



Ministry
of Justice

Transforming the Criminal Justice System

Strategy and Action Plan –
Implementation Update

July 2014



Transforming the Criminal Justice System

Strategy and Action Plan – Implementation Update

Presented to Parliament
by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
by Command of Her Majesty

July 2014



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Foreword



It has been a year since my Department published the Criminal Justice System (CJS) Strategy and Action Plan. In that plan, we set out the simple premise that all parts of the CJS should be working together towards achieving the same set of outcomes. That remains the basis for transforming the CJS, and we have made huge progress since last year.

Since publishing last year's plan, I have met a large number of victims of crime, and worked closely with the Victims' Commissioner, who I appointed to give victims a voice at the heart of Government. This has brought me fresh insight into how our criminal justice agencies serve members of the public who, when they come into contact with the CJS, can be especially vulnerable. I have heard a lot about the experiences of victims and witnesses. These blameless individuals report a crime because they have been wronged and society has an important role in putting that right. Too much of what I have heard tells me that we need to do more to make sure that their interests are put first. Unless victims and witnesses have the confidence to report crime and then participate in the evidence gathering and, where necessary, the trial of offenders, we have no CJS.

I am pleased that the Criminal Justice Board, which brings together the leaders of the criminal justice agencies, has identified three key priorities to continue the transformation that we began last year and these form the basis of our updated plans for the CJS. These priorities are to create a CJS that:

- cares for, and considers the needs of, victims and witnesses;
- is digital; and
- does things faster and right first time.

This Government has put improving the experience of victims and witnesses at the heart of its strategy for the CJS, and I am putting it first in this updated plan. This means supporting victims through the CJS process and making fair and respectful treatment of victims and witnesses the norm. I want to digitise the CJS so that we can streamline processes – this means police forces embracing digital tools and courtrooms becoming a beacon of digital working. And I want cases to be dealt with at the appropriate level and in a timely manner, particularly in the magistrates' and Crown Courts where better ways of working will make the system more efficient and effective.

But these three priorities, while vitally important to transforming the CJS, are not the only actions we will take. We will improve the way the CJS deals with specific crimes that require an enhanced response. Sexual violence and hate crime blight our communities. Domestic violence and abuse ruin lives. Modern slavery and cyber crime are emerging crimes where it is vital that the CJS response is joined up and successful.

This updated plan articulates how we will deliver actions through effective partnership working – at national level through the Criminal Justice Board and through local criminal justice partnerships – and how greater transparency will enable the public to hold criminal justice agencies to account.

Since last year's plan was published, CJS performance has been stable, in the context of a reduction in overall spending across the system. There are those who said that lower spending would lead to a dip in performance, but due to the diligence and professionalism of those working in the CJS, this has not happened.

That is not to say there have been no improvements, because there certainly have been. Crime has fallen to its lowest level since 2002/03 - 7.5 million crimes in the year ending December 2013, a reduction of 15% compared with the previous year's survey - and this is the lowest estimate since the survey began in 1981.

There are indications that reforms set out in last year's Strategy and Action Plan are beginning to have an effect. The proportion of cases dealt with in magistrates' courts which were completed at first listing increased from 66% in the first quarter of 2013 to 69% in the first quarter of 2014. We have also reduced the average time taken from when an offence is committed to when it is completed in the court; the average time taken to complete all criminal cases in the first quarter of 2014 was 158 days, down from 161 days in the same period in 2013.

But this updated action plan is not just about improving statistics – it is about developing and sustaining a high performing, efficient and effective criminal justice system that benefits victims and witnesses. The Criminal Justice Board fully endorses this updated action plan and is committed to its delivery. I believe, as do the Board, that the actions contained in this plan, once they are fully implemented and have become business as usual, will transform the criminal justice system into the modern 21st century system that it deserves to be, benefitting everyone who comes into contact with it.



The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

Strategy for criminal justice

In June 2013 we published *Transforming the CJS: A Strategy and Action Plan for the Criminal Justice System*.¹ It set out a vision for a modern criminal justice system (CJS) that provides a swift and determined response to crime, treats victims and witnesses with care and consideration, and provides much better value for money to the taxpayer.

We have made good progress delivering this vision. Victims have a louder voice with clearer and broader entitlements, digital working by CJS staff is increasing, and the CJS is more transparent than ever, with more information available to the public and television broadcasting available from some courts. This updated version of the plan builds on these achievements and sets out what we will do to complete this transformation.

The Criminal Justice Board's priorities for 2014/15

Over the last year, we have built the foundations for the modern service that the public deserves. We now want to complete our transformation of the CJS. Our reforms will put the victim first; make digital working the norm; reduce unacceptable delays and the time spent processing straightforward cases; and end the unnecessary complexity and outdated working practices that weaken our system.

The Criminal Justice Board ('the Board'), chaired by the Criminal Justice Minister, sets priorities and provides leadership for the CJS. The Board comprises the chief executives of the criminal justice agencies and senior leaders from across the system. The Board has three main priorities in 2014/15.

To create a criminal justice system that cares for, and considers the needs of victims and witnesses we will:

- make the Victims' Code and Witness Charter part of normal business for everyone in the CJS;
- provide a more joined-up response for victims and witnesses from criminal justice system partners;
- improve the services provided to support victims and witnesses;
- support victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system; and
- make fair and respectful treatment for victims and witnesses the norm.

¹ *Transforming the CJS: A Strategy and Action Plan for the Criminal Justice System*, Ministry of Justice, June 2013

To create a digital criminal justice system we will:

- support police forces to become digital by 2016;
- have digital by default courtrooms in the magistrates' and Crown Courts;
- deliver a common platform for the digital management of case information across the system;
- implement streamlined digital files nationally; and
- increase video usage across the criminal justice system.

To create a criminal justice system that is faster and right first time we will:

- make sure the right people – police officers, magistrates or judges – are dealing with the right types of cases and the right offenders;
- transform summary justice so that cases take less time to resolve; and
- improve Crown Court effectiveness to get earlier guilty pleas and more cases going ahead as planned.

