



Case Handling

Best Value Review



Bridgebury House Woburn Road
Kempston Bedford MK43 9AX



BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

Headquarters Woburn Road
Kempston Bedford MK43 9AX

case handling

Bedfordshire
Police
Authority

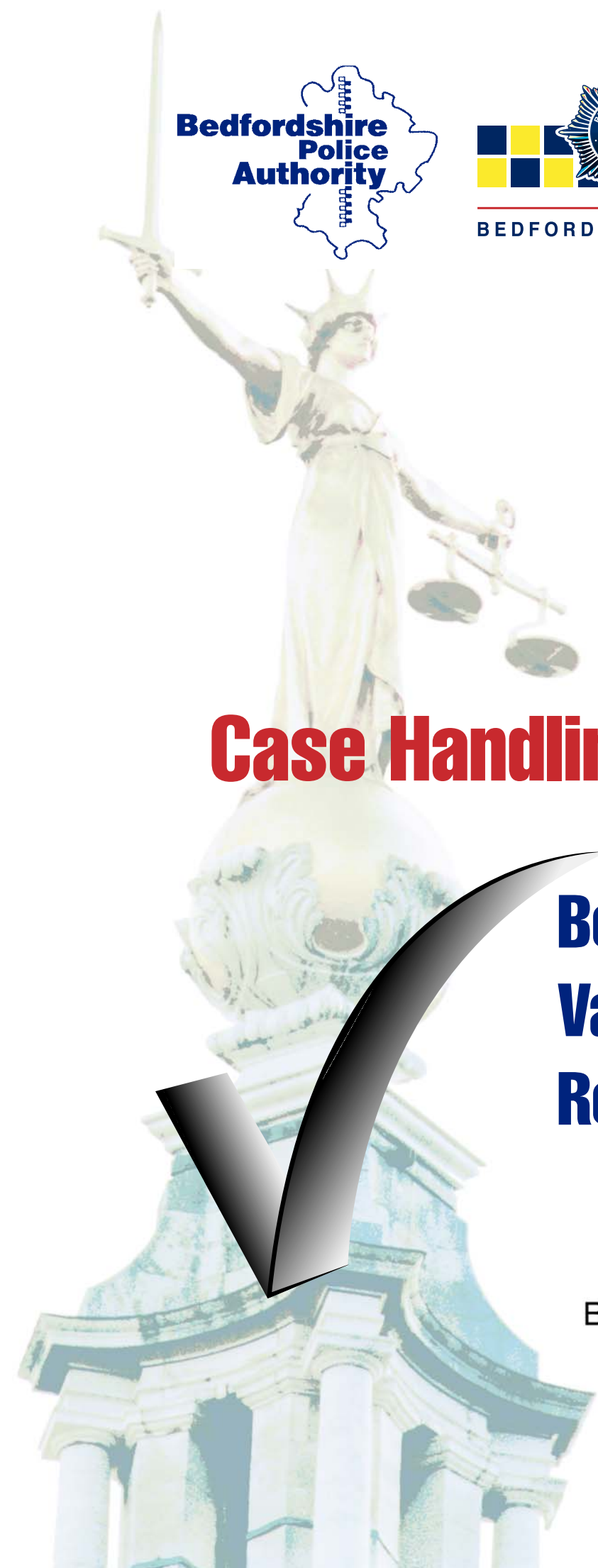


BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

Case Handling

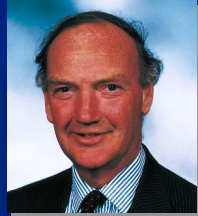
Best Value Review

Best Value



Executive Summary of Case Handling Best Value Review

Police Authority Scrutiny Panel



John Wells



Peter Cowan



Steve Owen

Best Value Review Team Member



Paul Howes

case handling



Introduction

The case handling process within Bedfordshire Police is primarily carried out by the Criminal Justice function of the organisation. This report essentially builds upon the scoping study, reporting on how the four Cs were applied to the process, the results of these and the conclusions and recommendations that have arisen through this work.

Definition

Case Handling has been defined as starting when a suspect is either charged, reported or cautioned for an offence and finishing when the case is finalised, e.g. conviction, acquittal or release.

Current Bedfordshire Police Case Handling Process

The current structure of the case handling process is dealt with in the scoping study document presented to the Police Authority at the instigation of the review. Therefore, for background information and data relating to the current position of the process, readers are directed to this previous document.

Summary of Work Done Under the Four Cs

■ **Challenge** - The process was described as essential to the effective and efficient operation of the police service. However four problems with the current process were identified.

These were:

- Communication with the CPS,
- The logistical problems of having three Divisional Case Units and two Court centres,
- The standard of victim/witness care,
- The number of probationers on territorial divisions.

■ **Consult** - Consultation essentially highlighted similar points to Challenge, in that the process was described as working well at present.

The problems identified were:

- Communication with the CPS,
- The logistical problems of having three Divisional Case Units and two Court centres,
- The standard of victim/witness care,
- The number of probationers on territorial divisions.

■ **Compare** - Comparisons were made with police services that have implemented the Gildewell recommendations of co-location with the CPS.

The results of this were generally positive, with the following advantages being given:

- Closer working relationships with the CPS and police staff
- The ability to solve problems quicker
- Lower administrative cost due to economies of scale
- A more collaborative working environment, removing the previous 'blame culture'.

However, comparison also identified lessons to be learnt from the implementation in other organisations.

These included:

- Ensuring staffing levels were appropriate
- Agreeing boundaries of mutual responsibility
- Involving key decision makers in planning

■ **Compete** - The scope for competition in the strict definition of the word is, within the case handling process, limited. However the review discovered that the scope for collaborative working is high, particularly in relation to the co-location of police and CPS Criminal Justice Units.

executive summary

case handling

Strategic Recommendation

Bedfordshire Police should implement the Glidewell principle through co-location of Criminal Justice Units with the Crown Prosecution Service. A joint police and CPS Glidewell implementation team should be set up to study the extent of co-location and the sites on which it can be achieved.

The actual process for the implementation of this and the structure of the new unit(s) are not recommended here. These will be resolved a joint police and CPS Glidewell implementation team with staff consultation and cost benefit analysis. However, based on the working practices of other police services and anecdotal evidence, the following are put forward as possible options.

Option 1 – Total Co-location (Centralised)

One central Criminal Justice Unit co-located with the CPS and situated in accommodation in the centre of the county. This would include both the Magistrates' Court element and the Trials (Crown Court) Unit. One suggested venue is the old Amptill Court building.

Option 2 – Partial Co-location

This option (which is also the preferred option of the CPS) would have three co-located units as follows:

- At Bedford comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff in the same building at either the present Bedford Police Station or at Bedford Magistrates Court linking in with the privately funded initiative to renovate, upgrade or relocate Bedford Magistrates Court. (Bedford Magistrates Court accounts for approximately a third of all Magistrates Court work in the County and therefore, a third of the prosecutors (four) will be located at Bedford along with a comparable number of admin staff from the Crown Prosecution Service).
- At Luton comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff co-located at Luton Police Station. (Luton Magistrates Court accounts for two thirds of the Magistrates Court work in Bedfordshire and therefore two thirds of the prosecutors (eight) will be located within this unit along with comparable administrative support staff).

- A Crown Court Trials Unit comprising the current Crown Prosecution Trials Unit together with a small number of Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff located at Sceptre House, next to Luton Crown Court. The Police staff would have responsibility for witness warnings, file building and quality control of indictable case papers.

This option has the added advantage that it provides a solution to the problem identified throughout the review of Dunstable DCU serving both Bedford and Luton Magistrates courts.

The advantages, disadvantages and costs of these various options are presented in the table on page 3.

Management Recommendations

Recommendation 1

A set of robust and appropriate local Performance Indicators should be developed for the Criminal Justice system and be adopted throughout the organisation.

It is important that adequate data is collected and collated so that the performance of the service in building and preparing files can be measured and assessed. This will be particularly important in the context of the changes proposed in the strategic recommendation.

Within a period of large-scale change, unless adequate performance data is collated at present, the organisation will be unable to assess the quantitative improvements instituted by this change. It is also important that at least some of the indicators are set jointly with the CPS in order to promote the principle of joint working and common goals.

The actual composition of the indicators will be best determined by the CJU and DCU managers themselves in collaboration with their CPS counterparts, however it has been suggested by the Scrutiny Panel that they should look at aspects such as positive disposal and time spent on files.

