



House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

**Policing priorities:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Fifth Report of 2022–23**

**Second Special Report of Session
2023–24**

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Home Affairs Committee

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Second Special Report

The Home Affairs Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, [Policing priorities](#) (HC 635) on 10 November 2023. The Government response was received on 8 January 2024 and is appended to this report.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

1. **The Government's priorities for policing are clear: to cut crime, improve trust and confidence in policing and deliver justice and high-quality outcomes for victims.** The Home Secretary is responsible for setting the national, strategic direction of policing and holding policing to account for these commitments. Chief Constables are operationally independent, held to account by a democratically elected PCC (and Mayors with PCC functions). Whilst it is for Chief Constables to make decisions about frontline policing and how resources are best deployed at a local level, the public rightly expect that the police will pursue available opportunities to prevent and detect crime and we are determined to work with the policing sector to deliver this.

2. **We have invested in policing to ensure they have the resources to tackle crime.** We have delivered our manifesto commitment to increase capacity through the **recruitment of an additional 20,000 officers** in England and Wales as of March 2023, bringing the total number of current serving police officers to a record high of 149,566. Our police are now more diverse than ever before, with the highest ever number of female (53,080) and ethnic minority police officers (12,086). **Police Funding has increased by up to £842.9 million when compared to 2023/24**, bringing the total police funding settlement for 2024/25 to up to £18.4 billion. Overall, PCCs will have an increase in police funding of up to £922.2 million (6.0% in cash terms) available to them this year. **We have equipped police with the powers they need** through the introduction of the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act 2022 and Public Order Act 2023. These deliver tougher sentencing laws to keep serious sexual and violent offenders behind bars for longer and provide more powers for the police to tackle disruptive protests.

3. **We are also taking steps to free up police time to focus on cutting crime.** In July 2023 we published the National Partnership Agreement, which provides a framework of actions that local areas can take to roll out the mental health elements of the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) approach to ensure people in need of mental health care are responded to by an appropriate person. Every territorial police force in England and Wales will be implementing RCRP. **If all forces in England realised time savings similar to those reported by Humberside Police, which initially developed RCRP, this could save around one million hours of police officer time per year.** We commissioned a study into police productivity which estimates that **38 million hours per year could be saved by improving productivity within policing.** We continue to work with police to consider the recommendations from the National Police Chiefs Council's (NPCC) Policing Productivity Review and determine what further actions can be taken to realise the estimated savings. And we are reducing bureaucratic burden related to crime recording. This includes reinstating the principal offence rule for behavioural crimes to

allow a focus on the **most impactful** offence and increasing the threshold for malicious communications crimes to ensure that they are only recorded when the threshold of a crime is met, rather than when someone is merely offended by something often posted on social media. The NPCC review team believe that these changes could save up to 443,000 police officer hours every year.

4. **Overall crime levels have also fallen by 10% within the last year** (Crime Survey of England and Wales June 2023 compared to June 2022), and in his State of Policing 2022 report, HMCI Cooke stated that “England and Wales are arguably safer than they have ever been”. We have continued to focus on priority crime types of homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood violence, as set out in the Beating Crime Plan. The current number of homicides (602 victims) is down 10% when compared to the year ending June 2022. Hospital admissions for assault by a sharp object for people under 25, which is the Government’s metric for serious violence, were also 10% lower in the year ending June 2023 than in the year ending June 2022. While there has been no statistical change in neighbourhood crime compared with the previous year (June 2022), the fact that crime, excluding fraud and computer misuse offences, has fallen by 56% between March 2010 and June 2023 highlights the progress in the fight against crime.

5. **We have sharpened the focus on police integrity, standards, and performance following a number of high-profile cases of police misconduct and criminality which have had an impact on public trust and confidence in policing.** This includes establishing the Angiolini Inquiry; reviewing progress made from HMICFRS’ report into vetting, misconduct, and misogyny; and reviewing the police dismissals process to improve confidence in the integrity of the police. Police leadership is essential to improving standards, which is why we have invested in a National Centre for Police Leadership through the College of Policing to develop standards and a leadership development framework at all ranks.

6. **And we are taking action to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System.** We have worked with the NPCC and CPS to revise the guidelines for charging and implemented a new case progression commitment to ensure that reports of crime are taken seriously and properly investigated, so that the system delivers the right outcomes for victims.

7. The Government’s response to the Committee’s recommendations is set out below. We are grateful to the Committee for the valuable scrutiny it has provided.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1: *We recommend the Home Office and the Mayor of London co-ordinate in commissioning a further independent review of the Met to monitor and measure progress in implementing Baroness Casey’s findings up to March 2024, a year on from the publication of her review.* (Paragraph 10)

Government Response

1. The Commissioner has demonstrated a genuine commitment to driving change and is in the early stages of implementing his “New Met for London” plan which sets out the work required by 2025, following the Casey report earlier this year. The London Policing

Board remains a newly established forum for holding the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to account. Given the scale of the challenges, the force needs some time and space (as acknowledged by HMICFRS) to turn things around.

2. The MPS will also be subject to continuous monitoring from HMICFRS by virtue of their 'Engage' status, with their next PEEL inspection report due in Summer 2024.

3. The Casey report recommends the MPS and the Mayor of London should commission independent progress reviews after two years, and again after five years. We would support a commitment to that timetable from the Mayor. In the interim, we would expect HMICFRS to continue to review progress on force performance through the regular police performance oversight group and the next PEEL inspection.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Home Office empower the College of Policing to require forces to use consistent recruitment processes which include values-based interviewing. We expect to see all forces aligning recruitment processes and utilising values-based interviewing within 12 months. (Paragraph 17)

Government Response

4. Values based interviewing is part of the police recruitment process. College of Policing guidance for post assessment in-person interviews contains a pool of questions that is competency and values focussed. All 43 forces complete an in-person interview with candidates and 37 forces currently use the College standard pool of questions. Work is ongoing by the College with the remaining six forces to adopt this question set.

5. Additionally, the Online Assessment Process (OAP), which was designed and is owned by the College of Policing, tests applicants against competencies and values. This is used by all 43 forces.

6. The College is working to put the end-to-end recruitment standard into regulations by summer 2024. This will ensure that all forces utilise the same standard, set by the College, and ensure consistency for candidates as well as supporting confidence in the recruitment process for the public.