Other priority areas

A digital CJS which cares for victims and witnesses and gets to the right outcome more quickly benefits everyone involved in the system. But it is also important that we have **the right response to crime**, and some priority crimes require an enhanced response. This year has demonstrated the pressing need to reduce the distress of victims of sexual violence when giving evidence, and through this plan we will implement fundamental reforms. We will take cross-government action to tackle domestic violence. We will continue to work across the CJS to better tackle hate crime. We will create a CJS where all victims are put first and do not undergo unnecessary stress during the court process, and where we respond quickly and decisively to emerging crimes such as modern slavery and cyber crime.

Over the last year, the Board has overseen delivery of a large number of actions. This updated document sets out what has been achieved and the Board's priorities for the next year and beyond. It provides an ambitious set of commitments, many of which build on those made last year. These will be delivered by individual CJS agencies, with oversight from the Board. By focusing on these three priorities, the Board will allow the CJS to deliver the broader transformation this updated plan envisages. This document describes all the actions that will contribute to the transformation of the system and also contains a broader set of actions which are of vital importance such as responding to priority crimes.

Delivering this plan

Transparency

Greater transparency in the system helps the public understand how it works, and allows members of the public to hold the CJS to account for decisions made. We have made more information than ever available to the public about how the system is performing, but more can be done to make this information clearer and easier to understand. The Government's transparency agenda promotes greater access to data so that people can use and share it.

But transparency is about more than data. For the first time, the public can watch proceedings from the Court of Appeal on television. Victims and witnesses now know much more about how they can expect to be treated when they come into contact with the CJS. We will continue to make the system more transparent so that:

- justice is seen to be done with readily accessible information on justice outcomes, and through court broadcasting; and
- victims of crime can access more information, in real time, about the investigation of their crime and progress of their case.

Fairness

We will support – at local and national levels – efforts to ensure that the CJS is fair and just, regardless of an individual's race, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability so that:

- police forces have more diverse workforces which better represent their communities;
- youth and adult liaison and diversion services – which give people with mental health conditions and substance misuse problems the right treatment as quickly as possible – are available to offenders; and
- we gain a better understanding of the decisions made by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) offenders, so that we can identify ways to improve their engagement with the CJS, including decisions about appropriate guilty pleas.

Working in partnership

We will implement our reforms by working in partnership. The CJS depends on a careful balancing of independence and effective joint working. The independence of the judiciary, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and the police, is central to ensuring the rule of law is maintained and decisions are made without interference. Our ambition is to have a modern, efficient system that supports the independence of those who need to make decisions right across the system.

Services are delivered locally – in police stations, courtrooms and communities – and it is local leaders who will make sure this plan succeeds. The Board is committed to creating the conditions CJS partnerships need to be successful. We have improved communications and partnership arrangements between agencies both nationally and locally. We want to build on this by giving local CJS partnerships the tools they need to be effective. We will:

- support partnerships to build a picture of local performance, to enable them to identify and tackle barriers to effective delivery and plan effectively; and
- give local leaders a greater voice in national policy and strategy development.

The wider context – building on 2013

Our focus is on the shared outcomes we set out in last year's Strategy and Action Plan:

- to reduce crime;
- to reduce re-offending;
- to punish offenders;
- to protect the public;
- to provide victims with reparation;
- to increase public confidence, including among victims and witnesses; and
- to ensure the system is fair and just.

Crime in England and Wales

- Crime continues to fall: the most recent Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) estimates 7.5 million incidents of crime against households and individuals in England and Wales – the lowest since the survey began in 1981 and a 15% drop since 2012, with statistically significant decreases in most crime categories.²
- The risk of being a victim of crime is at its lowest level since the CSEW began in 1981, with the likelihood of being a victim of crime now only 17%, compared with nearly 40% in the 1995 peak.³

This updated plan complements wider reforms that will change the face of criminal justice. Police and Crime Commissioners have brought new approaches to policing and driven collaboration across the CJS. They have assumed responsibility for commissioning the majority of victim services' so that, for the first time, services can be truly tailored to the needs of local communities.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is undertaking an ambitious programme of reform as part of a longer term vision and strategy to make courts more efficient and less expensive. By working with partner agencies, these reforms will further improve performance. By using modern technology and working practices, this programme of reform will create a more effective, efficient and high performing organisation and provide improved services to the public, victims, witnesses and those who work in the CJS.

One of our key outcomes is to reduce reoffending. We are tackling this through a radical overhaul of probation services which will see all adult offenders released on licence from custodial sentences receive supervision and rehabilitation in the community for a period of at least 12 months. A new public sector National Probation Service has been created, working to protect the public and building upon the expertise and professionalism which are already in place. Community Rehabilitation Companies will deliver 'through the prison gate' support to offenders to help them to settle back into their communities and break the cycle of reoffending.

² Crime in England and Wales, Office for National Statistics, April 2014

³ Crime in England and Wales, Office for National Statistics, April 2014

The Government is also implementing a cross-departmental programme to reduce the number of foreign nationals in the United Kingdom who have committed a criminal offence, and the risk and harm they present while they are here. We are preventing the entry into the UK of those who have committed or are likely to commit such offences; removing or otherwise facilitating the departure from the UK of those who are here; and managing the behaviour of those not yet removed, and those whom it has proved impossible to remove. The Home Office Immigration Bill will contribute to this work by streamlining the appeals process, placing the tough interpretation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (a right to respect for private and family life) in primary legislation and preventing the granting of bail to foreign national offenders when their removal is imminent.

Care and consideration for victim and witnesses

If you are a victim or a witness, you find yourself involved in the criminal justice system through no fault of your own. You have a very personal stake in the performance of the CJS – wanting to see the offender caught and punished, wanting assurance that it will not happen again – and you may need some support at what can be a worrying and emotional time.

If we are to achieve our shared outcomes – which are so important to victims and witnesses – we need them to participate fully in the system. We know that victims and witnesses who are satisfied with their contact with the CJS are more likely to be willing to engage with it again, and so giving them the confidence to participate is vital. Last year's implementation of the new Victims' Code and Witness Charter built on a set of reforms begun in 2012 to make the system more victim-focused. Victims and witnesses can now be sure what support they will get and at what stage, who to talk to about their case, and what to do if things go wrong.

