

DEVON AND CORNWALL  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

Criminal Justice System: working together for the public

A large, golden statue of Lady Justice, the personification of the law. She is depicted as a woman with a crown of stars, holding a sword in her right hand and a pair of scales in her left. The statue is set against a clear blue sky. The text 'End of year report 2023-24' is overlaid in large white letters on the statue.

# End of year report 2023-24

Working in partnership to improve  
the efficiency and effectiveness of  
the criminal justice system

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## Introduction from the Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB)



I am extremely proud to be able to report on the work the LCJB has delivered over the past year, some of which has gained national recognition such as the launch of the Criminal Justice and You resource for victims and witnesses. Some work is still ongoing but has already made significant impact and will no doubt have continued focus over the coming year. The support provided by each agency has been invaluable, particularly in our collective commitment to undertake effective scrutiny to review cases for compliance with policy and practice, and to secure critical learning. This work has seen the development of positive working relationships across the partnership with an increased appreciation of our individual roles and responsibilities whilst also identifying and reporting good practice. I would like to thank you all for your contributions and for providing the resources to make our work possible. The board has several task and finish groups who work together to address the areas of desired improvement and I am really grateful for their time and commitment.

There is no doubt in my mind how imperative partnership working is, and the recent public disorder and unrest nationally but also closer to home in Plymouth, is a prime example of how we work efficiently and effectively together as a criminal justice system. As a collective we were united in our dismay at the violence that occurred under the guise of protest and sent a joint message to the communities we serve and gave assurance that we would deal with such criminality swiftly. I have no doubt that the effective response and sentencing acted as a deterrent for further disorder.

Over the past year we have seen new legislation with the Victims and Prisoners Act, a new government and the King's Speech which sets out new priorities. There is much more work we need to do to prepare for the inevitable changes which will come alongside the Victims, Courts and Public Protection Bill and the Crime and Policing Bill, to just reference two.

As well as what we have achieved, I look forward to working with you in the next year as we seek to deliver services for our communities that are best serviced by a local system which operates as a whole, whilst also holding each other to account with honesty, integrity, and transparency.

I very much hope that you find this report useful and a reflection on how we have collectively helped to keep Devon, Cornwall, and the Isles of Scilly one of the safest places to live in the country, with one of the lowest crime rates.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. St. John'.

# Devon and Cornwall Criminal Justice Board Summary

## Purpose

Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) are the forum in which the local criminal justice organisations at police force area (PFA) level come together to work in the common interest to improve the criminal justice system (CJS). Working in partnership, the Devon and Cornwall LCJB aims to address cross cutting issues, improve the experiences of victims and witnesses, reduce reoffending, plus agree and deliver strategic priorities to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the local CJS.

## Aims

- To provide a strategic forum for the facilitation and delivery of a joined up criminal justice system in Devon and Cornwall and beyond, where there is an impact on service delivery in Devon and Cornwall.
- To provide a single strategic forum to engage with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on all criminal justice matters.
- To provide a central point of contact through which communication on criminal justice can be received, considered and disseminated.
- To work with key partnerships to provide a joined up, well-co-ordinated criminal justice system across Devon and Cornwall.
- To continuously monitor and improve the performance of the criminal justice system in Devon and Cornwall.
- To facilitate joint audit and scrutiny across the local criminal justice system.
- To promote good practice and innovation.
- To set local priorities and performance targets allied to national objectives.
- Managing relationships with other CJS bodies, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and the judiciary.
- Provide a conduit for communication between the centre and local areas on CJS cross-cutting issues.

## Membership & governance

In March 2022, the PCC Review (Part 2), carried out by the Home Office identified LCJBs as a critical vehicle to empower PCCs with the levers to bring together criminal justice partners to effectively tackle crime. In line with recommendations made by the Review, a suitable legislative vehicle is being sought to place LCJBs on a statutory footing and mandate that the PCC act as Chair.

In line with the National Guidance for Local Criminal Justice Boards<sup>1</sup>, Devon and Cornwall membership includes strategic leads and decision makers from across the criminal justice partnership. Board meetings are held on a quarterly basis, and in addition will convene when required to address emerging needs.

The LCJB is supported by effective sub-groups and scrutiny panels to drive activity on behalf of the local criminal justice system. Strategic priorities are reviewed and agreed annually, allocating leads and defining how it will measure its success. The priorities for 2023-2024 focused on support for victims and witnesses, efficient and effective criminal justice, reducing reoffending, addressing disproportionality and maximising communications and engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> [Criminal Justice Board - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108221/criminal_justice_board_-_gov_uk.pdf)

## Priorities

- Each priority area details a number of agreed actions which will be progressed through an appropriate lead agency, who will Chair relevant sub-groups / task and finish groups.
- Sub-group Chairs will be responsible for planning, implementing and co-ordinating actions and reporting back progress to quarterly meetings.
- Priorities are reviewed annually with an update on achievements presented at the annual planning day.

