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Assessment of the implementation of postal requisitioning in six pilot areas

Roger Bowles and Amanda Perry

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Policy briefing

Postal requisitioning (PR) introduces a new way for the police (and other public prosecutors) to get a person to court, notifying them of a court date by post. A review of the operation of PR was conducted at six pilot sites to inform decisions on national roll-out. Three sites piloted the method for traffic and other offences (cases where the defendant was reported for offences but not arrested), and three in police bail cases (involving criminal offences where the suspects had been arrested, released on unconditional bail and were awaiting police charge). Key findings emerging from the review of the pilots were as follows.

- The pilots suggested that the principle of PR was workable, and provided no evidence of a detrimental impact on failure-to-attend rates or on the adjournment of first hearings.
- There were substantial differences in the implementation of the two work streams ('traffic and other offences' and 'police bail cases'), which need to be addressed in decisions on national roll-out. For the traffic and other offences work stream, the switch to PR was simpler and could be achieved quickly, while, in police bail cases, the change was more complex, reliant on support from middle and senior management, and PR was used considerably less than expected.
- IT and local implementation teams were found to be critical to the operation of both work streams.
- The potential benefit of PR for traffic and other offences came from reducing the bureaucracy of criminal justice processes and more effective case management. These benefits were expected to outweigh the small net increase in recurrent and up-front costs.
- PR in police bail cases had the potential to save police staff time and improve case management. The benefits of this approach are sensitive to the scale of implementation, however, and estimates suggested that a greater uptake than was achieved in the pilots would be needed to offset the costs of this approach.

Summary

Postal requisitioning (PR) is an alternative to traditional charging methods and the summons process, and introduces a new way for the police (and other public prosecutors) to get a person to court. The aim of the project was to review the operation of six sites at which PR was piloted. The pilots were a response to recommendations of the Auld Review (2001) – a review of the criminal courts, which recommended that the charge/summons process should be changed. They were intended to assess the scope for simplifying procedures by allowing the police (and other public prosecutors) to issue a written charge and send a requisition by post, requiring the defendant to attend court on a specific date. It was not possible to assess the impact of PR on key outcome measures. However, the research does provide useful information about the process of PR and its implementation.

Context

Three sites piloted PR for ‘[traffic and other offences](#)’. Two of the sites (one a police traffic unit; the other a local DVLA office) dealt exclusively with driving or traffic offences. The third (a Basic Command Unit (BCU)) implemented PR for driving and traffic offences, and also for criminal summonses. The procedural change is simpler than for the police bail work stream since these cases usually do not involve arrest or bail.

The other three sites (covering four police BCUs; one of which was located in a more rural area) used PR for ‘[police bail cases](#)’ involving criminal offences where the suspects had been released on unconditional bail. Suspects, arrested and released on police bail, no longer need to go to the police station on the bail return date for charge. Instead, the person is sent a postal requisition listing the charge(s) against them and the date set for a court hearing. A significant amount of police time is potentially thereby saved. In the pilots, the postal option was not used for indictable offences, cases heard at Crown Court or for young offenders.

Approach

The research strategy was based on a mixture of methods to reflect the limited availability of benchmark or comparative data and the small scale of the experiment. Quantitative methods were used to investigate the scale and impact of the pilots. Qualitative methods (including semi-structured interviews) were employed to examine the attitudes of stakeholders towards the experience of implementation and its implications. Economic evaluation methods were used to explore the costs and benefits of the pilots, and to check working assumptions of the Outline Business Case (OBC). The two work streams (traffic and other offences and police bail cases) were analysed separately because of their distinctive characters.

Findings

Traffic and other offences

The pilot sites all handled high case volumes via PR immediately upon implementation of the new approach, and reported using PR for all eligible cases.

Stakeholders at all three sites were positive about the effects and optimistic about the prospects for extending the procedure. Effective liaison with other local agencies was identified as important, but the barriers to wider implementation did not seem to be great.

Implementation of PR was simpler for the traffic and other offences work stream, and required less training and communication than for police bail cases.

Police bail cases

In police bail cases, use of PR was discretionary and it was clear from interviews with staff at pilot sites that the approach was not used for all eligible cases. It competed with other procedural options, not always successfully. Wide variation in the use of PR was found across sites and case volumes were lower than expected. Possible reasons for the lower than expected take-up included variation in the case mix and attitudes and commitment to change. PR appeared to be of greater benefit, and was more frequently used, in the rural BCU.

Stakeholders expressed mixed views about the operation of PR and its net benefits. Court staff did not report significant savings of time or resources.

Positive impetus from middle and senior management within the police was identified as critical to building momentum. Provision of substantial guidance to key stakeholders as to how best to implement change at local level was also singled out.

Cost-benefit and Outline Business Case (OBC) estimates

The OBC for PR estimated the Present Value (PV) at £40 million, based on a phased roll-out across police forces and DVLA and a five-year project lifetime (OCJR, 2008). It also assumed PR would be used in all cases.

The evidence from the pilots suggests that the OBC may have underestimated the up-front (opportunity) costs of preparations. Its assumptions about the 'penetration' of PR were also not met for police bail cases.

The costs and benefits exhibited by the pilots suggest that PR for the traffic and other offences work stream had low costs but modest benefits, while police bail cases had higher costs but potentially greater benefits.

Differences were found in the perceptions of stakeholders. The courts, for example, reported some savings in time and expenditure. The police and DVLA reported better control of case flows and court scheduling but also additional responsibilities.

Mainstreaming

The pilots suggest that, following good preparation and changes to IT, it was possible to implement postal requisitions in place of traditional charging/summons approaches. It was, however, not possible to reliably assess the likely impact due to the lack of baseline data and the relatively small scale of the pilot exercise.

Officer time inputs and familiarity with the process, requirements to reconfigure software and strong leadership were identified by those interviewed as key to successful implementation.

Recommendations

There were a number of recommendations to support decisions on wider roll-out of PR.

- A larger sample of pilots should be implemented and monitored prior to a final mainstreaming decision.
- The larger sample of pilots should contain a number of rural areas.
- Baseline data should be established at pilot sites prior to implementation.
- The OBC assumptions should be reviewed in light of pilot experience.
- The ratio of PR (police bail) cases to the number of unconditional bail cases provides a useful indicator of the uptake of PR at a BCU level or within a police force and should be monitored.

Context

Postal requisitioning (PR) offers an alternative to traditional charging/summons methods, enabling the police (and other public prosecutors) to send a requisition by post without having to refer to the court. The provisions for PR set out in the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003 (sections 29 and 30) were a response to recommendations in the Auld Review (Auld, 2001) to simplify the charge/summons process.

Sections 29 and 30 of the CJA 2003 were implemented by a Commencement Order for the purpose of piloting the new approach in areas identified by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR). These pilots were restricted to adult offenders, cases (summary or either-way) heard at magistrates' courts (cases to be heard at Crown Courts were excluded), and focused on two Criminal Justice System (CJS) work streams¹:

- 'Traffic and other offences' – where it replaced the current requirement to lay an information for the court before a summons can be issued, allowing the police and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to issue a postal requisition.
- 'Police bail cases' – where a suspect released on unconditional bail could be charged and notified of the court date by post (and bail cancelled) and without need to return to the police station.

Figure 1 shows the existing process and the PR approach for each work stream.

By replacing requirements to lay an information to the court for summons and for the police and suspects to return to the police station following arrest for charge, PR was expected to support the Public Service Agreement 24 target to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the CJS in bringing offences to justice and contribute to the Criminal Justice – Simple Speedy Summary (CJSSS) agenda.

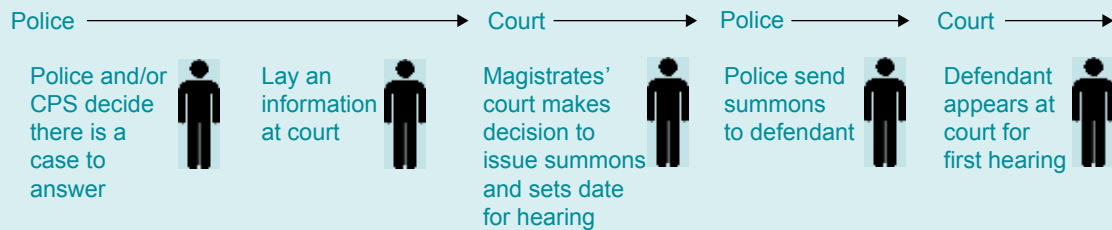
Implementation

PR was implemented in six pilot areas in 2007 and 2008. Three used PR for traffic and other offences (including some crime cases) and three in police bail cases. At many of the sites delays in implementation resulted from IT changes, legal issues, delays in reaching working agreements with local partners and other factors.

¹ The legislation applies to a wider range of public prosecutors (for example, at the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office).