What we have achieved

We have:

- **published a new Victims' Code** which gives victims of crime clearer entitlements from criminal justice agencies and better tailors services to individual need so they get the right support at the right time;
- **published a revised Witness Charter**, which sets out the standards of service all witnesses should receive, from the point of reporting a crime through to trial;
- **improved the complaints process** for victims and witnesses so that they know who to contact and what to expect if things go wrong;
- begun **piloting pre-trial recorded cross-examination** to help vulnerable witnesses give their best possible evidence – without subjecting them to the full atmosphere of the courtroom. The first cross-examination took place in Liverpool on 28 April 2014;
- opened **13 new rape support centres** since 2010;
- provided Police and Crime Commissioners with over £20m up-front funding to prepare themselves and voluntary sector service providers for the **transition to local commissioning**;
- created a **Victims' Panel**, which met for the first time on 7 May 2014, so that Ministers can hear first-hand from victims about what we can do better to help them come to terms with and recover from the traumatic effects of crime; and
- adopted the **TrackMyCrime** IT system, developed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary, which enables victims to view information about the progress of their case, and exchange messages with the investigating officer. TrackMyCrime is live in three police forces – Avon and Somerset, South Yorkshire and Kent.

Case study – TrackMyCrime

South Yorkshire police launched TrackMyCrime on 3 March 2014. Piloting began in Doncaster in mid-February and in the first week it was chosen by 20% of victims as their preferred method of communication with the officer. The system is now available to every victim of crime in South Yorkshire.

Victims themselves are recommending TrackMyCrime:

“I don’t have to try and track down the officer – I simply know who is dealing with it by logging onto TrackMyCrime.”

“It’s good to see what has been done on a screen, so I can re-read it if I misunderstand. It is a great benefit to me as I work shifts and can’t use my phone whilst at work to take calls.”

One officer said “TrackMyCrime is vital in giving the victim control in how they receive information. There are benefits for the officers too: it can often be tricky to try to fit in a phone call or visit with a victim when you are working nights and, using this system, we can send the update overnight and the victim will receive it when they check their account in the morning.”

What we are going to do next

We are committed to ensuring that victims of crime have access to high quality support to help them to cope with and recover from the impacts of crime and to ensure that victims and witnesses are well supported and informed throughout their time in the CJS. We will also be clear on how victims and witnesses must be treated. The Victims’ Code and Witness Charter go a long way to specifying the entitlements that victims (called ‘complainants’ during the investigation and court case) can expect, and we will work with the Victims’ Commissioner to design methods for monitoring and reporting on compliance with those entitlements.

To make the Victims’ Code and Witness Charter part of normal business we will:

- work with the Victims’ Commissioner to define measures for monitoring compliance with the Victims’ Code and Witness Charter by July 2014;
- set out monitoring and reporting arrangements for compliance with the Victims’ Code and Witness Charter using existing management information systems by September 2014;
- submit a first annual report on compliance to the Criminal Justice Board by March 2015;
- support the Victims’ Commissioner to recommend minimum standards that victims can expect whenever they complain to a criminal justice agency by December 2014; and
- respond to the Victims’ Commissioner’s recommendations by February 2015.

The Crown Prosecution Service’s network of Victim Liaison Units across England and Wales will be in place by July 2014. They will let victims know why the CPS has made its decisions and how they can find out more and challenge these decisions if necessary.

However, the number of different agencies and the complexity of the system means that it can be a confusing landscape for victims and witnesses and it is not always clear to them

who they should be talking to at each stage of the process. We want to clarify and simplify that landscape and make the journey of victims and witnesses through the CJS much smoother, making sure that there is the right combination of information, support and advice nationally and locally to support them throughout their interactions with the CJS.

Increasingly, when customers interact with public services – whether to order a passport or pay a bill – they do so digitally. When a victim of crime wants to know about their own case, they typically have to telephone the police officer dealing with it, find out when he or she is next on duty and then hope that the papers relating to the case can be found. An online case tracking service – TrackMyCrime – was developed by Avon and Somerset Constabulary – and we will make it available to all police forces by December 2014.

To provide a more joined-up response to victims and witnesses we will:

- establish a network of CPS Victim Liaison Units across England and Wales by July 2014;
- make TrackMyCrime available to police forces in England & Wales by December 2014 and encourage all police forces to have in place a plan to provide an online tracking system for victims by April 2015 by engaging Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and the relevant decision makers in each force;
- set out what victims can expect from CPS Victim Liaison Units, Witness Care Units, the Witness Service, and other organisations that aim to support victims through the CJS process, by October 2014;
- identify how we can simplify and improve the way the criminal justice system as a whole serves victims, and propose ways of achieving this, by December 2014; and
- begin implementing work to simplify the overall support given to victims by January 2015.

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims of crime have access to high quality support to help them to cope with and recover from the impacts of crime. We will make more money than ever before available for services to support victims, with a potential total budget of up to around £100m, double the current figure.

To improve the services provided to support victims and witnesses we are currently:

- moving to a majority of victim support services being commissioned locally by Police and Crime Commissioners, from 1 October 2014;
- competitively commissioning the national Homicide Service for when the current funding arrangements end in October 2014; and
- commissioning the national court-based witness service for when the current funding arrangements end in March 2015, to assist victims to give their best evidence and strengthen the CJS's ability to prosecute priority crimes.

We are evaluating the pilot of pre-recorded cross-examination for vulnerable witnesses. We will investigate how else we can harness digital technologies to ease the stress of giving evidence for vulnerable witnesses, including by exploring options to increase the usage of evidence by live-link from non-court locations.

To support victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system we will:

- increase meaningful reparation to victims by disseminating information so that sentencers, restorative justice practitioners, community rehabilitation companies, youth offending teams and victims are better informed about what reparation is and how it can help victims to cope and recover by September 2014;
- re-launch the Young Witness Pack by November 2014;
- revise and re-launch the MoJ publication *Vulnerable and intimidated witnesses: a police service guide for police officers* by December 2014;
- review interim findings of the evaluation of pre-recorded cross-examination of vulnerable witnesses by March 2015 to inform a decision on national roll-out;
- implement measures to improve the identification of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to ensure that they receive appropriate support at each stage of the criminal justice process by March 2015; and
- improve the usage of Investigative Anonymity Orders to provide greater protection for witnesses giving evidence during a police investigation by March 2015.