Recommendation 3: Common standards or vetting should be enforced nationally, with sanctions upon non-compliant forces. We recommend the Government make vetting upon transfer a statutory requirement within the lifetime of the current Parliament. It should also ensure all forces immediately implement His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services's recommendation on re-vetting officers of concern, including those who have been subject to a criminal investigation, received a formal warning or reduction in rank following a misconduct hearing, or where "adverse information" has otherwise come to the force's notice. We recommend the Home Office monitor how local policing bodies are holding their chief constables accountable for implementing the recommendation, taking remedial action swiftly where accountability is found lacking or progress in implementation unsatisfactory. We invite the Home Office to report its progress on this in six months' time: that report should include details of monitoring mechanisms and any remedial steps taken or planned. (Paragraph 18)

Government Response

7. Forces are required to vet in line with the statutory code of practice on vetting and the vetting authorised professional practice (APP) which are issued by the College of Policing. These both set out considerations in relation to transferees and we believe the framework for how vetting is carried out should remain with the College, in-keeping with other guidance on operational matters. The College updated their vetting code in July 2023 and is due to publish its draft vetting APP for consultation shortly.

8. The NPCC has already asked forces to check all officers and staff against the police national database (PND) to identify any intelligence which could warrant action being taken. Further to this, the NPCC is working on a programme which will help to facilitate automated continuous integrity screening checks, enabling relevant issues to be raised in real time.

9. It is a decision for PCCs on how they hold the Chief Constable to account on how they lead their force. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) may wish to consider taking forward findings in relation to PCCs.

10. The Home Office will provide Parliament with regular updates as appropriate on a number of pieces of ongoing work relating to integrity matters such as the Dismissals Review, Angiolini Inquiry and relevant vetting actions being taken forward by policing.

Recommendation 4: *The College of Policing's standards for leaders must, at every level of leadership, include the responsibility to support team members who call out inappropriate behaviour, along with the duty to do so oneself. We recommend the standards are amended accordingly. We invite the College of Policing to write to us on progress towards standards revision and the impact of changes in six months' time.* (Paragraph 23)

Government Response

11. Wellbeing and onboarding surveys consistently demonstrate that quality of supervision and line management is the biggest factor in retention and wellbeing. CoP have rolled out new national leadership standards and accompanying development programmes for every rank to improve leadership skills as well as line management essentials. This includes a focus on front line leadership, with targeted programmes for Sergeant/Inspector ranks. These new standards will be embedded in the system in the coming years through staged planned reform of promotions, progression and talent management.

12. The new Code of Ethics, which will be published in full shortly (the Code of Practice for Ethical Policing was published on 6 December, the remaining components—ethical policing principles and guidance for ethical and professional behaviour—are expected in early 2024), will guide everyone in policing in making decisions ethically. The Code will state that chief officers should '*ensure that whistle-blowers feel able to report concerns and are listened to, are given appropriate protections and are aware of the various internal and external routes*', and '*develop culture where staff feel empowered to encouraged to challenge of report behaviour, performance or service delivery that falls below expectations*'

13. Police forces should have measures in place to allow police officers and staff to come forward to report wrongdoing by colleagues in confidence if necessary. These issues

have formed part of HMICFRS inspections in the past. In addition, the IOPC has a confidential reporting line for officers and staff to report wrongdoing by their policing colleagues. The IOPC's effectiveness has been reviewed as part of the Cabinet Office's public bodies review programme by Dr Gillian Fairfield, the independent reviewer. The Fairfield report is being considered by Home Office Ministers, who expect to publish its findings in 2024. The Angiolini review is also expected to consider the effectiveness of police whistleblowing processes.

Recommendation 5: *We support the recommendation from HMICFRS that by 31 December 2023 Chief Constables make routine use of the PND to discover otherwise unreported adverse information about officers and staff. We recommend that the Government, and HMICFRS, urgently work with the PND and other sources of valuable information pertaining to their employees' conduct, to enable ready and proactive access. We would request that they report progress on this in their response to this report.* (Paragraph 29)

Government Response

14. The NPCC asked all forces to check officers and staff against the PND. Aside from this, the NPCC is working to develop a continuous integrity screening programme which will aim to improve intelligence sharing/flagging across policing.

15. Police forces should have measures in place to allow police officers and staff to come forward to report wrongdoing by colleagues in confidence if necessary. These issues have formed part of HMICFRS inspections in the past. In addition, the IOPC has a confidential reporting line for officers and staff to report wrongdoing by their policing colleagues. The IOPC's effectiveness has been reviewed as part of the independent review by Dr Gillian Fairfield and is being considered by the Home Office as noted above. Part 2 of the Angiolini Inquiry is also examining wider issues in policing, including the effectiveness of whistleblowing processes.

Recommendation 6: *We heard that there has been a lack of clarity on what constitutes misogynistic or predatory behaviour, as well as multiple reports of police officers engaging in commercial sexual exploitation. For that reason, we recommend that forces which have not already done so follow the Met's lead and make it explicit in policy that their police officers are prohibited from paying for sex.* (Paragraph 30)

Government Response

16. HMICFRS's vetting, misogyny and counter-corruption inspection (Nov 2022) recommended that the NPCC, in consultation with the College of Policing and IOPC, should define 'prejudicial and improper behaviour'.

17. In June 2023, the NPCC published its updated 'Sex Work National Police Guidance'. That guidance makes clear that the use of sex workers is incompatible with the role of a police officer or staff member because of the obvious and significant risk that it undermines public trust.

Recommendation 7: The Review of Dismissals was too narrow in scope. We recommend the Home Office immediately commission wider work on the functioning of the competence and disciplinary system, linked to the “Fitness to Practise” regime (see paras 51–54). (Paragraph 42)

Government Response

18. The dismissals review has considered wide areas of concern, as a result of which the Government announced a series of reforms to strengthen the misconduct, vetting and performance systems.

19. Police officers are subject to a regulated system of discipline, which includes those dismissed for either performance or misconduct reasons being added to the police Barred List, preventing them from re-joining policing organisations in the future.

Recommendation 8: We recommend the Home Office evaluate the impact of regulatory and other changes to policing misconduct and disciplinary processes 12 months after implementation. The evaluation should include consideration of the proportion of cases resulting in a finding of gross misconduct, changes in dismissal rates, the speed of misconduct cases, challenges against decisions and disproportionality in dismissal outcomes. We support in principle the recommendations made following the Home Office’s own review, that “the Government, with the policing sector, [...] consider the way data is reported, where there are possible gaps, and how to improve collection to enable more meaningful data across England and Wales”, and that the Home Office carry out multi-variate analysis to “identify any disproportionality related to intersectional characteristics.” We recommend these considerations and analysis commence immediately and invite the Home Office to set out its timetable for completion in its response to our report. (Paragraph 43)

Government Response

20. It is right that we consider the impact of changes to the misconduct, vetting and performance systems. We anticipate that it could take some time for a sufficient number of cases, commenced under any new regulations, to filter through the system to enable analysis to be conducted.

