



Police and Crime Panel
24 March 2025
Local Criminal Justice Board

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Security Classification	Official

Purpose of Report

This report is brought to the board to provide an update in relation to the development of the work of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and any Local Criminal Justice updates.

Terms of Reference LCJB and its Strategic Objectives:

To improve safety, trust, confidence and satisfaction in the Criminal Justice System across communities in Leicestershire by:

- Focussing on listening, supporting and making victims and witnesses a priority
- Focussing on efficiency and effectiveness and value for money
- Reducing offending and reoffending
- Supporting the Police and Crime Plan

Police and Crime Commissioner Police and Crime Plan Manifesto Commitments:

1. Court proceedings are not always the most effective way to deal with crime. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) will work with the LCJB to identify solutions that relieve some of this pressure. The use of Out of Court Resolutions (OORs) can bring swift and satisfactory justice for victims of crime. The PCC will establish systems that support the Force to use out of court solutions for victims of crime wherever most effective. The PCC will also help to drive any technological advances possible to speed up the processing of files so our Officers can get cases ready faster.
2. The PCC will work with partners across the CJS through the LCJB to develop and own actions to deliver the best for victims.
3. The PCC will ensure that all who have contact with victims know how to refer to our services. The PCC will make sure that compliance with the Victim Code of Practice is driven through the Force. Residents will see easily accessible victim support, even for those who do not wish to report a crime. Residents will see compliance with the Victim Code of Practice rise and residents will see action plans in place to ensure that the Force is focussed to support those affected by crime.

Background

4. I chaired the LCJB on 6 February 2025 for the first time, with a variety of our criminal justice partners present.
5. Thanks were given to Chief Constable Rob Nixon as a local and national lead within the Criminal Justice space.
6. Various updates were provided by our partners, with a full commitment to improving our local criminal justice strategy and developing this throughout the year.
7. We reviewed the timeliness of the victim's journey within the Magistrates Court. It was noted that there is not a backlog of cases in the Magistrates Court and timeliness of the victim's journey is positive. All partners are still aligned to the strategic objectives outlined within the national strategy of Transforming Summary

Justice (TSJ). Please see Appendix B.

8. The only exception to timeliness of the victim's journey within the Magistrates Court is surrounding the ability for sentencing to occur at the earliest opportunity due to some challenges within Probation's capacity. Probation has confirmed that caseloads are challenging but there has been a recruitment drive recently locally to improve its capability therefore as a partnership, we look forward to watching this metric improve.
9. From a strategic perspective, the timelessness of the victim's journey can also be impacted by police file quality and therefore we discussed some general themes. Our Criminal Justice Unit has a variety of measures in place and robust strategy to tackle police file quality and is fully committed to continuous improvement. The Force confirmed that they were constantly working to drive up quality, with the assistance of 29 gatekeepers and ten disclosure champions across the force. Disclosure champions have just finished a 10-week period of disclosure training and provide bespoke feedback to colleagues. As a partnership, we will be watching this metric improve.
10. A strategic update on Operation Drakeful was provided for our local prisoner release programme (40% into their determinate sentence). The national debrief held by the National Police Chief's Council noted the good practice in Leicestershire due to the effectiveness of its multi-agency hub and its success at cross agency information sharing. There is likely to be another rollout in the next 12 months to relieve further capacity in our prisons. In general, it was a success with few recalls and little reoffending from offenders released. The strategy implemented is likely to be repeated and shared with other forces. I am very proud of Leicestershire Police and our partner agencies for its superb involvement.
11. In the Crown Court, our commitment to improving victim timeliness is ongoing. Victims are still waiting too long for trials nationally due to numerous national multi agency issues. There is a national backlog of cases in the Crown Court and we await the independent review of the criminal courts by Sir Brian Leveson, which could result in a restructure.
12. Solutions were discussed to reduce the pressures on our Local Criminal Justice System, including relief of our Crown Court backlog.
13. Some of our multi agency operational groups, including the Crown Court Improvement Group, responsible for enacting our LCJB strategy, has been asked to review some of these ongoing issues in the Crown Court and report back.
14. The Violence Reduction Network (VRN) provided an update on its capabilities to prevent crime, including out of court resolutions and wider community diversions to ensure the right pathways are in place and are victim focused to try to stop offenders coming back into the system.
15. Our strategic commitment to continuous improvement of services for child victims was discussed and a report was received from one of our CHISVAs, where it highlighted the effect of justice delays a child's journey: *"What we are seeing is that,*

due to the consistent and lengthy adjournments, clients may enter as under 18 years of age and still be waiting for court as an adult. 5 years wait cannot be acceptable. Trials can be adjourned up to 5 times and this cannot be acceptable for the mental health and well-being of our young victims”.