The single page infographic on page 7 of this report outlines each of the priorities, associated actions, nominated lead and desired outcomes following the LCJB planning day held in September 2023. This report reviews the progress made against these and will inform the discussions for the collective focus moving forward.

# Local Criminal Justice Board: Our priorities

Priority	Actions	Lead	Outcomes
Support victims and witnesses	Scrutinise cases to ensure compliance with the Victims Code of Practice (VCoP)	LCJB Business Manager	To report on VCoP compliance, good practice and areas for improvement
	Preparing for the implementation of the Victims and Prisoners Bill	Victim Support	Assess and develop CJ systems and processes to retrieve, analyse and report data and gaps
	Listening and learning from the experiences of victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO)	Police RaSSO lead	Acting on feedback to reduce victim attrition, increase reporting and improve public confidence
Ensure efficient and effective criminal justice	Getting case file quality right at the first hearing - achieving efficiency in terms of quality and timeliness, ensuring justice is secured at the first available opportunity	LCJB chair	Publish quarterly file quality, timeliness and quality of justice data to show position and agree targets for further improvement
	Improving the timeliness in youth justice delivery to minimise any adverse system impact upon those within it and to better meet the needs of victim	Youth Justice Service	Establish and monitor targets for case progression. Develop a system for multi-agency tracking
Reduce reoffending	Getting Out of Court Resolutions right through the scrutiny of cases	LCJB Business Manager	To identify good practice and report actions taken to address areas for improvement
	To understand the reducing re-offending landscape and tailor the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) strategy to meet local needs	HMPs Probation	Increase communication, identify gaps and barriers, monitor performance and commissioned services
	Promote the use of Restorative Justice (RJ) to increase awareness and engagement	OPCC	Development of a communications strategy to promote RJ and publish associated data
Address disproportionality	To review disproportionality data held across the CJS	LCJB membership	Agree a framework for reporting, gather data and identify gaps in available data
	To address the issues of inequality relating to women on remand in Devon and Cornwall which compromise effective justice and seek to work in collaboration with key stakeholders to introduce creative solutions	Devon VCSE	Agree minimum standards for prison to court transportation. Identify gaps and support for women on remand. Address accommodation requirements
Maximise communications and engagement	To raise awareness and share news across the CJ partnership	LCJB Business Manager	Quarterly publication of a collective CJ newsletter
	Explore piloting a Local Criminal Justice Court Reporting Scheme (LCJCRS) to provide balanced reporting and raise public awareness and education of local criminal justice	OPCC	Commission and evaluate a LCJCRS pilot
	Communicate progress against agreed LCJB actions and priorities	LCJB Business Manager	Production of an annual report

## Priority one: Support victims and witnesses

### Action one: Scrutinising cases to ensure compliance with the Victims Code of Practice (VCoP)

Scrutiny activity is undertaken across the criminal justice partnership to assess quality of compliance with the Victim Codes of Practice (VCoP). <sup>2</sup>All partnership scrutiny panels are overseen and facilitated by the LCJB Business Manager on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Scrutiny panels receive really positive engagement and are well supported through attendance of relevant representatives from the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (Probation), and where appropriate, receive support from the wider CJS such as the Witness Support Service (WSS), Victim Support or other prosecution agencies such as Trading Standards.

Since the inception of the VCoP scrutiny process in February 2022, 9 panels have taken place reviewing compliance against a total of 59 cases of Domestic Abuse, Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO), serious road collisions, serious violence, fraud, stalking or harassment and most recently Section 28 cases (pre-recording cross examination of victims and witnesses).

Overall, 69% of these cases have been deemed to be fully compliant, 23% partially compliant and the remaining 8% being either non-compliant or not scored due to the lead agency having no statutory responsibilities under the code, such as a Fraud case overseen by Trading Standards in February 2024. This engagement however was positive for shared learning and has improved understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as fostering the development of positive working relationships. This is particularly reassuring given that an inspection published in December 2023 into how well the police, the CPS and the Probation Service support victims of crime<sup>3</sup> found that communication between agencies wasn't always consistent.

Our approach to VCoP scrutiny provides reassurance for the LCJB that learning is captured, best practice promoted and policy amended. The criminal justice joint inspection goes on to say:

We found that instead of trying to meet the needs of victims, the three bodies focused on whether they complied with the 12 rights set out in the Victims' Code. This focus on complying with the letter of the Victims' Code, rather than the victim's individual needs, has resulted in an emphasis on process rather than quality. Compliance with the 12 rights also varied.

We found that a lack of good-quality information and poor communication between criminal justice bodies added to the problems of an already overstretched criminal justice system. Criminal justice bodies need to work more collaboratively and focus on the quality of their contact with victims and not just on the process.

