

## INCREASING COMMUNITY ACCESS TO LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Ministry of Justice Business Plan for 2011-15<sup>1</sup> includes the following commitments:

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**Action 2.4** - 'Explore the use of **Neighbourhood Justice Panels** to divert a number of low-level cases from court to be heard by a panel of community volunteers and Criminal Justice System practitioners'

- i. Develop proposals for Neighbourhood Justice Panels (November 2010)
  - ii. Consult through the Green Paper on rehabilitation and sentencing reform (see also 1.1ii, 1.5ii, 2.1ii, 2.3ii and 5.3ii) (February 2011)
  - iii. Analyse consultation responses and publish detailed proposals (July 2011)
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**Action 3.3(i)** - 'Publish plans to increase community access to local criminal justice' (March 2011)

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**Action 4.1** - 'Increase the transparency of court results and the effectiveness of sentences:

- i. Prepare to publish sentencing data for different types of offence for every court in an open and standardised format to make it more accessible to victims of crime and the wider public (completed October 2010)
  - ii. Develop proposals to publish detailed court data in an open and standardised format (June 2011);
  - iii. Spread information about which sentences are most effective at cutting re-offending across the Criminal Justice System, working with the Home Office which is spreading information about which policing techniques are the most effective (June 2011).
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/business-plan-2011-15.htm>

This document draws on aspects of each of these commitments and brings them together into a set of proposals which collectively aim to increase community access to local criminal justice. In considering how best to achieve this, we have looked at a range of ways in which individuals and communities may seek access to local criminal justice services and at the different requirements and purposes of those who do so. We have brigaded actions under the following main headings<sup>2</sup>:

- Information
- Consultation and feedback
- Involvement and empowerment
- Court reform

For many people the Criminal Justice System is remote, complex, represented most obviously by the police and something with which they see no need to engage unless they have a problem with which they need help. Levels of awareness and understanding are low and levels of active involvement or participation – unless driven by a particular need – are not as high as we would like to see. The Criminal Justice System provides an essential public service. To do so effectively, there needs to be greater awareness and engagement by local agencies with the communities they serve and a greater willingness at neighbourhood level to support and work with local services to address issues of community concern. To achieve this and in the interests of transparency and increased accountability, we need to increase the level of access by communities to local criminal justice information and services. We need to create the conditions which enable communities to play their part.

The first and most important step is to provide meaningful and accessible information so that the public knows what is happening on their streets, what is being done about it, how to get help if they need it and what they can expect of their local criminal justice services. We also need to establish a meaningful dialogue between local services and their communities as an aid to understanding what is a particular concern and needs action and as a means of letting people know what the outcome of any action has been. Ultimately, what we want is for communities to feel that they have a shared responsibility with local criminal justice services to keep themselves and their neighbourhoods safe. We want them to get more involved, to have a say in local criminal justice matters, to participate through volunteering opportunities and to feel they have a stake in the much needed reforms to the criminal justice system and its processes.

We need to support local agencies in their efforts to create the conditions for that participation to happen and to grow. Criminal Justice services work in partnership with a wide range of voluntary, community and faith-based organisations, all of which play a vital role in facilitating dialogue and engagement with diverse communities. We are committed to strengthening that relationship, including through further competing the provision of criminal justice services to independent providers. Alongside the proposals for action set out in this plan, this will enable and support increased access by a wider range of communities as many of these organisations are rooted in local and involve local people and services users as volunteers.

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<sup>2</sup> These are not exhaustive and remain subject to review and amendment in response to changing community needs, the way in which society accesses information and services and feedback on effectiveness

## Increasing community access to local criminal justice

Information		
<i>Actions</i>	<i>Time scale</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<p><b>1. Increase access to data on justice outcomes:</b></p> <p>(i) Publish court level data on outcomes by offence type (MOJ Business Plan commitment 4.1(i));</p> <p>(ii) Test the feasibility of publishing justice outcome data alongside street level crime data;</p> <p>(iii) Ensure the public has sufficient contextual information alongside aggregate data with which to interpret data on justice outcomes, particularly in relation to sentencing, re-offending and reconviction;</p> <p>(iv) Test the feasibility of publishing user case studies online to show how the public, local services providers and data developers have successfully interpreted and used criminal justice data to hold local services to account, to develop new tools to increase transparency and understanding or to prompt local service improvement</p>	<p>October 2010</p> <p>February 2011 to October 2011</p> <p>October 2010 to January 2012</p> <p>January 2012</p>	<p>Completed in October 2010. Data can be viewed at: <a href="http://sentencing.justice.gov.uk/">http://sentencing.justice.gov.uk/</a></p> <p>Two Crime Mapping Trailblazer areas (Lincolnshire and West Yorkshire) identified to undertake feasibility testing and initial scoping meeting held.</p> <p>Information about sentencing and related matters was published alongside court-level data on outcomes in October 2010;</p>
<p><b>2. Increase access to information on individual sentencing outcomes:</b></p> <p>(i) Support efforts by the police and local criminal justice partnerships to publicise individual sentencing outcomes for cases of particular local interest;</p>	<p>March 2011 – July 2011</p>	<p>HMCS issued practical guidance, based on local good practice, to the police, Community Safety Partnerships and to Local Criminal</p>

