


# PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version Dec 2024

<b>Force</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>	Ben Adams
<b>Chief Constable</b>	Chris Noble
<b>Title of inspection</b>	<a href="#">Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service – Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates</a>
<b>Published Date</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
<b>Inspectorate</b>	
<b>Summary of inspection</b>	<p>His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services carried out a joint thematic inspection of the building of prosecution cases by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)</p> <p>In January 2024, the interim findings report was published after phase 1 of the inspection. It identified a number of high-level themes and areas of concern that have an adverse impact on the relationship between the CPS and police.</p> <p>In this final report, these themes are examined in more detail with the benefit of evidence obtained from our further inspection activity examining the joint culture and communication between the police and CPS.</p>
<b>Grade</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>1 By July 2026, the National Criminal Justice Board should create and publish a clear strategy and oversee the delivery of improvement across the criminal justice system but specifically the prosecution team. As soon as possible thereafter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement a national criminal justice action plan which identifies priorities, allocates responsibilities, and sets performance objectives</li> <li>• oversee the work of other relevant groups, including Local Criminal Justice Boards</li> <li>• publish regular updates on progress against the national criminal justice strategy and objectives.</li> </ul> <p>2 By October 2025, the National Criminal Justice Board should extend its membership to include the chair of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors' Group.</p> <p>3 By July 2026, the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB) should, as part of its national criminal justice strategy, create a viable, realistic plan for securing a national joint police and Crown Prosecution Service Digital Case File (DCF) management system or multiple, fully compatible systems. The NCJB should approach the challenges associated with securing the necessary funding for its proposed solution, and subsequently implementing it, as either its highest priority or one of its highest priorities.</p>



4 By January 2026, the Joint Operational Improvement Board should make sure that there is a clearly defined action plan reflecting adequate resourcing, joint commitments and shared milestones and outcomes to expedite the development and implementation of the Digital Case File (DCF) management system.

5 By July 2026, police forces should have in place as part of their gatekeeping or comparable arrangements:

- an effective governance and decision-making capability to ensure investigations are timely and completed to the appropriate standards
- agreed contact arrangements in place in forces and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Areas to facilitate clear, consistent, and transparent communication between police and CPS
- sufficient, trained, and competent decision-makers
- effective and efficient systems and processes to manage case file submission queues, to avoid unnecessary delays and risks to cases subject to statutory time limits.

6 By July 2026, the College of Policing should develop a national supervisors' training course and assessment on case file building.

7 Within 12 months of the completion of recommendation 6, police forces should ensure that every supervisor responsible for assessing case files prior to referral to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision is trained in case file building and Director's Guidance on Charging (6th edition) (DG6) quality assurance.

8 By July 2026, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should review all national and local case file submission checklists to identify good practice and consolidate this into a single national checklist. This should ensure accuracy and consistency of case file checklists until the Digital Case File (DCF) is fully operational in all police force and CPS Areas.

9 By July 2026, the police and Crown Prosecution Service at Joint Operational Improvement Meetings should develop a joint local training plan to increase awareness and understanding of each other's roles, including the operation of IT systems.

10 By July 2026, the National Criminal Justice Board should commission a joint review (supported by independent expertise) of performance data. This should include:

- the current use of criminal justice system (CJS) performance data
- how CJS performance data is collected, presented, and analysed
- how CJS performance data is used to support effective partnership working between the police and Crown Prosecution Service.

11 By January 2027, the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB) should use the outcome of that independent review to define and publish a national set of common metrics to enable effective scrutiny of all relevant aspects of the police's and Crown Prosecution Service's performance in pre- and post-charge cases. The NCJB should also extend this to include other aspects of performance to include matters relating to His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service and His Majesty's Probation and Prison Service.

12 By July 2026, the Joint Operational Improvement Board should review the Director's Guidance on Charging (6th edition) (DG6) including the National File Standard (NFS) and



issue a new (7th) edition to reduce unnecessary burdens on police and prosecutors. The review should include, as a minimum:

- reconsidering whether 'front-loading' is necessary in all cases
- reconsidering the extent to which rebuttable presumption material must be supplied to the Crown Prosecution Service pre-charge
- clarifying the format in which medical and forensic evidence is required for a charging decision
- in as many respects as is possible, removing ambiguity from the guidance.

13 By July 2026, Crown Prosecution Service Area managers should take steps to satisfy themselves that all action plans:

- are produced in accordance with the requirements of Director's Guidance on Charging (6th edition) (DG6)
- have a clearly documented rationale
- only contain requests for necessary and relevant documents, evidence or other material
- do not duplicate previously completed actions.

14 By January 2026 the National Police Chiefs' Council to undertake a review of redaction systems and to determine which systems are the most effective, including their compatibility with the Crown Prosecution Service's case management system and communicate this across all forces.

15 By July 2026, building on the work already started, the Joint Operational Improvement Board should take action to:

- work with the Home Office to, if necessary, draft proposals for amendments to the Data Protection Act 2018 and placing these before Parliament for its consideration
- work with the Attorney General's Office to consider how Attorney General's Guidance on Disclosure may be amended to reduce the burden of redaction in cases
- set out a list of approved police IT systems so that they become capable of handling unredacted and redacted material without the risk of unlawful disclosure
- consider how making greater use of artificial intelligence to automate elements of the redaction process may reduce the burden.