Victims must get the fair and respectful treatment they deserve. We will gather and review evidence and work with the Victims' Commissioner to get a better understanding of how victims and witnesses are treated in the CJS. We will review what support is provided for victims at court by prosecutors and submit an action plan for better ways of working to the Board.

To make fair and respectful treatment for victims and witnesses the norm we will:

- review and analyse behaviours within the CJS, working with the Victims' Commissioner, and develop proposals to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses by January 2015; and
- conduct a review of support for victims at court by CPS by December 2015.

A digital CJS

We are committed to delivering a digital CJS. Last year's plan set out a range of actions that would provide the CJS with the building blocks for digital transformation. The *Criminal Justice System Digital Business Model*,⁴ published in April 2014, laid out our vision for a reformed, digitised system. It details how the system will seamlessly and securely transfer case information from police to prosecution through to defence and the courts without delay, so that the people who need the information have it at the right time. It will collect information once, at the first point of contact with the victim, witness, or defendant. It will not need to be re-entered or duplicated, and will remain in one place with only those entitled to access it being able to do so. This will reduce both cost and delay.

We have taken important steps, but we have more to do to realise the vision set out in the Digital Business Model. We need to end the system's outdated reliance on paper and turn it into a modern, efficient system supported by the latest technologies which operates in a way that would be taken for granted in the private sector.

What we have achieved

We have:

- **set out our vision for a fully digital CJS** in the *CJS Digital Business Model*;
- launched the **Police Digital Pathfinders** initiative to support the sharing of ideas, innovations and best practice between forces;
- ensured that most police forces in England and Wales are **transferring over 90% of case files electronically** to the CPS;
- **tested a streamlined digital file** with eight police forces for some summary offences;
- established an **exemplar digital court** in Birmingham and a test court in Bromley; and
- promoted the take-up of **secure email by defence practitioners**, with all legal aid providers having access to secure email to accept service of electronic evidence from prosecution agencies.

⁴ CJS Digital Business Model, April 2014, Ministry of Justice

Case study – digital technology in Bromley Magistrates’ Court

The digital concept court set up in Birmingham Magistrates’ Court in 2013 proved that digital working in court is possible. Following this success, Bromley Magistrates’ Court is the first criminal court in England and Wales to be equipped with digital technology as part of an ambitious programme to ensure criminal courtrooms across the country are working digitally by July 2016.

The technology in Bromley allows wireless connection from tablets or laptops to large screens in the court so that CCTV footage, photographs, video and maps can be viewed by everyone in the room.

The CJS Efficiency Programme Director said: “Advocates are able to present high quality digital material from their own devices – direct to the court. This allows the court to remove DVD players and removes the need for paper copies of evidence and case material.”

What we are going to do next

Police officers’ notebooks are still the repository for evidence gathered at the scene of a crime, and mountains of legal paperwork still clutter up our courts. Better quality evidence captured on mobile devices should increase the likelihood of obtaining a conviction, so that more offenders are likely to plead guilty at an earlier stage, and fewer victims have to undergo the distress of a trial. A digital CJS will increase the public’s confidence that crimes will be dealt with in a swift and determined way, from the moment the police begin their investigation until the offender is caught and dealt with.

The use of body-worn video cameras, enabling instant and reliable collection of evidence at the very start of the police’s engagement with a crime, is an example of innovation within the police service. The Police Innovation Fund for 2014/15 exists to incentivise collaboration, digitisation and other innovation to improve policing. Police and Crime Commissioners are taking on a greater leadership role around police IT, and Innovation Funding has provided them with an IT Director to support them on driving innovation and value for money.

Police officers will be equipped with the tools they need to be able to start capturing evidence digitally at the scene of a crime, taking statements and uploading digital case information using mobile devices without needing to return to the police station. They will be able to capture witness and victim statements electronically on their mobile device or body-worn video at the scene of the crime.

To support police forces to become digital by 2016 we will:

- set up governance arrangements to oversee College of Policing support for digitisation;
- facilitate forces to build their own evidence base around digitisation, which the College will collect and share with other forces;
- share good practice and evidence through a POLKA (police online knowledge) community, a Deputy Chief Constable event on digitisation in July 2014 and by capturing and showcasing force development activity;
- use Innovation Fund projects to identify areas where there is a need for priority development of digital services by November 2014 and agree priority digital capabilities and national activity to support these;

- identify opportunities for innovation, collaboration and better value for money;
- help forces assess their own digital capabilities ahead of future HMIC inspections;
- use Bluelightworks (a pre-procurement service for policing) to ensure forces are well informed when making decisions on what to invest in;
- evaluate the next iteration of digital capabilities by November 2014;
- issue standards and guidance to forces on the use of body worn video by October 2014; and
- evaluate trials of body worn video to inform further roll out.

Digital courtrooms will see all professional court users working from tablet or laptop devices without the need for paper. Criminal prosecutors and defence lawyers in magistrates' courts will work digitally, presenting cases from mobile digital devices and magistrates will be able to view case information on digital devices. Wi-Fi connections will allow professional court users to access their own systems and the internet, meaning they no longer need to rely on bulky files and can quickly share information with others in the courtroom. Digital equipment will mean that all court users can see evidence like CCTV, photos or transcripts of 999 calls on screens in front of them.

To deliver digital by default courtrooms we will:

- continue to promote the take up of secure email by the defence to enable the digital service of case material from the CPS ahead of the Legal Aid Agency requiring defence practitioners to have and use secure email from July 2015 as prescribed in the new criminal legal aid contract;
- roll out screens and equipment to allow digital in-court presentation in magistrates' courts in test areas by August 2014 and nationally by August 2015;
- roll out a case management data store in the courts in test areas by December 2014 and nationally by June 2015;
- roll out a solution to enable magistrates to view evidence digitally in test areas by April 2015 and nationally by September 2015;
- roll out Wi-Fi for professional users in magistrates' courts in test areas by December 2014 and to professional users in all magistrates' courts by March 2016; and
- deliver equivalent actions to support digital working within the Crown Court by July 2016.

