



DEVON AND CORNWALL
CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

Criminal Justice System: working together for the public



End of year report 2024-25

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)



Despite a challenging year for the Criminal Justice System, I am extremely proud of our collective achievements as a Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Following the horrific murders of 3 children in Southport in July 2024, serious disorder largely fuelled by incorrect speculation on social media occurred in various towns and cities in the UK. This disorder also took place within Devon and Cornwall, primarily Plymouth on 6 August 2024. The policing response was rapid and professional, and our agencies worked together effectively to deliver swift justice. Since then, we have continued to work

together to reflect on what went well and whether there were any opportunities to improve our approach for the future. The criminal justice landscape remains difficult with Crown Court backlogs increasing and high caseloads for Probation Officers at a time when the Chief Inspector of Probation has voiced concerns about too few staff. There are new measures within the Prisons to deter violence and protect frontline prison staff from potential threats, including investment in better protective equipment for prison officers as part of the Government's plan for change.

Looking forward there is an incredibly busy time ahead for everybody working across the wider criminal justice landscape. The impact of the Government's devolution agenda on local government is likely to bring about the biggest changes to local government in a generation, with more power being given to local authorities. Similarly, the Government are pressing ahead with the reform of policing with the new Home Secretary about to publish details of wide-ranging changes.

At a local level, the continuation of the effective partnerships that we have developed through our local criminal justice board put us in a good place to prepare for these changes and as I prepare for my second decade as Police and Crime Commissioner I look forward to continuing our excellent work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Hernandez'.

Alison Hernandez

Police and Crime Commissioner,
Chair of the Local Criminal Justice
Board

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 Boards¹, 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 2023-204 focused on support for victims and witnesses, efficient and effective criminal justice, reducing reoffending, addressing disproportionality and maximising communications and engagement.

¹ [Criminal Justice Board - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-justice-board)

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 infographic on pages 6 & 7 of this report outlines each of the priorities, associated actions, nominated lead and desired outcomes following the LCJB planning day held in September 2024. This report reviews the progress made against these and will inform the discussions for the collective focus moving forward for 2025-26.

Our collective focus 2024-25

1 PRIORITY

Ensure efficient and effective criminal justice

Actions

- A** Focus on a child first approach across all CJ partners
- B** Delivering the file quality scrutiny inquiry recommendations
- C** Review potential learning opportunities from the dynamic CJ partnership response to the large-scale disorder in Devon and Cornwall in August 2024

Lead

- Vicky Cook
CPS
- Jim Pearce, Devon & Cornwall Police
- Jim Pearce, Devon & Cornwall Police

2 PRIORITY

Keep victims engaged to secure justice

Actions

- A** Minimising avoidable delays to achieve justice for victims
- B** Understanding hidden harm and the victim's journey

Lead

- Angie May
HMCTS
- Vicky Gleave
CPS

3 PRIORITY

Address disproportionality

Actions

- A** Understanding disproportionality across the criminal justice system
- B** Address issues of inequality relating to women within the CJS
- C** To understand the wider community impact following the large-scale disorder

Lead

- Alison Hernandez
PCC
- Isabel Livingstone –
VCSE rep Cornwall
- Josh Stunell – VCSE
rep Devon