Recognising the value that this partnership approach to scrutiny and assurance brings, future panels are already scheduled for December 2024 and February and March 2025. Final reports are published on the OPCC website.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information materials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales-and-supporting-public-information-materials)

<sup>3</sup> [Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/publications/meeting-the-needs-of-victims-in-the-criminal-justice-system)

<sup>4</sup> [LCJB scrutiny panels · Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Commissioner \(devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.devonandcornwall-pcc.gov.uk/scrutiny-panels)

## Action two: Preparing for the implementation of the Victims and Prisoners Bill

The importance of appropriate justice and support for victims and witnesses throughout the criminal justice system is laid out within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Nov 2020) and the Witness Charter: Standards of care for witnesses in the criminal justice system (updated Dec 2013).

It is the purpose of the Victims and Witnesses sub-group to work together to understand where inefficiencies or gaps in the offer exist, identify where improvements can be made, make recommendations and champion change across the offer, in order to achieve a more connected and whole-system approach that is more effective in responding to people's needs.

The multi-agency forum is held quarterly to facilitate professional discussions and sharing of information across the criminal justice partnership. These include updates on the national operating model<sup>5</sup> (NOM) for rape and serious sexual offences (RaSSO), the victims' voice and lived experience scheme, the development of a victims' services data dashboard and an opportunity to discuss the impact of legislation now that the Victims and Prisoners Bill has become law.<sup>6</sup>

Since the draft bill was published, there have been several key changes to specific clauses to strengthen and refine the legislation;

1. Clarified the definition of victim to include bereaved families and persons born as a result of rape and who will benefit from the Victims' Code of Practice.
2. Emphasised the distinct needs of child victims, for example, commissioners must consider specific needs of children when preparing a commissioning strategy to deliver ISVA/IDVA services, and under the DA Act 2021 children are victims in their own right when experiencing the effects of domestic abuse.
3. Puts a duty on relevant bodies to promote awareness of the Victims' Code.
4. Keep the Victims' Code under review.
5. Publish compliance information around the Victims' Code, so there is cross-system transparency for how the criminal justice system delivers for victims. This will be possible to see on national and local levels. PCCs will be required to take reasonable steps to make the information accessible for the public.
6. Expand the duty for named agencies to respond to recommendations in the Victims' Commissioner's annual report. This change ensures that recommendations are considered and responded to within 56 days.
7. Introduced a requirement for criminal justice inspectorates to consult with the Victims' Commissioner when developing their work programmes.
8. Better reflect the flexibility of ISVAs and IDVA roles, noting that they may offer support to those connected to a victim, such as families or friends.
9. Place a duty on PCCs, Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards to collaborate when commissioning support services for victims of domestic abuse, criminal conduct of a sexual nature and other serious violence.
10. Duty to collaborate in relation to relevant victim support services (Integrated Care Boards and Local Authorities)

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<sup>5</sup> [Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Victims and Prisoners Bill becomes law - UK Parliament](#)



## The Victims' Code

The [Victims' Code](#) is no longer optional. The final law has strengthened victims' rights, making it clear that victims require their rights within the Victims' Code, rather than simply saying they should receive them. The law has also given responsibility to the Secretary of State and Attorney General to review compliance with the Code and has given them the power to issue a notice to criminal justice agencies that fail to deliver victims' rights.

The Bill details four overarching principles that the Code must reflect:

- Should be provided with information to help them understand the criminal justice process;
- Should be able to access services which support them (including, where appropriate, specialist services);
- Should have the opportunity to make their views heard in the criminal justice process; and
- Should be able to challenge decisions which have a direct impact on them.

## VCoP Compliance

The Code compliance oversight framework is being introduced to oversee implementation and effectiveness. It will ask bodies to provide information on the formats in which they offer the Code to victims, and more generally will require bodies to collect information from victims on whether they are aware of the Code. Information will be overseen by both local and national oversight boards, to enable the sharing of best practice as well as to identify and address performance issues. There is also an increased focus on victims' issues in inspections to provide further insight into the effectiveness of actions taken.

## Promoting awareness of the Victims' Code

The specified bodies already have processes in place to inform victims about the Code. However, these vary across the criminal justice system with no way of monitoring how effective they are. The guidance will make it clear that victims who are engaged with a service should be made aware of the Code at the most appropriate time for them, either in writing or verbally.

## Action three: Listening and learning from the experiences of victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO)

Significant work is being undertaken in this area by the police lead for the RaSSO portfolio to reduce victim attrition, increase reporting and improve public confidence.