<p>(ii) Review and update legal guidance for public authorities on publicising individual sentencing outcomes including via the internet</p> <p>(iii) Assess the feasibility of publicising individual sentencing outcomes on-line and through other channels and consider the most effective means of doing so, including consideration and assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- existing local good practice by CJS agencies and partnerships; and</li> <li>- technical solutions offered/being developed by third party suppliers.</li> </ul>	<p>May 2011</p> <p>October 2010 – January 2012</p>	<p>Justice Boards in March 2011.</p>
<p><b>3. Increase the transparency of the effectiveness of sentencing:</b></p> <p>(i) Publish information about which sentences are most effective at cutting re-offending across the Criminal Justice System, working ... (Ministry of Justice Business Plan commitment 4.1(iii)).</p>	<p>June 2011</p>	

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p><b>4. Publish information about local services to</b></p> <p>(i) Review existing research and insight into what information the public wants to be able to access; produce a short-list of information and data categories for potential online publication; conduct an assessment of feasibility and develop a proposition for phased release of user-focused justice data and information on appropriate online platforms;</p> <p>(ii) Publish new content on DirectGov, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhanced online information and support for prospective jurors to help them prepare to carry out their duties effectively, as part of the new crime and justice proposition; and</li> <li>- Information about Quality of Service Standards for all criminal justice agencies to increase visibility and accountability, including information on how to complain. Links to the 'Court Finder' and 'Find your local MP' tools will also be provided; and</li> </ul> <p>(iii) Explore the feasibility of providing through DirectGov searchable information about local organisations funded through the new Victims General Fund and the services they provide to enhance the existing Victim Support postcode 'look-up' function with details of over 300 organisations and their services.</p>	<p>April 2011</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p> <p>July 2011</p>	<p>Scoping and feasibility work complete</p>

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p><b>5. Promote ways in which the public can have their say and opportunities to participate in local crime and justice issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Publish new content on volunteering in the justice system on DirectGov, as part of the Big Society section of the Home and Communities franchise;</li> <li>(ii) Enhance content about volunteering in the justice system and develop navigation paths to it, as part of DirectGov's new Big Society section;</li> <li>(iii) Publish complementary information on Justice.gov on careers in the criminal justice system, with details about potential roles and where to find out about vacancies;</li> <li>(iv) Publish information on local events on Justice.gov to enable the public to identify when and where they can engage with local services. The information will highlight the different types of events that people can attend, such as mock trials, police / court open days, and community safety events, with information about which organisations run the events and where to find out more.</li> <li>(v) Fund voluntary and community sector national infrastructure to help strengthen the engagement of diverse organisations and communities in local criminal justice areas.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p> <p>January 2012</p> <p>April 2011 – March 2014</p>	

<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>		
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p><b>6. Review the existing format and use of Community Impact Statements as a means by which decision-makers can assess the impact of crime on community life, gather views on community priorities then use the information as part of the justice process:</b></p> <p>(i) Review the evidence on current use of Community Impact Statements and develop options for the potential for use of community impact information in pre-court, community based interventions, such as Neighbourhood Justice Panels;</p> <p>(ii) Publish detailed proposals for the use of community impact information in community-based justice interventions;</p> <p>(iii) Implement use of community impact information in the first wave of test sites for the Neighbourhood Justice Panel approach;</p> <p>(iv) Explore the feasibility of linking community impact information to use of Victim Personal Statements in cases coming before the courts to ensure that information on secondary victims and wider harm to the community is available to decision-makers (Eg: If racist graffiti aimed at the owner is scrawled on a shop front, the owner is the direct victim and may make a Victim Personal Statement but members of the community from the same ethnic group as the shop owner may also feel victimised. The VPS will not pick up this wider harm but community impact information would provide additional insight into the potential seriousness of the offence in the community context).</p>	<p>March 2011</p> <p>July 2011</p> <p>October 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	<p>Action complete</p>