The LCJB's business as usual activity

SCRUTINY

Victims' Code of Practice (VCoP) Compliance

Child Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) Scrutiny

Adult Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) Scrutiny

ENGAGEMENT

Quarterly newsletter

Representation at national and regional CJ meetings

Presentation at national and local conferences

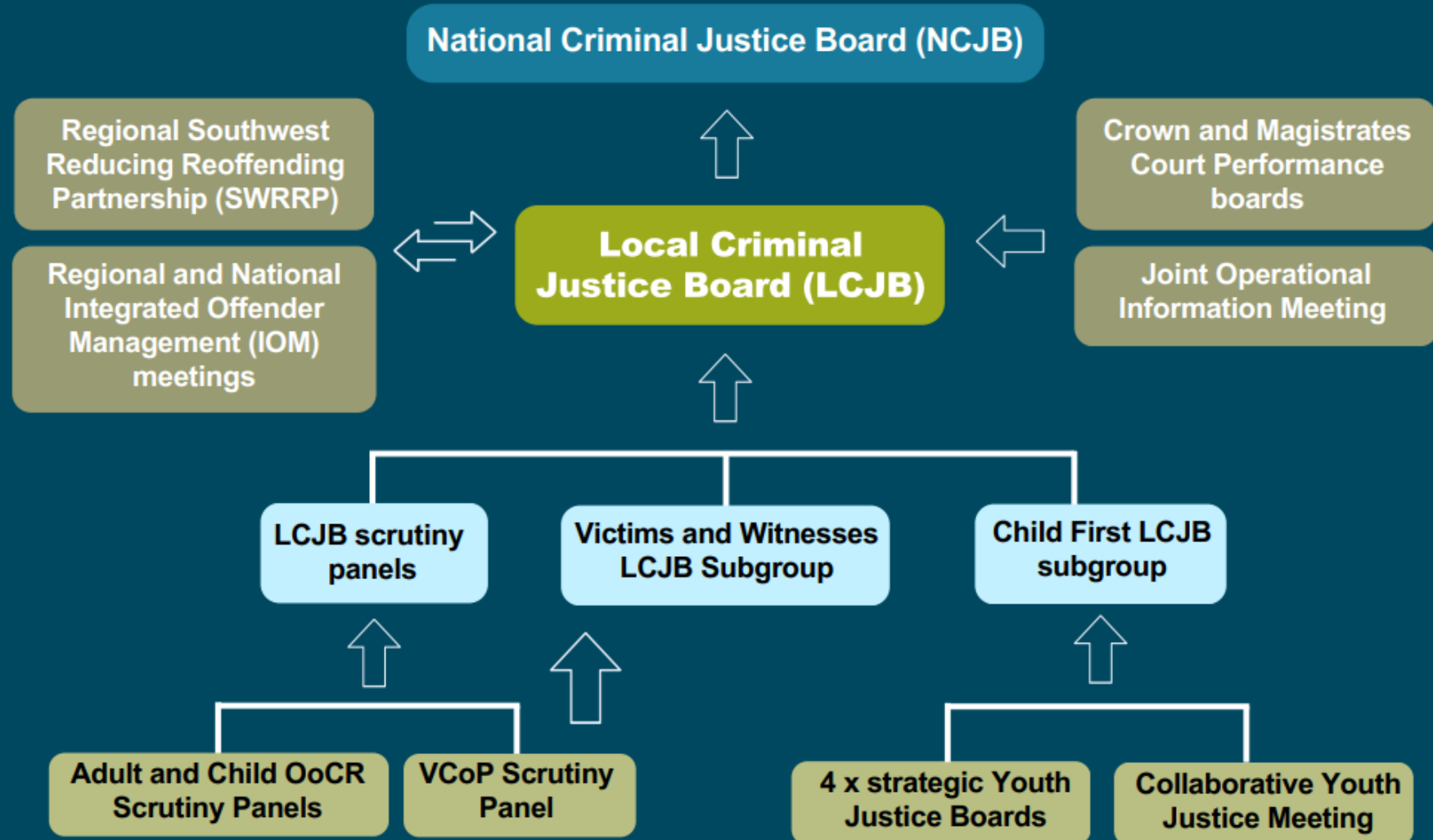
SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

Updates & maintenance of CJ & You Resource

Facilitation of LCJB board and subgroup meetings

Supporting the delivery of LCJB priorities

LCJB governance and key meetings



Priority one: Ensure efficient and effective criminal justice

Action one: Focus on a child first approach across all CJ Partners

The key purpose of the Child First subgroup is to enable all relevant agencies to meet, reflect, review, and collaborate to improve the timeliness and pathways for children whether as defendants, victims, or witnesses, whilst ensuring a 'child first' and trauma informed approach and to see children as children.

A Child First approach should equate to the best outcome possible, prioritising the best interests of children and recognising their needs, keeping children out of the Criminal Justice System with supportive and diversionary resolutions when appropriate.

