

Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report July 2025

Report: [Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report](#)

Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

This comprehensive report, jointly published by His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), examines the effectiveness of case building between police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in England and Wales. It focuses on either-way and indictable-only offences and aims to improve culture, communication, and partnership working to deliver stronger cases, better outcomes for victims, and increased efficiency within the criminal justice system (CJS). The inspection was conducted in two phases across multiple CPS Areas and police forces, involving detailed case file reviews, interviews, and performance data analysis.

Key Observations and Concerns

The joint inspection has shone a spotlight on systemic issues that persist along the frontline interface between police forces and the CPS. Inspectors identified, despite efforts over many years for positive change:

- Ongoing communication and cultural barriers between police and CPS that impede effective case preparation and mutual trust.
- Incompatible IT systems, leading to fragmented workflows and significant inefficiencies in transferring and processing case files.
- Lack of shared performance metrics, resulting in mismatched priorities, inconsistent standards, and ongoing friction at both strategic and operational levels.
- Persistent delays in charging advice, frequent case file deficiencies, and repeated 'back-and-forth' exchanges that waste time and impact victims and witnesses.

These foundational issues, while not isolated to Hampshire and Isle of Wight, affect the efficiency, consistency and public confidence in the criminal justice system as a whole.

Recommendations for Improvement

There are three force level recommendations, with overall the joint inspection issuing 18 recommendations aimed at restoring effective strategic oversight and operational alignment between police and the CPS, of which key proposals include:

1. National strategy and unified performance metrics: The National Criminal Justice Board should lead a system-wide strategy to align policing and CPS objectives and establish shared outcome-based performance indicators.
2. Digital case file interoperability: A fully integrated or fully compatible police-CPS case management system is urgently needed to replace disparate and inefficient IT platforms.
3. Standardised national case file checklists: Review and consolidate all local and national submission aids into a single checklist to ensure accuracy and ease of use until full digital integration is achieved.

4. Improved joint training and operational collaboration: Increase regular joint training sessions, and embed cross-agency understanding at all levels.
5. Enhanced quality assurance and triage governance: Ensure accurate CPS triage decisions, clear action plan monitoring, and more robust feedback mechanisms to reduce unnecessary rejections and delays.

These reforms are essential to deliver timely justice, improve outcomes for victims, and reduce frustration in police and CPS working relationships.

Our Commitment

As Police and Crime Commissioner for HIOW, I welcome the findings of this report and am resolutely committed to ensuring local action aligns with national reform.

- I will hold my Chief Constable to account to ensure HIOWC engages fully with national strategies and the Criminal Justice Joint Operational Improvement Board work on joint case work governance.
- We will implement local operational changes including joint training programmes, case submission workshops, and regular feedback loops with CPS Wessex to raise file quality and reduce inefficiencies.
- I will oversee performance tracking and improve local data transparency to ensure oversight and continuous improvement.
- We will collaborate with regional CPS colleagues and other forces to improve response times to action plans and triage rejections.
- I commit to supporting wider digital transformation, promoting the development of interoperable case management systems that benefit both police and CPS.

These steps will help ensure that case building in our region becomes more efficient, more victim-centred and better aligned with prosecutorial expectations.

This report rightly draws attention to the systemic inefficiencies undermining the joint efforts of police and CPS. While improvements have been made, much work remains to safeguard victims' interests, ensure timely justice, and rebuild trust between key criminal justice partners. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we will play our full part in driving the cultural, operational, and technological changes required. I will continue to insist on progress, transparency, and accountability in how our force and prosecutorial partners work together, and in turn improve public confidence in our criminal justice system.

Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary

His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out a joint thematic inspection of the building of prosecution cases by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

The inspection considered how police forces and CPS areas can improve culture, communications and partnership work on case building in either-way and indictable-only casework to deliver stronger

cases, a better product for the court and defence, and a better service to victims, witnesses, and the public.

As highlighted within the inspection report, the relationship between the police and CPS is critical, especially considering increased demand and reduced capacity within the wider judiciary system.

Some of the key issues identified within the report which are deemed to have an impact on culture include:

- Police file quality
- Timeliness of charging advice
- Changes to how case files were built
- Lack of clear shared performance metrics
- Incomplete data
- Joint strategy for improvement across the system
- Impact of DG6
- Conflicting priorities
- Lack of joint digital infrastructure

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary welcome the findings of the inspection report and recognise the challenges identified for both organisations. It is imperative to us as a force to address the recommendations to build on our local partnerships but also to ensure the effective delivery of justice in line with our force priorities of putting victims first, the relentless pursuit of criminals, and exceptional local policing.

Recommendation 5:

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

a) An effective governance and decision-making capability to ensure investigations are timely and completed to the appropriate standards

Within Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary there has been considerable work to ensure we have clear performance metrics in place; this has been assisted by the recent rebuild of the CJ performance reporting process which provides Area Commanders and managers with performance data regarding timely investigations and DGA compliance for file submissions. Further review work is ongoing to assess the impact of this, but early performance indications show a significant improvement in file quality submissions, particularly for remand cases with positive feedback received from CPS around this.

There is more effective tracking of significant investigations, monitoring of outstanding suspects and there has been the introduction of 72-hour peer reviews and 28-day serious crime reviews for unsolved murders. Bail and RUI data sets are also in place to identify lengthening investigations.

The Criminal Justice (CJ) Hub rebrand ethic was introduced earlier in 2025; this continues to place emphasis on OICs and their supervisors to be fully accountable for their investigation and file quality. This is supported centrally by the Investigation Skills and Standards team ensuring a standardised review format.