21. However, the Home Office does now publish standalone statistics annually on police misconduct and criminal proceedings.

22. The Home Office remains committed to working with the policing sector to better understand why disparities exist within the dismissals system. This includes better understanding the data, where collecting and reporting the data is vital to ensure an evidenced based approach to any mitigations taken, as well as reassuring the public of the fairness of the dismissals system. This work is ongoing across the policing sector.

Recommendation 9: We support HMICFRS’s call for Police and Crime Commissioners to be required to provide follow-up comments, at least annually, where HMICFRS have not yet confirmed that recommendations pertaining to them and their local force have been sufficiently addressed. We will return to matters of local accountability in our inquiry into Police and Crime Commissioners. (Paragraph 47)

Government Response

23. This recommendation aligns with the recommendations made in HMCI Cooke's State of Policing Report, published on 6 June.

24. There is currently no legislative vehicle through which to legislate for increased powers for HMICFRS, and any changes to legislation would need extensive consultation due to divergent views within the sector. Therefore, the previous Home Secretary asked policing leaders to come together and agree a way forward to address the issues raised in HMCI Cooke's report. Policing leaders met in September and broadly agreed that it would be beneficial for PCCs to report on a more regular basis, but there is not yet agreement on how this would operate in practice.

25. We are still considering HMCI Cooke's recommendations and will respond in due course.

Recommendation 10: *We recommend police forces embed specialist external expertise in permanent roles to drive the scale of cultural reform needed by officers, staff and the public in order to restore public faith in policing.* (Paragraph 50)

Government Response

26. The decision on how to deploy resources and drive delivery in force is a matter for Chief Constables.

Recommendation 11: *Working with the College of Policing, NPCC and other key stakeholders, we recommend the Home Office scope out a "Fitness to Practise" regime for policing. This should be done as part of the review of wider functioning of the disciplinary system we have recommended already.* (Paragraph 54)

Government Response

27. The College previously developed an approach to Licence to Practise as part of their 2015 Review of Police Leadership and, following an extensive consultation, developed a pilot for some specialist roles such as public protection. Licensing schemes are currently specific to specialist functions e.g. firearms, public order.

28. Introducing a wider licensing scheme for police officers could help enforce national standards and embed a culture of learning and personal development through the ranks. The College would need to revisit how it will approach and implement such a scheme, including the requirements and how they will maintain a register of those in policing.

29. Vetting is already standardised and could be considered at the same time to ensure it is part of a wider licensing system. Similarly, medical fitness is already a consideration in recruitment standards.

Recommendation 12: *We recommend the Home Office work with the Ministry of Justice in considering amendments to the Victims and Prisoners Bill to clarify rights for police officers who are themselves the victims of police-perpetrated crime. The Home Office should work with the Independent Office for Police Conduct to ascertain how police complainants could be afforded similar rights to other complainants and whether this*

would require amending the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020. Any necessary changes to the Regulations should be completed with the current Parliament. (Paragraph 60)

Government Response

30. We accept that there is a need to ensure that police officers who are victims of police-perpetrated crime are afforded certain rights when making a complaint. We do not think opening up the public complaints system to existing officers and staff can currently be achieved without creating a detrimental impact on the delivery of the system for the public. It is worth noting that officers and staff can currently use the IOPC's whistleblowing hotline to report concerns of wrongdoing that a criminal offence has been committed, or where there is evidence of conduct that would justify disciplinary proceedings. The IOPC can then use its 'power of initiative' to investigate matters without requiring a referral from the relevant police force.

31. Time allowing, we will explore any opportunities to address this matter as part of the delivery of the Dismissals Review recommendations.

Recommendation 13: *We strongly recommend the Home Office examine measures to further reassure the public that officers accused of offences will be investigated without fear or favour – whether this be through investigation by an officer from another force or through some other means.* (Paragraph 61)

Government Response

32. The majority of complaints and conduct matters can be investigated effectively by force Professional Standards Departments (PSDs). However, the most serious and sensitive matters are handled independently of the police by the IOPC, with police forces required by law to refer certain allegations to the IOPC under the mandatory referral criteria. This includes allegations of serious corruption or serious sexual offences.

33. Individual investigators are already required, by law, to have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience necessary to investigate a particular allegation, before they are appointed to do so. Following the review into police officer dismissals, the Government has recommended that the College of Policing introduce an accreditation scheme for professional standards investigators, to ensure the very highest standard of investigations.

Recommendation 14: *We recommend the Home Office explore with the Independent Office for Police Conduct how misconduct processes could run concurrently with criminal cases. It should also set time-limited targets for the reduction of time taken to reach decisions on dismissal for misconduct.* (Paragraph 63)

Government Response

34. Home Office statutory guidance already specifies that criminal proceedings should run prior to—or in parallel with—action for misconduct, unless to do so would prejudice any criminal proceedings.

35. Cases are often extremely complex; as such, setting time-limited targets could potentially create perverse incentives for investigators to rush to meet deadlines at the expense of thoroughness and quality of an investigation. Rushed investigations could have a serious impact on public confidence, particularly where meeting targets means that the evidence might not be considered in full when informing on a final decision.

36. There is some concern that setting time-limits adds an additional layer of bureaucracy into a system that we are trying to streamline – which could actually be detrimental to timescales in the long term.

37. In 2020, the Government introduced legislation to improve the overall timeliness of misconduct investigations. This included a 12-month trigger, requiring the investigating body—whether that's the IOPC or a police force—to provide written explanation for any delays, the planned steps to bring the investigation to a conclusion and the estimated conclusion date.

38. In August 2023, following the conclusion of the Home Office review into police officer dismissals, the Government announced a series of reforms to strengthen policing standards. This includes measures which we consider are likely to improve timeliness and efficiency in the system. This includes:

- a) responsibility for chairing hearings to return to senior officers;
- b) a presumption of fast-track hearings for former officers and special constables;
- c) a presumption of dismissal for proven gross misconduct;
- d) streamlining the performance system;
- e) specified offence types, conviction of which automatically amounts to gross misconduct; and
- f) a clarified route to remove officers who fail to maintain vetting.

Recommendation 15: We urge the Home Office to consider the findings of the IOPC Review. We recommend, given concerns about the complexity of the complaints system and lack of clarity about key players in that system, the Government consider how the Independent Office of Police Conduct review might be supported by a wider review of Police and Crime Commissioners' roles in complaint handling. (Paragraph 66)

Government Response

39. The previous Home Secretary commissioned the IOPC review in March 2023 as part of the Cabinet Office's public bodies review programme. The review has been considering the IOPC's governance, accountability, efficacy, and efficiency. Though we do not wish to pre-judge the findings of the independent review, we look forward to considering the report in full and thank Dr Gillian Fairfield and the review team for their continued work.

