Hertfordshire's Criminal Justice Board Strategy 2022-2025

Foreword

As Chair of the Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board, I am pleased to be introducing this new strategy which has allowed all local criminal justice partners to come to together to agree our joint priorities.

The Board has taken time to reflect on activity over the previous two years and to refresh our strategy. It has been a challenging couple of years for the criminal justice system not least because of the covid-19 pandemic and we need to take the opportunities to build back stronger, innovate and continue to use technology to ensure we have an efficient system.

This Board worked well together during the pandemic and there was a strong feeling of common purpose. I hope that the Board will continue to grow this common sense of purpose with this new strategy allowing the Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board to strengthen and grow.

There are many cross-cutting areas between the Criminal Justice Board and other Hertfordshire countywide Boards including the Community Safety Board, the Integrated Offender Management Board, the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Domestic Abuse Executive Board and the Drug & Alcohol Board. I will ensure that the Criminal Justice Board continues to engage with the other countywide Boards to ensure complementary strategies and a set of common principles in taking a prevention first approach, being evidence led and data driven.

As PCC, I have published my Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan. One of the four thematic areas in my plan is criminal justice and in order to ensure there is no duplication of activity, some of the priorities in this strategy echo this plan. The plan illustrates the breadth of the challenge facing the criminal justice system from addressing the time taken for trials to conclude in the Crown Court, to reducing reoffending and supporting those who have been a victim of crime.

A second thematic area in my Community Safety and Criminal Justice plan is 'Fairness, Equality and Confidence in Policing'. Fairness, equality and confidence in the criminal justice system is a priority for this Board. It is important that the Hertfordshire public has confidence and satisfaction in their local criminal justice system. A core element of this is ensuring a fair system with equitable access and outcomes for all users. Therefore, this strategy commits to establishing a new subgroup which will seek better to understand fairness in the criminal justice system in Hertfordshire.

This strategy is structured around four key priorities:

1. Putting Victims at the Centre
2. Preventing re-offending
3. Keeping crime low
4. Fairness and Legitimacy

These priorities will be delivered by the subgroups that exist under the criminal justice board which will be accompanied by outcome and delivery plans.

Purpose, Vision and Values

The Hertfordshire Criminal Justice Board (HCJB) was established to provide a structure for strategic leaders to meet, discuss and agree measures to improve the criminal justice system in Hertfordshire for victims, witnesses, the public and all those who encounter it.

Purpose

To ensure the delivery of improvements in the Criminal Justice System through multi-agency consultation and working.

Vision

To deliver a joined-up and modernised criminal justice system that delivers value for money and improves the confidence of victims and the public in the criminal justice system.

By working in partnership, the Board aims to use the best available evidence to reduce crime, harm, and risk by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

The Board's vision is built on the premise that all parts of the CJS should be working together towards achieving the same set of outcomes. This remains the basis for transforming the CJS, and the Board will continue to work towards this goal.

Board Values and priorities

The Board is underpinned by the following guiding principles core values which will support their approach to delivery:

1. Prevention First
2. Evidence led and data driven
3. Collaboration and Partnership Working
4. Whole Systems Approach
5. Shared problem solving
6. Sharing of knowledge
7. Hearing the lived experience of those using the criminal justice system

The Boards four strategic priorities are:

5. Putting Victims at the Centre
6. Preventing re-offending
7. Keeping crime low
8. Fairness and Legitimacy

Board Priorities

Priority 1: Putting Victims at the Centre - *Preventing harm through improved support for victims and witnesses at each stage of the journey*

This will be achieved through:

- Identifying gaps in provision for victim support such as tailored support for victims of sexual assault

- Identifying areas where there could be system wide learnings, such as looking at the victim's journey for different crime types, e.g., mapping the journey of a rape victim.

- Ensuring support is suitable for individual needs such as for those who are LGBTQ or neurodiverse

- Ensuring victims have an opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to describe how an offence has affected them

- Monitoring Victims' Code compliance (*it is anticipated there will be a formal role for the PCC and LCJBs in the new victim's bill.)

To achieve this, we will need to:

- Review relevant data including identifying areas where data is not currently collected
- Use data and evidence to identify any gaps in service provision
- Identify how many victims of crime are offered the opportunity to make a VPS and the number of occasions they are used in Magistrates' and Crown court proceedings[1].
- Engage with those using the services and hear their lived experience
- Commission surveys to understand impact and satisfaction

Priority 1 will be delivered through the victims and witnesses' subgroup.