The Subgroup is to provide oversight and support to the LCJB, helping to ensure the effective delivery of the objectives below:

1. Understand statutory requirements of all agencies to enable the prioritisation of child cases.
2. Develop Key Data Sets.
3. Ensure consistent policies and processes throughout the Peninsula, in line with the Child First national framework.
4. Promote Child First training for officers and those working with children.
5. Link into the other LCJB areas of business i.e The South West Reducing Re-offending Partnership (SWRRP), addressing disproportionality review work, Youth Court subgroup, Victims and witnesses and performance management.
6. Undertake process mapping exercise to identify gaps in timeliness in all aspects, quality of interventions.
7. Promote a childhood removed from the justice system using prevention, diversion, and intervention.
8. Identify gaps in victim support services.
9. Explore national initiatives and understand and implement the 'child first' approach.
10. Reduce First Time Entrants into the CJS

Attendees: Lead representative from each agency

- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Youth Justice Board (YJB)
- Youth Justice Service (YJS)
- Office of Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
- His Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Services (HMCTS)
- Devon and Cornwall Police
- Representative from HMPPS (Probation), the Magistracy and VCSE as required

To date the following has been achieved through individual organisational development or as a direct action linked to the subgroup:

- Child First Approach Action Plan
- Development of a child Information form
- Work being undertaken to review policies across all agencies and use of language
- The identification of cases over six months old or deemed to be high risk for review by police and CPS to see what action can be taken to expedite.
- The introduction of the Devon and Cornwall Police Child first Justice Pathway to improve its approach to child diversion and Out of Court Resolution (OoCR). This includes a child

deferred charge outcome that expands the OoCR offer, enables more children to benefit from diversion and allows the police to address racial and other disparities in the justice system.

- Devon and Cornwall Police have a new simplified process for police Evidence Review Officers (EROs)
- Development of training material to support the four-point framework for child OoCR
- Implemented a Child Information Form to reduce duplication
- Introduction of a new Force governance structure to provide oversight and direction regarding cases involving children
- Defence Advice Leaflet (to promote OoCR to reduce FTE in CJS)

Action two: Delivering the file quality inquiry recommendations

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 35 recommendations both for the police and the wider criminal justice system.²

In June 2025 an update was provided to LCJB members, which included information about the joint plan between the police and CPS in progressing the recommendations and improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system to the direct benefit of the public.

This plan includes:

- Information Technology
- Complexity and levels of experience
- Partnership working

New governance and measures are now in place to ensure the recommendations are progressed, with an emphasis on cultural change and staff surveys and training.

The S/JOIM (Strategic Joint Operational Improvement Meeting) Priorities were described as:

- File and investigative quality, including disclosure
- Collaboration and Prosecution team approach

² [File-quality-and-timeliness-exec-summary-and-recommendations-.pdf](#)

- Responsiveness to change
- Victim-centred, suspect-focussed, context led
- Improved CJ outcomes, consistent with or higher than the national average

A number of KPIs has been developed to run alongside how victims feel.

Force Directors Guidance Assessment (DGA) Compliance

- The primary measure of file quality will be through the DGA compliance
- The trajectory for compliance for Devon and Cornwall is increasing and is now above the national average. Prosecutors will now assess each file submitted by the police and therefore ensure that this data is accurate.

Pre-charge Performance Indicators

- All measures have improved with the National average improving by 3% and Action plan rates now at 11.60% with 43 days for a charging decision.
- Guilty plea rates are improving with a positive trajectory.
- Defendants electing to be heard in the Crown Court with no plea entered have increased over 12 months, with either way offences which could easily be dealt with at Magistrates, especially with the increase in sentencing powers.
- There are no concerns relating to non-convictions due to victim and witness issues and this remains positive for Devon and Cornwall.