40. It remains important that the independent review is given opportunity to report its findings before considering any wider implications.

Recommendation 16: *In our previous report on Police conduct and complaints, we concluded that uniting the roles of chair and director general of the IOPC detracted from the ability to scrutinise the executive action of the IOPC and to hold it to account. Notwithstanding the findings of the forthcoming Review, we again recommend that the Government appoint an independent chair alongside the director general of the IOPC as a matter of urgency.* (Paragraph 67)

Government Response

41. The Government's response to HASC's report in April 2022 noted that the independent IOPC review will consider the IOPC's governance structures. As such, we will await the findings of the report and consider any governance recommendations in due course.

Recommendation 17: *We recommend the Home Office requires forces to record data on all protected characteristics of complainants with the aim of achieving a greater understanding of who is making complaints, the outcomes of those complaints, and the extent to which there is disproportionality. Professional Standards Departments should analyse the data and adopt a "reform or explain" approach. To ensure transparency and scrutiny, this data should be submitted to the Independent Office for Police Conduct and made publicly available in a clear and accessible way on a regular basis.* (Paragraph 70)

Government Response

42. Responsibility for collecting and publishing data on complainants sits with the IOPC.

43. The policing sector recognises the importance of recording data regarding protected characteristics of complaints and possible areas of disproportionality. Data on the protected characteristics of complainants, including ethnicity, is published by the IOPC as part of its annual statistics publication. The IOPC also produces quarterly bulletins for all police forces.

Recommendation 18: *We repeat the recommendation from our previous report on police conduct and complaints that Government monitor and review bi-annually how effectively local policing bodies are holding their chief constables accountable for implementing IOPC recommendations and report the outcomes to us.* (Paragraph 73)

Government Response

44. The IOPC already publish their recommendations and forces (or local policing bodies or others to whom recommendations are made) are required by law to publish their responses and actions taken in response. Local policing bodies, such as PCCs or those exercising PCC functions are already required to hold their local forces to account and operate independently of the government.

Recommendation 19: *We support HMICFRS's call for the Home Secretary to review the limitations of its remit and powers and establish whether legislative change is needed. We believe the Chief Inspector of Constabulary should have powers to give directions where a force's identified failings pose a significant risk to public safety. This should include—in certain circumstances—power to direct the National Police Chiefs' Council's and*

the College of Policing's support for the force. We recommend formal arrangements for high-performing forces to "buddy" struggling ones are put in place within 12 months. (Paragraph 78)

Government Response

45. This recommendation aligns with the recommendations made in HMCI Cooke's State of Policing Report, published on 6 June.

46. There is currently no legislative vehicle through which to legislate for increased powers for HMICFRS, and any changes to legislation would need extensive consultation due to divergent views within the sector. Therefore, the previous Home Secretary asked policing leaders to come together and agree a way forward to address the issues raised in HMCI Cooke's report. Policing Leaders met in September to discuss the recommendations, and there was no agreement that HMICFRS needed expanded powers to direct the NPCC, College or police forces.

47. Given the varied reasons a force may enter 'Engage', the support required to improve is not necessarily one size fits all. The College of Policing's Home Office-funded Evidence-based Performance Improvement Programme gathers good practice from well performing forces and ensures this is shared.

48. We are still considering HMCI Cooke's recommendations and will respond in due course.

Recommendation 20: HMICFRS states that, while it regularly makes recommendations to organisations other than police forces to improve public safety, only Police and Crime Commissioners are required to respond to its reports. We support HMICFRS's call for further "additional departments and agencies" to be required to respond to its reports. This could include the Crown Prosecution Service and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales, for example. We recommend a statutory requirement be put in place for the Home Office to respond to recommendations made by HMICFRS in its thematic reports within the life of the current Parliament. (Paragraph 79)

Government Response

49. This recommendation aligns with the recommendations made in HMCI Cooke's State of Policing Report, published on 6 June.

50. There is currently no legislative vehicle through which to legislate for increased powers for HMICFRS, and any changes to legislation would need extensive consultation due to divergent views within the sector. Therefore, the previous Home Secretary asked policing leaders to come together and agree a way forward to address the issues raised in HMCI Cooke's report.

51. The sector met in September and agreed that the policing system would benefit if the inspectors of constabulary had expanded reach. Policing sector organisations have since committed to responding to recommendations.

52. We are still considering HMCI Cooke's recommendations and will respond in due course.

Recommendation 21: *We recommend that the NPCC, College of Policing, Home Office and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners formally consider whether a professional “duty of candour” might drive greater transparency in policing. We consider that, while this would not be enough on its own to drive the culture change needed, it would help set the direction of travel towards a presumption of openness.* (Paragraph 82)

53. As part of the Criminal Justice Bill we are introducing an organisational duty of candour for policing. This legislation will ensure that Chief Constables have a duty to ensure candour within the forces they lead. This legislation will give the Code of Practice for Ethical Policing the necessary prominence for policing and will require important tenets, such as candour, to be included. We expect Chief Constables will be monitored by HMICFRS and PCCs in how they adhere to the duties outlined in the Code of Practice. The new Code of Practice was published on 6 December.

54. As part of the major integrity reforms in 2020, the Home Office also introduced a duty of cooperation for police officers. This is included in the amended Standards of Professional Behaviour in the Police (Conduct) Regulations introduced in February 2020. All police officers now have an individual responsibility to give appropriate cooperation during investigations, inquiries and formal proceedings, participating openly and professionally in line with the expectations of a police officer when identified as a witness. A failure to cooperate is a breach of the statutory standards of professional behaviour, by which all officers must abide, and could therefore result in disciplinary sanctions.

Recommendation 22: *We recommend the College of Policing and individual forces maximise efforts to make neighbourhood policing a recognised specialism. Initial and on-going training for all public-facing personnel should incorporate communication, de-escalation and engagement skills.* (Paragraph 88)

Government Response

55. The College of Policing published its Neighbourhood Policing guidelines in 2018. The guidelines provide support and practical material across forces to optimise approaches to neighbourhood policing, including how to develop police officers, staff and volunteers in this capacity. The government will continue to work closely with the College of Policing and NPCC to ensure neighbourhood policing is a priority for all forces.

