



Local criminal justice boards

Supporting change management

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local and national services for the public. Our work covers local government, health and criminal justice services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we monitor spending to ensure public services are good value for money.

Introduction

- 1 The criminal justice system (CJS) is undergoing significant reform and change. In April 2003, 42 local criminal justice boards (LCJBs) were established. They aim to improve the delivery of justice and the service provided to victims and witnesses and to secure public confidence in the CJS. LCJBs join up local criminal justice agencies by bringing together chief officers and senior managers from the police, probation, Prison Service, Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates' courts, crown courts and youth offending teams.
- 2 The Audit Commission report, *Local Criminal Justice Boards – Supporting change management*, draws on the learning and experience of three case study boards and identifies the key challenges that they face as well as providing strategies to address these. The challenges include:
 - the need to engage all members actively in the partnership, as well as external stakeholders, including crime and disorder reduction partnerships and local strategic partnerships, in order to achieve shared objectives;
 - the importance of establishing robust governance arrangements that enable the effective and efficient implementation of LCJB objectives; and
 - the need to establish a local performance management framework that facilitates improvement.

The report also identifies some key issues that need to be addressed at national level in order to facilitate local improvements.

Engaging partners and other stakeholders

- 3 To achieve their objectives LCJBs need the full commitment of their members. They also need support from other parties involved in the CJS, such as magistrates and judges, and from wider stakeholders, such as crime and disorder reduction partnerships, local strategic partnerships and voluntary organisations that provide services for victims and witnesses. Developing a collaborative culture that encourages the participation of all member agencies is critical to building commitment. Partnership protocols, good inter-agency planning and joint training can all help to achieve this.
- 4 LCJBs may face tensions in balancing shared targets with the priorities of individual agencies. To manage these tensions they need to integrate their shared objectives and targets with those of member agencies, and use the flexibility that they have in setting local targets to ensure that they meet local needs.

- 5 LCJBs are not operating in a vacuum. Crime and disorder reduction partnerships and local strategic partnerships are also working on related agendas of reducing crime, improving safety and reducing the fear of crime. To ensure a joined-up vision of a strong local CJS, and greater public confidence, LCJBs need to build effective relationships with them and explore opportunities for collaboration on consultation, public communications and other initiatives. Health services are also important partners and should be encouraged to participate in the partnership.

Governance

- 6 Successful LCJBs are founded on strong ownership of shared objectives, clear management control arrangements and being visibly accountable to stakeholders. Accountability in LCJBs is complex and exists on different levels. As well as being accountable collectively to the National Criminal Justice Board for the shared public service agreement (PSA) targets, individual agencies are accountable to their own governing bodies, such as police authorities and probation boards. The commitment of these governing bodies is critical to the success of LCJBs and agencies need to involve them in shaping LCJB work. They must also join up their own strategic planning processes with those of the LCJB as far as possible.
- 7 The volume of work and co-ordination involved in delivering LCJB objectives is considerable. It is important that LCJBs clarify accountabilities and develop clear structures and ways of working so that people know who they are responsible to and what for, so that decisions can be made at the right level and at the right time.

Performance management

- 8 Managing performance is about establishing practical ways to improve the way things are done in order to deliver better quality services to local people and to improve accountability. It is not just about information systems, targets, indicators and plans; it is also about getting the right focus, leadership and culture in place.
- 9 The PSA targets provide the high-level vision for LCJBs. To build commitment and encourage a clear focus, boards need to integrate these targets with local priorities as far as possible. They must also build their targets into the plans of individual agencies to ensure that achieving shared objectives is not an extra chore but part of everyday business. As well as having a clear vision, successful partnerships have strategies to achieve this vision. For LCJBs this involves mapping out how they will develop their capability and capacity as a partnership in order to achieve long-term improvements. **Exhibit 1**, overleaf, provides examples of the milestones LCJBs might set for doing this.

Exhibit 1

Example milestones in building LCJB strategic capability

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish partnership and core support functions. ○ Agree delivery plans and embed objectives and targets in mainstream services. ○ Agree strategy for building partnership capability. ○ Establish robust governance arrangements. ○ Identify resources (people and money) needed to achieve delivery plan objectives and targets – agree plan to secure these. ○ Implement performance management arrangements, including IT systems. ○ Develop links with key stakeholders including partnerships. ○ Introduce risk management arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At least one-half of all CJS agencies using secure email and able to exchange case data electronically. ○ Identify further opportunities for collaboration and improved efficiency, develop resource plan further to achieve these. ○ Joint training to achieve specific improvements. ○ Establish shared consultation and communication arrangements with local partnerships and member agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrate strategic plans and annual reports with member agencies and crime and disorder reduction partnerships and local strategic partnerships. ○ All CJS agencies using secure email and able to exchange case data electronically. ○ Pool resources for specific initiatives and functions, such as performance management. ○ Produce LCJB management accounts demonstrating costs and benefits.

- 10 Finding the right framework for managing performance is also important and LCJBs need to develop arrangements that help people at different levels to focus on what needs to be done to deliver improvements to the CJS.

National support for local improvement

- 11 At national level, a new National Criminal Justice Board with responsibility for overall CJS delivery has been established. Its role is to make sure that central government departments, politicians and officials who are involved in delivering criminal justice act as one and drive and facilitate change. The relationship between LCJBs and the National Criminal Justice Board is key, as many local improvements depend on effective co-ordination, joined-up working at the highest level and LCJB access to adequate resources.

Conclusion

- 12 The pace of change for LCJBs is fast and unrelenting. It involves not only changes to policy, systems and procedures but also changes to the attitudes and behaviour of institutions and individual members of staff at all levels. In reviewing the effectiveness of the new arrangements it is important for the Government to consider all of these issues, as well as examining whether local boards have achieved the aims set out in their delivery plans.

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