As of August 2025, the force was at 69.1% Compliance with the National File Standards compared to the 43% figure published in the October 23 Policing Productivity Review. Positive changes made however continued focus will continue to be important. This continues to be managed within the JOIM (Joint investigation management meetings between the Police and CPS to improve investigation and prosecution of crimes) and a 12-month review following the publication of the report will be presented back to LCJB in December 2025

Action three: Review potential learning opportunities from the dynamic CJ partnership response to the large-scale disorder in Devon and Cornwall in August 2024

Context and Background

Following the murders of 3 children and the serious injury of 10 others 8 of whom were children in Southport in July 2024, serious disorder largely fuelled by incorrect speculation on social media occurred in various towns and cities in the UK. This disorder also took place within Devon and Cornwall, primarily 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 Local Criminal Justice Board (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.

The Devon and Cornwall LCJB took a dynamic and proactive partnership approach to these events but agreed at the LCJB annual planning day on 25 September 2024, that they wanted to take the opportunity to reflect upon the experience and look for opportunities and learning within the wider criminal justice system and to share good practice.

The aim of the debrief was to share good practice and identify partnership agency learning in relation to criminal justice processes to inform strategy and policy development across the system following the disorder in August 2024.

The objectives of this debrief were to:

- Review dynamic engagement and consultation across the CJ partnership throughout the period of disorder.
- To identify what went well and capture lessons learned.
- Report on the impact on business-as-usual activity because of the criminal justice approach taken i.e. displacement of cases and workload.
- To assess the overall impact on all agencies and highlight considerations for inclusion within appropriate strategic and contingency planning.
- Identify good practice that can be transferred to existing processes and approaches.

To enable success, Criminal Justice partners agreed appropriate access to relevant data, systems and people. A range of methods were utilised, including:

- A review of available documentation, material, and policies.
- Scrutiny of specific cases.
- Semi structured interviews with relevant stakeholders.
- Facilitation of a structured debrief and associated report

Good practice was identified throughout this review which includes the following:

- Early identification of guilty pleas.
- Judges' expectation that sentencing after guilty plea would happen the next day requiring Defence Co-operation.
- Compelling evidence that could not be disputed - CCTV, Stills from social media, Drone Footage, evidence spotters, Body Work Video (BWV).
- Identifiable suspects investigated and brought to court.
- Planning the number of daily arrests so not to overburden custody and the Magistrates Court.

The review also provided an opportunity for cross agency learning. Highlighted below are some of the areas which have informed the wider recommendations:

- Communication between agencies needs to be improved.
- Deviation in policies – for example youth justice.
- No point of contacts in some agencies (see recommendation 11).
- Local Resilience Forum (LRF) principles need to be better aligned and embedded at a tactical level within partnership agencies to improve response to critical and major incidents.
- Partnerships sit at strategic and tactical levels, but also need to sit at an operational level to assist all agencies in practical delivery and relationships

Conclusion

We live in a complex fast-moving and social media influenced world. This can mean protests can occur organically and rapidly fuelled by misinformation, hate and false premises as in this case. Further dynamic large-scale disorder or disturbance is therefore always a possibility. All partner agencies and bodies managed the events in Plymouth in August 2024 well and the speed of response together with a robust confident action undoubtedly stemmed further disturbance. This is testament to the

dedication, professionalism, skill and commitment of all concerned.

There are however clear opportunities to improve readiness especially surrounding communication and relationships at tactical and operational levels and to utilise learning regarding approaching swifter justice options for adult offenders.

Processes for managing under 18 defendants should however be strengthened to ensure the appropriate safeguards are followed.

Recommendations

1. Police contingency planning for disorder operations should factor in the potential for assaults on officers and ensure these instances are recorded and where appropriate lead to charges.
2. An improved mechanism for sharing timely Court results between the Police and Courts should be considered.
3. Future planning for disorder policing should include youth offending policies.
4. The use of a video Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in large scale disorder operations should be seen as best practice.
5. Operational liaison between the Courts and Police surrounding next day demand into custody especially around critical and major incidents should be improved to aid dynamic planning.
6. A system for recording sentencing remarks from judges should be considered for wider communication.
7. Probation should be informed in advance of the demand upon their service in large scale disorder and arrest scenarios.
8. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) should be consulted wherever possible prior to a youth being charged to court.
9. The process for implementing dynamic road closures in Plymouth City should be reviewed to include the involvement and communication with outsourced companies.
10. Large scale and major incident policy and contingency plans for all agencies should be reviewed and updated.
11. All agencies should look to develop and embed Local Resilience Forums (LRF) principles within Strategic Coordination Groups and seek to create Tactical Coordination Groups to support the LCJB response to critical and major incidents.

