



STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-11

Preface

As Chair of the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board, I am pleased to deliver this, our first three-year strategic plan. It gives information on how we will work with our partners to deliver national strategic aims and our own initiatives so that we can benefit our communities by being at the heart of a more efficient and effective criminal justice system. We want the public of Bedfordshire to have confidence in the Criminal Justice System locally so that whether they approach it as a victim, witness, defendant, volunteer or member of criminal justice agencies' staff they can say that they know the treatment will be effective, transparent and responsive.

In recent years we have made inroads into achieving against national targets and our own aims and we will build upon these to ensure that we are successful in delivering Public Service Agreement 24 – To deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public.

We work in a climate of reducing resources in real terms and so we must bring about these efficiencies by making better use of the resources that are available to us, chiefly our staff and IT systems.

Gillian Parker QPM, Chair of Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board and Chief Constable.

Introduction

There are 42 Local Criminal Justice Boards in England and Wales, which were established in 2003. Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board (BCJB) is made up of the chief officers from the criminal justice agencies:

- Police
- Crown Prosecution Service
- HM Courts Service (magistrates' courts and the Crown Court)
- Probation
- HM Prison Bedford
- Youth Offending Services for Bedfordshire and Luton

Together these agencies form the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in Bedfordshire. BCJB also has a representative from Victim Support and another from the Legal Services Commission. Collectively these organisations work for the people of Bedfordshire to achieve the Board's vision:

To have a criminal justice system that contributes to reduction of crime and re-offending, brings offences to justice efficiently, does not discriminate, supports the needs of victims and witnesses and raises confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS.

This is the first three-year Strategic Plan that BCJB, like other Local Criminal Justice Boards, has developed. It sets out how the organisations listed above will work together to bring offences to justice, improve public confidence and meet the needs of victims using simple and efficient processes. It shows what our targets are and how we plan to deliver these.

Background

The national view of the CJS

Each year, the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR) sets broad targets for the CJS across England and Wales and specific targets for individual LCJBs. In its paper, *Working Together to Cut Crime and Deliver Justice: A Strategic Plan for 2008-11*, published on 27 November 2007, OCJR outlined its aims for the CJS under the Justice for All Public Sector Agreement (PSA) 24 – to deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public. The Making Communities Safer PSA (23) focuses on reducing crime and re-offending; it is linked to PSA 24.

There are six Indicators under PSA 24:

PSA 24
DELIVER A MORE EFFECTIVE, TRANSPARENT & RESPONSIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR VICTIMS & THE PUBLIC

INDICATORS					
1	2	3	4	5	6
Increase the efficiency & effectiveness of the CJS in bringing offences to justice	Increase the levels of public confidence in the fairness & effectiveness of the CJS	Increase the proportion of victims & witnesses that are satisfied with the way they are treated by the CJS	Better identify & explain race disproportionality at key points within the CJS & have strategies in place to address racial disparities which cannot be explained or objectively justified	Reduce the harm caused by crime by increasing the quantity of criminal assets recovered	Compliance & enforcement

Through efficient and effective joined-up processes, the organisations that make up the CJS are expected to make best use of their limited resources – peoples’ skills and technology. This will allow them to free up time to tackle crime and reduce the fear of crime, help increase the experience of victims and witnesses and therefore increase public confidence in the CJS. This will not only help local communities but also contribute to the national targets. Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board is committed to making this happen.

Throughout the life of this three-year strategic plan and beyond, we will work with our partners both within the CJS and those outside of it such as local authorities, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) linking into their priorities under PSA 23 (making communities safer) and community representatives and groups. In doing this, the people of Bedfordshire can be confident that the system is effective, transparent and responsive to their needs and expectations.

This strategic plan gives BCJB's high level aims. There will also be a delivery plan for each of the years it covers which will be available at www.cjsonline.gov.uk/bedfordshire.

What we have already achieved

Bedfordshire comes within the top four LCJBs for public confidence and crime is falling across the county. We perform well in several areas against we are measured and work hard to improve performance in other areas.

- We have reduced the number of outstanding 'failure to appear' warrants by half since 2005,
- 92% of our fines are collected (against a national target of 83%),
- We continually meet both the Persistent Young Offender (PYO) Pledge and stretch targets of 71 and 65 days arrest to sentence,
- 56% of offences brought to justice were obtained through the court process in Bedfordshire (against a national average of 50%), and in June 2008, CPS prosecutions were 90% successful.

In the past year we have successfully rolled out Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy, Summary (CJSSS) in the adult magistrates' court and are seeing improvements in our performance as a result of more joined-up ways of working. Over 70% of guilty pleas at first hearing were dealt with on the day and almost 70% of contested cases (where the defendant either entered no plea or a not guilty plea) were finalised within two hearings. We were chosen to be an early adopter for CJSSS in the Youth Court so that other LCJB Areas can learn from the experience of staff and the work carried out in Bedfordshire. We have successfully rolled out Conditional Cautions and the Witness Charter and will be joining up IT systems in late 2008 so that data from the courts, police and CPS can be readily shared between the CJS agencies, if appropriate. We have made sure that the way our staff work reflects these new ways of working so that they can see improvements and results, and build their enthusiasm for their work in the CJS.