Different IT systems in both the CPS and HMCTS are sometimes not conducive to the effective sharing of information. We will build the infrastructure for a joined-up service. We will develop open standards, which will enable criminal justice IT systems to talk to each other more effectively and a digital evidence storage service for police forces to share digital evidence with their criminal justice partners.

To deliver a common platform for the digital management of case information we will:

- set open information standards to ensure that information flows smoothly between police and criminal justice systems;
- complete research to develop an approach to sourcing the elements of a combined case management system for HMCTS and CPS by July 2014;
- produce a tool to enable HMCTS staff to begin to manage the process digitally for guilty pleas, or proof in absence, for summary traffic offences in an exemplar court by September 2014 and a fuller featured version of the tool suitable for wider roll-out or extension to additional case types by April 2015;
- develop and test an integrated end-to-end digital process for CJ agencies by April 2015;
- develop a digital evidence storage service for policing which enables them to share digital evidence with colleagues in the criminal justice system by 2016. and
- deliver the elements that will be required to build a combined case management system for HMCTS and CPS by March 2017.

A key criticism of CJS processes is the repetitive nature of capturing the same information. We will create a system where information is captured only once, at the earliest opportunity. From that point onwards, it will flow through the system without the need for paper files or re-keying of information.

To implement streamlined digital files nationally we will:

- nationally roll out a streamlined digital file for magistrates' court traffic cases by December 2014;
- nationally roll out a streamlined digital file for all volume offences (first hearing) in the magistrates' court by April 2015;
- develop and test a streamlined digital file for all other cases in the magistrates' court by April 2015;
- develop and test a digital tool to enable police to populate streamlined digital files from the earliest opportunity by April 2015; and
- consider what Crown Court cases the streamlined digital file may be suitable for; develop, test and roll out by April 2016.

The Board will drive forward the increased use of video, where appropriate, for victims and witnesses, suspects, police officers and lawyers to ensure that best use is made of their time and that of CJS agencies. Video technology should be the default unless the person is required in the courtroom. Defendants in prison will more frequently appear in court via video link for pre-trial hearings, which will reduce transport costs and speed up the process. We will also test ways for witnesses to provide evidence remotely, for police officers to request warrants by video link from the police station to the court, and we will test video conferencing between defence counsel in Chambers and their clients in prison.

To increase video usage across the criminal justice system we will:

- pilot a secure internet-based video solution (IBVS) between the police and courts, with witnesses providing evidence and officers requesting warrants by video link by August 2014;
- test “virtual legal visits” by Defence counsel for consultations via IVBS video conferencing from Chambers to clients in custody at a prison, by September 2014;
- encourage all police forces to have video technology capable of interacting with the court and share best practice across forces to demonstrate the benefits of using video, encouraging those forces currently without video kit towards investment by March 2015;
- test the use of video for youth remand hearings where possible (the appropriate hearings are third and subsequent hearings and second hearings where there is no prospect of bail) by March 2015; and
- specify that every prison and court will have an objective around increasing video usage and will hold operational managers to account for delivering these objectives by April 2015;
- work with professional court users to increase video usage for appearances by police, expert, medical and professional witnesses, with a view to making applications for this the default position where possible by May 2015.

A CJS which is faster and right first time

The public will not have confidence in a system where the simplest cases take half a year to resolve, where a victim of crime can wait six months to know the outcome of the case, and where nearly half of cases don't go ahead on the planned day. Where a guilty defendant does not admit guilt at the earliest stage, victims endure unnecessary distress, and CJS agencies waste time and money preparing for a trial that never happens. In addition to harnessing new technology to transform the service we provide, we must work collectively across the system to transform the way we work.

Digitising the system will not be enough to deliver the service that the public expects. Victims and witnesses need to have confidence that their cases will be dealt with in a business-like and efficient way, where their needs are paramount. The independence of the judiciary, CPS and the police ensures the rule of law is maintained and decisions are made without interference. However, this is no reason why all parts of the system cannot work together to ensure processes are efficient.

What we have achieved

We have:

- **increased the speed with which cases are processed.** The average time taken from offence to completion for the most serious cases (indictable/trieable either-way offences) improved from 155 days in Q1 2013 to 151 days in Q1 2014;⁵
- increased the take-up of **police led prosecutions** for uncontested traffic and other specified offences in all but two police force areas;
- established dedicated **traffic courts** in all 42 police force areas;
- **introduced legislation** to allow suitable summary only, non-imprisonable cases that are straightforward and uncontested to be dealt with away from traditional magistrates' courtrooms; and
- kept **low-value shoplifting cases in the magistrates' courts**, except where a defendant elects trial by jury, so that fewer progress to the Crown Court.

What we are going to do next

A system in which cases are dealt with correctly at the right level, and where the outcome is reliable and commands public confidence, will help victims and provide better value for money. Out of court disposals are efficient and effective at dealing with some minor offending. We will create and test a streamlined framework for out-of-court disposals that is simpler for the public and victims to understand and for practitioners to operate, and that ensures that serious and persistent offenders are always brought before a court. The Government will shortly announce a package of measures to deliver these changes.

When a case transfers to the Crown Court, it becomes more expensive, takes longer, and fails to use the expertise of magistrates who are drawn from their local communities to

⁵ Court statistics (quarterly) January to March 2014, Ministry of Justice

provide local justice. We think that the role of magistrates needs to be enhanced, and that they should be dealing with more of the crimes that affect their communities. Later this year we will consult on how best to achieve this.

To make sure the right people are dealing with the right types of cases and the right offenders we will:

- publish a response to the consultation on out-of-court disposals; and
- consult on how to enhance the role of magistrates by December 2014.