Criminal Justice Visits:

Leicester Crown Court

16. As part of my preparation for LCJB, ahead of chairing my first Criminal Justice Board, I visited Leicester Crown Court on 3 February 2025 to observe timeliness and the victim experience at court.
17. It is worth noting that waiting time was experienced in court which would contribute to delays in the victim's journey. Our local courts are impacted by national strategy in relation the funding of our defence barristers and recorder sitting times, which impacts on availability and capability to hear cases in a timely manner, ultimately impacting on our local ability to cut through the Crown Court backlog. The Criminal Bar continue to request extra funding from government and careers in criminal defence need to be incentivised.
18. There was a focused and strategic driven conversation on the number of hearings per contested case and the success of our First Hearings (PTPHs) in the Crown Court and how we can continuously improve success. It is important that this is continuously monitored as it impacts directly on the experience of victims and witnesses at court and their confidence in all our criminal justice partners.
19. I am very grateful to our superb team at Leicester Crown Court for its facilitation of my visit and the strategic ideas that arose from these vital conversations, meetings and observation.

HMP STOCKEN

20. I visited HMP Stocken in Rutland on 25 February 2025 and met with the governor, Russ Truman, prison staff and prisoners to discuss the success of it peer to peer mentoring programme.
21. HMP Stocken is a Category C training prison and therefore there is real opportunity for deep and transformational work within its prison population.
22. The visit showed the success of the prison team at HMP Stocken and I was able to see the positive and transformational work that the governor is leading on within his team. I would like to give special thanks to prison staff for their hard work and dedication in transforming the lives of our prisoners.
23. I met two model prisoners who were part of a mentors in prison violence reduction scheme, facilitated by both the prison and our Violence Reduction Network. This peer mentor scheme is aimed at reducing violence in the prison, particularly knife crime. It was inspirational to see the work of our model prisoners and how they can ensure the safety and wellbeing of other prisoners by acting as peer support.

24. Some of our national employers such as Iceland, Chevron, Karcher, Toyota and Timpsons are making great strides in providing prisoners with the opportunity for employment on release. It is our ambition to have every prisoner leave prison with job security.
25. Housing is still a problem for prisons in general, as there is not always adequate provision locally for prison leavers. We must continue to identify gaps within our boroughs and districts and ensure that we are ensuring that adequate provision.
26. A high proportion of HMP Stocken prisoner leavers do not re-settle in our area. It is my proposal that further strategic work is required from all our members to ensure those who re-settle in our area have full and adequate support and we hope to develop further strategy around this as an LCJB.
27. I would like to give my gratitude to the team at HMP Stocken for its continued hard work in reforming the lives of our offenders and its innovative provision of training capabilities.

Key Updates:

28. Probation in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is currently undergoing an inspection and local stakeholders will be asked for feedback.
29. On 12 February 2025, the Lord Chancellor announced changes to Probation to reduce pressure on the service and the accredited programme requirements will be targeted with a focus on those who pose the highest risk of reoffending and harm.
30. The Right Honourable David Gauke published an interim Part 1 Report on 18 February 2025 about sentencing to ensure that we are not in a position again where there are more prisoners than prison places. At the end of 2024, 85,000 individuals were held in the adult prison estate. The feeling in the report is that there has been narrative by successive governments to be "tough on crime", which has focused primarily on punishment and incarceration. The report now suggests consideration of punishment outside of prison and preventing re-offending, allowing prisoners to turn their lives around.
31. The Leveson review into criminal courts aims at reducing the national Crown Court backlog of cases. Whilst the review has not been finalised, consideration to the following: the reclassification of offences from triable-either-way to summary only; Consideration of magistrates' sentencing powers; the introduction of an Intermediate Court; any other structural changes to the courts, including defendants being able to elect a non-jury trial in the Crown Court.

Recommendations:

32. A trial of a specialist and thematic LCJB to focus on domestic abuse and good practice, in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's recommendations.
33. Further analysis of our local strategy to improve the victim journey and the child victim journey from reporting of the offence until release.

34. Further reinforcement of our strategy surrounding child victims and a deep dive into improvements with recommendations to ensure that children are not experiencing delays in their formative years.
35. Revisit HMP Stocken in the next quarter and our other prisons to consider further VRN work and champion further prisoner support programmes including community mentorship.
36. A prison leaver task group led by the LCJB chair in conjunction with key stakeholders, exploring the effect of housing availability for prisoners resettling in our area.
37. A continued strategic approach to tackle our collective Prison overcapacity issue and share the good practice of Operation Drakeful.
38. Strategic focus on crime prevention, out of court resolutions and VRN to reduce pressure on our Crown Courts and Prisons.
39. LCJB strategy planning session and to co-develop a strategic action plan with all our partners.

Thanks:

With special thanks to Leicester Crown Court and HMP Stocken for facilitating both visits and Assistant Chief Constable, Michaela Kerr for her leadership on Op Drakeful, as well as all superb partners within the LCJB for their hard work and dedication to our achievements locally.

Attachments:

- A. Rt Honourable David Gauke's Part 1 report
- B. Transforming Summary Justice – Revised Principles
- C. The most recent national CJB minutes
- D. Public Accounts Committee report on Crown Court backlog of 5 March 2025
- E. Michaela Kerr – Briefing note on Op Drakeful

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