Figure 1: High level view of the existing process and the new PR approach

The current process – traffic and other offences:



The new postal requisitions process:



The current process – police bail cases:



The new postal requisitions process:



Postal requisitions will apply to unconditional bail cases

Please note: The process maps above are intended to offer an overview of the criminal justice process only. These procedures are subject to local variation and are likely to be scalable to the seriousness of an offence.

Table 1 *Number of postal requisitions issued*

Site	Type of pilot	Pilot data duration	Number of postal requisitions
A	Traffic and other offences	May – Sept 2008	1,151
B	Traffic and other offences	Jan – Nov 2008	679
C	Traffic and other offences	Sep – Nov 2008	966
D	Police bail	Jan – Nov 2008	70
E1	Police bail	Dec 07 – Dec 2008	34
E2	Police bail	Feb – Nov 2008	5
F	Police bail	May – Nov 2008	9

The three sites piloting ‘traffic and other offences’ were located in a variety of settings.

- **Site A** is a police unit, located in a metropolitan area, specialising in speeding and traffic offences involving the use of camera-based evidence.
- **Site B** is a DVLA office in an urban area. It handles prosecutions for four categories of traffic offences. Over 90% of the cases involve s29 (no tax).
- **Site C** is a police Basic Command Unit (BCU) in a mixed (urban and rural) area that used PR for traffic offences and crime case summonses.

The sites piloting ‘police bail cases’ were based in three English police force areas. Two of the forces used the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS) IT system; the remaining force used Niche.

- **Site D** is a shire force that implemented PR in a rural BCU.
- **Site E** is a large, primarily urban, force which implemented the change in two BCUs that covered areas including town centres.
- **Site F** is a metropolitan BCU.

PR was more heavily used for traffic and other offences (Sites A–C) because of:

- the much simpler, more specialist context in which these cases are set;
- the greater similarity amongst these cases;
- the shorter time taken per case; and
- the smaller number of staff involved in the procedure.

These characteristics enabled an ‘overnight switch’ to PR for this work stream. This contributed to both the high volume of PRs achieved and to the net benefits.

For both work streams, a substantial amount of preparatory work was needed, involving liaison with software suppliers and the acquisition of new printing facilities. It required liaison with local criminal justice agencies and partnerships. This was time-consuming and led to a delay in implementation.

None of the pilots encountered critical difficulties, although case volumes were very low at Sites E2 and F. Staff generally welcomed the change. There was no sign of serious legal challenge to the pilots' operation.

Scope of the report

The aim of this report is to assess whether PR might offer an effective and efficient alternative to traditional charging/summons approaches. It uses data produced centrally and locally, and evidence collected from interviews at the six sites to explore the implementation and impact of PR. It considers implications for both the management of wider roll-out and for an assessment of the degree to which the working assumptions about costs and benefits anticipated in the Outline Business Case (OBC), developed by OCJR, have been supported.

Research strategy

The research strategy was to identify and employ research methods (as set out in Table 2) that would best assess implementation of PR and assist decisions on whether to roll out sections 29 and 30 of the CJA 2003. During the pilot phase, the intention was:

- to replace the summons process (in selected areas), ending the requirement to lay an information to issue a summons;
- to allow police and DVLA public prosecutors (in the selected areas) to effectively issue a written charge and PR; and
- to enable the pre-charge bail length to be reduced (as when released on unconditional police bail, a suspect will be charged by the police as soon as a decision is made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)).

The research objectives and the methodological approach are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Research objectives and methodology

Research objective	Method employed
To assess whether and how the project objectives were met	● Analysis of site reports and data ● Interviews with stakeholders
To collect all available quantitative information on the process, such as the number of postal requisitions issued	● Analysis of site data ● Comparison with secondary data on case volume indicators
To test assumptions about the likely economic impact of this approach, and any consequent financial benefits or costs which can be reliably attributed to implementation	● Review of key working assumptions of OBC ● Comparison with case volumes achieved in pilots ● Estimates of cost savings based on findings from interviews
To assess perceptions of the costs and benefits of implementing the approach nationally for the police, HMCS, DVLA and CPS including good practice/lessons for national rollout; any risks; and changes needed to national IT systems to obtain maximum benefits from this approach	● Interviews with stakeholders

Research methodology

The six pilot sites were purposively selected by OCJR to represent the two work streams and a range of area types. The absence of pre-implementation baseline data plus the small number of experimental sites ruled out the possibility of estimating reliably the impact of PR on key outcome measures. However, the research does provide useful information about the process of PR and its implementation.

The study was therefore an exploratory one. It collected evidence on three key issues: (a) can the approach be implemented successfully? (b) if it can work, are the benefits sufficient to offset costs? (c) under what conditions will PR flourish?

Quantitative methods were used where possible for exploring outcomes such as the mean time elapsing between arrest and first court appearance. Semi-structured in-person interviews, supplemented by a group discussion and a number of telephone interviews and email exchanges, were used (as listed in Appendix 2). These collected responses to questions about both implementation (including planned coverage and operation of the pilots, comparisons between PR and previous approaches, and barriers to implementation) and the impact of the pilots (including assumptions about the economic impact, the perceived impact on CJS staff workloads, and implications for mainstreaming). A total of 16 interviews and one focus group (involving a further eight individuals) were conducted with staff from the CJS agencies involved (Police, Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) and CPS). This included those managing/overseeing the pilots and staff on the frontline implementing and using the new approach.

Methods of economic evaluation were used to explore the correspondence between key working assumptions made in the OBC and findings about how the pilots operated. This included estimating the scale of cost saving achieved in practice and the up-front investment costs of PR as compared with the impact on recurrent operating costs.

Sample structure

The traffic and other offences pilots were analysed separately to those for police bail. Many of the offences in the traffic and other offences work stream are handled by specialist units or organisations including police traffic units and DVLA offices and thus have a distinctive character.

Outline Business Case (OBC)

An OBC, prepared prior to the project, listed the principal categories of costs and benefits anticipated. Following standard Green Book investment appraisal principles (Treasury, 2003), it estimated the Present Value (PV) of PR at £40m, based on a phased roll-out across police forces and DVLA and a five-year project life-time (OCJR, 2008). It assumed PR would be used in virtually all possible cases. It estimated an average saving per case and adjusted for 'up-front' capital costs.

Further experimentation

The pilot programme reported on here is not large enough to enable reliable inferences about impact (and thus about costs and benefits) to be drawn. Furthermore, the quality of benchmark data available at sites prior to implementation of the pilots limited the scope even for making pre- post-implementation comparisons.

Recommendation: A larger sample of pilots should be implemented and monitored prior to a final mainstreaming decision, and benchmarking data should be collected.

Traffic and other offences

The procedural change for the traffic and other offences work stream is simpler than for police bail since offenders are usually not arrested or bailed. The potential savings for the police and DVLA result from them no longer having to lay an information to the courts to authorise a summons, although this is offset by their having to agree the date with the courts, print and issue the requisition. Direct issue reduces the potential risk of data loss in transit. It may also reduce delays in turning round cases at the court. A corresponding saving was expected at the court, since they no longer had to print, check and authorise requisitions.

PR was switched on quickly once the necessary changes were made and applied to all cases.

Implementation of traffic and other offences work stream

The setting up of the pilots required significant development work. Meetings with local partnership organisations including CPS and HMCS and IT system changes were needed. No insuperable problems arose. There was enthusiasm both to continue with it locally and to mainstream it to other police areas and DVLA offices.

Recommendation: The IT changes are critical and need to be watertight before implementation. These IT changes may provide opportunities for better supervision of data entry.

Small numbers of staff were involved and the operation was generally based in a single office or unit, so the training and communication requirements were not significant.

Operation of pilots

A substantial number of cases were handled with PR immediately upon implementation rather than there being a gradual increase. Table A3.1 in Appendix 3 shows 'switch-on' dates of May 08, January 08 and September 08 respectively for the traffic and other offences pilot sites A, B and C. Volumes fluctuated following implementation but there is no evidence that this was the result of anything other than fluctuations in the underlying volume of offending and enforcement activity.

The traffic and other offences pilot sites covered a narrow offence spectrum. Sites A and B were specialist units dealing with either a single offence type (driving licence offences at Site B) or two offence types (speeding and traffic-light offences at A). Site C was a police BCU which used PR for all traffic and criminal offence types that would previously have been dealt with using a summons. Its caseload was thus much more varied. Despite this, motoring and traffic offences contributed over 90% (904 of 966 cases) of Site C's PRs. Table 3 provides an overview of the operation and coverage of the three pilots.

Overnight implementation resulted in little disruption to case volumes and had minimal impact on staff. Little discretion had to be exercised by staff, which greatly simplified training requirements.

