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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street

London

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4 September 2025

Dear Home Secretary,

HMICFRS Report: Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report

Under Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, as Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to the report by HMICFRS entitled 'Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report'.

Both the Chief Constable and I welcome the publication of this report. The Chief Constable's responses to the recommendations are shown at Appendix 1.

I recognise that effective joint working between the police and CPS is crucial to an effective local criminal justice system. My Police and Crime Plan demonstrates my commitment to working with police and partners to improve the collaborative working across the local criminal justice system to ensure that those who break the law are dealt with robustly and brought to justice in an effective and timely manner.

The Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice Board (CCJB) is a strategic Board that brings criminal justice organisations together to support joint working and improve the overall function of the local criminal justice system. Through my role as Chair of the CCJB, I can provide reassurance that I monitor how Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) work together to build cases through investigation and prosecution to improve justice outcomes for victims of crime.

At a recent CCJB meeting, the Police and CPS provided a joint update in relation to progress being made in relation to Operation Soteria and the Rape and Serious Sexual Assault (RASSO) National Operating Model. A core area of focus for police and CPS collaborative working has been on improving case file quality. Locally, there are few case file quality failures, which is testament to this joint working arrangement. I am reassured that regular meetings between police and CPS are held to continue driving improvements in this space.

In addition, the introduction of dedicated contact channels for RASSO cases where Early Advice has been submitted is another way in which joint working between police and CPS is proving effective. These communication channels, which enable real time discussions to be had between lawyers and officers, help keep the case progressing and minimise delays.

I trust that this response, and that of the Chief Constable, provides reassurance regarding the commitment of both myself as Police and Crime Commissioner, and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to continue to work towards implementing the recommendations put forward in the HMICFRS report on joint case building by the Police and CPS to improve working practices.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Darryl Preston', written in a cursive style.

Darryl Preston

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Enc - Appendix 1 – Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report
'Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report.'

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report 'Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report.'

Recommendation 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:

- **Implement a national criminal justice action plan which identifies priorities, allocates responsibilities, and sets performance objectives.**
- **Oversee the work of other relevant groups, including Local Criminal Justice Boards.**
- **Publish regular updates on progress against the national criminal justice strategy and objectives.**

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB).

Recommendation 2

By October 2025, the National Criminal Justice Board should extend its membership to include the chair of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors' Group.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB).

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB).

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Joint Operational Improvement Board.

Recommendation 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.**

Constabulary Response:

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has multiple governance mechanisms which collectively have oversight around investigation standards, including timeliness and case file submissions. All our investigative directives, policies and best practice guidance have been located, for the past 2 years, within our bespoke online portal – Project Sherlock [Project Sherlock \(Investigations Guidance\) - Home](#). This offers a plethora of practical operational support to investigators and supervisors alike and is regularly monitored, amended and updated.

The Constabulary has developed a new Crime Standards and Performance Strategy 2025-2027 which enhances oversight within a specific framework taking an end-to-end review of crime management ensuring there is key support at investigator and supervisory level. Furthermore, within the force monthly Crime Standards Delivery Group and Crime Performance Accountability Meetings we have a well-embedded audit framework led by 2 DCIs (Standards and Assurance) and a detailed scorecard that gives broad accountability for the presence, quality, and supervision of investigative action plans.

Within the force specialist crime units, there are bespoke skillsets and protocols that ensure both a sound templated foundation and onward supervisory expertise are applied to the investigative plans. Based within the force Investigation Standards Department, the Case File Standards and Support Unit (CFSSU) undertake bespoke triage of all files to ensure they meet national standards before onward submission to the CPS. Following the success of this team, the force has embedded a dedicated RASSO DS who is trained to the same standards to improve timeliness and joint working with CPS. Collectively, this oversight reports in to the executive level chaired Force Performance Board for Chief Officer oversight and support.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary have agreed contact arrangements in place at executive, strategic/tactical and practitioner level. At executive and strategic level, through professional networks built through Strategic and Operational JOIM's and Criminal Justice Boards, the level of communication and contact is fluid which includes agreed escalation routes where necessary. Senior leaders within both organisations are transparent and engage in dialogue to understand, support and enhance joint working to ensure victims receive the best possible overall service. As a joint endeavour, the force has launched a monthly Police and CPS liaison meeting which allows leaders at tactical and strategic level to discuss emerging themes and trends and continue to build professional relationships and enhance communication. At practitioner level, through a variety of processes linked to case files, communication is being enhanced although it is acknowledged, there is additional work required to bring parity to that seen in more senior roles. These processes include:

- MS Teams channels utilised to address triage issues within red and green cases which improves timeliness.
- Within the Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan arena, real time case conversations take place between OIC's and lawyers where an action plan is being considered pre-charge to ensure a joint understanding around onward progression and timeliness. Through governance arrangements associated with this pilot, the force is working with the CPS to increase the remit of these real time case conversations recognising the value they have for both organisations.
- For RASSO, Specialist or Complex Cases where Early Advice has been submitted, there are dedicated contact channels which allow real time discussions between the lawyer and officer.

As highlighted above, through a dedicated strategy aimed at enhancing crime standards, the force is applying a focus on supervisory standards which will include initial investigation through to gatekeeping and post charge principles. Via a bespoke Power Bi platform, analysis is undertaken around supervisory performance in relation to matters such as action plans, escalation, and DGA failures. This Power BI is an iterative process and as the data matures, it will feed directly into governance continuous professional development to ensure the force response match the

themed areas of identified improvement including bespoke gatekeeper training supported by a force plan and governance to monitor completion.

Statutory Time Limit (STL) cases are subject to ongoing monitoring at force through to operational level to ensure timely investigation and case submission and they will feature within Crime Performance Accountability Meetings to ensure ongoing understanding of key themes which place pressure on the system. Operationally, data is available for management on a case-by-case basis with a STL calculator available to assist with more complex cases, especially those which fall within the DA remit. All STL cases submitted are reviewed by the CFSSU and are monitored and prioritised/progressed in a timely way to minimise delays in submission to the CPS. STL submissions are monitored monthly and feedback provided to the officer and supervisors where necessary. In addition to assist with STL cases even further, CFSSU are making improvements to digitalise prioritisation systems used to manage case file volumes which will assist in timeliness for all cases, including those subjects to STL.

Recommendation 6

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

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the College of Policing.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

Co-dependent on recommendation 6, which sits with the College of Policing and will be progressed upon release of requisite training package. As referenced above, the force has sufficient and robust governance and tracking oversight in place to ensure this training is delivered in a timely manner and detail available to ensure compliance.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

Early discussions have been held in relation to this recommendation, with further strategic and tactical level detail and a delivery plan to be agreed through the Criminal Justice Board and JOIM's. Through Operation Soteria, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and RASSO CPS have already commenced aspects of this recommendation through joint training and an amalgamation of both organisations'

national delivery plans with future plans around a bespoke event to bring together practitioners and lawyers to improve not only awareness but also build professional relationships and enhance communication.

Recommendation 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.**

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB).

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Criminal Justice Board (NCJB).

Recommendation 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.**

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Joint Operational Improvement Board.

Recommendation 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.**

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the National Police Chief's Council.

Recommendation 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.**

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Joint Operational Improvement Board.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Recommendation 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.

Constabulary Response:

This recommendation is for the Joint Operational Improvement Board.