



Criminal Justice Board Minute

Held on 12 July 2021 chaired by the Rt Hon. Robert Buckland QC MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

Members

- Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Rt Hon. Robert Buckland QC MP)
- Attorney General (Rt Hon. Michael Ellis QC MP)
- Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse MP)
- President of the Queen's Bench Division (Rt Hon. Dame Victoria Sharp)
- Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service & National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Criminal Justice (Nick Ephgrave)
- Director General, National Crime Agency (Lynne Owens)
- Director of Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecution Service (Max Hill QC)
- Chief Executive, HM Prison and Probation Service & Second Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice (Jo Farrar)
- Chief Executive, HM Courts and Tribunals Service (Kevin Sadler)
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Representative (David Lloyd)
- Victims' Commissioner (Dame Vera Baird QC)
- Chief Executive, Youth Justice Board (Keith Fraser)

By invitation

- Chair of the Bar Council (Derek Sweeting QC)
- Law Society Justice Lead (Richard Miller)

Senior Officials

- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice (Antonia Romeo)
- Director General, Policy and Strategy Group, Ministry of Justice (Jerome Glass)
- Director, Family and Criminal Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice (Nicola Hewer)
- Director, Courts and Tribunals Recovery Unit, Ministry of Justice/HM Courts and Tribunals Service (Ed Lidington)
- Director, Strategy, Capability and Resource, Public Safety Group, Home Office (Luke Edwards)
- Deputy Director, Public Law and Litigation, Attorney General's Office (Kelby Harmes)
- Deputy Director, Prison Reform / COVID-19 Gold Command, HM Prison and Probation Service (Ed Cornmell)

Apologies

- Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rt Hon. Priti Patel MP)
- Senior Presiding Judge (Rt Hon. Lady Justice Thirlwall)
- Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service (Dame Cressida Dick)
- Chair, National Police Chief's Council (Martin Hewitt)
- Chair, Criminal Justice in Wales Board (Amy Rees)

Agenda Item 1: Lord Chancellor's Welcome

1. The LORD CHANCELLOR welcomed members to the meeting and recognised the continued importance of the Criminal Justice Board (CJB) given it is the only forum to include leaders from across the Criminal Justice System.
2. He noted that there had been a vast amount of work done since the Board last met to help recover, rebuild and restore the system.

Agenda Item 2: CJSSC Update

3. ED CORNMELL outlined the work of the Criminal Justice System Strategic Command (CJSSC), which included identifying and addressing potential and current risks to the system. He thanked Criminal Justice System (CJS) partners for their participation and engagement in CJSSC activities.
4. The LORD CHANCELLOR agreed that CJSSC had played a vital role in ensuring the wheels of justice continued to turn during the pandemic.

Agenda Item 3: Criminal Justice Action Group

5. The LORD CHANCELLOR said that the Government's ambition for the CJS was significant, and the National Economy and Recovery Taskforce, driven by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chaired by the Prime Minister, had given us fresh impetus to build back better and build back safer.
6. He outlined that, with the support of the Prime Minister, cross-CJS governance structures had been reinvigorated, this had involved creating:
 - A CJB Steering Committee (CJB-SC), chaired by the Lord Chancellor, to oversee all aspects of CJB work;
 - A Criminal Justice Quad comprising the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice, Home Secretary and Attorney General;
 - A CJB Taskforce (CJB-TF), chaired by the Minister of State for Crime and Policing, to improve how Rape and Serious Sexual Offences are dealt with; and
 - A Criminal Justice Action Group (CJAG), which is chaired by Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), to focus on the specific priorities set out in the Criminal Justice Action Plan.
7. He said that he would like the CJB to be more focused on the link between the National Board and Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) going forward.
8. JEROME GLASS gave a summary of the work that CJAG had undertaken to date, with a focus on improving timeliness, improving victim engagement and reducing the outstanding caseload. These priorities were established as the core of the Criminal Justice Action Plan which had since been translated into the Criminal Justice Implementation Plan. CJAG had dedicated workstreams, for example, on:
 - Scorecards;
 - Local innovation and best practice through the creation of the 'Innovation Team';
 - Early Guilty Pleas; and
 - Data.
9. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - Broad engagement, including with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), LCJBs, legal professionals, and victims' groups, would be key to the success of this work
 - The data work would be about both current data, and what more needed to be done – including making current data more accessible
 - PCCs would play a critical role in delivering change, particularly around Operation Soteria

- Officials and Ministers would be engaging with Board members over the summer and into the autumn

Agenda Item 4: Recovery in the Criminal Courts

10. The LORD CHANCELLOR thanked everyone, from the judges, clerks and legal professionals, to the cleaners and security staff, for all they had done to keep our courts operating wherever possible.

11. ED LIDINGTON outlined the work that had taken place to enable justice to continue to be delivered, and what more needed to be done, with a focus on:

- Capacity;
- User experience of the system; and
- Working with partners across the system in advance of the upcoming Spending Review.

12. During the discussion, the following points were made:

- Resident Judges had led the way to identify local solutions to local problems
- The Judiciary, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and Public Health England/Wales had worked together to prioritise the welfare of jurors as restrictions were lifted
- The use of Nightingale courts was welcomed, as was the wider use of technology during the pandemic, but consistency of the use of technology was an issue
- There was concern around the capacity of advocates and litigators, and the risk the end of furlough would bring.

Agenda Item 5: CJB Stocktake

13. The LORD CHANCELLOR noted that it was an appropriate time to take stock of what the Board had achieved over the last two years.

14. NICOLA HEWER summarised the work that had taken place in the context of the CJB projects, commissioned in July 2020 which focused on 'building back better' post-Covid 19, as well as the work of the CJB Sub-Groups on the three priority areas set by the Board:

- Forensics;
- Case progression; and
- Sexual offences.

15. She concluded by thanking partners for their continued engagement in these projects.

16. During the discussion, the following points were made:

- There would be an update of the Operation Soteria work at the next CJB, which aligned to the work of the Sexual Offences Sub-Group
- The Rape Review demonstrated the truly collaborative work of the Sexual Offences Sub-Group and there was a need to have a mechanism to monitor progress
- It was important to prevent the pandemic from obscuring the underlying themes and issues within the system which existed before the pandemic for example knife crime and mental health
- The Police and Crown Prosecution Service were keen to see positive change, and the work of the Joint Operational Improvement Board (JOIB) would be key

Closing remarks from the Chair

17. The LORD CHANCELLOR closed by thanking attendees and noted that direct engagement work with Board members would be vital as we continued to make progress.

Action 1: Officials to engage with Board members on the work being undertaken by CJAG