Table 3 *Summary of traffic and other offences pilots*

Site:	A	B	C
Start date	May 08	January 08	September 08
Area type	Metropolitan	Urban	Mixed
Organisation	Police traffic unit	DVLA office	Police BCU
Offence types piloted	Traffic: - Speeding - Traffic signal offences	Traffic: - S29 (no tax) - Failure to notify disposal and bounced cheques	- Traffic (all types) - Crime summonses: theft etc
Postal Requisitions issued	1,151	679	966
Average cases per month:	230	62	322
Trend in caseload	stable	stable	stable
Successful prosecution:	86%	83%	n.a.
Requisition not served:	<1%	4%	n.a.
Adjournment rate			
Pre-pilot	(Mar-May): 11.0%	(Jan-Dec 07): 10.1%	n.a.
Pilot stage	(June-Sept.): 8.0%	(Jan-Nov 08): 5.0%	23.6%
Case duration (average)			
Offence to requisition	163 days	146 days	140 days
Requisition to first court hearing	22 days	22 days	23 days

Notes: n.a. denotes that data were not available. This was because case outcomes were not recorded in a useable form at Site C and an absence of comparable data.

At Site A, the adjournment rate is calculated from June to September rather than from May (when the project was implemented) in order to allow for the delay between requisition and the date of the first court hearing.

Challenges to implementation

In the early stages of implementation the form sent out by post at one site had to be redrafted to make it clearer following one complaint from a defence solicitor. There were also some printing issues in the early stages and new printers were bought.

Recommendation: Sites should assess the capability of printing facilities and be advised that they may need to acquire new printing equipment prior to implementation.

One site found resolving technical issues a challenge and welcomed help from OCJR. Delays in responses from the Home Office on legal issues were also identified at one site.

Impact

There was difficulty establishing solid evidence about the impact of implementation on key performance measures such as the speed with which cases are concluded or the amount of staff time saved. Courts were unable to verify a perceptible change in workload as a result of no longer printing and authorising summonses. Over 80% of prosecutions at Sites A and B were successful and the proportion of summonses not delivered was less than 4%.

Adjournment rates

A controlled experiment to distinguish the effects of policy change was not possible. However, data on case adjournments for first hearings before and after implementation show that the proportion of cases adjourned at Site A fell from 11% to 8% following implementation of the pilot in June 2008 (Table A3.4a in Appendix 3). The fall is statistically significant (at the 95% level), but this does not establish a causal link between implementation and a fall in the adjournment rate. A fall of around five percentage points (from 10.1% to 5%) was observed in the rate at Site B (Table A3.4b in Appendix 3). This fall is also significant but again inconclusive from a causal perspective.

From a sample of two sites it is not possible to draw inferences about what might happen to adjournment rates nationally if the procedural change were to be introduced everywhere. However, it is noted that the implementation date was different at the two sites (January at Site B and May at Site A). This reduces the likelihood that the change in adjournment rates was the result of some common external cause,² although it does not allow other factors to be discounted. A larger sample of observations would be needed to detect a downward shift in the adjournment rate attributable to PR.

Adjournments at Site C have been excluded because of lack of comparative data. The rate there was much higher: 23.6% of 686 cases for which data were available. This reflects the much more varied caseload of a regular BCU as against a specialist police traffic unit or a DVLA office. Adjournments were attributed to various factors, such as requiring that documents be produced or considering disqualification in cases where the defendant had not appeared for the hearing. In three cases, adjournments were to give defendants time to get legal advice or representation and, in a further five cases, they were to give time for personal service of summons.

Case durations

The scope for speeding up the completion of cases is likely to be smaller for the traffic and other offences work stream than in police bail cases. The lack of benchmark data made it difficult to reliably determine the impact of PR on case durations, however. Table 3 and supporting data in Table A3.5 (Appendix 3) show that the sites did not differ greatly in terms of case durations. The mean interval from offence to date of requisition was 163 days in Site

² For example, the introduction of Simple Speedy Summary Justice (CJSSS) during 2007–08.

A, 146 in Site B and 140 in Site C. The mean interval from requisition to court hearing was 22, 22 and 23 days respectively, so a wait of three weeks for a court slot was standard. It was not possible to establish whether these intervals differed significantly from those which applied in the absence of PR.

Lessons for practice

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the traffic and other offences pilots of PR.

- All eligible cases made use of PR, satisfying the implicit assumption of the OBC.
- Future requirements for further IT changes centrally are probably quite limited because of the software development work undertaken on behalf of OCJR during the pilots but local IT changes may still be required.
- There are a number of measures that could help support and speed up wider adoption.
- The IT changes are critical and need to be watertight before implementation.
- IT changes may provide good opportunities for better supervision of data entry quality, since it becomes easier for supervisors to monitor.
- Sites should assess the capability of printing facilities and be advised that they may need to acquire new equipment prior to implementation.
- For police forces more generally there may be merit in following the sequence of implementation used at Site C, namely switching all traffic and other offences over to PR first with a view to switching to PR as the default solution in bail cases later.

Police bail cases

In police bail cases the procedural change is, in essence, simple (see Figure 1 on page 2), although it is subject to local variation. With PR, several steps are eliminated from the standard procedure. This is potentially to the benefit of the court (in speeding up court hearings), to the person arrested (who avoids returning to the police station in order to answer bail) and to the police (who no longer have to process the individual through the custody suite at the bail return stage).

The four BCUs involved in the pilot account for 1.7% of the 236 BCUs in England and Wales. Home Office data indicate that they accounted for 1.66% of the 1,929,152 offences recorded during the year 2007–08. As might be expected, the BCUs exhibited crime profiles that reflect their location, with the metropolitan site notable for a higher crime rate (see Table A4.2 in Appendix 4).

These data give no indication of the number of cases in which PR might potentially be used, which will depend on the number released on unconditional bail in each BCU.

The BCUs differed in the way they operated bail and in the other initiatives being tried.

Implementation in police bail cases

PR was implemented successfully across the three pilot sites, albeit more slowly than planned in some locations. It was used on a discretionary basis rather than as an automatic rule in police bail cases. Many cases were excluded as a matter of policy; for example, if the offender was aged under 17 (at all but one site) or if the offence was indictable.

In other cases various contingencies prevented the use of PR. Preparing cases for charge involves a number of unpredictable elements. In order to use PR, an investigating officer had to complete preparation ahead of the bail return date. A lead time, usually 14 days, applied since the individual had to be notified of cancellation of bail in advance and allowance made for postal delay. Delays resulting from late receipt of forensic or other test results or of decisions from the CPS may thus have restricted use of PR.

The scope for making effective use of PR varied across police BCUs. It depended on how the bail system was used locally, on the offence and offender mix, as well as on the priority it was accorded by senior and middle-ranking officers. Its use was avoided in cases where individuals lived at addresses with a high turnover of occupants. Other procedural changes, the introduction of CJSSS and greater use of conditional bail may also have constrained uptake.

Operation of pilots

Table 4 shows wide variation in the use of PR in the police bail pilot sites. Two of the four BCUs issued several dozen requisitions. The most common offence types were theft (15% of cases), possession of drugs (19%) and violence (25%). PR was used very little for supply of drugs, weapons or sexual offences. It was not possible to identify the proportion of unconditional bail cases in which PR was used as pilot sites had not collected such information. An analysis in April 2008 at Site D showed the use of PR in 18 out of 429 unconditional bail cases, a penetration rate of about 4%, much lower than the rate implicit in the OBC.

Recommendation: To enable the progress of PR to be more accurately assessed, it is recommended that the ratio of PR to (all) unconditional bail cases be monitored.

Table 4 *Summary of police bail pilots*

Site:	D	E1	E2	F
Start date	January 08	December 07	February 08	May 08
Area type	Rural	Urban (town)	Urban (town)	Metropolitan
Organisation	Police BCU	Police BCU	Police BCU	Police BCU
Most common offence types	VAP theft, possession of drugs	Possession of drugs, drink driving, theft VAP	Drink driving, driving offences	Possession of drugs
Postal Requisitions issued	70	34	5	9
Trend in caseload	Rising: up to 8 per month	Falling slightly: down to 2 per month	Not calculated (low numbers)	Not calculated (low numbers)
Case duration (average)				
Arrest to requisition	67 days	91 days	22 days	73 days
Requisition to first court hearing	21 days	20 days	18 days	13 days
Requisition to bail to return date	11 days	26 days	31 days	n.a

Note: n.a. denotes that data were unavailable. This is due to this information not being collected by the site.

Challenges to implementation

Challenges to implementation arose in the four pilot BCUs in the form of managerial issues. In addition to time pressure on investigating officers within individual cases, officers managing the process were under pressure from other parts of their workload.

A number of adjustments had to be made pre- and post-launch. At one site the MG4D/E³ forms had to be changed, in part to bring forward the list of charges onto the front page of the form so that the purpose of the letter was more obvious to the recipient.