Recommendation 2

An in-depth, independent evaluation of the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton should be carried out to discover whether the expected benefits of this new system have been realised.

Activity analysis has indicated that file preparation by patrol officers takes considerably longer in C Division than the other territorial divisions due to the existence of the PHU. The issues raised by this have been agreed by the Scrutiny Panel as wider than the case handling review and should therefore be dealt with in more detail in a separate arena. This evaluation should take into account the early findings of the new Prisoner Handling Unit which went 'live' in Dunstable on 1 April 2002.

Recommendation 3

Consideration should be given to carrying out a specific management review of the service given by Bedfordshire Police to victims and witnesses.

Victims of crime deserve the best possible service from the police, as do those who act as witnesses. The police service essentially governs by consent and still relies heavily on public information and co-operation to solve crimes. If people, through a perceived lack of appreciation or by the police failing to inform them of the case outcome, feel that their witness statements are unnecessary or unwanted and therefore withdraw this help, then crime detection rates and public satisfaction rates could fall. We must therefore ensure that we maximise the service we give to guarantee that we continue to maintain public support.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the progress of the proposal to employ civilian file builders should be followed and any implementation assessed to determine its suitability for adoption throughout the organisation.

B Division has recently submitted a budget bid to employ civilian file builders similar to those in Northamptonshire. They would undertake the file building duties presently undertaken by officers to produce a case summary and complete a file, which would free up officer time for other duties. The implementation of this proposal has the potential to make far-reaching savings in the process and revolutionise the time that officers have for other duties. After a suitable period as a pilot system in Bedford, e.g. six months, if successful, it should be rolled out across the organisation.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the progress of the multi-agency group should be monitored by the Head of Criminal Justice and that any recommendations forthcoming in the area of taped evidence be fully considered by Bedfordshire Police.

Recommendation 6

The feasibility of electronic file building, by adding a Windows-based system, should be fully evaluated by the IT department.

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Estimated Cost
1	a) Total co-location would mean all the county's file preparation occurring in the same building as the CPS, maximising communication links.	a) A central location would mean co-locating away from the courts, negating many of the communication advantages of co-location. b) A central location would mean co-locating outside of the main police stations in the county, negating some of the communication advantages of co-location.	Amptill Court building would cost c. £600,000, together with estimated refurbishment costs of £250,000 - £300,000 and annual IT support link costs of approximately £100,000, therefore total cost of £1 million.
2	a) Maximise the benefits in improved communication links with the CPS and associated benefits with co-location. b) By situating in Luton and Bedford police stations, the unit would be close to the Magistrates and Crown Courts whilst retaining the advantages of being situated with patrol officers. c) Provides a solution to the problem highlighted with Dunstable serving two courts.	a) Potential CPS problems with resourcing. b) Staff mobility/relocation.	Medium - cost of refurbishment of new CJU offices - Cost of relocating displaced police units - Associated IT link costs

Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction	5
2. Definition & Objectives	6
2.1 Definition of the Case Handling Process	6
2.2 Issues Identified by the Police Authority as Key Areas of Interest	6
2.3 Key Objectives for the Review	6
3. Service/Cost Profile	7
4. The Four C's Analysis	9
4.1 Challenge	9
4.2 Consult	10
4.3 Compare	14
4.4 Compete	17
5. Summary/Conclusions	18
6. Recommendations	20

1. Introduction

As a Police Service our work is regulated by legislation and the codes of practice laid down by Parliament and Common Law. The introduction of Best Value in the 1999 Local Government Act outlined a framework for improving local services through a process of continuous improvement.

The principle of 'Best Value' is one which establishes a duty to deliver services to clear standards – covering both cost and quality – by a balance of the most effective, efficient and economic means available, taking full account of equalities and environmental factors. This means that we, as a service, must set out a series of fundamental reviews of our organisation and compare, challenge, compete and consult on our own strategy and procedures to deliver a best value service to all our customers.

As part of this duty, the service has formulated an ongoing programme of reviews to be carried out over a five-year time period. Case Handling forms part of the second year of this review programme.

The case handling process within Bedfordshire Police is primarily carried out by the Criminal Justice function of the Force. Its function is to assemble the evidence that supports a case against a defendant and to make this evidence available as a file to be used by the CPS to secure a conviction. Securing this conviction should be the final objective of both the Police service and CPS.

The everyday practicalities of Case Handling are undertaken by three Divisional Case Units (DCUs), working under the guidance of the Headquarters-based Criminal Justice Unit (CJU). The detailed structure of the process, responsibilities and its current service levels are outlined in the scoping document, presented to the Police Authority at the instigation of the review. It became clear that the key component in Case Handling is efficient communication between stakeholders. For background information and data relating to the process, readers are directed to this scoping study.

This review report essentially builds upon this scoping study, reporting on how the four Cs were applied to the process, the results of these and the conclusions and recommendations that have arisen through this work.

2. Definition and Objectives

2.1. Definition of the Case Handling Process

The process of Case Handling comprises three main elements, namely:

- Gathering together all of the relevant information relating to a crime or incident to determine the action required, and
- Communicating with victims, witnesses and suspects throughout the process to ensure awareness of the progress of a case or its outcome, as appropriate.
- The provision of a quality file to the Crown Prosecution Service.

In terms of setting boundaries, the start of the case handling process is deemed to be when a suspect is either charged, reported or cautioned for an offence. The end of the process occurs when the case is finalised, e.g. conviction, acquittal or release.

2.2. Issues Identified by the Police Authority as Key Areas of Interest

It was agreed at the Police Authority Case Handling Scrutiny Panel meeting of 21 November 2001 that there were a number of areas of concern that should be specifically addressed in this review. These are:

- a) The interface with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS);



- b) Difficulties in assessing evidence;
- c) Difficulties in obtaining additional evidence if this is required by the CPS;
- d) Overall service (CPS, Courts and Police) not working towards one standard set of indicators;
- e) Custody sergeants only having recourse to expert knowledge within normal office hours (Custody sergeants themselves will be covered by the Year 5 review of Offender Handling);
- f) Glidewell recommendations and the effect of the report on job security.

In addition to these, it was decided that the issue of Police National Computer (PNC) input and delays in this process should be examined.

2.3. Key Objectives for the Review

The aim of the review, as agreed by the Police Authority Case Handling Scrutiny Panel at the meeting of 16 October 2001, was:

'to produce something that is of benefit to the Police Service in respect of the Case Handling process.'

The boundaries of the review were governed by the limits of the case handling process as discussed in 2.1. (i.e. from the charge of an offender to the disposal of the case).

As discussed in the scoping document, various areas fell outside of the Case Handling process and were therefore outside of the boundaries of this review. These were:

- Custody - to be dealt with in separate review (Year 5).
- Offender Handling - to be dealt with in separate review (Year 5).
- Court processes and procedures - outside of the police sphere.
- CPS processes and procedures - outside of the police sphere.

In addition there were various constraints that had an effect on this review (to differing degrees):

- Legislation - much of the Criminal Justice System is governed and monitored by Acts of Parliament.
- Guidelines - the format and composition of files is governed by the National Manual of Guidance. The structure of this falls outside of the remit of this review.
- Composition of relevant bodies - the groups represented on various committees and bodies are beyond the scope of this review, i.e. the composition of Youth Offending Teams, Education Action Teams etc.

3. Service/Cost Profile

3.1. The current structure of the Criminal Justice system, and therefore the case handling process, is dealt with in some detail in the scoping study document presented to the Police Authority at the instigation of the review. As mentioned previously, it is not intended to duplicate work by reproducing this detail within this report. Therefore, for background information and data relating to the current position of the process, readers are directed to this previous document.

3.2. Cost of DCUs

A cost profile of the service is important to the review process. A breakdown of costs and the number of staff employed in each DCU is available in the scoping document, however the basic cost of each unit is reiterated here.

	B Division	C Division	D Division
Cost	£261,790	£390,819	£255,933
Number of Staff (f.t.e.)	18.5	26.5	17.5

3.3. PNC Data Quality and Timeliness

As part of the scoping study, it was agreed that the timeliness of PNC data should be examined. This whole area has been examined by the Home Office and between April and October 2001 on the direction of the Home Secretary, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a service-wide inspection of PNC data quality and timeliness. Broadly speaking, their report says that the service as a whole has made significant overall improvements in the clearance of old case results.

The agreed performance standard set out in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) PNC Compliance Strategy is that at least 90% of Arrest/Summons Reports should be created on PNC within 24 hours and full record updated within five days. The previous average for England and Wales in March 2001 was 35, by comparison Bedfordshire was 34 days for full record update.