Victim attrition data has been analysed from the National Victim Experience survey, and a survey recently conducted with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs<sup>7</sup>) who play an important role in providing specialist tailored support to victims and survivors of sexual violence. This has provided insight into why victims withdraw, and as a result, the police are working towards:

- Police investigators will issue the RaSSO Victim Information Guide to every victim.
- Police Sexual Offences Liaison Officers (SOLO) are skilled officers who will be accessible to all RaSSO victims, with ISVA services offered to every victim from the earliest opportunity.
- Embedding a formal process to record victim withdrawal (which will help to identify potential for re-engagement).

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<sup>7</sup> [The role of the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser \(ISVA\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/independent-sexual-violence-advisors)

- Products from the RASSO National Operating Model (NOM) have been introduced to facilitate improved victim communications and confidence which include a Victim Information Guide, a Memorandum of Understanding for the police and ISVA service, and a 'Risk, Need, and Safeguarding Management Plan'.
- Mandating that all investigators of RASSO complete the RASSO Investigation Skills Development Programme, which is informed by learning from Op Soteria.

Data from the National Victim Experience Survey and information from SOLOs and ISVAs indicates a positive impact on victim confidence to report. Data suggests victims are now reporting earlier, enabling improved forensic opportunities. Investigations are being positively impacted through Early Advice from the CPS.

Devon and Cornwall Police have better understanding of the positive role that ISVAs play in the support for victims and police data shows the numbers of victims withdrawing is declining whilst the numbers of rapes is still increasing.

There is also an improved understanding of the use of civil orders to ensure a better suspect-focused approach and ability to tackle repeat offending behaviour. Increased external communications has positively impacted victim engagement through platforms such as Sexual Violence Awareness Week and promotion of the National Victim Experience Survey. There is also improved engagement with police and the ISVA , Independent Advisors, DASV partnerships, and the NHS Sexual Safety Committee.

## Priority two: Ensure efficient and effective criminal justice

### Action one: Getting case file quality right at the first hearing – achieving efficiency in terms of quality and timeliness, ensuring justice is secured at the first opportunity

Given the critical importance that prosecution file quality and timeliness has on the securing of justice for victims of crime, the LCJB has maintained a strong focus on this area in the reporting period. As part of this, in consultation with the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the South West and the Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall Police, the LCJB Chair commissioned a formal scrutiny inquiry into this area in collaboration with the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

A detailed inquiry into file quality and timeliness from a victim's perspective across the Devon and Cornwall Police force area commenced in January 2024. There are other reports, notably those from HMICFRS which already identify procedural matters and overall police performance in relation to file quality, but this inquiry details those matters specifically which impact on victims of crime and how they receive justice.

The primary focus of the scrutiny was on Devon and Cornwall Police practices and in particular, where they interfaced with other bodies such as the Criminal Prosecution Services. Where victims engaged with other organisations and those commissioned to support them as they journeyed through the processes of getting to the courts, this was also examined. The scrutiny identified the complexity of large organisational structures and the need to optimise the use of data and other evidence to drive system change. It touched on different organisational cultures and differences in organisational priorities. Although it was ultimately the level of service provided to victims of crime that was scrutinised, timeliness and the level of communication provided to support victims were also reviewed.

The inquiry identified both good practice and areas for improvement and resulted in 32 recommendations both for the police and the wider criminal justice system.

Throughout the period of the scrutiny inquiry all the participating agencies have continued with their own improvement journeys, so the scrutiny can only ever represent a moment in time as changes are continually being made.

In addition to this formal inquiry, there continue to be regular multi-agency crown and magistrate court performance meetings and Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIM) to continually review and address performance.

## Action two: Improving the timeliness in youth justice delivery to minimise any adverse system impact

Firstly, it's worth mentioning that the previous delays in CJ around processing charge cases are now resolved so child cases are being reviewed within a matter of a couple of weeks where previously it was months. The CPS are also fast-tracking child cases for charging consultations.

Collaborative youth justice meetings are ongoing between the Police, the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Youth Justice Service (YJS), CPS, HMCTS, and the magistracy, as required, in order to discuss the police-led youth justice improvement work. Progress has also been made in the development of a data dashboard, which is being revised further following consultation.

Progress has recently been made regarding the implementation of a child Deferred Prosecution Scheme (DPS) which will reduce the number of prosecutions and prevent cases being delayed through police file preparation, CJ file management, CPS consultation and court time. It is anticipated that work will begin to implement this between September and December 2024. The DPS will also be a big step in addressing racial and other disparities.

Agreement has been received in principle for the introduction of a 'point of arrest' diversion scheme (Direct Diversion) aimed at fast-tracking lower-level offences to speedy informal disposal and timely intervention. Implementation of this scheme will require a force review of youth specialist resources to ensure police intervention can be delivered consistently.

There is also work ongoing to formalise the police and YJS Joint Decision arrangements through a unified protocol that covers all 4 YJS areas within Devon and Cornwall. The draft document has been out for consultation over the summer period. This is in line with current national best practice and will help drive consistency in Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) decision making and management of youth justice cases.