16 By October 2025, Crown Prosecution Service Area managers should take steps to ensure that prosecutors provide their contact details on all Manual of Guidance Form 3 (MG3s) and Manual of Guidance Form 3A (MG3As) to facilitate communication where required.

17 By October 2025, the Director of Public Prosecutions considers amending the current Director's Guidance on Charging (6th edition) (DG6) – which states that 'digital communication is [the] preferred' means of communication.

18 By October 2026, the Joint Operational Improvement Board should conduct an evaluation of early advice surgeries to assess their impact on culture and communication between police and Crown Prosecution Service, and whether they added value to the effectiveness of the charging process. If found to be successful, expand their use nationwide.

### Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's initial response

Commissioner Ben Adams welcomes this thematic inspection into joint case building and has a keen interest in improvements in this area as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Partnership Board (LCJPB). Case File Quality is a key metric monitored at the LCJPB and improvements have been noted in Staffordshire's performance in this area.

Concerns remain about court delays and backlogs here in Staffordshire which increases the risk of statutory time limits being exceeded. The measures in place to reduce this risk are noted and will be monitored moving forward.

The Commissioner looks forward to updates from CPS and Staffordshire Head of Criminal Justice in making progress with closer working arrangements and developing shared training opportunities with local CPS in the coming months.

### Chief Constable's response

Although Staffordshire Police was not one of the forces selected for participation in the HMICFRS and HMCPSP joint thematic inspection into the building of prosecution cases by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, the force recognises the significance of the findings. The final report, published following phase 2 of the inspection in early 2024, builds on the interim findings and provides deeper insight into systemic issues affecting joint working practices, particularly around culture and communication between the police and CPS. In response, Staffordshire Police will be progressing and monitoring the relevant recommendations outlined in the report.

The Head of Criminal Justice will oversee the implementation of these recommendations, ensuring completion within the specified delivery timelines. Progress will be reported to the force's command board and to the Inspection and Audit governance board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable.

**Rec 5, By July 2026, police forces should have in place as part of their gatekeeping or comparable arrangements:**

- **an effective governance and decision-making capability to ensure investigations are timely and completed to the appropriate standards**
- **agreed contact arrangements in place in forces and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Areas to facilitate clear, consistent, and transparent communication between police and CPS**
- **sufficient, trained, and competent decision-makers**
- **effective and efficient systems and processes to manage case file submission queues, to avoid unnecessary delays and risks to cases subject to statutory time limits.**

The force has the Joint Operational Improvement and Learning Meeting (JOILM) and Strategic Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (SJOIM) and these meetings address concerns and give an opportunity for development of initiatives and ideas from both parties. Progress has been made with regards to the Microsoft Teams channel between the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Staffordshire Police to improve communication. Initial review and findings from the roll out are not as expected and work to improve stronger timely communications from both parties is now being looked at.

The Force has a well-established, DCC chaired, Quality Investigations Board accompanied by a Quality Investigations Tactical Board for investigation performance management, escalation of issues, decision making and innovation.

The Prosecution Hubs have omnicompetent staff able to deal with all case file submissions in an effective and robust manner. The review function of the prosecution hubs allows improved file quality first time which reduces delays in cases being sent to the CPS. Whilst the Prosecution Hubs have encountered delays, due to staffing and volumes of case files, these are closely monitored and improvement plans have been put in place which have proven effective in reducing backlogs.

Statutory time limits are specifically monitored through the Prosecution Hubs to ensure any cases that have been sent to us are dealt with prior to expiration of any limitation. Frequent feedback is given to officers regarding the late submission of files that are close to limitation of proceedings to reduce the risk of these cases landing too close to expiration for the Prosecution Hubs and CPS to respond. Strong relationships have been built between the Prosecution Hubs and pre-charge CPS Teams so that we can communicate late cases with limitations.

**Rec 7, Within 12 months of the completion of recommendation 6, police forces should ensure that every supervisor responsible for assessing case files prior to referral to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision is trained in case file building and Director's Guidance on Charging (6th edition) (DG6) quality assurance.**

All Staffordshire Police officers receive on-boarding training in DG6 and file quality. The Prosecution Hub staff regularly attend shift briefings, CPD days and planned inputs to improve file quality and DG6 knowledge across the organisation where capacity allows. Opportunities, through the introduction of specialised teams sending their own TWIF (two-way interface) files, have been taken to refresh Sergeants' and Inspectors' knowledge on DG6.

Work is being completed within the Change and Efficiency Programme to highlight the failure demand created by poor file quality. Work is also ongoing to establish a 'best course of action' around a whole Force approach to file quality improvements however, recommendations have been made through the Prosecution Hubs, based on previous experience, on how to capture and prolong Officer learning, retention and commitment to improved file quality.

**Rec 9, By July 2026, the police and Crown Prosecution Service at Joint Operational Improvement Meetings should develop a joint local training plan to increase awareness and understanding of each other's roles, including the operation of IT systems.**

Training and development opportunities between CPS and Policing are positive and developing. CPS have provided disclosure training to various departments across Staffordshire Police and further inputs are scheduled around DG6 and disclosure.

The Prosecution Hubs have plans to deliver updated training around DG6 and file quality for all staff in the coming months. As part of this training the Local CPS will be engaged to update on Disclosure and DG6 requirements from a partner perspective.

### Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

As Chair of the LCJPB the Commissioner commits to maintaining oversight of DG6 compliance and case building improvements, highlighting concerns to all parties through the quarterly LCJB meetings.