The latest available figures for Bedfordshire (30/12/01) give a figure for input of six days.

A PNC/Custody interface has been purchased for the Force and has been introduced across the three geographic divisions in recent months. Once this is fully operational, Bedfordshire will meet the ACPO compliance target.

The information given here will be subject to a HMIC inspection in mid-March 2002. The initial findings of this inspection show that overall the HMIC feels that the organisation is performing well. Some areas of work are highlighted as good

practice (i.e. work done re-marketing PNC and the use of questionnaires and the B Division trial of Phoenix staff inputting PNC from custody).

They did also highlight some concerns regarding risk assessed auditing and the system for YOTs updating PNC. These findings are provisional at the moment and the final recommendations of the inspection will be acted upon separately and outside of this review process.

3.4. Current position on Glidewell recommendations

The Glidewell report in 1998 reviewed the CPS and in essence proposed a move to single administrative units, co-locating police and CPS staff, in order to maximise efficiency and eliminate duplications within the prosecution process.

Between September and November 1999, Chief Constables and Chief Crown Prosecutors were invited to draw up outline plans to implement Criminal Justice Units (CJUs) locally in accordance with the nine key objectives determined by the CJU Steering Group. The nine key objectives are:

- i) Shorter lines of communication between police and CPS;
- ii) Minimised transport of files between the police and CPS;
- iii) Cost savings by reduction of duplication including photocopying, archiving and the collection of performance and management information;
- iv) A single file system;
- v) Improved file quality and timeliness for both organisations;
- vi) Improved witness warning, witness care and victim support;
- vii) More effective deployment of staff;
- viii) Individuals within each organisation locally empowered to make day-to-day decisions;
- ix) Clearly defined single-focus location for the courts and other agencies.

The current position with regard to Glidewell in Bedfordshire is that a number of preliminary meetings have been held with the CPS. The HM Crown Prosecution Inspectorate report on an inspection of CPS in Bedfordshire notes that 'there has been a lack of progress, when compared to many CPS areas, to co-located CPS/police trial units and criminal justice units as envisaged in the Glidewell report'.

The current Bedfordshire Police aspiration is to move to a situation where there are two co-located criminal justice units, one at Luton and one at Bedford, dealing with Magistrates Court work. These would be supplemented with a trials unit located in Luton, dealing with Crown Court cases.

Progress has not been made on this due to various problems. These are given as the CPS being locked into a fairly long lease at Sceptre House, CPS administrative staff and DCU staff not being 'mobile' grades and therefore not required to move offices, and a lack of space in Luton and Bedford police stations.

3.5. Current position re: activity analysis data

An activity analysis exercise was carried out in May 2001 covering both the time taken by police officers and DCU staff in case handling. The data for police officers is given below:

	B Division	C Division			D Division	Force
	Patrol Hours	Patrol Hours	PHU Hours	Total Hours	Patrol Hours	Hours
Total average time per arrest & file	4.27	3.07	3.78	6.85	4.00	4.88

We can see from this table that the average time taken in B and D Divisions is broadly comparable at 4.27 and 4.00 hours respectively. Although Luton officers, in terms of patrol hours, only take 3.07 hours, when the Prisoner Handling Unit time is added (3.78 hours) this gives a total of 6.85 hours. This is obviously considerably higher than that of the other divisions.

The reasons for this are not immediately apparent. The original purpose of the PHU was to reduce the amount of time that officers spend in the station dealing with prisoners and maximise their availability on patrol. On first view, this would seem to have been partly successful in that patrol hours are nearly an hour less in Luton than other divisions. However it should be remembered that a number of officers have been taken off patrol to resource the PHU.

The PHU consists of 1 Inspector, 4 Sergeants and 32 Constables (source: C Division, Divisional Deployment Strategy). When adding the additional resource to the case handling process it does not appear that the envisaged efficiency gains have been realised. Mr Cowan of the Police Authority has undertaken a visit to the PHU and

has produced a paper relating to the validity of both the PHU itself and the activity analysis exercise that was undertaken.

With this paper in mind and the evidence collected throughout this review, the Scrutiny Panel has accepted that the issue of the PHU performance is wider than the Case Handling review. It is therefore recommended that an in depth, independent evaluation of the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton should be carried out to discover whether the expected benefits of this new system are being realised. This evaluation should take into account the early findings of the new Prisoner Handling Unit, which went 'live' in Dunstable on 1 April 2002.

3.6. Approach

In approaching the Best Value review of Case Handling we have tried to identify the different stakeholders in the process and consider the requirements of these, in order to evaluate whether they are receiving what they would consider as best value from the process. The stakeholders identified include the Police service, the courts, the CPS, defence solicitors, defendants, victims and witnesses.

Given that time is the most expensive cost for almost all the stakeholders, there is a common theme throughout of the avoidance of delay. In the case of the first four identified stakeholders, this takes the form of accomplishing the various necessary operations with the avoidance of duplication and excessive waiting times. On the basis of 'Diary of a Police Officer', if the time spent in the police station by patrol officers can be halved, Bedfordshire Police would be able to significantly increase its deployment of officers on the street.

4. The Four Cs Analysis

4.1. Challenge

4.1.1. Context of Challenge

We must challenge how and why a service is provided. We must ask basic questions about the underlying rationale for the services and consider alternative methods of provision. By tying this element in with consultation, we can also challenge current processes from the view of service users, taxpayers and partners and challenge their opinions of alternative methods of provision. One important aspect here will be the potential for using new technology and the exploration of alternative methods for using this to improve economy and efficiency.

All aspects of both internal and external challenge encompassed the questions and challenges given in the challenge matrix within the Best Value methodology of Bedfordshire Police.

4.1.2. What has been done?

Much of the internal challenge work undertaken within this review was also an integral part of internal consultation. This mainly covers the work carried out with the Criminal Justice Unit and the members of the Divisional Case Units. Full details of this work and their opinions are given in the consultation section of this report, Section 4.2. For this reason, full details are not duplicated here. In brief, staff members felt that the current case handling process is a vital element of the police service and, as such, cannot be removed. It forms an integral part of the complete police process, stretching from offence through investigation to conviction. They feel that it is working well within present limitations, however they did identify three main difficulties with the current situation. As mentioned previously, these are dealt with in more detail in the consultation part of this report.

However, briefly they are:

- communication with the CPS,
- the number of probationer constables presently on division (which has caused problems in officers' understanding of what should be put in case files),
- the logistical problems of having three Divisional Case Units and only two court centres.

By challenging the current process, although they felt that it was working well, they acknowledged that the provision of new technology (i.e. electronic file building) and the adoption of new, more streamlined working practices (i.e. some form of co-location with the CPS) would improve the process significantly.

Throughout the review, internal challenge to the process was supplemented by members of the Police Authority. This included undertaking visits to the DCUs, defence solicitors and other police services to assist in their understanding of the

process and enable them to challenge the process more effectively.

External challenge with Barclaycard essentially identified similar points to the internal challenge. They were provided with a copy of the scoping study, including the process maps, in order that they could examine what happens with the current process. They accepted that the process as a whole is essential to the effective and efficient operation of the police service and should be carried out in much the same way as it currently is. They did however identify three main areas where they felt improvement could be made and perhaps the process was not as effective as it could be. It is interesting to note that two of these are the same as those identified internally by the DCU staff members.

Firstly, they identified the difficulty of having three DCUs and only two courts. Although they were not aware of the specific problems that arise through this, they identified that the situation is, in theory, open to confusion and duplication. Secondly, they identified the apparent communication problem with the CPS. Although, again, the specific problems were not apparent from the scoping study, the situation of carrying out the majority of your business with another agency indicated to them an increased opportunity for difficulty. In suggesting a solution to this problem they accepted that, at least in theory, a system of co-location would seem to provide a viable option.

Their third perceived area of improvement concerned victim/witness care. Barclaycard is also a major user of the case handling process, not only that of Bedfordshire but every police service throughout the country, through the provision of statements in credit and debit card fraud cases. They estimate that they as an organisation provide between 25 and 30 statements per day to police forces, but they receive notification of the result of a case on a handful of occasions over an entire year. These notifications only tend to be for very large cases and primarily come from the specialist police unit that investigated the case. Their opinion was that, although they are a large multinational company and they will not stop providing statements, it would be beneficial for staff morale and agency co-operation to receive a notification of the case result and appropriate feedback in all cases.