Impact

Police time savings

Reducing pressure on police time is a key objective of PR. The time saving is the product of the average time saved per case and the number of cases in which PR is used. If there are low volumes (as seen in the pilot and shown in Table 4), cost savings per case have to be high.

The police time saved per case is potentially quite high since the process of charging in person on the bail return date is time consuming. The defendant has to be accompanied throughout their time at the police station, using perhaps two hours of the investigating officer's time in addition to 10 to 15 minutes of custody sergeant time while the defendant is in the custody suite. Under PR this time is all saved.

The scale of such savings is difficult to estimate, however, because it varies a great deal depending upon the setting. In some BCUs, it is small because the investigating officer is involved very little in the charging process. Where individuals have been arrested at a distance away from a central custody suite, the savings can be much larger. In a rural BCU area with a single central custody suite, the individual answering bail and the investigating officer may both have to journey to the custody suite. Charging an individual can then easily account for half a day of an officer's (and a defendant's) time not needed with the postal approach. The number of police bail cases in the pilot was insufficient to allow anything more than illustrative calculations of the scale of police-time cost savings to be produced.

Recommendation: Any further pilot work should contain a number of rural areas to allow the potential benefits for these sites to be assessed.

A further benefit that emerged was that PR could be used in respect of defendants in prison. It avoids the need for an investigating officer having to make a time-consuming and thus costly visit to the prison in person to put the charge.

PR involves the police taking over from courts the process of accessing court listing systems and setting court dates, and thus does involve some extra work for the police. The Criminal Justice Units (CJUs) handling PR found their workload increased, albeit not by much. These units also had to buy additional printing equipment.

Recommendation: Sites should assess the capability of printing facilities and be advised that they may need to acquire new printing equipment prior to implementation.

3 The MG4D/E is the form used by the police for PR, and details the charges in a particular case.

In the cases where PR was used, there was not a problem with delivering postal requisitions successfully. However, the cases were often cherry-picked (or selected because the site expected a PR to be successful) and represented those where it was most likely that defendants were living at the expected address. Extending coverage to a higher proportion of those on unconditional bail would likely result in some degree of non-delivery, but there is no evidence as to what this proportion might be.

Recommendation: A further pilot including a greater proportion of unconditional bail cases would allow the likely scale of non-delivery to be assessed.

Case durations

A second objective of PR is to reduce the time taken from arrest to a court hearing. Individual case-level durations for the pilot sites are indicated in Table 4. In the absence of information about durations in other BCUs or about durations prior to PR, it was not possible to make reliable estimates of the reduction in case durations. However, the average time from the date of issue of a postal requisition to the bail return date was calculated.

A court hearing will typically be set, say, three weeks following charge. The time between issue of a requisition and the bail return date (usually set to a minimum of two weeks) can be used as a proxy for the reduction in duration of the case (see Figure A1.1). This gives an average reduction of 11 days at Site D, 26 days at E1 and 31 days at E2. One interpretation of the differences would be that the police force at Site D was issuing PRs close to the deadline date (say two weeks prior to the bail return date), while the force at Site E was issuing PRs where there was an opportunity to speed up a case by using PR well ahead of deadline. These latter cases were rarer but offer larger time savings per case.

In E2, the arrest to requisition date is only 22 days, compared with more than 60 days in the other three areas. This seems to confirm that either these are unusual cases or that E2 runs a tighter bail system (or possibly both). The low number of cases and high standard deviations of case durations (see Table A4.4 in Appendix 4) again limits inferences.

Other agencies and interests

A reduction in court adjournments is another potential payoff from PR. The cost saving per adjournment prevented is potentially very high, although low case numbers and lack of comparative data prevent estimation from this pilot.

One note of caution is that both CPS and HMCS at one site identified the possibility that PR might result in fewer defendants being adequately prepared for a (first) court hearing. This could occur where the defendant does not have time (because of postal delays, for example) to organise a defence solicitor prior to the hearing. This might limit the capacity of PR to

deliver disposal of a higher proportion of cases at a first hearing. Lack of benchmark data prevented assessment of the strength of this argument, however.

Legal defence solicitors were reported at two sites to have not been much involved in the changes. It was suggested by those interviewed at these sites that, particularly in light of the move to fixed fees for Legal Aid, defence solicitors were agreeable to PR since it enabled them to streamline the handling of cases.

In bail cases where there is an identified victim, the victim has an interest in the treatment of an accused party. PR saves the defendant having to attend the police station to go through the charging process in person. It is possible that victims regret what might be seen as a 'watering down' of the experience of being charged. No crime victims were interviewed as part of the work to explore this possibility in more detail.

Lessons for practice

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings from the three police bail pilots.

- No legal barriers to PR have, as yet, emerged.
- Using delivery by first-class post worked satisfactorily.
- There were no signs of adverse behavioural responses to the changes amongst defendants.
- Existing partnership frameworks at local level provided a medium for the requisite liaison between agencies.
- The issues that arose were, generally, manageable.
- There are a number of measures that could help support and speed up wider adoption.
- Support for IT development is critical in respect of local tailoring of the principal case management systems employed by police forces and other agencies.
- Staff familiarisation with the postal procedures is best delivered in person: other media such as email (and posters) do not work well.
- Support from senior staff, particularly in the police, is essential.
- Effective middle-management supervision is equally important in persuading officers to make use of postal procedures.
- Effective support in the form of briefing packs is very useful in the early stages.
- Learning from the experience of other forces can speed up development.

Successful implementation of PR for bail cases requires that the middle-ranking officers directly supervising investigating officers get the right kind of support. If they are not given enough time to organise the change, then there is every likelihood that uptake will be patchy. This can result in recriminations and frustration on all sides.

Training and awareness are required at many levels. Investigating officers, custody sergeants, line managers and supervisors as well as support staff all need to be made aware of the possibilities offered by PR and to be encouraged to embrace it. A critical role is played by the line manager who can press investigating officers to explain decisions not to use PR and encourage its greater use. For the approach to thrive, it has to be actively considered in all qualifying cases rather than as an occasional option.

There was positive support for having a single point of contact (SPOC) during implementation to facilitate an understanding of PR and to encourage its wider use. This need not be a full-time post nor a police officer, although the post holder would need support from senior officers when pressing for use of PR and access to data systems (e.g. the NSPIS diary) to review the status of investigations.

Partner organisations, including the CPS, HMCS and local defence solicitors all need to be properly briefed on its functioning and to have protocols in place.

Good support from the central agencies commissioning the pilots was also identified as important. IT issues, management of the change via local partnerships, provision of training materials and access to help-desk or in-person specialists on short secondment were all mentioned as areas where support was particularly helpful.

The model for implementing PR across BCUs within a police force area (PFA) needs attention. The pilot at Site E was implemented in two BCUs within a PFA covering a large urban area. The implementation team formed by local partners covered both BCUs. This enabled some economies of scale, although it is not clear that this model would survive if and when PR were extended to all BCUs in the PFA. In larger forces, particularly the Metropolitan Police, a single implementation team could not cover the whole area. Wider roll-out would require an appropriate model for dissemination.

Costs and benefits

PR potentially provides time savings to criminal justice agencies and also contributes to PSA 24. One critical issue is whether the scale of the benefits is sufficient to meet the costs of implementing and operating change. The traffic and other offences work stream and police bail cases are distinguished when estimating costs and benefits, since they are different in character.

The OBC (OCJR, 2008) estimated benefits and costs for PR. The operation of pilot schemes enabled the assumptions and findings of these preliminary estimates to be tested. Practice generally in CJS organisations does little to facilitate cost assessment. Some of the organisations interviewed had estimated some of the cost and benefit components but did not always collect the right kind of data to support such analysis. For example, staff inputs were priced at salary cost levels and excluded any overhead or salary-related employer cost elements. Time when staff were travelling was excluded from calculations and time inputs to meetings were omitted from estimates, even where these were regular and considerable.

These omissions compound the rather narrow view of the implementation process apparent in the OBC. For example, no allowance was made for a project manager (usually a middle-ranking police officer) or for setting up an implementation team with staff from local agencies to meet upwards of a dozen times before launch. Introduction inevitably imposes start-up, or 'capital', costs that go well beyond the costs of reconfiguring software. This section uses evidence from pilots to estimate the benefits and costs associated with the two work streams, distinguishing the up-front capital element and recurrent costs, using Treasury Green Book methodology.

Traffic and other offences

The potential savings for the traffic and other offences work stream are smaller per case than for the police bail work stream but the procedural change is easier, and thus cheaper, to implement. Once the changes to software and printing facilities have been made and the format of the procedural changes agreed with local partners, the whole caseload is switched to PR. Modest administrative savings for the court may result (from not printing and authorising summonses).