Devon and Cornwall Police have also initiated a conversation between regional police forces and the CPS, with the support of the YJB to consider opportunities to reduce the number of cases involving low level motoring offences going to court.

## Priority three: Reduce Reoffending

### Action one: Getting Out of Court Resolutions right through scrutiny of cases

The scrutiny of Out of Court Resolutions (OoCRs) for Adult and Youth cases is overseen by the LCJB Business Manager on behalf of the Chair of the LCJB. Youth and Adult OoCR scrutiny panels are scheduled over a 12-month period, with 4 panels conducted per year for each. Like the partnership approach to VCoP scrutiny, OoCR scrutiny panels also receive very positive engagement and are extremely well supported through attendance of relevant representatives from the Police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), HMCTS, the Magistracy, Youth Justice Service (YJS), Youth Justice Board (YJB) and relevant support services as appropriate.

In April 2023 a decision was made to separate the OoCR process, in order to review adult and youth cases separately. This has been successful in securing the right partnership engagement at each meeting and now allows for full and effective review of cases.

To date (since September 2021) a total of 164 cases have been reviewed over 15 OoCR scrutiny panels. A summary of the results shows that 21% of cases discussed at panel were considered to be consistent with Police and CPS Policy, 38% were consistent but with observations, 36% were deemed to be inconsistent, with the remaining 5% falling to the category where the panel were unable to reach a conclusion. Examples of learning outcomes and good practice include:

- Where cases were deemed inconsistent with policy, CPS advice should have been sought.
- Previous offending history is not always taken into consideration and therefore the issue of the OoCR is inconsistent with policy, such as the issuing of multiple community resolutions within a 12-month period.
- Incorrect crime classification.
- Instances of the police using community resolutions, which were not sufficient to address the perpetrators' risk of reoffending, for example 'a verbal apology' was the reparation.
- The need for earlier engagement with the Youth Justice Service.
- Information about Restorative Justice not always provided to the victim.
- The panel noted some excellent engagement with schools, colleges, and parents.
- Where the police have established Youth Intervention Clinics, these have provided some excellent engagement with early interventions and diversion for children.
- Timely referrals to support services.
- Evidence of good multi-agency working.

Feedback from each panel is provided to the police commander for Criminal Justice and Reducing Reoffending to consider the scrutiny reports and disseminate any organisation learning.

Panel members from all the agencies involved in this detailed scrutiny are thanked for their time in reviewing the cases and attending the panel meetings, making this a really positive partnership approach to effective scrutiny with professional challenge and multi-agency learning.

*"The quality and organisation for the panel meetings is consistently excellent, and there is a clear and coherent cycle of continuous learning and improvement evident."*

## Action two: To understand the reducing re-offending landscape and tailor the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) strategy to meet local needs

A report was shared with the LCJB in March 2024 to provide information and assurance regarding the structure, delivery and performance of the Integrated Offender Management Scheme across the South West Probation region/Devon & Cornwall footprint.

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) was introduced in 2009 to bring a cross-agency response to crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The aim was for the most prolific and problematic offenders to be prioritised and jointly managed by Police, Probation and other partner agencies. The strategy was refreshed in 2021 in order to meet the changing and emerging crime trends across the country.

The refreshed strategy introduced a new, more flexible approach to IOM, moving away from a single defined criteria for IOM cases and introducing three cohorts of IOM to build upon the previous model but also introduce flexibility to enable local areas to continue to use IOM to reflect their local priorities. The refreshed strategy refocused IOM on neighbourhood crime (robbery, burglary, theft from the person and vehicle theft) recognising that currently, neighbourhood offences have the highest levels of reoffending of any offence types and make up a high proportion of overall reoffending. The strategy also focuses IOM on neighbourhood crime, as this group of offenders are particularly well suited to an IOM approach. It is known that many of these offenders have multiple, interlinked reasons why they reoffend including substance misuse, housing and employment needs and mental health issues. IOM aims to support offenders to desist from crime by helping them to meet these underlying needs.

The three cohorts introduced by the refresh are:

- Fixed cohort (priority mandated group) - Neighbourhood crime offenders with a high, very high or prolific risk of reoffending, assessed using the Offender Group Reconviction Score (OGRS).
- Flex cohort - Acquisitive crime that doesn't meet fixed threshold where there is added value.
- Free cohort – 'other' locally determined cohorts of offenders with different needs, risks and offending patterns. This includes schemes focused on serious violence, serious organised crime and domestic abuse. Exeter has a group of 10 (gang with links to county lines) - in essence a young persons' cohort – South Devon exploring similar pathway. So Free is currently based on local trends at Force level (wider D&C) and local command level.