The summary justice system should provide simple and speedy justice for low-level offending, and the magistrates' courts deal with over 90% of all criminal cases annually.⁶ But magistrates, usually sitting in threes, and district judges preside over a system that has become complicated, cumbersome and inefficient. We want a faster CJS, with fewer ineffective and cracked trials, shorter waiting times for witnesses and quicker outcomes for victims. The Transforming Summary Justice programme will provide more streamlined processes in the magistrates' courts.

To transform summary justice we will:

- work with local criminal justice areas to deliver swifter summary justice by reducing the number of hearings per case, increasing the effective trial rate, decreasing the number of adjournments and streamlining disclosure in line with the judicially led magistrates' disclosure review;
- implement the 10-point model of summary justice in England and Wales by May 2015 and support the related recommendations of the magistrates' court disclosure review;
- establish a monitoring scheme to ensure that the summary disclosure recommendations are implemented effectively as part of the summary justice model; and
- commence implementation of the Single Justice Procedure from April 2015.

The most serious and complex cases are heard by the Crown Court. Only half (51%) of trials in the Crown Court go ahead on the day they have been listed. In the first quarter of 2014, an average case dealt with in the Crown Court took 304 days from offence to completion, and 70% of defendants entering a plea, plead guilty at some point during their case in the Crown Court.⁷ The experience for victims and witnesses can be frustrating. Preparing to give evidence in a trial is daunting and made more so by uncertainty about whether the case will go ahead.

All CJS partners will agree how to implement the Senior Presiding Judge's proposals for a new national consistent model for the Early Guilty Plea Scheme. The scheme will aim to encourage early guilty pleas, reduce the number of pre-trial hearings and improve case management. Sir Brian Leveson's review of efficiency in criminal proceedings will address how courts can best use their time, and the Board will support this work as it progresses

⁶ Court statistics (quarterly) January to March 2014, Ministry of Justice

⁷ Court statistics (quarterly) January to March 2014, Ministry of Justice

To improve Crown Court effectiveness we will:

- reach cross-criminal justice system agreement on how to implement the Senior Presiding Judge's proposals for a national consistent model of the Early Guilty Plea scheme for the Crown Court that will not permit local variations, but will preserve judicial discretion and encourage early guilty pleas;
- make certain that benefits in the tailored approach to paper-heavy cases tested in four court centres are fully realised and that disclosure requirements are met; and
- support the work of the President of the Queen's Bench Division review of efficiency in criminal proceedings which is due to report by November 2014.

The right response to crime

We know that there are some priority crimes which require an enhanced response. These are all crimes where the victims face particular difficulties or where it can be particularly difficult to secure a conviction. They are also crimes which require a national, coordinated response. For this year's plan, those crimes are: sexual violence; domestic violence and abuse; modern slavery; cyber crime; and hate crime.

What we have achieved

We have:

- investigated measures that can be taken to **reduce the distress to victims when they are being cross-examined**. The recommendations from that work will be taken forward as actions in this year's plan;
- provided for an **enhanced service for victims** of sexual violence, domestic violence and human trafficking under the new Victims' Code;
- given the police new tools to respond effectively to **domestic violence and abuse**, through the national roll-out of Clare's Law and domestic violence protection orders;
- prosecuted over 78,000 and **convicted over 58,000 people for domestic violence** in 2013/14, increases of over 7,000 and 6,000 respectively on 2012-13;
- reached the **highest ever conviction rate for domestic violence offences** of 75%. Nine in ten of these convictions arise from guilty pleas meaning that the vast majority of victims are spared having to give evidence in court;
- assessed how **disability hate crime is handled** in a number of police forces in the country, the findings of which are addressed by actions in this plan; and
- encouraged the wider use of **community impact statements** in crimes that blight communities, including gun and knife crime.

What we are going to do next

No one needs reminding of the priority required to ensure that victims of sexual violence have more support to report crimes and then to give evidence against the perpetrator. The National Group on Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People will publish a package of measures to make certain that victims of sexual violence have access to adequate service provision and are properly supported to cope and recover.

We will be clearer about the roles of the people and organisations that support victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system and we will be clearer about how victims can access the services they need. The National Group will also take forward recommendations from a report published in March 2014 on ways to reduce the distress caused to some victims in sexual violence trials, looking in particular at the cross-examination process. The CPS has established dedicated Rape and Serious Sexual Offence Units in every area and is working to achieve more successful outcomes, discontinuing fewer cases, and ensuring fewer cases fail for reasons other than jury acquittal.

To better tackle sexual violence, we will:

- implement the joint CPS and Police Rape Action Plan developed following a National Rape Scrutiny Panel;
- publish guidance to clarify the role and purpose of intermediaries, independent sexual and domestic violence advisers (ISVAs and IDVAs) and other ‘supporters’ of victims and witnesses in the court process, and what victims and witnesses can expect;
- implement a trigger for enhanced management of certain cases by those who come into contact with victims of sexual violence, to ensure focus on their needs;
- remove inconsistencies and find ways to align rules of professional conduct to support effective conduct of management and trials of sexual offences; and
- using the evidence from the Home Office review of the way sexual offences are investigated and prosecuted, identify what further action is required to improve the CJS response to sexual offences.

Domestic violence and abuse ruin lives and are wholly unacceptable crimes. That is why this Government has made tackling domestic abuse one of its top priorities. Last September the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to conduct a comprehensive review of the police response to domestic violence and abuse because she was concerned that the response is not as good as it should be.

On 27 March, HMIC presented its findings and they are extremely worrying. HMIC’s report highlighted that the current police response to domestic abuse is failing victims. It identified a lack of visible leadership and direction by senior officers. It also identified unacceptable weaknesses in core policing activities: investigating crime, preventing crime, bringing offenders to justice and keeping victims safe. The Home Secretary is leading work through the newly established National Oversight Group to ensure that the police take urgent action to address these shortcomings.

To better tackle domestic abuse, we will:

- Implement the actions in the cross-Government Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Girls 2014 to improve the CJS response to domestic abuse;
- Ensure delivery against HMIC’s recommendations, through the Home Secretary’s National Oversight Group, to improve the police response to domestic abuse including publication of action plans by every police force by September 2014;
- Improve data collection and performance management on domestic abuse by developing and implementing a new mandatory data standard for domestic abuse for the police;
- Build victim feedback into performance monitoring of the police response to domestic abuse; and
- Publish updated CPS guidance on domestic abuse.