The reduction in delays in the transmission of paperwork resulted in a smoother flow of cases, although the small number of pilots made it impossible to infer reliably whether it brought about a reduction in the adjournment rate. The switch of printing documents from the courts to police or DVLA offices did cause some local adjustments. However, courts seemed not to have noticed any saving and the police and DVLA offices produced little evidence of an increase in costs.⁴

4 The potential costs are likely to vary between areas depending on the extent of the change to current practices resulting from PR. Those forces which have always been involved in printing summonses are less likely to experience an increase in costs.

Illustrative estimates of the costs and benefits associated with implementation and impact (see Table A5.1 in Appendix 5) put the set-up costs at around £2,340, based on the costs of a three-person implementation team meeting six times. The relative simplicity of implementation means it is probably reasonable to assume that no extra resources were required, aside from those for implementation team meetings. In addition, the central IT costs have mostly been incurred already so, from an investment perspective, the marginal costs of extending to other areas should be comparatively low.

From a mainstreaming perspective, the key implication is that the principal cost, albeit not one that has been monitored very well, is the set-up costs associated with liaising with local partner agencies. With typical caseloads of many hundred per year to spread these (one-off) costs over, the increase in cost per case is likely to be negligible.

Police bail cases

A different cost-benefit structure was identified for pilots using PR in police bail cases. The potential benefits from PR for this work stream derive from speeding up the delivery of justice and savings to the police from reduced time inputs.

Benefits

Quicker processing of cases, other things being equal, represents an improvement for all. The scale of these benefits was not assessed beyond estimating a reduction of two to three weeks in average case durations.

At least one of the pilots made its own estimates of the saving in police time at the bail return stage. This estimate was low and it excluded some important elements. When a person is charged they typically spend some time (one to two hours) in the police station. The time lost as a result by both police and the accused should be treated as part of the cost of the process. Time spent in the custody suite with the custody sergeant (an average of 14 minutes according to an estimate from Site D) has to be added.

Estimates also need to take account of the fact that the investigating officer may have had to travel from another police station. This adds travel expenses and time. At Site D, this involved many officers in lengthy (return) journeys and could result in a half-day being required to travel to and attend a (single) charging event. In order to take account of the time spent at the police station plus travel time, it is assumed that an average of two hours of officer time is required for a charge in person.

Appendix 5 outlines the derivation of the hourly costs of police time employed. For estimates of custody sergeant time and average travel expenses, figures from Site D have been used. Table 5 shows an estimated saving of around £100 per case (assuming that the cost of issuing a PR is negligible).

Table 5 *Estimated benefit from police time saving*

	Time (minutes)	Price per minute (p)	Cost per event (£)
Investigating officer	120	58	69.60
Custody sergeant	14	72	10.08
Travel expenses	Average per trip:		12.53
Total			92.21

This saving is only an approximation, and the figure may vary widely across police forces, depending on the location of custody suites and the pressure on facilities locally. It is clearly a significant sum, but aggregate benefits will depend critically on the volume of cases in which the saving is made. Where a BCU is handling fewer than a dozen cases the savings will be modest, probably no more than £1,000 annually. But elsewhere BCUs handling several dozen cases may make considerable savings.

Costs

The costs of setting up and operating PR are reviewed separately.

Set-up costs, as far as can be discerned, have not been considered in full. In the OBC, the capital costs associated with centrally supported modifications to IT systems were included, but local set-up costs were not. A lot of preparation work has to be done locally to enable implementation of PR, ranging from local fixes to enable interaction between IT systems to meetings of local implementation teams.

The common threads running through the implementation models applied at Sites D to F were a project manager and a local implementation team. Taking the latter first, Appendix 5.2 provides an illustration that the costs of a series of implementation meetings might be up to £7,000 per BCU. If a police sergeant were to be assigned to lead a six-month implementation project on the basis of two days per week (40% of their workload), this would add £14,400 or so in salary costs, including overheads.

The total set-up costs can be summarised as follows:

Prior to launch

Police sergeant for six months @ 40%	£14,400
Implementation team meetings	£7,000

Following launch

Police sergeant for 12 months @ 10%	£7,200
-------------------------------------	--------

Total set-up costs £28,600

Recurrent ('process') costs involved are not very significant. It is assumed that, within 12 months of launch, it will be possible to re-assign the 10% of the project manager's time allocated to monitoring, training and promoting PR. Beyond that point, apart from some small recurrent printing costs, no further significant recurrent costs arise.

Net benefits

The net cost-benefit picture thus involves a comparison of significant up-front costs (of perhaps £35,000) and negligible recurrent costs with expected savings that may vary from less than £1,000 (where implementation is weak) to £10,000 annually for a BCU using PR in 100 cases each year and proportionately more if the case volume is higher. Three implications follow.

- Unless a significant number of cases is anticipated, the benefits may be insufficient to cover the up-front costs.
- A key objective is to reduce the need for many rounds of meetings ahead of implementation.
- Distilling the lessons from pilot areas into substantial practical guidance to new sites could have a substantial payback.

Conclusions

The costs and benefits exhibited in the pilots provide a guide to the costs and benefits that might be expected from wider implementation of PR for traffic and other offences. The initial costs incurred centrally in designing pilots have been ignored, since they have already been sunk. There are clearly set-up costs associated with implementation of PR at new sites, however. Agreements have to be reached with local partners about how PR is to work, for example, and information about changes has to be communicated to staff. These costs may be lower than the corresponding costs incurred at pilot sites because of learning from experience and because changes such as software modifications have already been completed.

The costs and benefits, and particularly the net benefits in police bail cases, are very sensitive to the scale at which PR is operated. If the volume of cases is low, the fixed-cost element cannot be spread very effectively and the cost savings per case will be low. The implication of this is that, if PR were to be mainstreamed for police bail cases, implementation should be resourced sufficiently to ensure that investigating officers and managers are well briefed on PR and have incentives to make use of it.

Evidence from the pilots suggests that the assumptions made in the OBC about case volumes and set-up costs for police bail cases were too optimistic. The pilots have produced useful evidence which can be used to revisit the business model.

Recommendation: A review of the critical assumptions made in the OBC about case volumes and savings per case is recommended prior to finalisation of a Full Business Case.

Conclusions

This concluding section summarises the findings from the pilot sites and in particular the two work streams of PR that were tested. It also looks at the implications of these initial findings for plans for mainstreaming the approach.

Traffic and other offences

The introduction of PR was simpler for the traffic and other offences work stream than for police bail cases. Once preparations were made, pilot sites switched all cases to PR. The benefits in terms of saving of time were limited. In some areas of work, however, it may be possible to enable some substitution of police staff (formerly known as civilians) for police officer time in document preparation.

The up-front costs of introducing the change were found to be significant. Liaison between police (or DVLA), the courts and the CPS was needed and sites experienced delay and cost in resolving IT issues. However, the coordinated software system revision planned by OCJR should enable these costs to be reduced for future sites. Provided that learning and good practice are well documented and communicated, the additional costs of bringing new sites on stream should not be great.

Police bail cases

The potential benefits of PR for police bail cases accrue primarily to the police via a saving in staff time. There may also be benefits in the form of improved case management with defendants being charged ahead of the bail return date in areas where the bail system is more tightly managed.

In the three pilot sites, there was wide variation in both how widely PR was adopted and in the size of likely cost savings. In a rural BCU, the benefits from savings of officer time were probably substantial whereas in urban settings the benefits were smaller. However, even this finding may be confounded if there is no requirement that the investigating officer be present for charging. Likewise variations in the way BCUs operated their bail system, or made use of conditional bail, affected the scope for PR. With high fixed costs of implementation this meant that, for some BCUs, the costs of implementing PR were high relative to the potential benefits.

On the other hand, many of the 'up-front' costs of adjusting the standard IT packages have been incurred already. So, when considering mainstreaming, these costs should be ignored. The costs of implementing the change at local level may still be significant. These costs have to be taken seriously, particularly since the extent of uptake in two of the four pilot BCUs was disappointing. Familiarising investigating officers with the new procedure and how it fits with alternatives is an inescapable up-front cost. Encouraging officers to make full use of the

scope PR offers requires significant on-going time inputs from senior and supervisory staff as implementation proceeds.

If mainstreaming PR were to proceed, it would be important to find ways of persuading BCUs to commit to the change and to reflect this commitment in the time they give project managers to implement it. In the absence of serious commitment, there is a risk of low uptake, and thus fewer cases across which to absorb the up-front costs.

Methodology

The number of sites at which pilots were implemented was sufficient to test the principle of PR for the two work streams but too small to support inferences about the likely impact of wider implementation. The fairness of the approach and its use for other public prosecutors and other types of cases (such as cases involving conditional bail and youths) have not been assessed. These issues might be addressed in future research and further inform decisions on roll-out.