Our agencies have had their own successes too! Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service, for example, was ranked number 1 for its performance in 2007-08 and 76% of the young people with whom it works are in education or employment; this is 5% higher than the national average. A recent HM Inspection recognised the high quality work of Luton Youth Offending Service and deemed it one of the best services in the country, commenting particularly on its use of volunteers. HM Inspector of Constabulary has identified Bedfordshire Police as demonstrating improvements in performance over the past year and a much better service to the people of Bedfordshire. The Probation Service in Bedfordshire is currently one of the best in England and Wales.

There are opportunities for members of the public to volunteer in the CJS in Bedfordshire for example, they may be magistrates, Victim Support volunteers or work with young people via the Youth Offending Services. We welcome their contribution.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE CJS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Men and women of all ages, from different ethnic and work backgrounds are currently volunteering in the CJS in Bedfordshire:

- 120 Special Constables each give an average of 350 hours annually in support of Bedfordshire Police's 'regulars'. They come from all walks of life with BME representation of about 9% and 29% women.
- Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service benefits from the unpaid service of nine part-time and two full-time volunteers who are aged 19 to 43. Luton Youth Offending Service continues to develop its volunteers who work in reparations as 'appropriate adults and with the provision of support to young people and their parents.
- In our two magistrates' courts, at Bedford and Luton, we have over 300 magistrates, all members of their communities. Their average age is 53; half are women. Ten per cent declare themselves as disabled and 43 magistrates are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Funding

As one of the smallest LCJBs, we receive the lowest level of funding from the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR). For 2008-09, the total budget is £140k; like other Boards, most of this is committed to staff costs. We receive one-off funding for specific projects to assist with project management, staff and judicial training, defence engagement and implementation.

How the CJS in Bedfordshire will look in 2011.

During the life of this three-year strategic plan, we will be working within the CJS to make sure that:

- We maintain our performance where it is good and will strive to perform better in those areas where we need to improve to ensure that offences are brought to justice.
- Victims and witnesses have a positive experience by being involved, informed, valued and thanked through quality support.

- We know who our communities are and we will engage with them so that they will feel that they are better informed about and involved in the CJS, ensuring that it is fair to all and reflects local needs.
- People who enter the CJS in Bedfordshire are treated efficiently, effectively and fairly in a way that is responsive to their needs and addresses any unfair disproportionality.
- Staff and volunteers will be confident to speak about the CJS and their part in it, being proud of the contribution they make to the system as a whole.
- We have a CJS that protects the innocent, be they victims of crime or defendants.

The Effectiveness and Efficiency Delivery Board (EEDB) is the part of BCJB that is responsible for delivering PSA 24 Indicators 1, 2 and 4. The EEDB's strategic aims for 2008-11 are to:

- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) as an end-to-end process to increase the number of offences brought to justice in key areas.
- Increase public satisfaction and confidence in the fairness of the CJS.
- Ensure that the CJS is transparent and accountable in serving the needs of our diverse communities and identifies and eliminates any disproportionality.
- Deliver the Persistent Young Offender (PYO) Pledge and a range of CJS improvement priority projects.

The EEDB will do this by working towards these targets for 2011:

- For offences brought to justice (OBTJ) performance as a proportion of recorded crime for serious and sexual offences (Tier 1 crimes) to maintain current competitive position in the top third of our most similar group of forces (MSG).
- For OBTJ/ recorded crime for serious acquisitive crime (Tier 2) improve our performance to the mid-point of the MSG y 2009 and improve further by 2011.
- For OBTJ/ recorded crime for other crimes (Tier 3), improve our current performance position from our mid-point in the MSG.
- For sanction detections to achieve targets that support the attainment of the OBTJ goals.
- To achieve levels in other OBTJ supporting measures in CPS and the courts for the attainment of OBTJ goals.
- To monitor police file quality and to identify recurring issues for improvement and suitable actions.
- To achieve national targets under the PYO Pledge and stretch targets.
- To be in the top 10% of LCJB Areas for public confidence in the CJS and consistently achieve national performance targets.

PSA 24 Indicator 3 is the responsibility of the Victims and Witnesses Group of BCJB.

Its vision is to give high standards of service for victims and witnesses with the needs of the victim at the heart of the system.

The Victims and Witness Group's strategic aim for 2008-11 is to improve victim and witness satisfaction with the Criminal Justice System.

