

Scrutiny Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny Board (OSB) – Crime and Disorder Committee
Date of Meeting:	Enter date
Subject:	Bedfordshire Reducing Reoffending Strategy
Report Author:	Alison Harding: Joint Chair of the Bedfordshire Reducing Reoffending Board; Head of Local Delivery Unit for the National Probation Service in Bedfordshire

Purpose

1. To provide information on the work of the Bedfordshire Reducing Reoffending Board 20/21, and the Reducing Reoffending Strategy and priorities

Recommendations

2. The Board to note the report

Report

3. The Bedfordshire Reducing Reoffending board (RRB) is a sub group of the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board (CJB) and it reports to the CJB. The priorities of the Board are agreed by the CJB and are formulated in discussion with Community Safety Partnership colleagues and other stakeholders.

The work of the Board has of course been impacted over the past year by the COVID19 pandemic in that the services and support available to offenders has had to adapt to the pandemic and deliver differently.

However, the OSB should note that

4. The RRB has continued to meet bi-monthly and focus on its priorities as well as being used by members as a means of sharing information about models of delivery and service during the pandemic.
5. Agencies represented at the RRB have continued to provide statutory services to offenders albeit applying different approaches. For example, Probation Services (both the National Probation Service and BeNCH Community Rehabilitation Company – ‘the CRC’) have continued to have face to face contact with those offenders in the community assessed as posing the highest risk of serious harm and vulnerable offenders. Blended models of supervision have been developed, with much greater use being made of telephone and digital contact with offenders, and doorstep visits. Youth Offender Services have similarly continued to fulfil their statutory responsibilities with face to face contact with young people. Both Adult Probation services and Youth Offender Services have continued to provide the Courts with advice about suitable sentencing.
6. The pandemic has impacted on the range of interventions and support available to support offender desistance from crime. An obvious example of this is that Probation Services have not been able to bring groups of offenders together to deliver the usual range of accredited programmes that focus on Thinking Skills, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offending. One to one work has been delivered instead, with offenders being

prioritised for this work based on the level of risk they pose. Another example is Drug and Alcohol Services that have largely been delivered over the phone rather than face to face.

7. Direction of Bedfordshire, a Police and Crime Commissioner funded initiative that signposts offenders to services in the community, has been invaluable during the pandemic and has supported the statutory services to access support for offenders

Strategic Priorities;

8. Housing - Housing will always be a priority of the RRB, because it is very difficult for an offender to desist from crime if they do not have someone to live. The work the RRB expected to be doing to address the housing needs of offenders – which in broad terms was to improve offender access to housing by bringing local partners together – changed significantly as a result of the pandemic. The anticipated early release of prisoners during the first lockdown resulted in the establishment of a Homelessness Prevention Taskforce (HPT) in each Probation region (which for Bedfordshire is East of England). Whilst the anticipated early release of large numbers of prisoners did not happen, the teams remained in place to support offenders released from prison into accommodation. The OSB should note that the HPT is not an accommodation provider and does not replace the responsibilities of the Local Authority. Rather, funding is available for short term emergency accommodation (14 nights in a hotel) and for rent deposit or rent in advance to help an offender secure more permanent accommodation.
9. It has recently been announced that the East of England is one of 5 probation regions chosen as part of Project Vanguard which will see the HPT remain in place, with funding available for the first 12 weeks following release. Accommodation providers will be commissioned and wrap around support will be available. The OSB should note that the availability of move on accommodation for offenders, be this via the local authority or third sector providers, will be crucial if we are to significantly impact on offender homelessness. The bullet points identified under the 'Housing' priority thus remain very relevant.
10. Offender Management, Wellbeing and Employment, Training and Education
11. Integrated Offender Management (IOM) provides a framework for the management of some cohorts of offenders, determined by local partnership priorities. Many schemes lost their way following the split in Probation Services in 2014, and this was commented upon in a HMIP thematic inspection of IOM schemes in 2019. Bedfordshire's IOM scheme remains in place and is hosted by YouTurn Futures and it has continued to operate during the pandemic. The most recent performance report presented to the RRB is provided to give a flavour of the scheme. A new, national IOM strategy has been published (November 2020) with Operational Guidance due for publication in April 2021. Bedfordshire is well placed to respond to the strategy which in broad terms refocuses IOM on serious acquisitive crime. A task and finish group is currently underway to review the current cohorts, and to scope which offenders will be brought under IOM under the new strategy.
12. Reducing reoffending pathways are an essential part of supporting offenders to desist from crime. As noted above, Direction for Bedfordshire has become a key player in identifying these pathways, operating as a one stop shop of services.

13. With regards to Mental Health, the Board will wish to note that Luton is a pilot area for Community Mental Health Treatment Requirements which can be made by the courts as part of a Community Order.

3 Serious Violence

14. The arrangements in place to manage offenders who have either committed serious acts of violence, or who are risk of doing so, have continued to operate during the pandemic. The RRB has good links with other Boards who have oversight of this agenda, for example the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board, and the YOS SMB – the Chair of the RRB sits on both of these Boards.
15. MAPPA Level 2 and 3 panels have continued to meet throughout the pandemic to ensure robust risk management of those offenders who pose a high risk of serious harm and where a partnership approach is required. Indeed, the transfer of meetings onto a digital platform has resulted in approved attendance by duty to co-operate agencies.
16. The multi agency gang panel (MAGPAN) has also continued to meet to focus on children and young adults involved in gang activity, and to provide support and interventions to desist.
17. The OSB is also asked to note the Probation Reform Programme whereby the Probation Services currently delivered by the Community Rehabilitation Company (since 2014) are brought back in to the public sector (the National Probation Service) from 26th of June 2021. This means the reunification of the Probation Service and is good news in terms of reducing reoffending as it means that Probation will once again be able to speak with 'one voice' in the partnership arena. It means that all offenders subject to statutory supervision will be under the supervision of the National Probation Service (part of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service). A new Target Operating Model has been published and describes how Probation Services will be developed and delivered over the next few years.

Proposal/Option

18. For comments and or recommendation

Appendix (if any)

Appendix A - Bedfordshire Reducing Reoffending Strategy

Appendix B - Direction for Bedfordshire Newsletter

Appendix C - IOM Performance Report

Appendix D - IOM strategy

List of Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972, Section 100D

19. None