Their view was that the communication is predominantly one way, with their statements going into 'the abyss' never to be heard of again. They felt that a more serious connotation of this problem would be in regard to the general public. The police service essentially governs by consent and still relies heavily on public information and co-operation to solve crimes. If people, through a perceived lack of appreciation or by the police failing to inform them of the case outcome, feel that their witness statements are unnecessary or unwanted and therefore withdraw this help then it is possible that crime detection rates and public

satisfaction rates could fall. It is therefore recommended that **consideration be given to carrying out a specific management review of the service given by Bedfordshire Police to victims and witnesses.**

4.2. Consult

4.2.1. Context of Consultation

Consultation with a wide range of local and other interests forms an important part of the review process, both in reviewing existing performance and in the setting of performance targets for the future. Consulting with current and potential users, taxpayers and partners is essential to gain an understanding of their needs and expectations. Reviews will need to employ a variety of mechanisms to obtain feedback from users (both internal and external) and consideration should be given to new and innovative approaches. It is important that service users and others are kept informed of new performance targets as they are set, as well as the outcomes of the consultation and the review.

4.2.2. What has been done?

4.2.2.1.

Consultation with DCU staff members has identified three main issues:

Firstly, the communication with the CPS was described as poor. There are major problems with notifications and requests taking long periods of time to reach the DCUs. CPS memos can take up to ten days to reach the DCU and they can also wait for days for files. This leads to files going missing and creates delays in the system. This is because of the methods of communication, largely letter post, used by the CPS. Anecdotal evidence from DCU staff members indicates that the CPS holds onto files that need upgrading and does not keep to the agreement that the police should receive notification for full file upgrading within 24 hours. The same lack of communication is evident in witness warning. Trying to get hold of witnesses and ensuring their attendance at court is a lengthy and time-consuming process. If this cannot be done over the phone, then it involves police officers physically going to the witness's address to warn them. DCU staff state that the CPS is frequently late in requesting which witnesses it requires. This leads to further unnecessary time constraints and extra work. In addition, if there is a problem with the witness, e.g. they do not wish to attend, then the CPS is very slow to advise the DCUs what action they want to be taken. This also frequently leads to witnesses/officers wasting large amounts of time attending court and not being required to give evidence. This lack of communication leads to extra work for the DCU and police officers and a poorer service to the public/witnesses.

Secondly, concern was raised over the number of

probationer Police Constables there are on division presently, especially in Luton. It was argued that the majority of these do not know what should go onto a case file through a lack of experience, training and knowledge of the job. The loss of more experienced officers from the organisation who may have served as Tutor Constables or coaches has exacerbated this problem. In the DCU staff's opinion Tutor Constables now have less experience than may have been the case in the past. In terms of experience and other time constraints this may make them less able to help the probationer with their file preparation. The Head of Training has been made aware of this situation and is currently looking at the level of training given to probationers, both on a national and local level, regarding case handling/file preparation. This issue has also been forwarded to the Training BVR for consideration as part of this review.

Thirdly, problems were expressed with the current situation of having three DCUs and only two courts. Files that deal with cases in outlying areas of D Division, e.g. Ampthill, can travel huge distances to be completed. For example, the file goes from Dunstable to Ampthill for the officer to complete, it then goes back to Dunstable DCU who then send it to Bedford Magistrates Court. Although in theory this should not take a long time, given the internal mail system and the collection/delivery timescales involved with this, it can take days to move files. There is also a problem with officers bailing offenders to the wrong court. One example was given of the DCU sending the file to Bedford, only to find that the officer had bailed the offender to Luton. They were unaware of this until the CPS contacted them looking for the file and the situation could only be remedied by faxing the file (60 pages) to Luton at some considerable expense in terms of time and money.

4.2.2.2.

D Division DCU did pilot a very simple form of electronic file transfer. This involved scanning in the CPS memo to the computer and sending this as an e-mail attachment to the officer involved. In this way it speeded up the process and also gave the DCU staff the electronic receipt to prove the officer had read the e-mail. This system was discontinued however due to the difficulties of scanning with single flat bed scanners, both in terms of speed and quality. All staff agreed however that the initiative was a valuable exercise and that electronic file building has the potential to make time savings in their work.

The feasibility of electronic file building within the current system was discussed with the Head of IT and the Head of IT Projects. They highlighted that the service (in conjunction with the Home Office, PITO and other police services) have signed up to the new NSPIS Case Preparation package. Although there has historically been slippage in the delivery of this system, it is currently being

tested and is due to come into service in a few years time. To their knowledge this new system does not allow for direct input of statements etc and will purely have a text editor, as with the current CJS system. They highlighted that there is a facility, using a piece of software called Joe Text Editor, to input statements and other text documents to the current CJS system directly. This issue has been raised with the Criminal Justice Department. They said that the package has been used and assessed within the organisation but that it was found to be unsuitable and provided no efficiency savings. It was not very user friendly and involved a lot of time consuming switching from function to function. There were no discernible benefits or time savings provided by the software and therefore it was not adopted throughout the organisation.

4.2.2.3.

General points were made by the DCU members concerning the low morale within some units. This was attributed to the pressure of time constraints upon the staff and the historic understaffing of the units since they were established following the Business Change project. This is exacerbated by the problems of communication with the CPS discussed above. They feel that there is a lack of appreciation of their work and that whilst constantly under the threat of decision conferencing, there is 'never any light at the end of the tunnel'. The position of the Case Advisor was also highlighted. It was felt that due to the specialist nature of this role, too much responsibility was placed on an individual. When the person concerned was off sick or on leave the work could not be done by another member of staff. This leads to large backlogs of work that this person has to clear on their return to work. It was agreed that access to specialist legal advice in the form of CPS lawyers would alleviate this problem. This point should be referred to the Glidewell implementation group for their information.

4.2.2.4.

One additional issue that was raised by DCU staff was that CPS lawyers are requesting an adjournment in the case if the officer does not provide the schedule of exhibits and unused material for the first court hearing. There is no requirement for officers to do this under law. The schedule of material should be presented with the full file, i.e. after the first hearing when a not-guilty plea has been entered. This should list all the available material and the officer should indicate which of this they feel may undermine the prosecution case or help the defence. It is then the responsibility of the CPS to assess what should be disclosed to the defence. The requesting of adjournments at an early stage may give the defence the impression that the prosecution case is weak and encourage them to advise their clients to plead not guilty when they otherwise

may not do so. This issue has been raised with the Head of Criminal Justice who has investigated the issue. He has concluded that the problem in fact lies with officers not including the schedule of unused material in the full file because they believe that the defendant will eventually plead guilty, even though they have pleaded not guilty in the early stages of the court process. As the CPS needs this, the case cannot proceed so they have to ask for an adjournment. This may, in some cases, cause the magistrate to lose patience and throw the case out. The Head of Criminal Justice is making further investigations and a solution to the problem is being sought. Following completion of this, a report should be submitted to the Deputy Chief Constable for his information and consideration.

4.2.2.5.

In general, the DCU staff were supportive of the principles of Glidewell. They acknowledged that it had the potential to solve many of the problems they experience, especially on the communication side. However they had two main reservations about moving to such a system.

Firstly, they felt it was of vital importance that the resource levels should be adequate. As mentioned previously, they feel that the resource levels of the DCUs were never appropriate following the move to DCUs by the Business Change project and that this has contributed to their problems of low morale. The importance of this point is highlighted in the comparison work carried out with Northamptonshire and Hampshire, as discussed under Comparison (section 4.3.). In brief, whilst Glidewell has worked well in these areas, they have had problems with under resourcing which has not allowed these benefits to be maximised.

Secondly, they were very clear that any co-located unit should be situated within the police station environment. This would preserve the communication links with the officers in the case and it was felt that to move away from this environment would be more damaging to the process than not co-locating.

4.2.2.6.

The staff questioned were generally positive about the Criminal Justice computer system (CJS). They stated that, although it had created more work in the initial stages, it had now speeded up and was working better than at any time previously. It saves staff time in sending out automated letters and the tracking function is very useful, enabling staff to check file details even if they do not have the file. Some notable problems were identified however. Although it is now quicker, it is still felt that it is not a very user-friendly system as it is not Windows based. The fact that you have to keep coming in and out of different screens is very labour intensive. This is

further exacerbated by the fact that it doesn't 'word wrap', which again causes time problems. The activities that consume the most time involve the taking of and inputting onto the system of witness statements. Staff also highlighted that it still does not carry out some of the tasks promised when introduced. An example of this is that the MG10 forms were originally supposed to link directly from the Duty Management System (DMS) into the CJS system. The court would then have access into this at any time. However this is not the case and this has to be done manually, which is a further time consuming task. In summary, the staff are, in the main, pleased with the system but the conversion to a Windows based system and the addition of a few additional functions have the potential to make quite considerable non cashable savings in time.