Recommendation 23: *We are concerned at the duration of the investigation following the supercomplaint on section 60 searches. We welcome the Home Office’s recent commitment to better communication around section 60 searches, along with moves to support more consistent local scrutiny. We strongly support His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service’s recent recommendation for further primary research to quantify the deterrent value of stop and search and the causes of disproportionality in its use. This research should examine the impact on trust and confidence that stop and search has so that officers can make evidence-based decisions on how best to deploy it.* (Paragraph 98)

Government Response

56. The investigation into the supercomplaint on section 60 stop and search is a matter for HMICFRS, together with the IOPC and College of Policing. The Home Office welcomes

the report on the supercomplaint, which was published on 15 December. The report makes a number of recommendations for the Home Office, to which the department will respond shortly.

57. Action on HMICRS's recommendation regarding further research to quantify the deterrent value of stop and search and the causes of disproportionality in its use is for the NPCC and College of Policing.

58. To help improve public trust and confidence in policing, the Government has consulted publicly on a draft Community Scrutiny Framework which aims to set out principles to enable the effective scrutiny police use of powers, including stop and search. Responses to the consultation are under consideration, in preparation for publication of the Framework in the new year.

Recommendation 24: *When commissioning victim services, Police and Crime Commissioners should be mindful that not all victims will want to report crime or have trust and confidence in the police. By and for services may provide a more tailored approach and ensure that all victims and survivors have equitable access to crucial support.* (Paragraph 103)

Government Response

59. Under the victim's code, the right to be referred to victims' support services (Right 4) apply to all victims, regardless of whether they have reported the crime to the police. PCCs are responsible for commissioning dedicated local victim support services which the public can access to help them recover if they become a victim of a crime. Ministry of Justice provides grant funding to PCCs to enable them to do this, and the grant agreement states that victim services must be available whether or not a crime has been reported to the police.

60. Additionally, in the Ministry of Justice's Victim's Funding Strategy (VFS - May 2022), it was recognised that access to support, including the ability for different victim groups to access the same level of service can be a challenge. This can be particularly difficult for those with protected characteristics, those in prison settings, and those who are more likely to access 'by and for' services'. The VFS sets out 5 national commissioning standards, one of which is 'Victims receive equitable access to services'. To meet the standard, commissioners will: "Ensure funding stream applications are accessible, particularly to smaller or 'by and for' organisations".

Recommendation 25: *The National Race Action Plan contains admirable aspirations. Stakeholders need to ensure they are realised speedily. We recommend the NPCC commit to a clear timeframe for the next iteration of the plan and adopt an "accept or explain" response to ISOB's recommendations.* (Paragraph 110)

Government Response

61. The Police Race Action Plan is led by the NPCC and College of Policing, with contributions by a series of policing and civil society stakeholders. The plan is independent of Government.

Recommendation 26: *We urge the Government to expedite recruitment of a permanent new Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, so that victims and survivors do not face such a long wait without a representative again. We recommend policing proactively publish and interrogate data on outcomes and victim satisfaction to measure the impact of a renewed focus on supporting victims.* (Paragraph 113)

Government Response

62. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the appointment of the Victims' Commissioner. There are a number of existing data sources that provide trends in victim engagement and satisfaction with policing [Crime Survey in England and Wales, force level victim satisfaction surveys and crime outcomes data (14 & 16)]. In lieu of a consistent national data set, the Ministry of Justice will work with forces to encourage the use of a consistent survey questionnaire. In addition, we will consider opportunities to strengthen and drive consistency in the use of ADR444, which requires territorial police forces to conduct Service Improvement Surveys with victims of domestic abuse and stalking.

Recommendation 27: *We repeat our previous recommendation, made in our report on "The investigation and prosecution of rape", that the Government strongly encourage forces without specialist police rape and sexual offence teams to put such teams in place and with sufficient resource, including capacity for ongoing training and development.* (Paragraph 120)

Government Response

63. The deployment of officers is a matter for Chief Constables.

64. As the National Policing Lead for Adult Sexual Offences, Chief Constable Sarah Crew highlighted when she gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, it is important to recognise that there will be different considerations in different force areas.

65. To help drive consistency nationally, we have launched a National Operating Model for the investigation and prosecution of rape. All forces in England and Wales are now implementing this new approach to rape investigations.

66. Further action includes 2,000 police investigators receiving new specialist training in rape and sexual offences by April 2024.

Recommendation 28: *We restate the previous Home Affairs Committee's recommendation from its 2018 report into Domestic Abuse, that "immigration status must not bar victims of abuse from protection and access to justice." We concur with the Women and Equalities Committee's recommendation that the Government "establish an appropriate firewall type mechanism between the police and the Home Office to prevent data sharing for the purposes of enforcing immigration rules against victims of abuse." As that Committee said, any information sharing from the police with Immigration Enforcement on victims should only be in exceptional circumstances for the purposes of assisting in the safeguarding of the individual or acting against their abuser.* (Paragraph 124)

Government Response

67. Following a [Review into data sharing arrangements between police and Immigration Enforcement](#), published in December 2021, it was concluded that a 'firewall' is not an appropriate solution.

68. A firewall would not prevent the perpetrator, or any anonymous third party, informing Immigration Enforcement about the victim's immigration status. Stopping information sharing can impact law enforcement agencies' ability to support victims and remove the perpetrator's ability to control and manipulate victims because of their immigration status.

69. A firewall will not provide migrant victims of crime with assurances that no immigration enforcement action would be taken whilst reported crime was being investigated and whilst they were receiving support to seek to regularise their status. This assurance would be contained within the Migrant Victims Protocol.

70. The NPCC guidance 'Information sharing with the Home Office where a victim or witness of crime is a suspected immigration offender' already sets out under what circumstances police should share information with Immigration Enforcement and specifies that when someone reports a crime, the police must always, first and foremost, treat them as a victim, and that police must never check a database solely to establish a victim's immigration status.

71. The NPCC guidance also sets out that when an individual reports as a victim of crime, the focus should always be to investigate the allegation and put in place reasonable measures to protect the victim from harm. It refers officers to the College of Policing's guidance on initiating support and protection for victims of domestic abuse within the Major Investigations and Public Protection Authorised Professional Practice which guides officers to measures to protect the victim and signpost to local support services.

Recommendation 29: We recommend the Home Office, working together with key partners, set out its vision for the basics that the public nationwide have the right to expect from policing. This may reflect the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, College of Policing and NPCC's Policing Vision 2030, but will also focus on how those objectives may be perceived in the public mind. (Paragraph 132)

Government Response

72. The Home Office and Ministers have been clear on the strategic priorities for policing: to cut crime, improve trust and confidence in policing and deliver justice and high-quality outcomes for victims.

73. The Beating Crime Plan, published in July 2021, set out the strategic approach to cutting homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime; exposing and ending hidden harms such as VAWG, child sexual abuse and modern slavery; and, building capability and capacity to deal with fraud, cyber and online crime. To focus the system on our national crime priorities we have developed directional, national measures for policing to reduce key crime types (the National Crime and Policing Measures). These measures provide collective responsibility to deliver real improvement.