Although it is 200 years since slavery was abolished in the UK, we know that this heinous crime continues in the UK and abroad. Adults and children trafficked into the UK are subjected to terrible exploitation, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labour. This Government is committed to leading the international effort to stamp out slavery. The Government's Modern Slavery Bill simplifies and toughens existing legislation, and will ensure that perpetrators receive suitably severe punishments for these appalling crimes. It improves support for victims, including making specific provision for specialist advocates for child victims. The Bill also provides for a new independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, who will work with law enforcement to drive a robust and comprehensive operational response. We will also publish a strategy explaining how law enforcement and other partners, in the UK and overseas, will work together to stamp out modern slavery.

To better tackle modern slavery, we will:

- use the Modern Slavery Bill to provide law enforcement with the tools it needs to tackle modern slavery and establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to ensure law enforcement is doing all it can to tackle this crime;
- complement the Bill, with a comprehensive programme of activity, including:
 - publishing a strategy setting out how law enforcement partners will work together to bring perpetrators to justice and support victims, both in the UK and overseas; and
 - identifying modern slavery as a priority for the National Crime Agency (NCA), making full use of its intelligence, tasking and coordination functions to tackle the worst forms of modern slavery and lead the law enforcement response.
- better support victims of modern slavery by reviewing and improving the support received through the National Referral Mechanism; replacing the Victim Care Contract and trialling child advocates to give child victims expert and specialist support.

Criminals exploit the opportunities the internet offers to commit crime online. We need to ensure that the police and CJS partners recognise and tackle crimes committed online with the same degree of professionalism and capability as they do 'offline' crime. While the police have developed specialist capabilities at a national level to deal with high-end cyber crime, the capability of local forces to tackle everyday, volume online crime is less developed. The police must exploit the opportunities the internet offers to investigate crime, whether committed online or offline. We are working to ensure that the police have the tools, training, and understanding to investigate cyber crime.

To better tackle cyber crime, we will:

- provide funding from the National Cyber Security Programme to train 5,000 police officers and front-line staff in cyber investigative techniques, through a one-week bespoke training course and attendance at training specific to role and rank;
- continue to work with internet search engines such as Google and Microsoft to identify and block users who search for online child abuse imagery;
- work, through the US/UK Taskforce, to identify and design technical solutions to better address the threat of online child sexual exploitation; and
- host an international online child sexual exploitation summit in late 2014, working with partners including the voluntary and community sector.

In March 2012 the Government published *Challenge it, Report it, Stop it – Delivering the Government's hate crime action plan*.⁸ A progress report published in May 2014 provides an overview of our achievements to tackle hate crime to date. The report also highlights areas that have emerged or have continued to evolve, and what we will do to tackle those issues for the remainder of this Parliament. The UK is recognised as a world leader in terms of responding to hate crime, but more can always be done.

To better tackle hate crime, we will:

- work across the criminal justice system to ensure that hate crime is tackled and victims are properly supported;
- agree actions from the National Policing Lead on Hate Crime & CPS Disability Hate Crime Audit;
- establish a cross criminal justice working group to continue to work with the courts to improve information on the use of enhanced sentencing for hate crimes; and
- consider the recommendations of the Law Commission's review, *Hate Crime: review of aggravated offences* and publish the Government response by December 2014.

Case study – True Vision

The 2011/12 and 2012/13 Crime Surveys of England and Wales suggest there are around 278,000 hate crimes per year although fewer than 44,000 were recorded by police forces in England and Wales in 2012/13.

To raise awareness of hate crime among victims and professionals, the cross-Government Hate Crime Programme established the True Vision website at www.report-it.org.uk. Its core purpose is to:

- allow online reporting of hate crime;
- provide information to victims and professionals; and
- distribute a library of resources to support local delivery.

True Vision has had over 280,000 visits since it was set up in 2010 and has received 3,640 reports from members of the public in 2013/14.

Key to the success of True Vision has been the use of social media; targeted advertising led to over 1% of the estimated British Sign Language users in the UK downloading a video about hate crime.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-action-plan-challenge-it-report-it-stop-it>

Delivering this plan

Working in partnership

Partnership working – nationally and locally - is key to successful reform of the CJS. Everything we have achieved over the last year has been delivered through collaboration. The Board, in articulating its vision and the actions that underpin it, provides national leadership. Local partnerships will continue to deliver those actions to make that vision a reality in a way that suits local conditions.

The introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) has galvanised the local policing and criminal justice landscape and provided leadership for multi-agency partnerships. A number of PCCs now chair the Local Criminal Justice Partnerships (LCJPs) within their force areas and many have entered into formal partnership arrangements with other local agencies such as local authorities and the fire service to reduce crime and improve community safety.

What we have achieved

We have:

- launched a bi-monthly **Criminal Justice Bulletin** for CJS partners to share national developments, good practice and innovative ideas;
- begun a series of **road shows** for national and local CJS partners to improve collective understanding of how best to deliver CJS reform;
- created a **new online community**, hosted by the College of Policing, providing local and national CJS partners with a platform to share good practice, engage in policy development and store useful information;
- developed a simple **national resource model for LCJPs** to adopt so that each partnership has the resources it needs to operate effectively; and
- developed, with CJS partners at a local and national level, a **set of minimum expectations** which provide a clear articulation of what an effective local partnership looks like.

What we are going to do next

The Board is committed to building sustainable local-central links, which enable partnerships to feed their thinking into the centre, and ensure that national leaders understand the local impact of CJS reforms. To this end, we will strengthen communication channels, making sure that they are truly two-way.

To support local partnerships to lead and manage effectively we will:

- give local partnerships access to the national performance framework, in order to better support them in accessing and using performance information;
- work with LCJPs to produce a guide on how to build a local performance picture;

- develop a clear set of expectations of local partnerships;
- the Board will work with local partnerships to develop a set of expectations about its own behaviour and way of working, ensuring that it works in a way that genuinely supports partnerships as best it can;
- develop and grow the online community (POLKA) into an interactive space where local and national criminal justice partners can directly engage with each other through online discussions and open forums and to host useful information such as the local performance guide and minimum expectations; and
- hold a conference, in October 2014, for local and national CJS leaders to discuss organisational and cross agency initiatives.