The feasibility of this was discussed with the Head of IT and the Head of IT Projects. They highlighted two potential problems with converting the current CJS system to a Windows-based package. Firstly, the service (in conjunction with the Home Office, PITO and other police services) has signed up to the new NSPIS Case Preparation package. Although there has historically been slippage in the delivery of this system, it is currently being tested but is not due to come into service for several years. It has the major advantage that it is Windows-based and links into other packages, therefore it should be more user friendly. The second problem is that it would be expensive to convert the current CJS package to a Windows-based system, with an estimated cost of £200,000. In addition, relations with the supplier are very slow and complicated therefore any timescale for the change is likely to be long and could possibly run into the implementation of the NSPIS package. With these factors in mind and the general positive feeling of DCU staff towards the current system it is felt that no changes should be made to it, aside from those already listed by the Criminal Justice Department and being actioned by the IT Department. However the scrutiny panel feel that the issue of electronic file building should be addressed in more detail therefore it is recommended **that the feasibility of electronic file building, by adding a Windows-based system, should be fully evaluated by the IT Department.**

4.2.2.7.

Two consultation exercises were carried out with victims of crime. Firstly, some use was made of the survey that was undertaken for the Year One review of Crime Investigation. Through collaborative work with Bedfordshire Victim Support, 154 people responded to the survey. In the relevant areas, results showed that only approximately one third of respondents (31%) were kept informed of progress with the case with 61% receiving no updates. Thirty eight percent (38%) of people would like to have received other information about progress with the case. To be

informed whether anyone had been arrested/convicted for the crime was also a high priority for people.

In total, nearly half of the people responding to the survey stated that improvements could be made. Of these, the highest numbers wished to be kept informed of developments. However, it should also be noted that a similar number of people were satisfied with the service given and felt that the police had done all that could be done. For the purposes of this review, it is clear that victims want to be kept informed of the progress made with their case. We are responding to this need in a lot of cases, however it has been highlighted that our response may need to be reviewed and adapted in some areas.

The second victim consultation exercise was undertaken in collaboration with NWA Social and Market Research. This involved carrying out face to face interviews with victims to ascertain their opinions on and experiences of the case handling process. By utilising face to face interviews, it was hoped to obtain these in greater depth than a written questionnaire could provide. However due to a very poor response rate, only one response from 73 invitations, it was decided by the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 1 March to disregard this exercise.

In light of these consultation exercises it is recommended that **consideration be given to carrying out a specific management review of the service given by Bedfordshire Police to victims and witnesses.**

4.2.2.8.

A number of meetings were held with the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Bedfordshire, Mr Richard Newcombe, to obtain the CPS view of our case handling process. The result of this consultation was, in general, positive. The relationship is, from the CPS point of view, very good. The quality of files is to a high standard and the quality of disclosure was described as very good and up to date. A few concerns were raised about the frequency of joint performance meetings, as these had not been happening at regular intervals. However this has been rectified and they are now being held on a quarterly basis.

The main cause of concern highlighted by the CPS is the lack of progress in the implementation of the Glidewell recommendations within the county. In its opinion, the re-organisation of the CPS and police functions would result in a significantly better Criminal Justice system. Co-location would result in better communication between the parties and lead to a better understanding and the opportunity to learn from each other. The instant availability of CPS staff and lawyers through face to face contact with police staff would be a significant advantage and would, in the CPS's opinion, lead to fewer cases being discontinued. The relevance of this last point was highlighted by the visit to

Northamptonshire Police who commented that this is one of the main advantages evident since co-location occurred. It was also mentioned that it would be considerably easier to meet the 14-day limit for giving advice on case files with a co-located system. In the future savings could be made through the rationalisation of the currently separate IT systems into one common package, although the feasibility of this has not been assessed and it would take a significant amount of joint work and time to complete.

Consideration would also need to be made to the new contract issued by the CPS to LOGICA for provision of a new IT system. The CPS is of the opinion that there is an expectation from government that Glidewell should be implemented and that if Bedfordshire does not comply with this, then we will fall behind. Subsequent guidelines and recommendations, e.g. the Auld report, are, and will be, built on the foundation of Glidewell and, unless this foundation is in place, we are likely to fall even further behind in the future.

The position of Mr Newcombe, and therefore the Bedfordshire Crown Prosecution Service, is that he would like to move to a version of Glidewell as soon as possible. However, this must be commensurate with the need to ensure that it is done in a planned, organised and collaborative manner. Bedfordshire is one of only three counties that has not moved towards co-location. Mr Newcombe stated that he was awaiting agreement in principle from Bedfordshire Police and the outcome of this Case Handling Best Value Review before he takes the next step towards developing an action plan and subsequent implementation of a version of Glidewell.

The preferred option of Mr Newcombe is for three co-located units as follows:

- At Bedford comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff in the same building at either the present Bedford Police Station or at Bedford Magistrates Court. (Bedford Magistrates Court accounts for approximately a third of all Magistrates Court work in the County and therefore, a third of the prosecutors (four) will be located at Bedford along with a comparable number of admin staff from the Crown Prosecution Service).
- At Luton comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff co-located at Luton Police Station. (Luton Magistrates Court accounts for two thirds of the Magistrates Court work in Bedfordshire and therefore, two thirds of the prosecutors (eight) will be located within this unit along with comparable administrative support staff).
- A Crown Court Trials Unit comprising the current Crown Prosecution Trials Unit together with a small number of Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff located at Sceptre

House next to Luton Crown Court. The Police staff would have responsibility for witness warnings, file building and quality control of indictable case papers.

There are a number of issues that need to be resolved by an implementation team, including the re-location of staff, information technology, accommodation and optimum staffing levels. Mr Newcombe suggests a joint implementation team headed by a senior member of Bedfordshire Crown Prosecution staff and a senior officer (Inspector or Support Staff equivalent) Bedfordshire Police. Recommendations could be made to a joint project board comprising members of the Bedfordshire Police Executive and senior staff from the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Home Office has funds available under the Capital Modernisation Fund for the development of Glidewell type units, however bids for finances have to meet set criteria that will be rigorously scrutinised. The fund is unlikely to pay for any structural changes or alterations to police stations to facilitate a co-located unit. The grant is primarily for changes within the Crown Prosecution Service to achieve a version of Glidewell.

There is no doubt that there is pressure from the Attorney General and central government to move towards co-location as soon as possible, however on many occasions Mr Newcombe emphasised the point that any move towards this must be conducted in a planned, structured, efficient and effective manner. He was unable to offer any likely cost of his preferred option, however would be keen to evaluate all options before coming to a conclusion on any version of co-location for Bedfordshire.

4.2.2.9.

Consultation with representatives of Bedfordshire defence solicitors acting as stakeholders in the process was generally positive, as it was felt that the police have good relationships with both the defence and crown prosecutors. However it did raise a number of common issues relating to aspects of the process. These were, in broad terms, issues with taped evidence (audio and video), the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton and the fact that Dunstable DCU serves two courts.

Taped evidence (audio and video) was cited as being rarely available at an early stage with the advanced disclosure, particularly if the defendant was not represented at the time of charge. Tapes need to be supplied at/before court to avoid an adjournment. If the defence solicitors have to write to obtain an audio tape, it takes, on average, five working days to turn around. This issue was raised with Bedford DCU. They explained that the tape system in interview rooms has three decks producing a master tape, a work tape and a tape for the defendant. Once charged, the defendant

or their solicitor is handed a copy. If this copy is lost the DCU charges £20 per replacement and on payment this is posted by 1st class post. Every defendant should therefore receive a copy of the original tape.

It is true that videotapes do take more time. CCTV produces multi-screen tapes, the master being held by CCTV. They are available to the officers within two days, and the officer has to select the scenes they require. There is a special unit at HQ where the multi-screen tapes are reduced to a single, relevant tape. As soon as the relevant tape is returned to division it is copied and copies are made available as required to defence and others. It is important that video evidence is made available as quickly as possible as there is frequently a difference between what the defendant said happened and what the tape shows. An early view of the tape would therefore eliminate any problems at an early stage and avoid the need for adjournment applications. A multi-agency group, consisting of the Crown Court, Probation, Police and Defence Solicitors, is currently looking at the more timely provision of taped evidence. **It is recommended that the progress of this group should be monitored by the Head of Criminal Justice and that any recommendations forthcoming be fully considered by Bedfordshire Police.**

Representatives of Luton defence solicitors gave a number of perceived problems with the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton.