74. The Government welcomes the commitments from the NPCC for the police to attend the scene of all residential burglaries, which came into operation in Spring 2023. In August 2023, following discussions with the NPCC, APCC, College of Policing and HM Chief Inspector, the Home Secretary and Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire announced that police forces across England and Wales had agreed to a national commitment to pursue all leads for all crime types where there is a reasonable chance it could result in catching a perpetrator and solving a crime. Forces have been implementing this commitment which is key to getting the basics right. His Majesty's Inspectorate will use their existing inspections framework to assess whether forces are following the College of Policing's updated guidance and professional practice for Investigations, and we will closely monitor their findings.

75. The Government's Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan, published in March 2023, affirms the Government's commitment to tackling ASB. It is backed by £160m of new funding, the bulk of which will be allocated to police forces in England and Wales to assist them deal with the menace of ASB which can blight communities.

76. The Home Secretary also sets priorities for policing through the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR), which sets out what, in their view, are the national threats at the time the document is issued, and the appropriate national policing capabilities to counter those threats. Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables must have regard for the SPR.

77. The Home Office has taken steps to free up police time to focus on the strategic priorities. This includes simplifying Home Office counting rules and rolling out the RCRP approach to mental health.

Recommendation 30: *Multiple bodies are involved in setting the strategic direction of policing both locally and nationally. However, the Home Office must provide a strong "strategic centre" and take responsibility for providing policing with the resources it needs to succeed. As a first step, the Home Office must urgently review the Police Allocation Formula and update it where necessary, setting out points for future review in advance to facilitate effective planning by PCCs and forces.* (Paragraph 138)

Government Response

78. The Government has provided strong strategic direction of policing nationally, including through the SPR, which PCCs must have regard to, and Beating Crime Plan (see response to rec 29 for more details). It is for PCCs and Chief Constables to decide how best to incorporate the strategic direction into their local plans.

79. The Government is committed to ensuring that the policing system has the powers, resources and tools to confront the complex and evolving crime picture we are grappling with. The government has recognised that the current police funding formula is out of date and no longer accurately reflects demand on policing and is currently undertaking a review in consultation with the policing sector. Although we are working to introduce new funding arrangements as soon as possible, their quality and longevity is our focus.

Recommendation 31: We recommend the Home Office monitor the effect of changes in response to non-crime hate incidents and crime recording more broadly, so that adverse impacts are quickly identified and the effect on public trust and confidence tracked. (Paragraph 141)

Government Response

80. Non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs): Officials are currently undertaking a monitoring exercise to measure the impact of the NCHI code by collecting data from a number of forces to illustrate the difference in the number of NCHIs recorded before and after the code entered into effect. The data will be ready for review in the new year.

81. Crime recording more broadly: Officials have identified relevant data sources and have developed in depth analytical methodology to support understanding the impact of changes made to crime recording rules as part of Phase 1 of the ongoing review. This will be carried out by December 14th, 2023, and repeated March 2024. Comparison will be against data which predates Phase 1 changes and then December 2023 compared to March 2024.

Recommendation 32: We support the commitment in the Government's Fraud Strategy to "make the tech sector commit to protect their customers through legislation and voluntary commitments" and "help banks slow down suspicious payments." We urge the Home Office to deliver on those commitments as soon as possible. For example, a new online fraud charter was to be delivered by the end of Summer 2023. We expect to see this by the end of 2023 at the latest. (Paragraph 151)

Government Response

82. The Online Fraud Charter was published on 30 November 2023. The Charter is split into several areas of detailed commitments. It includes actions focused on:

- a) Blocking frauds from occurring in the first place.
- b) Improved reporting structures and faster takedowns of harmful content and users.
- c) Making sure advertisers are who they say they are.
- d) Greater collaboration with law enforcement and other partners to drive further intelligence sharing, transparency, public communications and horizon scanning.

83. In practice, this means a greater degree of filtering out and removing of fraudulent content, heightened verification for users using a range of services from dating apps and marketplaces to potential advertisers and raised awareness and education for users. It will ensure that signatory companies make fraud easier to report online. When content or users are found to be fraudulent, immediate and decisive enforcement action will be taken.

84. The Government is also working with the Insurance Sector to deliver an Insurance Charter by Spring 2024 which will focus on reducing insurance fraud.

85. We are also delivering through existing sector charters with the retail banking and telecommunications sectors.

Recommendation 33: *The Right Care Right Person model appears to have been successful in reducing demand on police in Humberside. We recommend that, as it is adopted across the country, the Home Office carefully evaluate the impact of its adoption on both policing time and overall performance, publishing its first findings a year on from the adoption of the National Partnership Agreement.* (Paragraph 162)

Government Response

86. The Home Office is working closely with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on a joint evaluation of RCRP, including both the impacts on police time and the implementation of RCRP from a health and social care perspective. Findings will feed into an implementation evaluation report due to be completed in Spring 2024, which we intend to publish.

Recommendation 34: *We recommend the Home Office also work with the Department of Health and Social Care to evaluate the impact of RCRP on wider outcomes, for example, for those in mental health crisis who might previously have been dealt with by the police and be prepared to take remedial action where necessary to support other service providers. This evaluation should include any impact on the workload, wellbeing and safety of policing colleagues as well as partners in health and social care.* (Paragraph 163)

Government Response

87. The Home Office is working closely with DHSC on a joint evaluation of RCRP, including both the impacts on police time and the implementation of RCRP from a health and social care perspective. Findings will feed into an implementation evaluation report due to be completed in Spring 2024, which we intend to publish.

Recommendation 35: *If Right Care Right Person is to succeed as a national approach, it is crucial that those frontline health and care services who will be expected to step up receive the resources they need to do so. As Government makes funding settlements across these services, it must ensure that those resources are in place.* (Paragraph 164)

Government Response

88. As the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy has set out in correspondence with the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, although there is not currently any additional funding specifically allocated to deliver RCRP, NHS England will be working closely with DHSC to refine existing national resource estimates, based on intelligence from local systems as they develop their plans for implementation. DHSC will use this intelligence to potentially inform any fiscal events next year.