As a result of the recommendation around better links with Local Resilience Forums the following has been agreed:

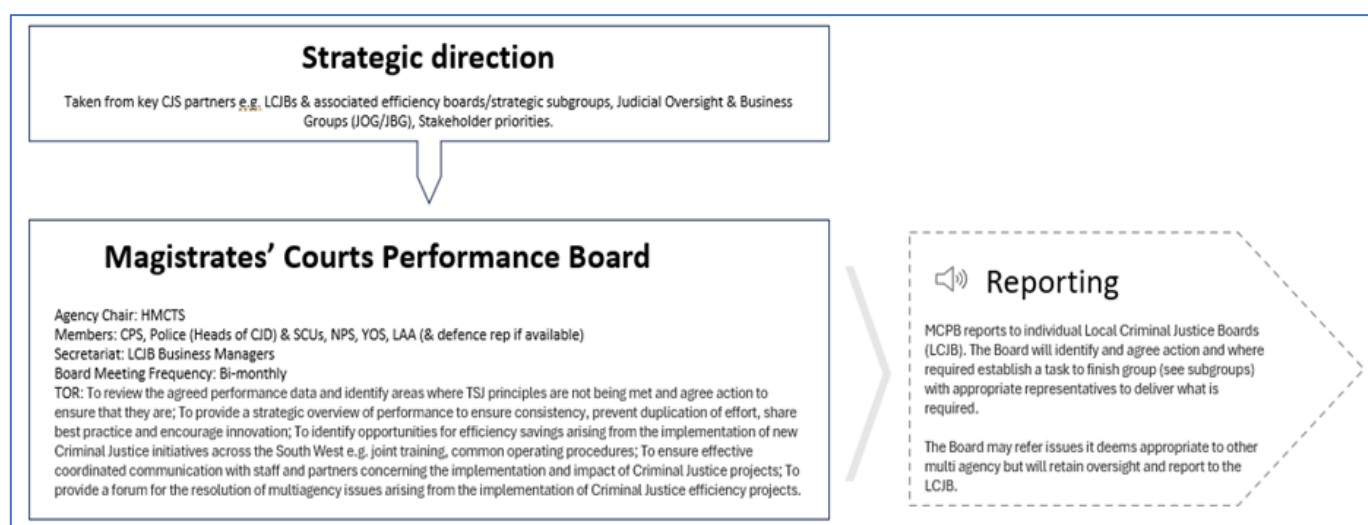
- There is recognition that there is an identified need following the CJ review (post the disorder Aug 24) to have a designated LCJB member to attend the LRF partnership and SCG meetings as a single strategic representative.
- The LCJB representative would then be responsible for gathering any relevant information prior to and post any relevant meetings as the conduit between the LRF executive board and the LCJB
- Training can be provided to the identified LCJB representative on the role of the SCG
- It will be written into the LRF doctrine that the identified LCJB representative will become a standing attendee.

Priority two: Keep victims engaged to secure justice

Action one: Minimising avoidable delays to achieve justice for victims

Following a review undertaken by HMCTS the following action has been undertaken:

- Refreshed Magistrates and Crown Court Performance Boards which are supported by LCJB across the region.
- Review undertaken to establish right representation across the CJS
- New subgroups identified to feed into the MCPB (Youth, Traffic, TSJ, Sentencing performance subgroups)
- Key information from Magistrate and Crown Court Performance Boards will be reported back to LCJBs for information and assurance.



Action two: Understanding hidden harm and the victim's journey

Police and CPS leads met on 7 May 2025 chaired by Vicky Gleave, Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor for the CPS SW, and Assistant Chief Constable Jim Pearce.

The meeting was an open discussion to consider what can be done collectively to ensure the following:

- Hidden harm is identified - the where and how
- Effective engagement with victims
- Identification of offenders, and
- Ultimately protecting victims and bringing offenders to justice.

