification of offenders release. At the moment there is no expectation to notify victims or witnesses if the sentence is less than 12 months and this is something that we are looking at in Bedfordshire to see what we can do to bridge the gap, especially for victims of serious sexual assault and domestic abuse and this is in the very early stages. DP advised that there used to be Cracked and Ineffective Case Meetings which were co-ordinated via the AOJ (Administration of Justice). We really need to get those back up and running again as they provide some really key information.</p> <p>There is some work underway to set up some meetings between Defence and the CPS to address some of the issues relating to preventing adjournments. As some of our work through our criminal justice structure, we are doing a deep dive into guilty/not-guilty anticipated pleas, to understand what is happening in that context to again, try to prevent future adjournments.</p> <p>Looking to the future, we are creating a victims card across the organisation, we know what we need to be doing but it is driving those standards and making sure our front line are delivering where we need to be. We have also been successful in securing funding to introduce a two day trauma informed training session for our frontline policing and we are going out to Victims Support to help with in-depth victims surveys/interviews to look at what we are getting back and how we can enforce our future delivery.</p> <p>Reducing Reoffending</p> <p>To provide an update at the next meeting.</p> <p>Programme and Performance Management Group – Jaswant Narwall (PPMG Chair):</p> <p>JN provided the Board with a highlight report from the previous (Q4) PPMG.</p> <p>The PPMG was held last week with Hertfordshire. JN welcomed the fact that Bedfordshire now has a Performance Officer in place. There wasn't a performance report for Bedfordshire on this occasion as the Performance Officer is new in post. JN reminded the Board that the CPS and Herts would be willing to continue to support with reports in future if there are occasions, as with this</p>

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	<p>quarter, when Bedfordshire are not able to provide a report as the comparative data is important for discussions at this Board. FJ thanked JN for the feedback and offer of continued support.</p> <p>JN provided an overview including performance for the region.</p> <p>Domestic abuse is a priority, we need to increase referrals and improve the conviction rate and looking at evidence led prosecutions where appropriate. We need to look at where we can support our victims and ensure we use the IDVA services where possible. The challenge is how to safeguard losing our victims and witnesses due to the time it has taken to get the case to court, the focus is around building confidence.</p> <p>We are also looking at cases that ought to have come to the CPS but did not. As far as charging on rape cases is concerned that has been ongoing work in this area, our rape conviction rates are going up and the referrals coming in from the Police is better in Bedfordshire, we provide an early advice service and encourage the force to use this support. We are charging on time, all rape cases are charged within the 28 day period and we do not have backlogs. We have a full team with sufficient paralegals in this area.</p> <p>To add to what IM had said earlier concerning the Courts; The law changed at the end of March, to reduce powers of the Magistrates Courts. Sentencing powers increased to 12 months per offence as a result of COVID, in order to take the pressure off the Crown courts and to deal with cases in a shorter period. The government has decided now to reduce this sentencing power back to previous levels, of six months per offence. Subsequently, we may get more cases going into the Crown Court, adding to the pressures in the Magistrates. We will have to wait to see the impact of this change.</p> <p>JN reminded partners that the CPS provide a Direct Service which is available 24/7, a charging service is provided to all 43 police Forces. The daytime charging (9am – 5pm) is going to be taken back and there are going to be two channels – red and green charging. The red charging will be all suspects in custody and there is an intention to further remand them in custody and the aspiration is to provide this advice within 3 hours. The green charging is the 28 day charging that we are currently providing. JN will not look at priorities within those two channels until this is established.</p> <p>Regarding future Beds reporting at the PPMG, FJ confirmed that Beds will provide a 23/24 Q1 report at the next meeting.</p>
4.	<p><u>Serious Violence Duty Update – Francoise Julian</u></p> <p>FJ provided partners with an update regarding the OPCC’s progress as conveners in relation to the Serious Violence Duty (The Duty). The Duty, came</p>