Amongst these were:

- delays if they are busy (due to perceived lack of resources),
- no personal involvement (as opposed to previously having contact with an Investigating Officer)
- the approach in interviews showing a lack of experience and a need for more training.

They did however state that its major strength was that the unit is dedicated to interviewing. It has been accepted by the Scrutiny Panel that the issue of the PHU performance is wider than the case handling review and it is therefore recommended that **an in depth, independent evaluation of the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton should be carried out to discover whether the expected benefits of this new system are being realised.** As discussed previously, this evaluation should take into account the early findings of the new Prisoner Handling Unit, which went 'live' in Dunstable on 1 April 2002.

Another main concern of the defence solicitors was the structure of having three DCUs, as discussed earlier. Defence solicitors feel that this system requires streamlining. Co-location with the CPS into one or two units situated near the courts should alleviate a lot of these difficulties.

4.3. Compare

4.3.1. Context of Comparison

There is a need to compare current and prospective performance against other public sector bodies and those in the private and voluntary sectors. Exact comparisons are unlikely to always be possible, however any significant performance gaps should be identified. The reasons for these can then be investigated to determine the nature and extent of any improvement required.

4.3.2. What has been done?

Internal comparison between DCUs was carried out as outlined in the scoping study. Process maps from Dunstable DCU were provided to both Luton and Bedford DCUs for their appraisal and for them to identify any differences in process. The results showed that, apart from some differences in terminology, the processes were almost identical. The most likely explanation for this is that the national manual of guidance and legislation governs the composition of files and the timetables for their submission. The sharing of good practice is also promoted through the quarterly meetings that are attended by all DCU managers and CJU staff. This helps to standardise the processes throughout the Force and ensure that units are working to the same principles. It has been identified however that there is a lack of local performance indicators that are common across the organisation. This makes comparison across divisions more difficult. It is therefore recommended that **a set of robust and appropriate local Performance Indicator's should be developed for the Criminal Justice system and be adopted throughout the organisation.** The actual composition of the indicators will be best determined by the CJU and DCU managers themselves in collaboration with their CPS counterparts, however it has been suggested by the Scrutiny Panel that they should look at aspects such as positive disposal, discontinuance rates and time spent on files.

Comparison of performance data (BVPI 131) was undertaken with Bedfordshire's family of forces. This data is presented in the table opposite, which gives figures for 2000/01. We can see from this that Bedfordshire's performance is very high in comparison with other forces. We are in the top three in all four elements of BVPI 131 and score consistently above 90% in each of these. This information shows that, although consultation with DCU staff has said that communication with the CPS causes problems and delays, this does not seem to have significantly impacted on the BVPI figures. In terms of co-location with the CPS, this also indicates that Bedfordshire would be starting from a significantly better position than some forces that have already co-located, e.g. Hampshire. However, as mentioned in the scoping study, it is recognised that this data may be misleading. Within the limitations of the

timescales now imposed, there is little scope for police supervisors to undertake quality checks before files are submitted and little time for the CPS to return files for amendment without jeopardising their ability to take the prosecution forward. If deficiencies in the court files are not notified, the reporting rules require us to assume that they meet the quality standards – thus artificially inflating the apparent performance level. A health warning must therefore be attached to the data.

External comparison was undertaken with police services that have recently adopted the Glidewell principles and moved to co-located units with the CPS, predominantly Hampshire and Northamptonshire. This work has highlighted the clear benefits of Glidewell and, almost without exception, people were in favour of the move and the changes that it had brought about. They were firmly of the belief that the advantages of the system outweighed the disadvantages, although they admitted that it was a 'continual learning process'. Although it must be remembered that Bedfordshire is starting from a better initial position than many other services.

Hampshire Police implemented Glidewell in June - July 2001 and have established five co-located Criminal Justice Units (large units in Portsmouth and Southampton and three smaller units in Aldershot, Basingstoke and the Isle of Wight). Visits were made to Portsmouth and Aldershot by the review team and to Basingstoke by the Police Authority. Portsmouth is the largest unit within the force and is situated in the police station, next door to the courts. It is staffed by both police and CPS admin staff and has 10.5 CPS lawyers on site. Since its inception it has primarily focussed on making sure that lawyers have files for court appearances and that these files are up to date. Before Glidewell, it was not unusual to have 30-40 missing files per month. Since Glidewell implementation this figure has dropped steadily and in January 2002 there was only one missing file. Before Glidewell, the CPS had a massive backlog of post and correspondence (e.g. statements, file updates), therefore these were not being linked up with case files. As a consequence, some cases were failing at court. Since co-location, there is no

- BVPI 131a – Percentage of all full files provided to CPS within pre-trial issue time guidelines that are fully satisfactory or sufficient to proceed
- BVPI 131b – Percentage of youth full files provided to CPS within pre-trial issue time guidelines that are fully satisfactory or sufficient

backlog at all in CPS or police work. In addition, fewer cases have been discontinued, although evidence for this is anecdotal. They are also up to date with PNC input. This improvement however is not without a detrimental effect in other areas. There is currently a backlog of victims/witnesses that have not been notified of the case outcome (back until 30 November 2001). There is also a backlog in finalising and weeding files and as such this is adding to the already problematic storage problems. However these should be rectified by the use of local extra storage facilities. Overall, however, staff were very positive and liked the new way of working.

The list of advantages they gave for the system included:

- closer working relationships between CPS and police staff,
- the ability to resolve problems quickly,
- lower administrative costs due to economies of scale (e.g. phone calls, and therefore phone costs, have fallen by around 50% since implementation),
- a more collaborative working environment, removing the previous 'blame culture'.

Although one of the advantages is given as lower administrative costs, actual costs have not been collected and were therefore not available. No comparison could therefore be made with our costs to highlight differences. This situation was also true in Northamptonshire, as they have collected no data on costs since co-location.

In light of their experience, the main recommendation they would make is to get the resource levels of the new unit right. All of the problems they experienced emanated from poor resourcing, both on the police and CPS sides. The main problem was the lack of CPS lawyers. At full establishment there should be 17 lawyers, however there are currently only 10.5. This leads to problems as they do not have time to review the files properly and there are not enough staff to provide a duty lawyer. This means that effectively all of the lawyers are out of the office in court all day, therefore access

- BVPI 131c – Percentage of all expedited/ remand files that are fully satisfactory or sufficient to proceed
- BVPI 131d – Percentage of expedited/ remand youth files that are fully satisfactory or sufficient to proceed

	BVPI 131a	BVPI 131b	BVPI 131c	BVPI 131d
Bedfordshire	90.7%	99.0%	95.1%	99.5%
Avon & Somerset	77.1%	99.2%	94.3%	98.7%
Essex	56.6%	97.3%	64.9%	99.6%
Hampshire	67.2%	97.5%	62.5%	97.0%
Kent	*	*	*	*
Leicestershire	82.6%	99.2%	85.9%	99.8%
Sussex	91.9%	98.4%	91.5%	98.4%
Thames Valley	41.5%	98.4%	39.2%	87.0%

* = Figures for Kent are not available

to legal advice is limited. It also increases the use of agents who do not have the same knowledge or time as the other lawyers. There were also initial difficulties in defining the boundaries between CPS and police administrative work. The CPS employees were very grade conscious and were unwilling to do work they perceived was not within their remit/job role. This however seems to have been an early 'teething' problem and has begun to rectify itself.

Aldershot is a much smaller unit and has encountered none of the problems associated with Portsmouth. When challenged, they could see no disadvantages with the new system. They attribute this to being a smaller unit and the fact that all of their CPS staff were newly recruited for the unit. As such they did not have any of the 'historical baggage' that existing staff may have had. They had no experience of the old system or job descriptions and therefore could not make comparisons and were more willing to carry out a wider range of duties. Like all police environments, Aldershot police station has a problem with a lack of available space due to the need to accommodate CPS staff as well as existing police staff in the new unit. They have solved this problem by moving the Major Incident Room out of the police station and into the existing CPS building in Basingstoke. This has released almost a whole floor in the station and enabled the co-located unit, as well as other units, to comfortably fit in. A system such as this has been used in the Metropolitan Police and could be a possible solution to the accommodation problems within our own organisation.