These, our vision and strategic aim, demonstrate the real commitment that BCJB has to improving the experience of victims and witnesses within the CJS. By setting out what we plan to achieve in this important area, we can communicate to the public the significance that criminal justice agencies give to ensuring victims and witnesses receive justice and ensuring that victims have a voice. We will put victims and witnesses at the heart of the CJS. Not only is this important as a way of increasing public confidence, it is a fundamental reason for the CJS' existence. No-one can undo the damage inflicted by the most serious crimes or the fear and distress caused by much low-level offending and anti-social behaviour but through the CJS, society can go some way to redressing that suffering. Our agencies will work together to improve the range of responses in order to provide a seamless service to victims and witnesses from the time of the crime to the conclusion of the case. BCJB is committed to ensuring that this happens.

The Victims and Witnesses Sub-Group will be working towards these objectives during the life of this three-year plan:

- To develop and implement policy on how the CJS in Bedfordshire tackles intimidation of victims and witnesses and so improve services to them.
- To implement in full all elements of the Witness Charter (adopted in Bedfordshire on 1 July 2008).
- To ensure full compliance with the Victim Code of Practice by all agencies.
- To ensure that victims understand the Victim Personal Statement process.

BCJB's Offender Management Group (OMG) will work to protect the public by reducing the reoffending or managing the risk of specific targeted groups of offenders within the community. We will work with partners in the community strengthening our links with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and striving to deliver our shared goals by achieving a closer alignment of our strategic and business planning. In this we will be able to utilize shared performance management data, shared strategic assessment and analysis capability. This is linked to PSA 23 – Making communities safer – and the priorities identified in our Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

The OMG will work towards the following targets for 2008-11:

- Reduce the rate of reoffending in the prolific and priority offender cohort by 20% against predicted rates in 2008-09 and set annual targets thereafter.
- Reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence from 38% to 35% in Bedfordshire and a reduction in Luton.
- Pilot an approach to working in partnership with an identified cohort of repeat offenders committing serious acquisitive crime and at risk of receiving short-term custodial sentences, and reduce their rate of reoffending.
- Recall all standard cases within 144 hours and all serious cases within 74 hours.

- Reduce the rate and seriousness of reoffending on all Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).
- Reduce the rate and seriousness of reoffending on all MAPPA level 2 and 3 cases.

We will work with our partners throughout the country to reduce the harm caused by crime by increasing the quantity of criminal assets recovered. We cannot do this on our own. Our Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) Group, which will focus on PSA 24 Indicator 5, where the police, CPS and courts work together to secure both restraint and confiscation orders against criminals. These local agencies will work closely with the HMCS South-East Enforcement Unit, based in Dover, and the Thames and Chiltern Complex Cases Unit based at Cawley, to ensure that orders are enforced and monies collected. As an area, we are required to meet national targets in this important aspect of criminal justice so that criminal activity ceases to be profitable.

BCJB's Enforcement Group will concentrate on ensuring that fines and compensation are paid, community penalty order breaches are actioned and the number of failure to appear warrants reduces. One of the main aims of these groups is to get greater first time compliance of orders made by the courts. Its work focuses on PSA 24 Indicator 6 and we will deliver by:

- Prosecutors getting as much information about the offender prior to laying information,
- Carrying out joint operations that will bring defaulters back before the courts,
- Criminal Justice Agencies working together to ensure that resources are used effectively in achieving our overall aims,
- Identifying and targeting prolific and persistent offenders at an early stage in the enforcement process, and,
- Expanding the use of the Warrant management System to Probation and the Crown Prosecution Service.

BCJB has always adopted new ways of working to best enable it to meet new developments. It will be working with OCJR and other LCJBs in the East of England to realise its potential to move forward. New projects and initiatives will be delivered or planned during the lifespan of this strategic plan and these currently include:

- The Streamlined Process,
- Virtual Courts,
- Closer joint working between police and CPS,
- *PROGRESS*,
- Postal Charging

We will work with colleagues to deliver opportunities for the public to look behind the scenes of the CJS during Inside Justice Week and at other times. We acknowledge that members of the public expect the CJS to look after them and so we will include them in the work we do and communicate with them. We want to not only reduce crime in Bedfordshire but the fear of crime

too. By 2011, Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board wants to see our communities engaging with the CJS as members of staff, volunteers or community representatives. We want them to feel that they are confident that the CJS serves them well.

GLOSSARY

BCJB	Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board, one of 42 in the country
BME	Black & minority ethnic
CDRPs	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
CJAs	Criminal Justice Agencies – police, CPS, courts, probation, prisons, Youth Offending Services, Victim Support
CJS	Criminal Justice System made up of police, CPS, courts, probation, prisons, Youth Offending Services, Victim Support
CJSSS	Criminal Justice: Simple, Speedy, Summary
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
EEDB	Effectiveness and Efficiency Delivery Board, one of BCJB's sub-groups
HMCS	Her Majesty's Courts Service
IT	Information Technology
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MSG	Most similar group (of forces)
OBTJ	Offences brought to justice
OCJR	Office for Criminal Justice Reform
OMG	Offender Management Group, one of BCJB's sub-groups
POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
PSA	Public Service Agreement
V&W	Victims & witnesses
VCPO	Victims Code of Practice
YOS	Youth Offending Service