The absence of suitable baseline data has limited the ability to assess the impact of PR, and will need to be established in future work to allow the costs/benefits to be more reliably assessed. Although not used in this research, due to the very specific remit of the pilots, the Time Intervals Survey (TIS) offers a potential source of baseline information for further exploration.⁵

There was wide variation across the police bail pilots in the use made of PR and this underlines the need for caution in estimating the costs and benefits of wider roll-out.

Practice issues

There were claims, in the bail case pilots, that project managers had been given responsibility for implementing PR without the demands being adequately reflected in their workload. Monitoring pilot progress, liaison with other agencies and encouraging uptake are time-consuming activities to absorb. If this is to be reflected in adjustments to workloads of senior officers, the cost implications might be significant. Without such commitment, there is a real risk that the resources put in to developing PR will simply be lost because it may not be widely used and will suffer from competition from other initiatives. Equally critical is ensuring that middle managers supervising 'frontline' staff, whether police officers or police staff, are aware of the operational demands of implementation.

The quality of IT support for PR is critical. At the pilot sites, much effort went into developing 'workarounds' to accommodate requirements on local IT systems. Amending forms to allow

⁵ Use of the TIS was explored for this research. However, it would be extremely difficult to select, from the TIS, only those cases included in the pilots and it is likely that the resulting sample from a one week survey would be too small to allow for meaningful analysis.

postal despatch is comparatively straightforward. Variation across forces in the software systems used and the fact that there are interactions with other systems (e.g. courts) makes it less straightforward. This is resolvable in principle but would need close attention and dialogue between software specialists and practitioners.

Another strand of set-up activity to take into account is the process of familiarising officers with the demands of PR. Although the basic principle is straightforward, officers still need to be familiarised with the new forms and procedures. Experience at police bail pilot sites suggested email notification is not an effective method of preparing officers for change. Effective training or familiarisation can be costly in terms of officer time, and may involve multiple sites.

Concluding remarks

The pilots suggest that introduction of PR has the potential to contribute to delivery of swifter, more efficient justice. For both pilot work streams it is comparatively easy to measure the scale on which PR is being deployed but more difficult to assess the benefits per case, in part because of a lack of baseline data on which to make comparisons. The pilots revealed considerable differences, however, in the structure of costs and benefits between PR for the traffic and other offences work stream and PR in police bail cases.

The potential benefits for [traffic and other offences](#), in terms of speedier disposal and more effective case management, seemed to outweigh the small net increase in recurrent costs and the round of up-front costs.

For [police bail cases](#), there was a finer balance.

- The set-up costs are high and there are no guarantees that significant benefits will follow.
- Significant differences in the intensity with which the pilots were pursued make it more difficult to generalise about the effects.
- Comparatively slow implementation at some sites inhibits analysis of the scale of 'learning-by-doing' cost-reduction effects.
- With good preparation and management and the goodwill of officers, there is the potential to save significant amounts of police time.
- Managing implementation across 43 police force areas and 236 BCUs would nevertheless be a significant challenge and mixed experience would likely result.

Recommendations

- A larger sample of pilots should be implemented and monitored prior to a final mainstreaming decision.
- The larger sample of pilots should contain a number of rural areas.

- Baseline data should be established at pilot sites prior to implementation.
- The OBC assumptions should be reviewed in light of pilot experience.
- The ratio of PR (police bail) cases to the number of unconditional bail cases provides a useful indicator of the uptake of PR at a BCU or within a police force and should be monitored.

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Office for Criminal Justice Reform (2008) *Postal Charging: National Rollout: Outline Business Case*: London, OCJR: version PC OBC V2.0.

Internet data sources

BCU-level recorded crime data: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/bcu1.xls>

Police pay rates: <http://www.police-information.co.uk/policepay.htm>

Appendix 1 Summary of changes in process

Postal requisitioning replaces the whole summons system and is simply the method by which a person is required to attend court to answer the charges against them.

The **written charge** replaces the laying of information and the **postal requisition (PR)** replaces the summons. They each start at different places but use the same process for getting to court i.e. postal requisitions.

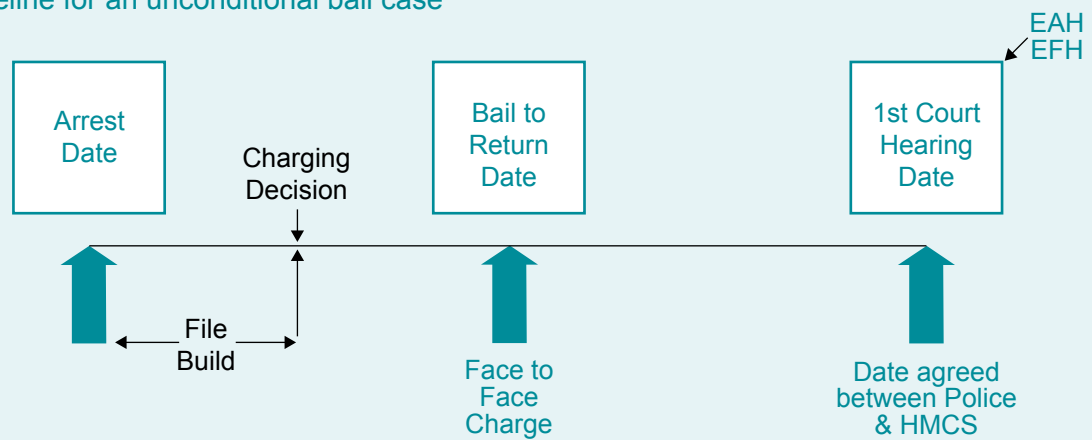
The two work streams are as follows.

- 1) Cases where the defendant is reported for offences (without the need to be arrested), generally for minor process traffic offences (**'traffic and other offences'**) e.g. safety camera, RTC, speeding etc. A PR is issued through a Criminal Justice Unit (CJU)/ Central Ticket Office (CTO)/Administration and Process Unit (APU) notifying the defendant of the written charges and the court date for attendance.
- 2) Cases where the defendant is arrested and taken into custody, generally for crime offences (**'police bail cases'**). Following interview, the suspect is unconditionally bailed to return to the police station pending a charge decision from the CPS Duty Prosecutor. If the charge decision is received well in advance of the bail-to-return date, a PR may be issued notifying the defendant that the bail to return is cancelled and informing him/her of the written charges and the court date for attendance. This is likely to be used less frequently in the light of other developments in the CJS, particularly the introduction of CPS Daytime Direct.

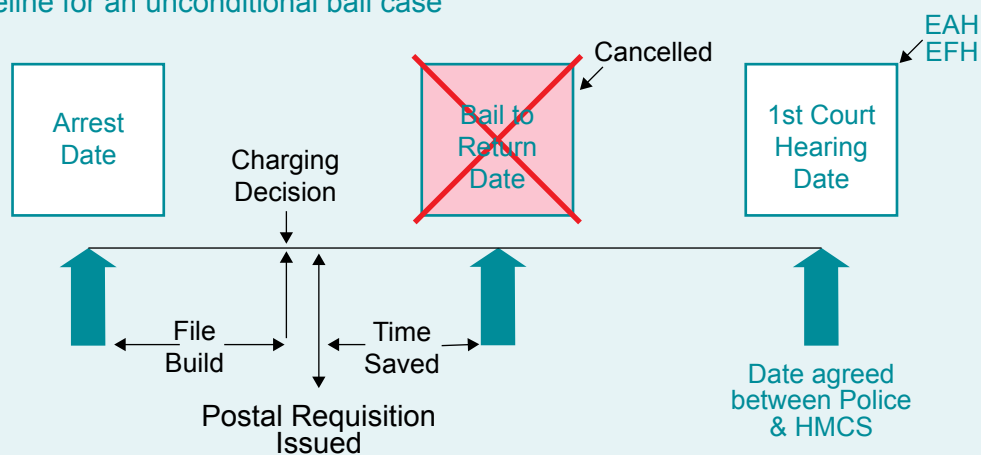
The scope for saving time and reducing the duration of cases from arrest to first court hearing is illustrated for the police bail work stream in Figure A1.1.

Figure A1.1 Timeline of police bail cases using existing processes and under PR

a. Timeline for an unconditional bail case



b. Timeline for an unconditional bail case



Note: The time saved is the duration from the date of issuing a PR (part b) to the bail-to-return date. 'EAH' refers to Early Administrative Hearing and 'EFH' refers to Early First Hearing.

Appendix 2 Interviews conducted

Table A2.1 provides further details of the interviews and discussions undertaken for the qualitative aspect of this research.