Northamptonshire Police has also recently implemented the Glidewell recommendations and co-located with the CPS in one central unit based at Weston Favell police station. This unit is then served by six satellite units which are staffed by two-three admin staff. The central unit comprises police, CPS administrative staff and CPS lawyers, all located on one floor. At the same time as implementing co-location, they also introduced a new IT system. This was developed in house by their IT department and enables the electronic transfer of files. File builders at the central unit can e-mail officers directly for information. Officers can then send statements electronically back to the file builder, if it is available in electronic form, or they can take it to one of the satellite offices where it can be scanned in and sent to the file builder. This system does not remove the paper file, as this is still maintained, but it enables a very quick transfer of information, considerably speeding up the process. In conjunction with the availability of CPS staff in the co-located unit, it enables information requested by the lawyers to, potentially, be available in hours as opposed to days.

The total set up costs of the central co-located unit and its satellite 'feeder' units was £557,429 in Northants (figure is for police costs only). This figure includes £32,000 for the internal software development of the new IT system and £296,729 actual capital costs for building alterations,

refurbishment and decoration. This also includes the capital costs for relocating those units that were displaced by the new Glidewell units. If the IT work had been bought in from a commercial supplier, the cost would have been much higher for the development of the software.

However, the Police Authority Scrutiny Panel is of the opinion that what has been done in Hampshire and Northamptonshire is an extremely expensive way of solving a communications problem. From the investigation stage onwards, it is the task of the Police service to assemble all the available evidence sufficient to warrant a prosecution and then martial it into a file which the CPS can use to secure a conviction. It is also for the CPS to ensure that the evidence in the file is adequate for the conviction to be secured. The Police service and CPS have quite distinct roles, which necessitate the careful management of any potential co-location of offices. The main part of the process that co-location would impact is the part of the full file building process after the first hearing in which the quality of evidence is assessed, a job that only the CPS can do.

B Division has recently submitted a budget bid to employ civilian file builders similar to those in Northamptonshire. They would undertake the file building duties presently undertaken by officers to produce a case summary and complete a file, which would free up officer time for other duties. The implementation of this proposal has the potential to make far-reaching savings in the process and revolutionise the time that officers have for other duties. **It is recommended that the progress of this proposal should be followed and any implementation discussed as part of the ongoing civilianisation project. After a suitable period as a pilot system in Bedford, e.g. six months, if successful, it should be rolled out across the organisation.** Aspects of this may also impact of the future Best Value Review of High Visibility Policing.

As in Hampshire, Northants were very supportive of the new co-located system and commented that it had solved far more problems than it had created. They have noticed better communication with the CPS due to their proximity and have noticed, as in Hampshire, that fewer cases are being discontinued in the initial stages. Although, again, evidence for this is anecdotal and no performance indicators are available to confirm this. They have also noticed that the process of de-warning witnesses has become more efficient. Again, as in Hampshire, most of the problems experienced came from poor resourcing, both on the police and CPS side. There were also problems caused by adopting co-location and a new IT system at the same time. Given the option, they indicated that they would not do both at the same time again. However, many of these problems were essentially 'teething' problems and were significantly outweighed by the advantages.

A further visit was undertaken to Northamptonshire by Inspector Hudspith of the

Criminal Justice Unit and Jerry White, a representative of the IT department, to assess the merits of its computer system. They found that the Windows-based system to be very user friendly and easy to navigate.

The fact that it incorporates Word enables documents such as statements to be typed and complete electronic files created. Both systems include diary facilities that enable the user to check whether tasks have been performed by the due date. However, the Bedfordshire Police CJS system is rich in functionality and covers a wide range of tasks in a way that the Northamptonshire system does not. A by-product of this is the management information that becomes available. In general therefore, the Northamptonshire system does have some impressive features but it works within narrowly defined parameters and therefore does not compare with the Bedfordshire CJS system. The ability to attach statements to the electronic file is, however, one function that would, potentially, make non-cashable savings in time. When asked to estimate these potential savings the DCUs were unable to clarify a figure. Bedford's statements are typed and proof read by the B Division Secretariat. The Secretariat Supervisor has estimated that her unit type and proof read an average of 1,000 pages of statements a month, however no accurate figure can be placed on this. D Division estimates that it would save a dual file typist post altogether, a saving of approximately £11,530. However it would then need to use the administration post for any additional typing needed, which may distract from other work.

Work has also been carried out on a national scale by the Glidewell Working Group on behalf of the Criminal Justice Steering Group examining a number of sites where early co-location between the police and CPS had been achieved. A report, published in January 2001, indicated that:

- Without exception, all sites visited were pleased with the progress and improvements made through joint administration.
- No one interviewed at any level expressed a desire to return to the 'old' separate working practices.
- All sites reported that co-location was eliminating unnecessary work through improved communications.
- Improved dialogue between CPS and enquiry officers has cut down duplicate photocopying, reduced administrative work and improved timeliness.
- Enquiries by CPS and the police that took weeks to clear can now be resolved satisfactorily in minutes.
- Speedier notification of proposed discontinuance, for example, has reduced the wasted effort on upgrading files unnecessarily.

This would seem to be further evidenced by the

visits outlined in the previous paragraphs. Costs have reduced for the police and CPS through joint working and savings in economies of scale, however the report acknowledges that it is too soon to quantify any annual cost savings. The working group also identified lessons that had been learnt during the implementation of joint working. Again, these were broadly similar to those identified in the review teams visits. They included:

- ensuring staffing levels were appropriate,
- agreeing boundaries of mutual responsibility,
- involving key decision-makers in planning.

4.4. Compete

4.4.1. Context of Competition

Best Value Reviews are required to consider the role of competition as a means of securing efficient and effective services. There is a range of possibilities to be considered in demonstrating that service provision is competitive. Fair and open competition will be expected to play an essential and enduring role in the review programme. Reviews that fail to recognise this, and give insufficient weight to the benefits of a healthy and genuine partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors, are unlikely to lead to the sustained improvements required.

4.4.2. What has been done?

The fundamental questions behind competition are 'could case handling be done better by outsourcing it to another agency for a cost benefit result?' and 'what would we lose or gain from such an outsourcing exercise?' As mentioned earlier in the methodology the case handling process is unlikely to prove a viable area for outsourcing, but the general principle, that the service must be properly tested by exposure to outside competition, has been taken into account throughout the review. By widening the definition of competition to encompass collaboration and collaborative working arrangements the review has sought to do this.

The scope for collaborative working within case handling is high, as essentially this is the whole purpose of Glidewell. By working more closely with the CPS, both in physical proximity and in working practices, the scope for improvement is enhanced. The advantages of Glidewell that have been demonstrated throughout this report would lead to more collaborative working and a more competitive approach to case handling. The issue of the potential for inter-force collaboration has been mentioned in relation to competition. DCUs within Bedfordshire do currently deal with files from other police services, notably Hertfordshire and non-geographic services (NCS and British Transport Police), although no work is done on these files and we purely provide information. No police services currently operate co-located units with other forces. CPS boundaries have recently been altered to mirror police boundaries, therefore it is felt unrealistic to explore this as an option at this time.

5. Summary/Conclusions

5.1. The current case handling process, in general, works well within Bedfordshire Police, as its performance in BVPI 131 shows.

The DCUs are staffed by dedicated workers who are very competent in the roles they perform within these units. An example of this has been highlighted by the Police Authority Scrutiny Panel regarding the practice of Bedford DCU's manager checking each file before it is allocated to the file manager.

They, on the whole, have a good working relationship with the centrally located Criminal Justice Unit and patrol officers, although concerns were expressed at the present number of probationers. This dedication and commitment is noticeable in the performance of the units, which is consistently high.

The sharing of good practice is also promoted through the quarterly meetings that are attended by all DCU managers and CJU staff. This helps to standardise the processes throughout the Force and ensure that units are working to the same principles.

5.2. However, although the process is perceived to be good, internal problems with the process have been identified throughout this review. These



have come primarily from staff members, users and stakeholders. Most of these can be described as minor, apart from three.

5.2.1. Firstly, there is the low morale experienced by each DCU, to a greater or lesser extent. It is felt that this is caused by a lack of staff and the associated pressure this brings in terms of achieving, often short, timescales for case files. There is a feeling that the re-organisation that occurred after the Business Change project was, in resource terms, not well planned. Coupled with this, there is a feeling within the staff of a lack of appreciation and the perceived constant fear of decision conferencing.