IOM schemes operate across all 5 Police Force Areas (PFA) and the 9 Probation Delivery Units (PDU) in the South West region. In Devon and Cornwall this comprises one PFA and 3 PDUs (Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, Plymouth and Devon & Torbay)

Probation performance of the Fixed cohort is measured and monitored against key performance indicators, which mirror those against which the wider caseload is measured, so allowing for comparison. Critically, the primary difference is that those on the IOM scheme are expected to receive a greater frequency of contact with services, a higher level of supervision intensity and enhanced provision to address their offending (criminogenic) needs.

IOM teams are resourced and managed via the PDU structures, however, the additional funding referenced above has facilitated the creation of a small regional team to drive the scheme and some additional staffing at a local level in 'hotspot' areas, primarily in and around Bristol.

A robust Governance structure is established at strategic, operational and tactical levels to ensure the effective delivery of the scheme. This includes a single oversight governance group, which is well attended by Probation and Police staff from across the region. It was therefore agreed that there is no requirement to convene a separate LCJB sub-group and to utilise these mechanisms through the engagement of the HMPPS (Probation) and LCJB representative, who would act as the conduit between the two.

### Action three: Promote the use of Restorative Justice (RJ) to increase awareness and engagement

Make Amends <sup>8</sup> is an award-winning, Victim Support commissioned service for Devon and Cornwall. A project of Shekinah, Make Amends delivers Restorative Justice across the region. The service provides support to people who have been affected by crime, conflict, anti-social behaviour or harm caused by the actions of others.

Restorative Justice creates opportunities for people who have been harmed to come together into communication with those who are responsible for that harm, in order to get answers to their questions and to explain the effect the incident has had on them. It gives those who accept responsibility for the harm, an insight into the real impact their actions have had on the person affected, their friends and family or the community. The process aims to help everyone move on.

Data has been attained from Make Amends to understand the scale of referrals to the service and the up-take. Data for April – June 2024 shows a decline in the use of Restorative Justice with 27 new referrals being made in this quarter, of which 18 were classed as sensitive and complex. In the 30 cases this closed quarter, 26 had a successful RJ outcome.

Make Amends have now completed work on Safer Streets 5 in Paignton, under which they trained an additional 8 volunteers and 2 RJ Ambassadors to facilitate RJ interventions. This approach aims to provide sustainability of the work over the long term. The neighbourhood policing team at Plymouth are working with officers from the Paignton area to shadow officers to better understand the effects that ASB incidents have on the community and the real impact RJ can provide.

In addition, work has commenced with Torbay Council to target local schools and introduce the use of Restorative Practice. A pilot school has been approached and Make Amends will now begin to collect baseline data. This includes statistical data gathering, plus looking at attendance and exclusion rates over a period of time, in order to evidence any reactive and preventative measures.

Work continues with Cornwall NHS Trust around the use of RJ in secure mental health settings. A successful conference has been held between a patient and ward manager and the use of Restorative Circles, to support staff teams affected by harm where patients lack capacity.

The CJ and You interactive resource for Victims and Witnesses also includes information about the use of Restorative Justice and explains the opportunities for people affected by crime.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://shekinah.co.uk/make-amends>

## Priority four: Address disproportionality

### Action one: To review disproportionality data held across the CJS

The intent of this action was to agree a framework for reporting, gather data and identify gaps in available data across the CJS. Whilst it is understood that work is being undertaken within each CJS agency independently to understand disproportionality, this action hasn't been progressed as a collective. The linked publication 'CPS charging decisions – examining demographic disparities in the outcomes of our decision making' <sup>9</sup>, is an example of such work, as is the Devon and Cornwall community scrutiny panel <sup>10</sup> which aims to build trust and confidence between the police and the community they serve through accountability, transparency and training. The panel meets online monthly, in order to review the police's use of both force and stop and search.

### Action two: To address the issues of inequality relating to women on remand in Devon and Cornwall which compromise effective justice.

The LCJB task and finish group, 'The Maximising the Dignity of Women Throughout the Criminal Justice System', have worked together to address the issues relating to inequality for women on remand in Devon and Cornwall, where effective justice is compromised. The group is now working in collaboration with key stakeholders to introduce creative solutions. A review of the challenges faced by women is also underway, including the transportation and logistics from HMP Eastwood Park to courts in Devon and Cornwall, as well as bail and custody procedures, and accommodation.

### Transportation of Women to Courts

The current Prisoner Escort & Custody Services (PECs) contract, established in 2020, presents challenges in addressing the specific needs of women on remand transported from HMP Eastwood Park. Designed for a mixed-gender population, the contract may not adequately consider the unique requirements of these women, although a positive meeting held between LCJB members (facilitated by HMCTS) provided an opportunity for discussions with senior national representatives from PECs. While these discussions were positive and addressed the need for a women-specific contract with minimum standards, its implementation is not expected before 2030. This extended timeline for a more suitable contract highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring. This monitoring is crucial to ensure current practices, particularly regarding transportation and health assessments, adequately meet the needs of women on remand. Channels for communication were agreed, in order to provide feedback directly to PECs where issues were encountered.