<b><i>Actions</i></b>	<b><i>Time scale</i></b>	<b><i>Progress</i></b>
<p><b>7. Capture and promote examples of effective ways in which the community and local criminal justice services have worked together to tackle issues of local concern:</b></p> <p>(i) Work with the Home Office, local CJS agencies and voluntary sector partners to identify the most effective mechanisms through which communities can be consulted on matters of local concern and through which feedback may be provided;</p> <p>(ii) Work with local CJS agencies, voluntary sector partners and with the judiciary to promote attendance at community events by the public and CJS practitioners, providing opportunities for consultation and feedback, including Neighbourhood Policing, beat meetings and community meetings.</p> <p>(iii) Fund voluntary and community sector national infrastructure for a further three years to help strengthen effective volunteering and mentoring in criminal justice services.</p>	<p>April – October 2011</p> <p>April – October 2011</p> <p>April 2011 – March 2014</p>	



<b>Involvement / Empowerment</b>		
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p><b>10. Explore the use of Neighbourhood Justice Panels to divert a number of low-level cases from court to be heard by a panel of community volunteers and Criminal Justice System (CJS ) practitioners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Develop proposals for Neighbourhood Justice Panels;</li> <li>(ii) Consult through the green paper on rehabilitation and sentencing reform;</li> <li>(iii) Analyse consultation responses and publish detailed proposals;</li> <li>(iv) First annual data release (subject to consultation and development of further proposals, on the number of Neighbourhood Justice Panels and the volume of cases brought to them.</li> </ul>	<p>November 2010</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>July 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	<p>Action complete</p> <p>Action complete</p>
<p><b>11. Promote volunteering within the Criminal Justice System:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Work with Volunteering England to highlight CJS volunteering opportunities as a contribution to Volunteers Week and the European Year of Volunteering 2011;</li> <li>(ii) Increase the accessibility of information (online through DirectGov and through other channels such as Volunteering Centres and CJS staff) on a range of volunteering opportunities across the CJS to enable community participation in local crime and justice issues;</li> <li>(iii) Explore with local criminal justice partners and umbrella</li> </ul>	<p>June 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	

<p>12. Develop practical, user friendly signposting and guidance to enable communities to make better sense and use of published data and to hold local agencies to account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Develop an information pack to enable communities to source and interpret data about fairness and equality in justice outcomes and in the delivery of criminal justice services, and how to use the information to hold local agencies to account (E.g. where data show there is a difference in rates of stop and searches per 1,000 population between ethnic groups, and where communities and others may wish to undertake more in-depth analysis or ask questions to help with further understanding the reasons for such differences.</li> <li>(ii) Undertake user-testing with a small number of voluntary and community sector organisations and representative user groups to quality assure and assess ease of use;</li> <li>(iii) Refine and prepare the guidance for publication online;</li> <li>(iv) Explore options for extending this approach to other criminal justice data sources, including those on sentencing outcomes, re-offending and reconviction .</li> </ul>	<p>June 2011</p> <p>October 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>April 2012</p>	

Court reform		
<i>Actions</i>	<i>Time scale</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<p>14. <b>Increase community access to local criminal justice services through Neighbourhood Justice:</b></p> <p>(i) Work with the Home Office, the Office of the Attorney General, the judiciary and with criminal justice agencies to develop a coherent framework for Neighbourhood Justice which generates trust and confidence amongst criminal justice professionals and the public confidence that lower-level crime is being tackled effectively at the earliest possible stage in the justice process, avoiding the need to bring cases before the courts which can be dealt with in the community with the involvement of the community. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Empowering front-line police officers and other criminal justice practitioners</b> to use their discretion to apply the right solution (for the victim and the community) to the problems they find;</li> <li>- Developing a <b>clearer national framework for the use of out-of-court disposals</b> which promotes the professional discretion of police officers, while ensuring that use of out-of-court disposals is appropriate, proportionate and effective;</li> <li>- Exploring how we might <b>increase the use of restorative justice</b> at different points within the criminal justice process; and</li> <li>- Looking at the potential of the <b>Neighbourhood Justice Panel approach</b> to involve communities more closely in achieving effective justice outcomes as an integral part of a</li> </ul>	<p>July 2011</p>	

<p>(ii) Publish more detailed proposals on Neighbourhood Justice alongside wider plans for reform of the Criminal Justice System (MOJ Business Plan commitment 3.1)</p>	<p>July 2011</p>	
<p><b>15. Applying the lessons from problem-solving courts and approaches and integrating the most effective elements into the core business of magistrates' courts.</b></p> <p>(i) Complete evaluations of Dedicated Drug Court and Mental Health Court pilots and a review of the implementation and effectiveness of problem-solving approaches;</p> <p>(ii) Develop an integrated problem solving court model drawing on the evidence from problem-solving approaches, the Dedicated Drug Court and Mental Health Court pilots, and consider roll-out to magistrates' courts in England and Wales.</p>	<p>March 2011</p> <p>October 2011</p>	<p>Action complete</p>