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	<p>into force on the 31st January 2023 and there has been a lot of activity around this. The Government commissioned an advisory group called Crest Advisory and their role is to help Agencies in terms of their readiness to fulfil the SVD.</p> <p>Crest Advisory, have contacted Partners and had meetings where they would have asked how they feel we as a County are ready for the SVD. Crest will be working with the OPCC and specified partner agencies to support readiness for implementation of the Duty.</p> <p>There was a question and discussion relating to the involvement of certain authorities listed in the Duty. The OPCC provided assurance that all specified authorities were consulted for a consensus; a) to identify the partnership which would be responsible for the Duty in Bedfordshire and b) on how the 22/23 Home Office funding should be allocated.</p> <p>The Board was informed that the Serious Violence Duty, lists the CSPs and Health as key partners in terms of implementation of the Duty. As such, next steps for the OPCC will be to arrange meetings with these organisations to discuss how they will carry forward their responsibilities in relation to the Duty.</p> <p>Please see the attached SVD brief for further information.</p>
5.	<p><u>Mental Health Policy & Neuro Development Checklist – Francoise Julian</u></p> <p>At the last meeting JN spoke to us about a pilot regarding a mental health policy and neurology checklist that was going to be piloted across certain Force areas, Thames Valley Police (TVP) are one of the forces taking part in the pilot. JN provided a paper for information only that has been sent out with the minutes.</p> <p>The question today is around whether we want to consider implementation of the mental health policy and neurodiversity checklist in Bedfordshire?</p> <p>DP was unable to locate the checklist and felt it would be useful to see it before a decision is made. It is a good idea but we need to understand what is the ask from us and how this would affect the crime system. This decision would need to go to the Strategic Oversight Group. All were in agreement.</p> <p>JN stated her agreement and clarified that her request was not to pilot in Bedfordshire but to inform the Board about the Pilot and to suggest that it is considered for Beds once the Pilot is over; We need to be aware of the mental health issues. The key part of the neurodiversity checklist is that it aims to provide understanding of a suspect’s mental health before consideration of charge. And we have a defendants policy, where we look at all of those matters in any event. Awareness and alertness to some of the issues before it comes to charging is really important, especially when a very large or significant majority of suspects do have mental health issues and so it's</p>

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	<p>important for us to understand on what basis we are charging or taking forward investigations and if there's other pathways that can be taken.</p> <p>All agreed that next steps would be to wait for feedback from TVP and then look at setting up a task and finish group in the CPS with the police to carry forward and roll out via the JOIM and SOG. AV asked for this to be brought back to the board for an update so that it remains on the radar in the future.</p> <p>Action: CPS/Force update to be added to the Boards forward plan.</p>
6.	<p><u>Themed Discussion: Women in the Criminal Justice System – Dee Perkins</u></p> <p>This is to have a conversation and go through some national data, local context and have a conversation around what we should be doing as a board.</p> <p>Nationally we know that for 40% of all women arrested no further action is taken, this is often for offences of violence against a person and they are often arrested at the scene of a domestic incident. National research supports that the majority of the women are usually victims of more serious crimes themselves and sometimes they have been victims for most of their life i.e., sexual abuse as a child. We also know a number of them suffer mental illness and drug and alcohol related mental illnesses.</p> <p>Publicly we know there is a huge loss in confidence in terms of women in our communities within the criminal justice system. In Bedfordshire, looking at data for a 3 year period, at the year 21/22 data shows we averaged just under 50% no further action rate for women who have come in to the Custody Suite; these women are normally aged between 26 – 45, 68% are in a position of care (carers for children or elderly relatives). This data has been provided by the lady when entering custody. 30% of them are arrested at the scene of a domestic abuse incident and 21.5% are dependent on drugs, 10.5% are alcohol dependent and 18.5% disclose they had been a previous victim of domestic abuse, 32% were under the influence of alcohol and 51% suffer from a form of mental health illness.</p> <p>In terms of taking this forward this shows we have a high percentage of women arrested with no further action taken, previous victims, with caring responsibilities and mental health issues. Can this be looked at through a Partnership approach as another subgroup, that sits under the BCJB with clear representation across the Partnership?</p> <p>Some Forces have female offender strategies, some are led by the OPCC and the other part is led by the Force. We are in the process where we have a draft in place already. We need to look at diversion pre arrest and keeping this cohort away from the criminal justice system. We also have support from a</p>