5.2.2. Secondly, there are the inherent problems of the current structure of three DCUs and two courts. A combination of the fact that Dunstable DCU serves both Bedford and Luton courts, covers a number of outlying police stations and the time taken for files to work their way through the internal mail system leads to difficulties. This can lead to files not being at the correct place at the correct time and deadlines being missed.

5.2.3. Thirdly, there is a perceived lack of information being fed back to victims/witnesses. There is, at times, a lack of notification of results, both to individuals and organisations. This can lead to not only feelings of unimportance amongst victims/witnesses, but also may potentially lead to future non co-operation and poor public satisfaction.

However, with due regard to these points, the major problem with the current case handling system is external to the organisation. This is the issue of communication, or the lack of communication, with the Crown Prosecution Service. This is the major stumbling block in meeting deadlines and providing a thorough and timely service to the user.

Research has shown that the adoption of the Glidewell recommendations of co-location have succeeded in certain areas associated with this problem.

5.3. The benefits of co-location

Work undertaken under the four Cs in the area of co-location has identified a number of areas in which perceived benefits have been realised. These have been identified throughout the text of the report covering the four Cs, but in essence they are:

- closer working relationships between CPS and police staff,
- the ability to resolve problems quickly,
- lower administrative costs due to economies of scale (e.g. phone calls, and therefore phone costs, have fallen by around 50% since implementation),

- a more collaborative working environment, removing the previous 'blame culture'.
- all sites reported that co-location was eliminating unnecessary work through improved communications.
- improved dialogue between CPS and enquiry officers has cut down duplicate photocopying, reduced administrative work and improved timeliness.
- enquiries by CPS and the police that took weeks to clear can now be resolved satisfactorily in minutes.
- speedier notification of proposed discontinuance, for example, has reduced the wasted effort on upgrading files unnecessarily.

We can see that co-location has led to improved communication with the CPS and, anecdotally, an increase in the number of cases continuing to court. Officers have more access to specific legal advice and there is a removal of the 'blame culture' presently in evidence.

It should be remembered however that co-location is not a panacea to all the current problems and no figures yet exist on its financial benefits. Although one of the advantages is given as lower administrative costs, actual costs have not been collected in any of the services looked at and were therefore not available. No comparison could therefore be made with our costs to highlight differences.

It should be remembered that full co-location would also require considerable capital expenditure.

There is still evidence of duplication within the system (mainly due to the continued existence of a dual file system) and the costs of implementation could on the face of it outweigh any immediately available cost savings. It is also important, as with any project, to ensure that the implementation is correctly planned and that any new units are sufficiently resourced. This should help to ensure that the present situation of low staffing and the associated low morale is not allowed to develop in any new unit.

The three main issues identified during the implementation of joint working were;

- ensuring staffing levels were appropriate,
- agreeing boundaries of mutual responsibility,
- involving key decision-makers in planning.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Strategic Recommendation

Bedfordshire Police should implement the Glidewell principle through co-location of Criminal Justice Units with the Crown Prosecution Service. A joint police and CPS Glidewell implementation team should be set up to study the extent of co-location and the sites on which it can be achieved.

The actual process for the implementation of this and the structure of the new unit(s) are not recommended here. These will be resolved by a joint police and CPS Glidewell implementation team with staff consultation and cost benefit analysis. However, based on the working practices of other police services and anecdotal evidence, the following are put forward as possible options.

Option 1 – Total co-location (Centralised)

One central Criminal Justice Unit co-located with the CPS and situated in accommodation in the centre of the county. This would include both the Magistrates' Court element and the Trials (Crown Court) Unit. One suggested venue is the old Ampt Hill Court building.

Option 2 – Partial Co-location

This option (which is also the preferred option of the CPS and Bedfordshire Police) would have three co-located units as follows:

- At Bedford comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff in the same building at either the present

Bedford Police Station or at Bedford Magistrates Court. (Bedford Magistrates Court accounts for approximately a third of all Magistrates Court work in the County and therefore, a third of the prosecutors (four) will be located at Bedford along with a comparable number of admin staff from the Crown Prosecution Service).

- At Luton comprising Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff and Crown Prosecution Service Criminal Justice Unit staff co-located at Luton Police Station. (Luton Magistrates Court accounts for two thirds of the Magistrates Court work in Bedfordshire and therefore, two thirds of the prosecutors (eight) will be located within this unit along with comparable administrative support staff).
- A Crown Court Trials Unit comprising of the current Crown Prosecution Trials Unit together with a small number of Bedfordshire Police Divisional Case Unit staff located at Sceptre House, next to Luton Crown Court. The Police staff would have responsibility for witness warnings, file building and quality control of indictable case papers.

This option has the added advantage that it provides a solution to the problem identified throughout the review of Dunstable DCU serving both Bedford and Luton Magistrates courts.

The advantages, disadvantages and costs of these options are presented in the table below.

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Estimated Cost
1	a) Total re-location would mean all the county's file preparation occurring in the same building as the CPS, maximising communication links	a) A central location would mean co-locating away from the courts, negating many of the communication advantages of co-location. b) A central location would mean co-locating outside of the main police stations in the county, negating some of the communication advantages of co-location.	Ampt Hill Court building would cost c. £600,000, together with estimated refurbishment costs of £250,000– £300,000 and annual IT support link costs of approximately £100,000, therefore total cost of £1 million.
2	a) Maximise the benefits in improved communication links with the CPS and associated benefits with co-location. b) By situating in Luton and Bedford police stations, the unit would be close to the Magistrates and Crown Courts whilst retaining the advantages of being situated with patrol officers. c) Provides a solution to the problem highlighted with Dunstable serving	a) Potential CPS problems with resourcing. b) Staff mobility/relocation.	Medium –cost of refurbishment of new CJU offices –Cost of relocating displaced police units – Associated IT link costs

6.2. Management Recommendations

Recommendation 1

A set of robust and appropriate local Performance Indicators should be developed for the Criminal Justice system and be adopted throughout the organisation.

It is important that adequate data is collected and collated so that the performance of the service in building and preparing files can be measured and assessed. Such data is also required to complete the process of Activity Based Costing. This will be particularly important in the context of the changes proposed in the strategic recommendation. Within a period of large-scale change, unless adequate performance data is collated at present, the organisation will be unable to assess the quantitative improvements instituted by this change. It is also important that, at least some, of the indicators are set jointly with the CPS in order to promote the principle of joint working and common goals. The actual composition of the indicators will be best determined by the CJU and DCU managers themselves in collaboration with their CPS counterparts, however it has been suggested by the Scrutiny Panel that they should look at aspects such as positive disposal and time spent on files.

Recommendation 2

An in depth, independent evaluation of the Prisoner Handling Unit at Luton should be carried out to discover whether the expected benefits of this new system are being realised.

Activity analysis has indicated that file preparation by patrol officers takes considerably longer in C Division than the other territorial divisions due to the existence of the PHU. The issues raised by this have been agreed by the Scrutiny Panel as wider than the case handling review and should therefore be dealt with in more detail in a separate arena. This evaluation should take into account the early findings of the new Prisoner Handling Unit, which went 'live' in Dunstable on 1 April 2002.

Recommendation 3

Consideration should be given to carrying out a specific management review of the service given by Bedfordshire Police to victims and witnesses.

Victims of crime deserve the best possible service from the police, as do those who act as witnesses. The police service essentially governs by consent and still relies heavily on public information and co-operation to solve crimes. If people, through a perceived lack of appreciation or by the police failing to inform them of the case outcome, feel that their witness statements are unnecessary or unwanted and therefore withdraw this help then crime detection rates and public satisfaction rates could fall. We must therefore

ensure that we maximise the service we give, to guarantee that we continue to maintain public support.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the progress of the proposal to employ civilian file builders should be followed and any implementation assessed to determine its suitability for adoption throughout the organisation.

B Division has recently submitted a budget bid to employ civilian file builders similar to those in Northamptonshire. They would undertake the file building duties presently undertaken by officers to produce a case summary and complete a file, which would free up officer time for other duties. The implementation of this proposal has the potential to make far-reaching savings in the process and revolutionise the time that officers have for other duties. After a suitable period as a pilot system in Bedford, e.g. six months, if successful, it should be rolled out across the organisation.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the progress of the multi-agency group should be monitored by the Head of Criminal Justice and that any recommendations forthcoming in the area of taped evidence be fully considered by Bedfordshire Police.

Recommendation 6

The feasibility of electronic file building, by adding a windows based system, should be fully evaluated by the IT department.