



Advisory group works to improve criminal justice services

A PIONEERING group that acts as a 'critical friend' to the criminal justice agencies in Wiltshire is celebrating its first anniversary.

The Wiltshire Independent Advisory Group (IAG) was set up in 2007 by the Wiltshire Police Authority and the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board, and now works with all criminal justice agencies in Wiltshire and Swindon.

It is the first time a group has played such a role with criminal justice agencies in the county.

Its 15 members, who were chosen following a recruitment process, represent the diverse communities of Wiltshire.

They aim to provide impartial advice locally to the Crown Prosecution Service, HM Courts Service, HM Prison Service, the National Probation Service, the Police and the Youth Offending Service.

The IAG also makes recommendations to improve effectiveness in ten key areas, such as unlawful discrimination, equality, community engagement and hate crime.

Its first annual report, published this month, highlights its work to date, as well as its main achievements, and sets out its plans for the future.

IAG chair, Sharin Masih, said 2007/08 has very much been a formative period for the IAG.

It has worked at inducting members on Criminal Justice issues and established working guidelines.

Ms Masih said another important task for the IAG is to improve the handling and resolution of critical incidents.

A critical incident is defined as "any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact upon the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community".

During its first year, the IAG has been involved in five critical incidents.

The group is also providing independent advice to Wiltshire Police about the disproportionate use of stop and search powers on members of black and minority ethnic communities.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board (WCJB) was set up in April 2003 to manage the CJS at a local level. It, along with the other 41 Local Boards across England and Wales, reports to the National Criminal Justice Board which supports them in their work to meet Public Service Agreement targets at a local level and reduce crime in Wiltshire
2. Wiltshire's CJB comprises chief officers from the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, HM Courts Service, the Probation Service, the Prison Service and the Youth Offending Service.
3. For further information please visit: <http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Wiltshire> or call Chloe Boyce, WCJB Communications Officer, on 01225 781216.