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	<p>charity in Luton who can run a programme through education support and help. Ideally a sub-group would be a suggestion at this stage?</p> <p>JN thanked DP for the presentation noting that it was a really helpful run through of some of the issues. The women offender strategy is something often considered as there are concerns around them being arrested. We would need to look at the type of offending as it should not apply to serious or repeat offending as the CPS are required to look at the case on public interest grounds to make sure we categorise the type of offending we are looking at. Out of court disposals is going to change this year so we also need to keep that in mind. The transgender population will need to be considered into this strategy as well. This is not a bad idea in principle but will need to be operationally driven.</p> <p>LC informed that there is a meeting on Monday for the Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board and on the Agenda is the Annual Domestic Abuse Report, with a comment that criminal justice is missing within that group. Could this be joined up or gain an understanding of the work that is already happening? AV agreed there has been helpful work in this space, particularly around domestic abuse and widening out to criminality would be helpful.</p> <p>JN said it would be helpful to understand in the other strategies, what has been included and what has not been included.</p> <p>DC agreed it is a really good idea and with the Transitions Sub Group, initially a Task and Finish Group was put together to look into what the Terms of Reference would look like, local statistics etc.</p> <p>KS shared a particular area of concern is ‘failed to nominate driver’, this is another area of offences where people are putting offences in their partners name.</p> <p>AV asked DP how would it be best to carry this forward? DP advised there is a Police lead – Maz Wheeler who can lead with some support, the strategy work that has already been completed and can be shared. The ask is for a joint OPCC/Force led project, initially looking at the gaps and then to invite throughout the Partnership to form Task and Finish Group, to look at how we can make a difference, the change in OOD and the gravity scoring to see what we can come up with. This can then be brought back to this Board at a later date. All were in agreement.</p> <p>AV asked all to note that the BCJB is a Board that can make decisions and if there are attendees who are unable to make decisions on behalf of their organisation, we need to look into this as we need the right level of representation at these meetings. We will not always be able to note on the agenda if any decisions will need to be made as this is often follows discussions.</p>

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	<p>Action: FJ to contact Maz Wheeler, to progress a female offender strategy in Bedfordshire, as a Joint OPCC/Force led task group.</p>
7.	<p><u>HMICFRS Presentation – Berni Merchant</u></p> <p>BM introduced herself and advised that she works with Bedfordshire Police and supports them in respective inspection processes, mainly HMIC.</p> <p>In November 2021 there was a joint thematic inspection published around the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders. This is a follow on for a comprehensive review from 2009 ‘the Bradley Review’, that looked at mental health and learning disabilities. The purpose is ‘are people with mental health identified when coming into the CJS;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the information passed on through the rest of the system? – Are individuals being properly assessed and referred on for help? – What is the quality of support they are getting, is it timely and adequately resourced? – Are the most seriously mentally ill people being looked after in the appropriate setting? <p>The report finalised with 22 recommendations across many different areas and 9 affect the Police and the criminal justice services;</p> <p><u>Two were raised for the criminal justice system;</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and deliver a programme of mental health awareness raising for staff working within CJS services. 2. Jointly review arrangements to identify, assess and support people as they go through the CJS. <p><u>The following relate to the Criminal Justice Board;</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Agree, produce and analyse cross system data sets to inform decisions and promote joint working. 4. Ensure that liaison and diversion mental health assessments undertaken in police custody are provided are provided to CPS and defence lawyers for full charging decisions. <p>These points could be brought to these meetings for regular updates going forward. FJ advised there is a planning meeting in place for the 24th May and we will look into these actions as one of the possible areas to move forwards.</p>

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	<p>Action: FJ to contact Mental Health to provide a steer in terms items 1 and 2 above and MT will carry forward items 3 and 4. FJ and MT to meet to look at how to progress.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>BCJB Public Meeting – Francoise Julian</u></p> <p>FJ advised regarding the annual public meeting. FJ met with JN, DP and DC and there was an agreement to proceed with the public meeting as this provides openness and assurance that the public currently do not have on all of the work that is taking place. The meeting will be virtual so it will be better controlled and managed. We will send out the questions request to the public, these will be pulled together for the Board and workstream chairs.</p> <p>FJ confirmed that this will be a Public Meeting looking at the Boards annual report and the work being progressed by the respective workstreams to provide assurance to the public regarding the ongoing work in the CJS to support victims, witnesses and vulnerable adults in the Criminal Justice system and to reduce reoffending.</p> <p>All were in agreement but suggested for the date not to be at Christmas time.</p> <p>Action: FJ will provide some dates of the public meeting for the Board to consider.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Closed Meeting</u></p> <p>Bedfordshire Police - Response to the Casey Report</p> <p>The Casey report relating to the Metropolitan Police, was published on the day of this meeting, revealing ‘institutional failures’ in the Metropolitan Police.</p> <p>Bedfordshire Police, in response to the Casey review and it’s findings, provided BCJB partners with a detailed verbal briefing in response to the review report, which outlined the work being progressed by the Force, to reinforce its’ position of zero tolerance in relation to violence against women and girls, racism and all forms of discrimination.</p> <p>The PCC and Board thanks Bedfordshire Police, for their transparency and leading by example as a member of the BCJB, to provide partners within the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice system, with a detailed report and assurance in such a timely manner.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Meeting Dates</p> <p>20/06/2023 – 10am</p> <p>19/09/2023 – 10am</p> <p>19/12/2023 – 10am</p>