Priority 2: Preventing re-offending - *From conviction to custody or community sentence to resettlement and rehabilitation*

This will be achieved through:

- Clear rehabilitative pathways for offenders across the spectrum from first time offenders (with analysis of out of court disposals and diversion) to those at the highest risk of offending including those on the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme and MAPPA.

- Improving connections with and access to physical health services

- Ensuring support is suitable for individual needs such as for those who are LGBTQ or neurodiverse

- Greater visibility of the work of MAPPA at the Criminal Justice Board so that as a system we can bring back findings and learnings

- Improving engagement with offenders whilst in prison and on the day of release to work

To achieve this, we will need to:

- Review relevant data including identifying areas where data is not currently collected
- Use data and evidence to identify any gaps in service provision
- Engage with those using the services and hear their lived experience

[1] Review of data to understand offer rate and acceptance level via police, and how often the statements are read in court either by victim or Prosecutor.

- Co-commission services where necessary

Priority 2 will be delivered through the rehabilitation of offender's subgroup. The rehabilitation of offender's subgroup will have close links with the IOM executive board.

Priority 3: Keeping crime low - *Reducing crime through early intervention*
This will be achieved through:

- Opportunities to divert people away from the criminal justice system through out of court disposals and diversion schemes

- Identifying the need and developing support services tailored for different groups and needs.

- Engagement and resilience building in schools, working with them to adopt a prevention first approach for children and young people

- An increased focus on restorative justice approaches as outlined in the Section 7 of the Sentencing Act 2020

To achieve this, we will need to:

- Review the membership of the early intervention and prevention subgroup to include schools, district council colleagues and the Constabulary prevention first team.
- Work closely with the Hertfordshire Youth Justice Board, identifying joint objectives, and sharing information and data
- Develop an understanding of intergenerational cycles of crime
- Review provision for women to receive tailored support, e.g., through women's centres and trauma informed diversion schemes
- Evaluation and reviewing the approach to and the effectiveness of out of court disposals / diversion schemes
- Engage with the out of court disposal scrutiny panel
- Develop a communication plan / strategy to provide a voice of support understanding of the use of out of court disposals and reassurance to the public around their use
- Review the HMICFRS joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders

Priority 3 will be delivered through the prevention and early intervention subgroup

Priority 4: Fairness & Legitimacy – *Increasing trust, improving efficiency, and addressing fairness in the CJS*
Increasing trust & improving efficiency
To deliver improvements in performance throughout the end-to-end criminal justice system, particularly regarding increasing the speed of effective justice by reducing the time taken at every stage. To enable this the aspiration is to change the culture from individual parts in a CJS system to a whole CJS service. This recognises that changes in one area of the criminal justice system impacts on other areas, e.g., increasing Officer numbers may increase cases being brought before the CPS and courts.

This will be achieved through:

- Reviewing the effective administration of justice including outstanding court cases to minimise victim attrition and cases collapsing.

- Decreasing the lead time to effective justice by reducing the time taken at every stage once an offence is reported.

- Decreasing the amount of time defendants spend in custody (ensuring a shorter wait time for cases to come to court)

- Enhanced digital innovation to improve efficiency of case progression

- Identifying ways to improve the efficiency of processes at organisational interfaces

To achieve this, we will need to:

- Make best use of available data from the newly published CJS Delivery Data Dashboard
- Continue to monitor outstanding court caseloads, timeliness (and transforming summary justice timescales) and released under investigation numbers
- Continue to monitor file quality and address any issues identified
- Reinvigorate defence engagement in the HCJB

The improving efficiency aspect of Priority 4 will be delivered through the Programme and Partnerships Monitoring group and the digital innovation subgroup

Fairness in the CJS

The HCJB recognises that to maintain confidence in the Criminal Justice System it is essential that all victims, offenders, and witnesses are treated in a fair and equitable way.

This includes a focus on racial disparity as well as exploring wider disparity in the system, e.g., young people, women, mental health.