89. It is worth stating that this Government has already put record levels of investment into mental health. The NHS Long Term Plan commits an additional £2.3 billion a year for the expansion and transformation of mental health services in England by March 2024 so

that an additional two million people can get the NHS-funded mental health support that they need. We are delivering £150 million capital funding for mental health urgent and emergency care. This includes funding for over 160 schemes which will provide new and improved spaces for people in mental health crisis, which in turn are expected to improve patient experience and outcomes, reduce the likelihood of inpatient admission being required and help reduce pressure on A&E departments and ambulance services. Many of these schemes will be completed by the end of 2023/24, and include new or improved crisis cafes, crisis houses and other alternatives to A&E for people nearing or experiencing mental health crisis. They also include spaces in or adjacent to A&E for people who do need hospital admission, crisis assessment and liaison centres and health-based places of safety for people detained by the police.

90. There of course remain challenges in responding to mental health needs as demand for crisis mental health services has increased by one third since before the pandemic and doubled since 2017, but the above measures will help towards easing the pressure on mental health crisis services and contribute to a reduction in police time spent responding to mental health-related incidents.

Recommendation 36: *We recommend the Government set out in its response to this report its vision for policing's role in crime prevention.* (Paragraph 168)

Government Response

91. The evidence tells us that the police do have a role in crime prevention. For example, hotspot policing, when deployed effectively, helps prevent crime. The Government also recognises that policing alone cannot prevent all crimes from taking place, other agencies also have a role to play.

92. Since 2019, the Home Office has provided over £160m to fund our local network of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs), which tackle the drivers of violent crime, and provided over £165m to boost visible police patrols in serious violence hotspots; with a further £55m invested in VRUs and £30m in hotspot policing in 23/24 alone. Evaluation of VRUs impact reflects both VRU and GRIP preventative work. The latest published findings show that since funding began, from April 2019 to December 2021, an estimated 136,000 violence without injury offences had been prevented. Based on these offences avoided, a return on investment of £4.10 for every £1 of SV funding was estimated.

93. As part of our response to exploitation, we have invested £3.9m since 2019 in the Prevention Programme. The programme is delivered by the Children's Society working with a range of partners, across sectors to tackle and prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation, child criminal and financial exploitation and modern slavery and human trafficking on a regional and national basis. Since the programme began it has reached over 56,000 people.

94. In 2021 the Government published the Beating Crime Plan, focusing on how we cut crime, reduce the number of victims and make our country safe. The Plan combines deterrence and enforcement with prevention. It is encouraging to see that, as set out in paragraph 4, overall crime levels have fallen by 10% in the year to June 2023.

Recommendation 37: *Police and Crime Commissioners should hold forces to account on efforts to recruit, retain and progress a broadly representative workforce across all ranks.* (Paragraph 174)

Government Response

95. PCCs have existing statutory responsibilities for setting the policing and crime objectives for their area, and for holding the Chief Constable to account for running the force.

Recommendation 38: *Senior officers should actively support staff organisations representing groups and consider the full range of tools at their disposal to ensure that forces reflect the community they serve.* (Paragraph 175)

Government Response

96. NPCC have agreed a consistent approach to the national staff support associations. They are currently conducting a review of diversity staff support networks in policing to assess consistency of governance arrangements and how forces use them.

Recommendation 39: *We recommend the Home Office complete implementation of the Police Covenant within six months.* (Paragraph 179)

Government Response

97. Following being laid down in law by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Police Covenant has been delivering on the priorities agreed by the ministerial chaired Police Covenant Oversight Board. This includes the appointment of a Chief Medical Officer for Policing, the creation of toolkits for families, leavers and the bereaved, and implementation of pre-deployment mental health training for officers. The Covenant provides an ongoing process, with updates on progress set out in the Annual Report. The next report is due to be published in March 2024.

Recommendation 40: *We recommend the Home Office work with partners to create a mechanism to collect data on staff and officer views on police culture, wellbeing and morale. This would, for example, provide an annual picture on confidence to whistle blow on unacceptable behaviour.* (Paragraph 180)

Government Response

98. Forces already carry out their own surveys in relation to wellbeing and inclusion and have measures in place to allow police officers and staff to come forward to report wrongdoing by colleagues in confidence if necessary.

99. These issues have also formed part of specific HMICFRS inspections in the past: their 2022 inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service looked at vetting and re-vetting arrangements for transferees, whistleblowing arrangements, the work of counter-corruption units and, where relevant, wider Professional Standards Departments.

100. As a part of HMICFRS' Police Efficiency Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) Reports, forces are graded from 'Outstanding' to 'Inadequate' on how good they are at building, developing and looking after its workforce and encouraging an ethical, lawful and inclusive workplace. Their 2023–25 PEEL assessment framework also examines whether forces understand the main factors influencing workforce wellbeing and take actions to address them; whether it promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and helps supervisors to foster an ethical and inclusive working environment; and whether officers and staff from under-represented groups have opportunities for development and progression (where appropriate).

101. HMICFRS regularly publishes rolling reports on counter-corruption and vetting for each force, giving a graded assessment. They will soon similarly inspect forces' professional standards departments alongside this and provide a graded assessment.

102. HMICFRS' inspection reports are published on their website and provide a regular examination and assessment of individual forces' ability to foster a positive culture.

103. The Home Office has also completed annual onboarding surveys (OBS) for newly recruited officers as part of the Police Uplift Programme. The OBS provides insights into the views and experiences of newly recruited officers on wellbeing and morale, training and support.

Recommendation 41: *We recommend the Home Office set out a workforce plan and strategy for policing over the next ten years as a matter of urgency. The plan should address officer and staff numbers and skills. Particular attention should be placed on recognised areas of shortage. The plan should be subject to periodic review and impact analysis, with the first of these completed and published by 31 December 2024.* (Paragraph 190)

Government Response

104. Following successful delivery of the Police Uplift Programme, the Government has continued to work with forces to support the commitment to maintain officer numbers at Uplift levels. It is important that each police force has an effective workforce plan in place, to meet current and future needs. The Home Office continues to work closely with policing partners nationally as they seek to build on the success of the Uplift in developing longer term workforce plans.

Recommendation 42: *We recommend the Home Office, working collaboratively with forces and the NCA, create a sustainable pipeline of fraud specialists, with fair pay scales that will encourage retention.* (Paragraph 192)

Government Response

105. We are working with City of London Police, the national lead force for fraud, and the NCA's National Economic Crime Centre to develop a "People Strategy" for Economic Crime. This will address recruitment and retention challenges for Economic Crime, including fraud. This will also consider opportunities to exchange people and counter-fraud skills across the public and private sectors.

106. We are also working with College of Policing to review the fundamental training offered to police officers relevant for fraud, including digital skills, so we can identify opportunities for improvement.

107. We are setting up a new National Fraud Squad dedicated to pursuing the most sophisticated and harmful fraudsters, with over 400 new specialist investigators, and have made tackling fraud a priority for police forces in England and Wales.