The Board will continue to ensure that the planning of resources, including IT, buildings and services that the CJS buys in, is more joined up. We know that the performance of services contracted by one part of the system can impact elsewhere. All CJS agencies have been working hard to increase efficiency; current budgetary constraints have provided a strong incentive to collaborate to meet this shared challenge. Agencies across the CJS are working together to build on previous IT investment and break down the barriers to working together. The creation of a new 'common platform' to integrate the case management systems of the CPS and HMCTS is an example of this in action.

To improve services contracted or commissioned by criminal justice system agencies we will:

- establish a multidisciplinary criminal justice system working group to determine which services that are bought into the system are particularly important in improving performance and delivering its outcomes;
- engage cross criminal justice stakeholders to aid understanding of working practices both from a CJS perspective and the perspective of wider partners;
- draw up criteria against which all contracts can be assessed to identify opportunities for join-up between criminal justice agencies and cost savings; and
- develop a transparent approach to all prospective contracts to provide new opportunities for collaboration.

Transparency

Making sure that members of the public are able to understand how the CJS works and how it is performing is a core component of our reform plans and supports the wider transparency agenda. It is essential if people are to hold the system to account for the service it delivers.

We are committed to opening up public services in order to enable taxpayers to scrutinise their local CJS, building public confidence in the system as a whole. Being able to see how the courts work, and seeing justice being done in cases of national importance, is now possible through the televising of cases from the Court of Appeal. Broadcasting began in October 2013.

What we have achieved

We have:

- begun **broadcasting from the Court of Appeal** – removing a ban on cameras in courts that had lasted since 1925; and
- **made information about end-to-end timeliness of criminal cases more accessible**. Members of the public can now access *police.uk* to find out the average time a case took, from the offence to the outcome, in their local courts.

Case study – Rape Monitoring Group

The national Rape Monitoring Group (RMG) identifies issues affecting the criminal justice response to rape. The RMG has published data on rape for every police force in England and Wales. It intends to publish data on rape from all criminal justice agencies in summer 2014 in one easily accessible document.

In January 2014 the RMG published data outlining for each police force: the number of rape offences recorded by police, the outcomes and “no crime” rates. These data were designed to aid Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and the public to understand how rape is being dealt with by police forces. The aim is to enable PCCs and the public to ask questions about how rape is dealt with locally so that agencies improve the service provided to victims and ensure that investigations and prosecutions are robust and effective.

When the first data set was published in January 2014 considerable local media coverage lifted the profile of rape cases in local forces. The RMG’s next publication, later this summer, will highlight what impact the publication has had on the way the police are dealing with these cases.

What we are going to do next

We want to increase the amount of information that is available to the public about the CJS. The *police.uk* website provides a strong foundation, and since November 2013 it has included case timeliness data so the public can see how long cases take in their area. We can do more to make it easier for members of the public, and for criminal justice staff, to access and make sense of published data. We will change how and where CJS performance data is published online so that members of the public can easily find out how the system is performing, both locally and nationally. We will introduce new arrangements by March 2015.

Broadcasting from the Court of Appeal has opened up the courts and allowed more people to see how decisions are taken in significant cases. The Government has set out its intention to begin broadcasting sentencing remarks from the Crown Court and will work with the judiciary to bring this about.

To increase transparency we will:

- further consider the broadcasting of sentencing remarks in the Crown Court; and
- change how and where CJS performance data is published online so that members of the public can easily find out how the CJS is performing locally and nationally.

Fairness

Last year we set out a focus on fairness within the CJS to ensure that the public can expect equal treatment regardless of their background. We described the over-representation of some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), faith and disabled groups at various stages of the CJS, as well as under-representation in the workforce. In November 2013, MoJ published the latest statistics on Race and the CJS,⁹ which highlighted parts of the system where there is evidence of inequality.

Interaction with the system can be stressful and in some cases traumatic, especially for vulnerable people. We know that people with mental health issues are disproportionately represented in the CJS, both as victims and as defendants. The police and the CPS now have a duty under the Victims' Code to assess victims at an early stage, and to refer any victim eligible for enhanced services for pre-trial therapy, if it is deemed necessary. To help prevent victims from developing mental health problems as a result of crime, every victim is entitled to have their details passed on to services which offer emotional and practical support to help victims to cope and recover.

What we have achieved

We have:

- created a **CJS equality network**, bringing together equality leads from each agency;
- included in the new Victims' Code the requirement for anyone with a **mental health problem to be offered enhanced support** at every stage of the criminal justice process; and
- created opportunities for talented BAME staff to develop and progress in the police force through the launch of the **BAME Progression 2018 Programme**.

What we are going to do next

We have designed a range of reforms that, taken together, will make the criminal justice system fairer and ensure more equal treatment. These include developing new guidance in Easy Read format to make the CJS a less confusing place for its users, promoting positive action to make police forces more representative of the communities that they serve, and supporting local partnerships to better ensure that their services provide equal treatment for all.

We want to know more about how BAME prisoners interact with the system and what this means for them and for their victims. We will begin to roll out new youth and adult liaison and diversion services to identify, assess and refer offenders with mental health issues, learning disability, substance misuse problems or other vulnerabilities into support or treatment services so that they can be treated.

⁹ Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2012:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistics-on-race-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2012>

To increase fairness in the CJS we will:

- develop, test and roll out Easy Read guidance to make the CJS easier to understand;
- work with Local Criminal Justice Partnerships to review plans for tackling local equality and provide support;
- examine the experiences of BAME prisoners to understand their decision making process at key stages and identify ways to improve their engagement with the CJS, including decisions about appropriate guilty pleas;
- develop and issue guidance to all police forces to promote and encourage greater use of positive action in recruitment, as appropriate, to increase diversity in the workforce; and
- roll out new youth and adult liaison and diversion services to 22% of the population of England by 2015/16.

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