The group considered how hidden harm could be defined, and agreed: 'Occurs behind closed doors, not always recognised as harm and taking a range of forms including, physical, emotional, psychological and financial abuse' The group felt this quote was clear.

The range of crime types that could be considered to fall within the above definition (from a criminal justice perspective) are non-exhaustive and include Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), Domestic Abuse (DA), Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) and stalking, modern slavery, child

sexual abuse/exploitation, honour-based abuse (HBA, hate crime, domestic servitude, elder abuse and county lines.

The group are working to identify what data can be gathered to understand current performance and demand. However, it is difficult to develop comprehensive intelligence on hidden harm areas as it is reliant on it being reported.

There is a need for awareness and engaging the public is key to ensure those that come into contact with hidden harm are able to identify it and officers are able to recognise it and to consider what exists across the country for example:

- Thames Valley Police have a [Hidden Harm campaign](#)
- [London's Hidden Harms: domestic abuse | Crimestoppers](#)

Actions were taken from this up-date including:

- Using the scrutiny panels to deep dive into hidden harm and use best practice from the Modern Slavery teams
- To consider how a reporting process can be improved and what other partners can provide in terms of data, i.e NHS

Priority three: Address disproportionality

Action one: Understanding disproportionality across the criminal justice system

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'³, is an example of such work, as is the Devon and Cornwall community scrutiny panel⁴ 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.

Crest have been commissioned to look at data collection across the CJS. The scope of this review will be limited to consolidating and understanding existing data capability related to disproportionality in Devon and Cornwall. We do not anticipate doing any direct data collection, and any data analysis will be limited to qualitative analysis of engagement with key partner agencies. The programme of work has commenced and has four phases:

1. a mobilisation phase to ensure effective project set-up and to maximise efficiency to project delivery, with a specific focus on building key relationships and ensure effective project set-up and to maximise efficiency of project delivery, with a specific focus on building key relationships and ensuring appropriate data sharing arrangements are in place.
2. an engagement phase with key agencies to review the available evidence, understand existing data collection capability on measures of disproportionality.
3. a data capability review phase where we analyse and RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rate data capability related to disproportionality for key agencies across the CJS in Devon and Cornwall.
4. a reporting phase where the findings from the previous three phases would be brought together into a comprehensive report and analysis plan for potential data analysis in the future.

The final report will include suggestions for next steps to take the findings from this review further and will be presented to LCJB members at the December 2025 Board meeting.

Action two: Address issues of inequality relating to women within the CJS

The National Police Chiefs' Council has established a strategic meeting for Women in the Criminal Justice System (Women who offend) and is developing a national strategy and delivery plan to support the work of this group. In order to connect with this work on a national level both Devon and Cornwall Police and the OPCC have representation at the meeting. The below information is shared from the draft documentation of this group to highlight their strategic vision and objectives. Feedback will be provided back to the LCJB to ensure local work contributes to the national direction.

³ [CPS charging decisions - examining demographic disparities in the outcomes of our decision making | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

⁴ [How we use stop and search | Devon & Cornwall Police \(devon-cornwall.police.uk\)](#)

Introduction

Women in contact with the Criminal Justice System are amongst the most vulnerable in society. Many experience trauma, domestic abuse, mental health problems or have a history of alcohol / drug misuse / self-harm. They are more likely to be offending because of victimisation including exploitation and coercive control. They often commit non-violent, low-level offences for which many receive short custodial sentences. There is lack of access to resources to break the cycle of offending. Failure to intervene early and to divert where appropriate can result in convictions, which in turn can lead to a loss of accommodation, employment and their children. Given what we know about adverse childhood experiences, the disruption of children's lives when mum goes to prison and the increased chance of those children becoming involved in criminal behaviours, if we get our policing and criminal justice response to mum right, we can make an intergenerational difference.

In conjunction with the VAWG programme, we are exploring whether policing's response to domestic abuse where the woman is cited as the offender is sufficiently mature and trauma informed. To look at whether we are over criminalising women by failing to take account of the full circumstances of a woman's lived experience, even more so when the woman is Black, Asian, Minoritised or Migrant.