Table A2.1: Interviews conducted at each site

Site	Organisation (number of people interviewed)	Mode of interview
A	Police Senior Support Staff (1) Case Manager (2) HMCS (2)	In person In person In person
B	DVLA Local Office (1) DVLA HQ Manager (1) HMCS (1)	In person In person Telephone
C	Police (1) Civilian workers with Police (2)	In person In person
D	Police Inspector (1) HMCS (1) CPS (1) Requisitions GateKeeper, Police (1) Area Prosecution Supervisor (1)	In person In person In person In person Telephone
E	Police Senior Support Staff Manager (1) Police Inspectors (2) Police Civilians (3) CPS (1) HMCS (1)	Focus group discussion
F	Police (2) Police (1) HMCS (1)	In person Telephone Telephone

Total: Personal interviews:16
 Telephone interviews:4
 Group discussion:1

Appendix 3 Traffic and other offences: additional quantitative data

Table A3.1 gives the monthly volume of cases for 2008 at Sites A, B and C in which police or DVLA issued a postal requisition.

Table A3.1 *Monthly analysis of requisitions at traffic and other offences sites*

Site:	A	B	C
Jan	-	63	-
Feb	-	30	-
Mar	-	57	-
Apr	-	39	-
May	127	71	-
Jun	298	171	-
Jul	248	50	-
Aug	238	55	-
Sep	240	49	274
Oct	-	51	378
Nov	-	43	314
Total	1,151	679	966
Monthly average	230	62	322

Table A3.2 gives a breakdown by offence type for postal requisitions issued at Sites A, B and C. Only at Site C were they used for non-driving or non-motoring offences.

Table A3.2 *Traffic and other offences by site and offence type*

Offence type	A	B	C
Failure to provide information	0	0	66
Failure to provide documents	0	430	428
Speeding	481	0	231
Traffic light offences	177	0	25
Other driving (e.g. using phone; without due care)	0	0	121
Other traffic (e.g. excess weight)	0	0	33
Assault/harassment	0	0	11
Theft	0	0	16
Vehicle taking	0	0	5
Criminal damage	0	0	11
Other crime	0	0	17
Not classified	0	0	2
All categories	658	430	966

Note: Some data were missing and, therefore, totals do not all tally with Table A3.1

Table A3.3 Court outcomes for Site B, January – November 2008

Court outcome	Number of cases	%
Successful prosecution	562	82.8%
Adjourned	34	5.0%
Target unknown or summons returned	25	3.7%
Out-of-court settlement	44	6.5%
Withdrawn/insufficient evidence	5	0.7%
Other	9	1.3%
Total requisitions	679	100.0%

Table A3.4a Adjournment rates at Site A before and after implementation

	Requisitions issued	Cases adjourned	Adjournment rate prior to PR	Adjournment rate following PR
March	305	21	6.9%	
April	441	61	13.8%	
May	127	14	11.0%	
June	298	24		8.1%
July	248	17		6.9%
August	238	23		9.7%
September	184	13		7.1%
Total	1,841	173	Mean March-May: 11.0%	Mean June-Sept: 8.0%

Notes: Postal Requisitioning began in Mid-May 2008 and the first hearings resulting from these postal requisitions in June 2008. Detailed data run only until mid-September 2008.

Means are calculated directly from the raw data and not as an average based on monthly rates.

Table A3.4b Adjournment rates at Site B before and after implementation

	Requisitions issued	Cases adjourned	Adjournment rate prior to PR	Adjournment rate following PR
2007	1,340	136	10.1%	
2008	679	34		5.0%
Total	2,019	170	Overall average: 8.4%	

Table A3.5 Average intervals (in days) between key events by site				
Site		Number of days from offence to issue of requisition	Number of days from requisition to court hearing	Number of days from offence to court hearing
A	Mean	163	22	186
	Std. Devn.	20.2	2.8	19.8
	N (cases)	777	777	777
B	Mean	146	22	167
	Std. Devn.	33.8	4.3	33.3
	N (cases)	679	679	679
C	Mean	140	23	163
	Std. Devn.	29.9	3.8	30.1
	N (cases)	909	913	909

Note: Some data on dates were missing, and, as a result, totals differ slightly from those presented in Table A3.1.

Appendix 4 Police bail cases: additional quantitative data

Table A4.1 gives the volume of cases at Sites D, E1, E2 and F in which the police issued a written charge by post ahead of the bail-to-return date. Cases are broken down by offence type, using a simple classification based on the principal offence categories used in recorded crime statistics.

Table A4.1 *Postal requisitions issued in police bail cases by site and offence type*

Offence:	Site:	D	E1	E2	F	Total
Violence against the person		25	5	0	0	30
Burglary		4	1	0	0	5
Criminal damage		2	3	0	0	5
Driving offences		2	1	2	1	6
Excess alcohol		6	6	3	1	16
Child protection		2	0	0	0	2
Drug supply		0	1	0	0	1
Possession of drugs		9	9	0	4	22
Obstruction		3	0	0	0	3
Sexual offences		1	0	0	0	1
Theft		12	5	0	1	18
Theft of motor vehicle		1	2	0	0	3
Weapons		1	1	0	0	2
Other		2	0	0	2	4
Total		70	34	5	9	118

For purposes of contextualisation, Table A4.2 shows the volume of recorded crime for each of the BCUs during the year 2007–08.

Table A4.2 Recorded crime levels by site and offence type

Offence:	Site:	D	E1	E2	F	England & Wales	Pilot sites as %
Violence against the person		5,004	1,539	2,476	5,423	961,188	1.50
Robbery		191	159	104	1,471	84,706	2.27
Burglary (dwelling)		1,626	789	825	1,746	280,704	1.78
Theft of a motor vehicle		741	596	545	1,373	170,177	1.91
Theft from a motor vehicle		2,028	1,439	1,035	2,987	432,377	1.73
Total for these five offences		9,590	4,522	4,985	13,000	1,929,152	1.66
Offences per 1,000 population		28.3	29.9	28.1	58.6	35.91	

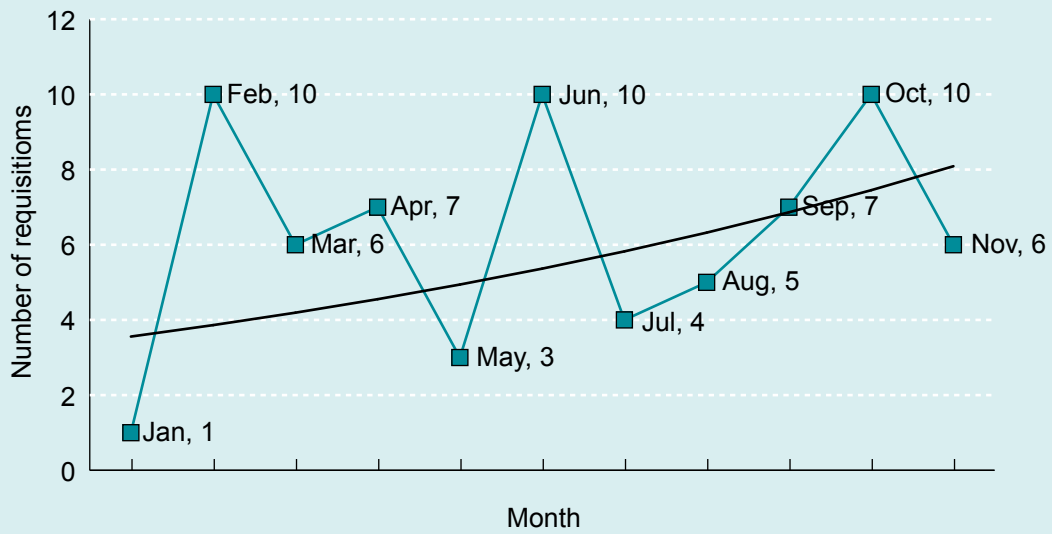
BCU-level data on recorded crime from: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/bcu1.xls>

Table A4.3 Monthly analysis of requisitions in police bail cases by site

Site:	D	E1	E2	F	Total
2007: all months	1	1	-	-	2
2008					
Jan	1	6	-	-	7
Feb	10	5	2	-	17
Mar	6	0	0	-	6
Apr	7	0	0	-	7
May	3	5	0	0	8
Jun	10	4	2	0	16
Jul	4	5	0	3	12
Aug	5	3	0	3	11
Sep	7	4	0	1	12
Oct	10	0	0	1	11
Nov	6	1	1	1	9
Total	70	34	5	9	118