### Bail and Custody Procedures

The group has also discussed the judicial decision-making process regarding bail and custody. It is acknowledged that courts can only make decisions based on the information available to them and that judges will only remand individuals when necessary. Group members have identified, through the review of several case studies, that up-to-date and relevant information is not always being obtained and passed to the courts. Information is often being gathered at the very last minute, resulting in courts not being presented with a true picture of the defendant's circumstances / risks / attitude and behaviours. This has therefore been identified as a gap, particularly the requirement for better support for women within the criminal justice system.

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<sup>9</sup> [CPS charging decisions - examining demographic disparities in the outcomes of our decision making | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

<sup>10</sup> [How we use stop and search | Devon & Cornwall Police \(devon-cornwall.police.uk\)](#)



A review has also been undertaken to understand the lessons learnt following the use of Newquay custody centre in supporting the remand of a female prisoner whilst their Crown Court trial was taking place at Truro Crown Court. Feedback was obtained from all key stakeholders and shared with delegates. Whilst the initiative was deemed supportive and there is recognition of the positive effort and engagement provided, it is recognised that this solution did not meet all the needs of the women concerned and was challenging to deliver.

The MOJ team managing female offenders recognises that unfortunately there is an ongoing challenge due to the geographically dispersed nature of the women's custodial estate, with women in the far South West (and parts of Wales) most commonly impacted. As a result, they are now exploring options to invest in improved video conferencing centres and have provided a contact within South Wales to consider how they have tackled similar situations.

## Accommodation

The Women's Centre Cornwall and Probation have been working together to look at data on housing outcomes for women leaving HMP Eastwood Park. Probation provided data covering six months from December 2023 to May 2024. This data shows that of 56 women, 38% were released homeless or in short-term/transient accommodation (including 3 rough sleeping, 6 'friends/family transient', 1 in hostel/emergency/campsite). 27% had settled/long-term (including 7 in supported accommodation, 6 in social/private rental and 1 homeowner). 20% were placed in HMPPS commissioned accommodation – (CAS) <sup>11</sup>, 2 or 3.

Probation shared details of 11 women released homeless or in transient accommodation (those who had been referred to CRS) for more detailed analysis. It was notable that most of these had multiple stays in prison and many have been recalled since the release recorded in the data. Most have been offered accommodation at some points. Several have clear signs of being victims of abuse or exploitation.

Women's Centre Cornwall continue to co-ordinate weekly Custody Release Planning Meetings and Probation co-ordinate Homelessness Prevention Task group meetings to plan for release. Probation co-ordinates the Supporting Women on Probation Panel (SWOP) in Exeter, which is effective but there is no similar multi-agency forum in other areas. Probation are working on their homelessness strategy and have requested to meet with the Women's Centre Cornwall lived experience group.

Potential future considerations for action by the LCJB:

- Write to housing and homelessness leads from local authorities asking that women leaving prison are prioritised in supported housing design and provision, in order to prevent further crimes being committed against or by those women, and to support public safety.
- Request data from HMPPS on recall rates for those released from prison with different housing outcomes and explore the provision of more appropriate accommodation to prevent recall. Recommend that SWOP meetings are held in other areas across Devon and Cornwall.

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<sup>11</sup> [The Community Accommodation Service - Contracted services - Justice Data](#)

## Priority five: Maximise communications and engagement

### Action one: To raise awareness and share news across the CJ partnership

The first quarterly LCJB newsletter was published in August 2024. This contained information about the election, the King's Speech and relevant CJS legislation; it also featured an update from HMCTS on pre-recorded cross examination – improving support for children going to court, information about the probation reset and partnership scrutiny. Newsletters are scheduled to be distributed between the quarterly LCJB meetings and will contain relevant information from across the partnership. Board members are asked to share articles of interest and share across their own networks.

There has been a continued LCJB input at Magistrate annual meetings across Devon and Cornwall with presentations provided in Tiverton, Ivybridge and Truro Magistrates court, sharing information around Out of Court Resolutions and how cases are scrutinised. These have received positive feedback, with further attendance planned throughout the year to support Youth Court Bench Chairs.

The OPCC has just launched its new website which contains current LCJB information and associated documents. The new site has been designed to create a more accessible and transparent platform for the public and partners - the simpler design means that those with visual impairments will find it easier to navigate. There is also a verification system which will reduce spam and the management system is simpler to use. All VCoP and OoCR scrutiny reports will be published via this platform, following agreement through the relevant governance processes.

Finally, [Criminal Justice and You](#) was launched in March 2024, with the aim of transforming the experience of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system. A unique, multi-media resource commissioned by the LCJB, it was developed by 'victims for victims' and has already received very positive feedback and national attention. It brings all aspects of the criminal justice system into one place, helping to demystify every step of the process.