Strategic Vision

The strategic vision for the NPCC Women in the Criminal Justice System portfolio is to prevent harm and offending by improving policing's response to women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System.

We will do this by working in partnership to develop, implement and evaluate initiatives tailored to women's offending behaviours, needs and vulnerabilities, alongside developing current practices and procedures.

Objectives

- 1) Research and Development – understanding gender-specific needs and enhancing trauma-informed approaches to aid the development of gender-responsive interventions and programmes, particularly where gaps in support services for women are identified or known.
- 2) Training and Education – to ensure every police force has access to gender-specific training aimed at enhancing decision-making processes informed by an understanding of women's unique needs and circumstances.
- 3) Development of Practice Guidance – by establishing gender-responsive practice guidance, the criminal justice system can better support women, improve rehabilitation efforts, and contribute to a fairer and more effective system.
- 4) Comms and Engagement – to ensure portfolio information, developments, advice, practice and guidance is shared accurately and efficiently among all stakeholders.
- 5) Tactical Toolkit – to enable police forces to more easily identify and access existing good practice. Toolkit published on NPCC website. Link –
<https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/prevention/2025/wcjs-toolkit-npcc-2024-version-1.1-june-2025.pdf>
- 6) Augmentations to Process and Procedure – ensure that existing operating methods, processes and procedures are informed by the lived experience and needs of women, creating interventions that support fair and effective policing practices.

In addition to the work being undertaken nationally, HMPPS Probation supported by the South West Reducing Reoffending Partnership (SWRRP) hosted a conference for the region - 'Whole System Approach: Women in the Criminal Justice System' in September 2025. Devon and Cornwall LCJB members were actively engaged with the meeting with Isabel Livingstone from Women's Centre Cornwall (Cornwall VCSE LCJB representative) presenting information highlighting the work undertaken locally and the services and support provided to women. The event provided an excellent opportunity to hear from those with lived experience, share ideas and network.

Below is a pledge made at the conference from the regional director of Probation. The September 2025 annual LCJB planning day will provide an opportunity to discuss how the LCJB can contribute to this area of work when considering the priorities for 2025-26.

Whole System Approach: Women in the Criminal Justice System

We in HMPPS (SW) pledge to deliver a gender-responsive, trauma-informed service tailored to the complex needs of women under Probation supervision. Working together with our partners, CRS providers and stakeholders to commission activity that meets the needs of women to reduce reoffending and promoting the use of female-focused sentencing options that account for the complex realities many women face.

Becky Hart, Regional Probation Director

Action three: To understand the wider community impact following the large-scale disorder

Josh Stunell is the Devon VCSE LCJB representative and founder and CEO of bthechange CIC which is an award-winning social enterprise dedicated to supporting individuals who are involved in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. With a deep commitment to racial equity and social justice, he has worked for over a decade to transform the lives of marginalised communities, focusing on those affected by the criminal justice system and health inequalities.

At the heart of his work is a belief in creating systemic change by addressing the root causes of inequality. Through bthechange CIC, Josh has led several initiatives designed to support the recovery and reintegration of individuals who have been incarcerated, particularly Women & Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse individuals. Our work is rooted in cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and a holistic approach to recovery, ensuring that every individual receives the support they need to rebuild their lives.

Given this experience bthechange have been commissioned by Plymouth City Council to undertake work to understand the wider community impact following the large-scale disorder. With the consent of Plymouth City Council, the learning of this review will be shared with LCJB members.

Scrutiny

Scrutiny activity is undertaken across the criminal justice partnership to assess quality of compliance with the Victim Codes of Practice (VCoP) and consistency of Out of Court Resolutions with policy and practice. All partnership scrutiny panels are overseen and facilitated by the Head of Criminal Justice Partnerships who has responsibility for the LCJB Business Management function 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), The Youth Justice Board (YJB), Youth Justice Service, Magistracy and where appropriate, the wider CJS such as the Witness Support Service (WSS), Victim Support Services or other prosecution agencies such as Trading Standards.