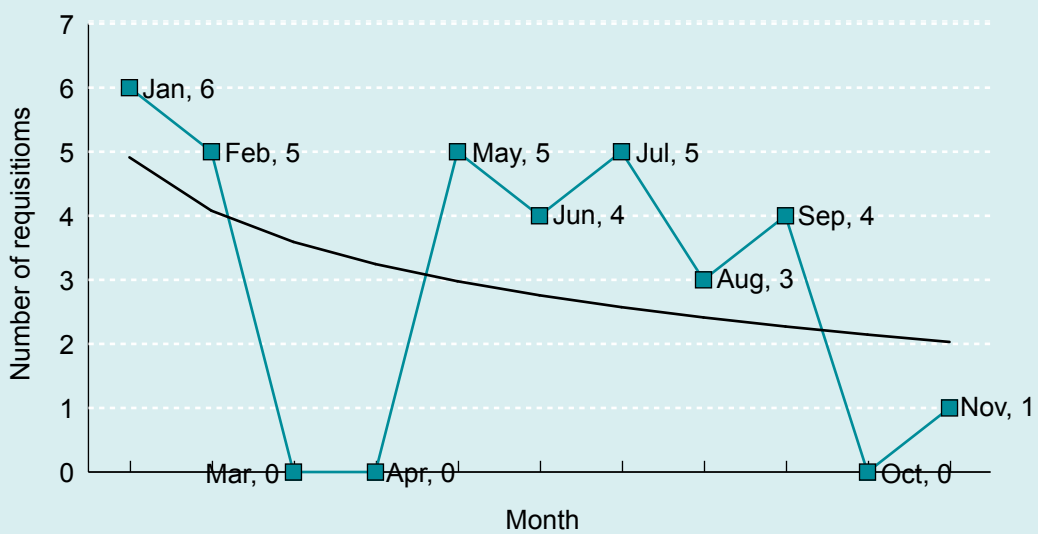
Notes: One requisition was issued at Site D in 2007, although the full pilot did not start until January 2008. Although the pilot at Site E1 ran until December 2008, complete data for December were not available. Only data to the end of November have therefore been included.

Figure A4.1 Monthly requisitions in police bail cases at Site D



Note: A non-linear trend line has been fitted.

Figure A4.2 Monthly requisitions in police bail cases at Site E1



Note: A non-linear trend line has been fitted.

Table A4.4 *Average intervals between key events in police bail cases by site*

(days)

site		Number of days from arrest to issue of requisition	Number of days from requisition to first court hearing	Number of days from arrest to first court hearing	Number of days from requisition to Bail to Return date
D	Mean	66.75	20.82	87.58	11.48
	Cases	70	70	70	70
	Std. Deviation	77.56	47.76	69.71	51.16
E1	Mean	90.50	19.64	110.14	25.61
	Cases	34	34	34	34
	Std. Deviation	72.67	2.08	72.78	13.98
E2	Mean	22.00	18.40	40.40	31.40
	Cases	5	5	5	5
	Std. Deviation	12.38	1.67	13.61	11.52
F	Mean	73.33	13.11	86.44	
	Cases	9	9	9	
	Std. Deviation	58.77	2.42	59.01	
Total	Mean	72.20	19.79	92.00	16.80
	cases	118	118	118	109
	Std. Deviation	74.17	36.76	69.48	42.30

Appendix 5 Working assumptions for cost and benefit calculations

Estimating the costs and benefits associated with the pilots is an inexact science. The basic questions ('what benefits result?' and 'what are the costs of enabling change?') can only be answered if there is good information about the counterfactual. This usually prompts further questions. For example: Would the number of case adjournments have fallen (or changed) anyway? How would staff have spent their time if they had not been involved in project implementation?

In order to provide even crude answers to these questions, assumptions have to be made about whether such estimates could be followed confidently when judging whether to implement change more widely. This section sets out a simple model of the costs of implementation for each work stream.

Traffic and other offences

For the traffic and other offences work stream, the potential gains per case are smaller than for the police bail work stream. The scope for saving significant amounts of police time is absent and the change results in benefits that are likely to be primarily administrative, such as better case flow control. At the same time, however, the costs of implementation are likely to be lower since fewer agencies and fewer staff are involved. This reduces (but does not eliminate) the need for implementation meetings.

This research found no evidence of a long-term change in staffing requirements as a result of implementation. During the process of implementation, some local liaison is needed between the police or DVLA office issuing postal requisitions, the CPS and the courts. Table A5.1 provides an estimate of these costs.

Given that the caseload of the offices concerned will typically be many hundreds per year, it is clear that the costs of moving to a PR approach will quickly be absorbed. Once in place the system is likely to differ little in cost from the pre-implementation position. Thus, it can be concluded that, for the traffic and other offences work stream, the costs and benefits of a switch to PR are small.

Table A5.1 Implementation team meetings: illustrative costs for a traffic and other offences site

	Hourly salary, £	Hourly overheads £	Cost per 3-hour meeting, £
DVLA or police staff	20	20	120
CPS	25	25	150
HMCS	20	20	120
Total	65	65	390
Number of meetings for implementation team			6
Total cost of implementation team			2,340

Police bail cases

Staffing costs

Data on staff costs collected from police sites appear generally to be based simply on salary costs, with no salary-related costs or overhead component.⁶ This gives the following (indicative) hourly costs of staff:

Police constable	£17.53
Custody sergeant	£21.63
Detention officer	£10.95
APT clerk (file builder)	£12.45
Custody admin clerk	£9.50
Healthcare professional	£93 per call-out
Appropriate adult	£28
Interpreter	£46

Note: Current police pay rates (p.a.) are as follows:⁷

Constable:	£21,534 – £ 33,810
Sergeant:	£33,810 – £37,098

Adding overheads at 100% would double this figure. Given the pressure on space in police stations and the cost per square foot of space (given costs of security etc.) plus vehicles and equipment, this is surely not an overestimate.

Illustrative example of estimation of implementation costs

Implementation of PR is usually done via a local management team containing representatives from key agencies. Assume that this group meets once a month for a year and comprises a police sergeant, a police constable, a police civilian and a representative from each of the CPS and HMCS. For simplicity, ignore the costs of venue hire, travel expenses and secretarial support and assume the meetings take three hours (including travel time). In round terms, using a 100% overhead, the cost over the year amounts to around £7,000 as indicated in Table A5.2 below.

⁶ The figures given here are taken from an evaluation document produced by one of the pilot sites.

⁷ These rates are taken from: <http://www.police-information.co.uk/policepay.htm>, 18 Nov 2008.

Table A5.2 Implementation team meeting costs: for a police bail site

	Hourly salary, £	Hourly overheads £	Cost per 3-hour meeting, £	Cost over year, £
Police Constable	17.50	17.50	105	1,260
Police Sergeant	21.50	21.50	129	1,548
Police civilian	12.50	12.50	75	900
CPS	25.00	25.00	150	1,800
HMCS	20.00	20.00	120	1,440
Total			579	6,948

Using a similar kind of approach, estimates of other parts of the implementation cost can be made. Launching an effective scheme requires the commitment of a project manager who is given recognition for the time commitment involved. Estimates indicate that a minimum amount of time would be two days per week (40% of their time) over a minimum of six months. If this task were given to a police sergeant earning £36,000 per annum, the total cost of their input would be £14,400.

Adding this to the costs of the local implementation team, gives an estimate of set-up costs locally of the order of £21,000 per BCU during the year prior to launch. This represents part of the capital cost.

If the implementation team were to continue to meet and the project manager to retain a time allowance for supervising the operation of PR, then there would be further costs. This could be represented as a recurrent cost. This cost might taper off over a year, or perhaps two, as PR becomes 'business as usual' and does not need any significant additional support. It would be legitimate then to treat the year one running-in phase as part of the capital or set-up costs. For simplicity let us assume that the project manager is allowed 10% of their time to support, monitor and disseminate PR for the first 12 months of live operation. Ignoring any pay rises, this would put the cost of the running-in phase at 10% of the annual salary of £36,000 plus overheads at 100%, namely £7,200.

Table A5.3 Estimated set-up costs of a postal requisition project for police bail cases

Year prior to launch:	
Project manager (40% for 6 months)	£14,400
Local implementation team meetings (x12)	£7,000
Year following launch:	
Project manager (10% for 12 months)	£7,200
Total set-up costs per project	£28,600

To this total would need to be added the costs of any new printing facilities required by the police.

This total does not, of course, refer to a cash flow. It is virtually all comprised of the opportunity cost of the staff time committed to the project and the cost of essential support facilities (buildings, lighting, heating, cars, computers, holiday pay, sick pay etc.) captured via overheads. These are real costs, however, both to the taxpayer and to society.

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Postal requisitioning (PR) offers an alternative to traditional charging methods and the summons process. This report reviews the operation of PR at six pilot sites, which were set up in response to the recommendations of the Auld Review (2001). It looks at the scale and methods of implementation across the pilot sites, three of which used PR for traffic and other offences (cases where the defendant was reported for offences but not arrested) and three for police bail cases (criminal offences where suspects had been arrested and released on unconditional bail). Some evidence on the effectiveness of the pilots in reducing case durations and staff time inputs is also presented. The assumptions made at the planning stage about the likely costs and benefits of the programme are reviewed in light of experience at the sites.

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