This will be achieved through:

- Reviewing national reports and guidance. This includes the 2020 Government update on tackling racial disparity, the Farmer review for women, the HMICFRS report in to Police response to violence against women and girls, the APPG reports on women in the penal system, and the Charlie Taylor review. The Farmer review for women specifically identified LCJBs as having a key role in encouraging joined up working at a local level with regards to women.
- Developing a data set to identify challenges specific to Hertfordshire and where disparity exists
- Produce a public report on fairness in the CJS in Hertfordshire
- Identifying services to address any disparities identified with a co-commissioning approach to these services.

To achieve this, we will need to:

- Set up a new fairness in the CJS subgroup and identify a work plan
- Review relevant data including identifying areas where data is not currently collected
- Use data and evidence to identify needs for service provision that could address any inequities
- Engage with the public and hear from those with lived experience

The fairness in the CJS aspect of Priority 4 will be delivered through the Fairness in the CJS subgroup

Delivering the strategy

The HCJB is a voluntary partnership. It is not governed by statute and is not an executive body. HCJB meetings are not open to the public, but the public are invited to a specific meeting held in public, normally annually. The partnership comprises statutory, voluntary sector and community organisations including commissioners.

The following will support the Board to deliver on the strategy and four priorities:

Evidence based and data driven

The work of the board is supported with a locally produced performance dashboard and the national data delivery dashboard.

Determining and commissioning work

From time to time the Board may see fit to commission a specific piece of work, e.g., an area of specific data analysis or a research paper with recommendations. Any member of the Board can bring a proposal to commission work and any areas of work will be agreed by members at a Criminal Justice Board meeting. This work will be carried out by the most appropriate agency with support from the Criminal Justice Policy & Research Manager within the OPCC.

Financial support may be available through the OPCC innovation fund to enable the Board and partners to pilot new and innovative projects.

Effective Commissioning

Over the past year there has been additional money available in some areas of the criminal justice system. With the current financial climate this is unlikely to remain, and it is likely that budgets and funding will become much tighter over the coming years. It therefore remains important to focus on innovation to ensure the Board shrink together not apart and make the most of innovative opportunities to drive value for money and reduce waste in the system.

The Board's vision is to deliver a system that gives value for money and avoiding duplication of spending is key to that. Collaborative commissioning will be vital to the delivery of this strategy with knowledge and evaluations shared and resources pooled.

Community Engagement to increase public confidence in the system

Community engagement and communication will be crucial for the success of this strategy. There continue to be reports in the media about court backlogs and with the newly

introduced CJS scorecards the public may have questions about the performance in Hertfordshire.

Engaging with the community and sharing information with them in a way that is transparent and accessible is important and can help to contextualise the issues and reassure the community.

Engagement with the community will support all the priorities from increasing public confidence to reporting offences, to addressing inequalities in the system, to increasing confidence in the effectiveness of community sentences.

The Board will review the information published with regards to the work of the Board (and subgroups) and local performance data. The Board will also identify qualitative data and case studies that can be shared to give meaning to the statistics.

Membership and Chair

Board members will represent their own organisation at a strategic level and are responsible for championing HCJB business throughout their organisations.

The members of the HCJB are:

- Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire (Chair)
- Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Chief Supt Criminal Justice & Custody of Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Chief Crown Prosecutor, Thames & Chiltern Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Head of Hertfordshire Local Delivery Unit, National Probation Service (NPS)
- Governor of HMP The Mount Prison
- Cluster Manager, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)
- A Chief Executive, representing District Councils
- Area Manager, Citizens' Advice (Witness Service)
- Contract Manager, Legal Aid Agency
- Place Director, East and North Hertfordshire, Integrated Care Board
- Health and Justice Commissioning Manager, NHS England
- Head of Service, Youth Offending Service
- Director of Children's Services, Hertfordshire County Council
- A Representative of Defence Solicitors
- Lay person
- Fairness in the Criminal Justice System group Chair

Member's responsibilities

Information sharing is critical to the success of the HCJB. Members will undertake to share relevant and appropriate information with each other.

Many of the Board are also members of other countywide groups. Where Board members do attend other meetings they will identify areas of crossover, share the HCJBs priorities and support to ensure the HCJB can interacts and feed into other county boards.

Members will share their organisational plans with the Board to ensure these can be fed in to the HCJB strategy. These will be shared annually with the OPCC CJ Policy Manager.