The new resource was hailed as an “invaluable asset” by Victims Minister, Laura Farris, in March 2024 and features 14 videos of partners working in their own area of expertise from within Devon and Cornwall Police, Victim Support, the Crown Prosecution Service, His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service and the Youth Justice Service – all speaking directly to victims and witnesses to explain what to expect at each stage, from reporting a crime through to the conclusion of a case. There is information about accessing victim services and restorative justice, as well as what happens if a case doesn’t go to court or if the perpetrator is under the age of 18. Details are also provided about how to make a complaint if a victim or witness is unhappy with the service they received. Further videos by Citizen’s Advice Bureau, the Parole Board, and His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service have also been included. To ensure accessibility, the videos feature a British Sign Language translator and subtitles in multiple languages, and transcripts are viewable as a plain text document for anyone who experiences difficulty with a video format.

*“The "Criminal Justice and You" launch was truly impressive and far reaching in my view.*

*The speakers were memorable for all the best reasons, and the initiative has huge and positive implications to support those, typically in most need of the services, in a coherent way”.*

The resource is being promoted on social media and attracting around 1000 visits each month. Enquiries from other LCJBs across the country have resulted in work being undertaken to recreate the resource as a best-practice template. A package has been shared to minimise duplication and encourage the development of a national product, but one which reflects local services.

A huge thank you for all those who contributed.



## Action two: Explore piloting a Local Criminal Justice Court Reporting Scheme (LCJCRS) to provide balanced reporting and raise public awareness of local criminal justice

The Police and Crime Commissioner remains committed to delivering a pilot court reporting scheme to deliver on the Local Criminal Justice Board's commitment to improving communication and transparency. The proposal would fund a third-party supplier to provide content from magistrates and crown court in Devon and Cornwall for a three-month period, this will be distributed to publishers, who will be able to publish at no cost. The scheme is based on the successful Local Democracy Reporter Scheme, a national BBC-funded programme which has been running since 2017. Since the last meeting of the LCJB, discussions have taken place with potential suppliers and work has progressed to draft contracts. The OPCC is confident a contract can be awarded this autumn/winter. Following delivery of the contract, an impact report will be prepared which will measure the number of articles published and estimated audiences.

## Action three: Communicate progress against LCJB actions and priorities

This document aims to provide LCJB members with a summary of the work carried out by the respective panels and subgroups on behalf of the board. It details progress against each of the priorities and actions agreed at the 2023 planning day.

## Working together

In response to the disorder nationally and locally in Plymouth on 6 August 2024, the strategic leadership from across the criminal justice system called an extraordinary meeting to ensure they were working together as effectively and efficiently as possible. This saw the publication of an open letter to the communities of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to state how appalled the LCJB were at the violence that had occurred in our area under the guise of protest. The letter stressed that whilst legitimate protest would be supported, violence, racism, disorder, criminal damage and the community fear that this generated, would not be tolerated.

This is an example of the benefits of having an established network of criminal justice strategic leads and a forum within which meetings can happen quickly, ensuring a joined-up and timely approach. This has been recognised as best practice nationally.



### **Strict embargo: Thursday 8 August 0001 hrs** **Violent disorder in Plymouth**

#### **An open letter to the communities of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly**

As the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, we are appalled by the violence that has occurred in our area in recent days under the guise of protest. We will always support legitimate protest, but violence, racism, disorder, criminal damage, and the community fear that this generates will not be tolerated.

We would like to assure the communities we serve that the agencies within the criminal justice system are dealing with criminality swiftly. You will already have seen charges of individuals involved both locally and nationally. Several individuals have already been remanded into custody at various locations. Of the six people arrested in Plymouth, four have pleaded guilty to offences under Section 2 of the Public Order Act 1986. Sentencing for their crimes is due to happen today (Thursday 8 August) and their photographs have already been published. Working together with our LCJB partners, we will act quickly and continue to use all powers available at our disposal to bring these criminals to justice.

Our partnership intelligence and information systems ensure that we will have local and national resources available to respond and deal as necessary to future disorder to keep our communities safe.

We would like to thank the law-abiding people of Devon and Cornwall for their support at this time and give a commitment that where we have the evidence of people choosing to participate in any activity of this nature, either directly or online, they will be arrested, detained, charged and sentenced.

If you have any information about violent disorder being planned, please contact Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org) or call the police on **101**. In an emergency call **999**.

Yours sincerely,

**Alison Hernandez**  
Police & Crime Commissioner  
Devon, Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly  
LCJB Chair

**Jim Colwell**  
Acting Chief Constable  
Devon & Cornwall Police

**Victoria Cook**  
Chief Crown Prosecutor  
Crown Prosecution Service  
South West