Recommendation 43: *We recommend the Home Office empower the College of Policing to mandate learning curricula and essential Continuous Professional Development. This could lead to development of a Licence to Practise as part of the wider Fitness to Practise model we have discussed.* (Paragraph 196)

Government Response

108. The College of Policing already has the power to mandate qualifications for the appointment and promotion of police officers and probation periods. The College of Policing's foundation training for all those entering the service includes substantial coverage of police ethics and self-understanding. All entrants to the service will cover the College's national policing curriculum. The delivery of training in each police force is the responsibility of individual chief officers, according to policing needs and priorities, which may include specific community needs. HMICFRS inspect forces against standards set by the College of Policing.

Recommendation 44: *Policing must continue its investment in leadership, especially at sergeant level. These training elements should be embedded within the workforce plan we have recommended.* (Paragraph 198)

Government Response

109. We continue to support the College in its work to improve leadership at all levels in policing, including the College's new programmes for front line supervisors and tutor constables to support new officers. The forthcoming reforms to promotions and progression will help embed the new leadership standards, beginning at the front line.

110. It is clear that such an unprecedented surge in recruitment introduces a high number of new officers into policing. These new officers are welcome and are critical to supporting communities, tackling crime and building trust. They must be fully supported to fulfil their potential. The Police Uplift Programme worked with forces to ensure there was, and continues to be, sufficient tutor and assessor capacity so new officers get the training and support they need to thrive.

Recommendation 45: *The Home Office should take care that its determination to keep a non-degree route open into policing is not in conflict with attempts to build the profile of policing as a highly skilled profession, and does not create more inconsistency with the recruitment, competency requirements and training of other entry routes. We recommend the Home Office investigate further the impact of making a degree a mandatory requirement first on police officers' recruitment and retention and, secondly, on the potential impact on policing's reputation. We also recommend that the Home*

Office keep under review the wider impacts of its decision to retain a non-degree entry route. We recommend all three of these elements of research and analysis be commenced within the next three months. (Paragraph 202)

Government Response

111. The new non-degree entry route into policing (Police Constable Entry Programme) is due to launch to new recruits in April 2024. Whilst the PCEP route will not result in a formal level 6 qualification, officers who join via this route will be judged as to whether they are competently operating a year after their time on the programme.

112. All policing entry routes are based on the same national policing curriculum ensuring all entrants into policing cover the same content. The College will continue to monitor the effectiveness of all entry routes to make sure they are optimised for candidates and forces.

Recommendation 46: Now that DG6 has been in place for almost three years, we recommend the CPS review its implementation and impact, consulting stakeholders before proposing changes that will better reflect an appropriate balance between the need for effective early investigation and proportionality in resource consumption. We understand that there is already “work ongoing” in this area, and that the piece of work we recommend here may now come under the auspices of the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences. (Paragraph 213)

Government Response

113. The Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences commenced on 12 October. The terms of reference state that the Review will assess the operation of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 and the Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure. The Review will consider legislative and non-legislative modifications that could improve the regime.

114. The Chair of Review will meet with a range of interested parties, including the CPS, to examine the application of the regime and all relevant underpinning processes.

Recommendation 47: We urge the Home Office to accelerate the timetable for the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences. (Paragraph 214)

Government Response

115. Part one of the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences, which is looking specifically at the operation of the disclosure regime for all crime type, is expected to report back in Summer 2024.

116. Effective disclosure is critical to a fair trial and supports public confidence in the administration of justice, therefore, full and thorough consideration is required.

Recommendation 48: We recommend the CPS and NPCC review the process for police obtaining early advice from prosecutors before full case files are prepared or submitted and charging decisions made. Where possible, we recommend this work draw on local examples of existing good practice. (Paragraph 215)

Government Response

117. We are working with the NPCC to design a CJ Unit Optimum model focused on improving case progression and communication with the CPS. This will include consideration of EIA, and good practice across forces. It will also give consideration to the Soteria model but for all crime.

Recommendation 49: *We recommend the Home Office expedite, with urgency, its work with the Attorney General's Office and CPS to identify potential solutions to the lengthy and resource intensive redaction process in case file preparation. This should include piloting a "redaction bubble", consideration of any necessary changes to data protection regulations and consultation with HMICFRS on harnessing existing good practice. Forces with the poorest digital capabilities should be prioritised for the pilots and outcomes formally evaluated. We expect initial piloting to be completed within 12 months.* (Paragraph 220)

Government Response

118. The Home Office is leading a Redaction Working Group, which brings together officials from HO, MoJ, AGO, CPS and policing representatives to explore solutions to the redaction burden. The Group has developed simplified guidance to boost officers' confidence when applying DPA.

119. We are also providing funding to the PDS and Home Office ACE to develop, test and procure on a new framework automated redaction products, which will reduce the time it takes to redact text and audiovisual files.

120. Further, we are working to set up a pilot of a revised process that will streamline and reduce the redaction burden, within current legislation. We are also exploring legislative options for a redaction 'bubble'.

Recommendation 50: *We second HMICFRS' recommendation that the Home Office lead a review of the digital forensics budget and identify where need is greatest. The review should encompass future funding needs at both force level and centrally. It should provide a basis for a national strategy to bring the service into the 21st century in terms of digital forensics. We recommend the Home Office launch and commence implementation of the national strategy within 12 months.* (Paragraph 221)

Government Response

121. In September 2022, the Home Office, working with the NPCC, launched a project to quantify the challenges in digital forensics delivery and build an evidence base for future decision-making on change. This successfully collected and analysed data across police forces nationally, supporting our work to address the recommendations made by HMICFRS.

122. We looked at digital forensics budgets in forces and the national picture as part of this data collection. We are now considering issues including governance and approaches to budgets and investment as part of our work to develop options to reform digital forensics, in response to HMICFRS's recommendation that Home Office work with NPCC, the College of Policing, and the private sector to design an alternative operating model.

Recommendation 51: *We recommend the Home Office work, in collaboration with the NPCC, to put more incentives in place for alternative disposals to charging and prosecuting individuals in court, where they have been proved effective and better fit with victims' needs and wants. If alternative disposals can speed up the delivery of the justice to which victims and survivors are entitled, while reducing court backlogs, everyone benefits.* (Paragraph 226)

Government Response

123. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced reforms by simplifying the current framework on Out of Court Disposals (OoCD). The changes are intended to provide much more consistency to the Police, victims and offenders.

124. The new framework reduces the number of adult out of court disposals from six to two, comprising of an upper tier disposal titled 'Diversionary Caution' and a lower tier disposal titled 'Community Caution'.

125. As the new framework is yet to go live across all forces in England & Wales, it is too early to predict if this will help to speed up justice and reduce court backlogs.