Communications from the hub to both OIC and investigation managers continues to support improvements in the investigative culture. Structured and consistent guidance led responses at set intervals are complementing the investigation review ethos, taking responsibility for learning and providing managers with the information to identify gaps in learning and outliers in performance.

CJ are also introducing a decision-making application to help in disposal decisions. It's an improved version of the Outcome Buddy and sits alongside plans to build CPD activity for supervisors and OICs on decision making. This work will be embedded as part of The Crime Skills Academy work to continue to upskill our workforce.

b) Agreed contact arrangements in place in forces and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Areas to facilitate clear, consistent, and transparent communication between police and CPS

The Criminal Justice teams are proactive with CPS colleagues. Real Time Case Conversations (RTCC) have been developed as a joint platform between HIOWC and Wessex CPS, using national guidance. This was rolled out in force in July 2025 and is now facilitating verbal communication between Lawyer and OIC. This is aimed at reducing action plans returned to HIOWC from CPS and is largely Lawyer lead.

A re-invigoration of Early Case Planning Conference (ECPC) has coincided with the development of RTCC. Further work is ongoing to ensure a clear method of tracking ECPC however its use in remand cases has provided early signs of encouragement and improvement. Engagement is OIC lead, and early case conversations should direct the enquiries and reduce APs later. This is working particularly well with Amberstone teams.

There is current development work ongoing to produce a new streamlined escalation process between CPS and police as a single, simple process for CPS to escalate case file issues within predetermined parameters. This will give a single point of entry into the force. A meeting with CPS is set for mid-September 2025 to discuss and agree proposals.

The escalations process will be fully automated aside for Custody Time Limited (CTL) cases that will require some staff input due to the timescales involved and a process will also be suggested for receiving RTCC initial requests. This way the measurement of RTCC uptake and performance can be more effectively tracked.

HIOWC are currently working with CPS towards consistency across all Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIM) platforms encouraging accountability and continuous improvement, streamlining the subject issue for better focus. With more effective processes being introduced that bring the two organisations back to a place in which lawyers and OICs can speak directly, the stronger the prospects are in terms of getting it right for victims first time and achieving justice efficiently.

c) Sufficient, trained, and competent decision-makers

As stated, work is underway through the successful Crime Skills Academy to develop packages for training and upskilling our decision makers within force. This will require embedding and support through local policing as well as specialist crime to fully realise its benefits.

d) 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.

Pre Charge Advice (PCA) file submission process and CJU file administration processes are now controlled and processed via the recently introduced OneTouch Lists system. This is a large and widely functioning system that has replaced a more protracted and disparate system previously operated. From the amalgamation of the data, 37 instances of double keying have been eliminated and large parts of the process are now automated. These automations and the improved Supervisor

File Checker are providing performance dividends across the board and notably in the remand case and STL spaces.

One of the most significant matters is the introduction of digital casefiles, due later in 2026. Significant preparatory project work is soon to begin within CJ for this eventuality.

An area for further improvement is the Non-PCA Statutory Time Limits (STL) and non- PCA cases, in general these are not overseen or quality assured by the CJ Hub. Further work is underway to explore options around how HIOWC can ensure file quality and submissions for these cases

Recommendation 7:

Within 12 months of the completion of recommendation 6 (CoP development of a national supervisors training course and assessment on case file building), 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.

Currently selected detective sergeants provide inputs on key training programmes in force. Packages exist and are approved for Initial training, including PIP1 to PIP2, leadership and DS/DI.

Upon receipt of the CoP package from recommendation 6 this can be incorporated within this and as part of the Crime Skills Academy work alongside overall supervision improvement plans.

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.

This recommendation will be reviewed at future Strategic Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (SJOIM)/ Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) meetings for joint agreement and engagement between HIOWC and CPS with a joint training plan designed with the SJOIM overseeing development and delivery of this in the next six months

Sam De Reya
Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Recommendations:

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

OPCC response:

I welcome this recommendation as a necessary step toward ensuring timely justice and improved outcomes for victims. This recommendation reflects a shared understanding that quality investigations and seamless police-CPS collaboration are fundamental to delivering justice. As PCC, I remain focused on holding the force to account for improving investigative standards, ensuring timely case file progression, and strengthening victim trust. The public rightly expects justice without unnecessary delay, and I am committed to ensuring that Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary delivers on that expectation.

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.

OPCC response:

It is essential that supervisors who act as the final quality checkpoint before CPS submission, have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to assess case files rigorously and consistently. This ensures not only efficiency in prosecution decision-making but also fairness and transparency for victims and suspects. I will raise this matter with my Chief Constable and through my scrutiny arrangements, and ensure that a training programme is developed and delivered to all relevant supervisors, including Sergeants and Inspectors in operational and investigative roles.

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.

OPCC response:

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I have long advocated for greater joint working to reduce delays, improve case quality, and deliver better outcomes for victims of crime. The complexities of modern case building, coupled with distinct organisational roles and systems, require structured, cross-agency training and dialogue. Building shared understanding is not just beneficial, it is essential to ensuring that criminal justice processes are efficient, fair, and victim-focused. I will continue to use my statutory role to hold both HIOWC and CPS Wessex to account for working in close partnership to deliver this recommendation. I will seek assurances that this training is embedded into the induction and ongoing professional development of both new investigators and prosecutors.

This recommendation aligns closely with my work to build a more effective and accountable criminal justice system in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Enhancing mutual understanding between police and prosecutors will help reduce friction in the case progression process, improve timeliness, and ultimately lead to better justice for victims and communities. I remain committed to supporting and monitoring this joint effort through chairing the Local Criminal Justice Board and my wider scrutiny functions.