The Devon and Cornwall LCJB has committed to undertake 12 scrutiny panels a year to cover a range of themes linked to the Police and Crime plan or where there are emerging risks / threats highlighted.

Victim's Code of Practice

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 (updated in April 2021) and the Witness Charter: Standards of care for witnesses in the criminal justice system (updated Dec 2013).

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.

The Code compliance oversight framework is being introduced by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2026 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.

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.

The new Victims Code of Practice published in April 2021 is a charter of rights that dictate the minimum level of service victims can expect at every stage of the justice process. The Code includes the following 12 victims' rights:

1. To be able to understand and to be understood.
2. To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay.
3. To be provided with information when reporting the crime.
4. To be referred to services that support victims.
5. To be provided with information about compensation.
6. To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution.
7. To make a Victim Personal Statement.
8. To be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness.
9. To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals.
10. To be paid expenses and have property returned.
11. To be given information about the offender following a conviction.
12. To make a complaint about your rights not being met.

The scrutiny of VCoP is about reviewing cases and working practices to recognise and promote good practice, identify any areas for development and support the police as an organisation to learn and improve, so that the public can be assured and have confidence in the criminal justice system.

The panel reviews a random sample of anonymised cases to assess if all the 12 rights of the Code have been complied with. The panel cannot change the outcome of any decisions taken and is not part of any disciplinary procedure, it can only make recommendations.

The panels findings are shared with each agency so good practice can be highlighted or areas for improvement addressed. Reports are published for the public to view as part of our commitment to openness and transparency.⁵

Out of Court Resolutions

Out of Court Resolutions (formerly known as Out of Court Disposals) are a method of resolving an investigation without having to go to court and can only be used in certain circumstances. They may include the issuing of a Caution sometimes with conditions, a Community Resolution, or a deferred caution or deferred prosecution with mandatory conditions being set. Restorative Justice can form part of any Out of Court Resolution and is victim focused, bringing the harmed and harmer together to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

Membership of the panel include representation from the Crown Prosecution Service, His Majesty's Court & Tribunal Service, Youth Justice Service and the Magistracy. The police attend the panel meetings but do not have any voting rights.

The panel will review a random sample of anonymised cases where OoCRs have been used, exploring good practice and learning experiences, recognising areas that could be improved.

The panel will review each case on whether they consider the decision was:

- Consistent with policies and the CPS Code for Crown Prosecutors
- Consistent but with observations added from the panel
- Inconsistent with policies
- Panel failed to reach a conclusion

The panel cannot change the outcome of any decisions taken and is not part of any disciplinary procedure, it can only make recommendations.

The panel's findings are shared with each agency and published on the OPCC website for the public to view as part of our commitment to openness and transparency⁶.

⁶ [LCJB scrutiny panels – Your voice in policing](#)

Engagement

Sharing 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. Since then, newsletters have been developed and disseminated on a quarterly basis between LCJB meetings containing relevant information from across the partnership. Board members are asked to share articles of interest and share across their own networks.

Local Criminal Justice Court Reporting Scheme

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. As a consequence, a fund a third-party supplier 'Newsquest' has been commissioned to provide content from magistrates and crown court in Devon and Cornwall for a three-month pilot 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. The Pilot will commence in Autumn 2025 following the recruitment of a dedicated reporter to oversee this area of business. Following delivery of the contract, an impact report will be prepared which will measure the number of articles published and estimated audiences.

Support and Development

Criminal Justice and You

[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 resource has been hailed as an “invaluable asset” by Victims Minister, Laura Farris, in March 2024 features 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. The resource continues to be assessed and developed to include new areas of focus since its inception and now also includes inputs on Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RaSSO) and Bail. In addition to this the platform hosts 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 resource has been promoted on social media and attracts around 1000 visits each month. Enquiries continue from other LCJBs across the country and the package has been shared to minimise duplication and encourage the development of a national product, whilst reflecting local service provision. The content of this product will continue to be reviewed annually to ensure content is current and provides the latest advice and support for victims and witnesses.

