

Response from the Police & Crime Commissioner of Devon and Cornwall to Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report

In 2024 I took the decision to run my own scrutiny inquiry which examined file quality and timeliness, case management and the service to victims in Devon and Cornwall. This decision was heavily informed by the interim findings of the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection report published in January 2024, alongside the Policing Productivity Review and intelligence collected by my own office, and by myself as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). The findings of this work [are published on my website](#).

This final report highlights just how important the relationship between police forces and the CPS is in ensuring that justice is served and that appropriate outcomes are achieved for victims. As LCJB Chair I have worked with force leaders and the CPS to significantly improve and strengthen these relationships locally, and ensure that we are working collaboratively towards the joint goal of achieving justice.

Ensuring that those involved in case building have appropriate training, capacity and access to technology to ensure that case files are of sufficient quality before they are submitted to the CPS, is equally important. In Devon and Cornwall the creation of a centralised team of Evidential Review Officers has improved the compliance of files being submitted to the CPS dramatically.

I am pleased that the force is now also making use of a Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) which ensures that digital evidence for each case is all held in one place, including provision for the public to upload evidence directly.

There is however still more work to do in this area. It is vital that the force's leadership remain focussed on continually improving file quality, which includes ensuring that file building training has the required impact on the quality of files produced by officers at the first stage.

The force's 2023-25 PEEL assessment highlighted significant improvements that were required around the way the force investigates crime. Crime investigation standards have been a persistent problem for Devon and Cornwall Police for a number of years, and as such continue to be an area of significant focus for the force. The quality of case files submitted to the CPS is integral to the force's ability to secure justice for victims at the conclusion of an investigation. I am assured that the Chief Constable and his team are working hard and pushing for continuous improvement across these areas, and I expect to see further improvements over the coming months. However I will continue to closely monitor progress of both investigation standards and the quality of files, and hold the Chief Constable to account on the force's performance in these areas.

Chief Constable's comments

I fully acknowledge the findings of the inspection, which rightly highlight the excellent work being carried out across the force. At the same time, I recognise and accept the areas identified for improvement and appreciate the constructive feedback provided.

Within Devon and Cornwall Police, there exists a clearly articulated and robust framework of structures, responsibilities, and ownership that underpins our commitment to continuous improvement. The standards relating to crime reporting, allocation, management, and investigation are central to the integrity of our service to the public and remain a strategic priority for this organisation.

We fully recognise the critical importance of fostering and enhancing collaborative working practices across all areas of our investigative functions, by actively sharing knowledge, experience and specialist skills, we aim to create a culture of excellence and learning that supports the delivery of high- quality investigations.

Furthermore we remain absolutely committed to strengthening our joint approach with the Crown Prosecution Service. This partnership is essential to ensuring the consistent submission of high-quality case files and maintaining open, effective lines of communication. Such collaborations are fundamental to improving investigative and prosecutorial standards across the criminal justice system.

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.

Action planned/taken: The forces Crime Reporting, Allocation, Management and Investigation Standards policy outlines the standards and expectations of investigation and supervision of crime in Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP). It also outlines the frequency of supervisory reviews (every 28 days). All Inspectors complete monthly audits of crime and performance of this and all crime related matters are governed through Investigative Quality Assurance Board, Crime and Vulnerability Governance Board and Force Performance Board.

Police and CPS now have a shared Microsoft Teams channel, monthly 1:1's between the Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor and Criminal Justice Commander, and effective Strategic, Operational, and RASSO Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (JOIM) structures. The Domestic abuse (DA) Improvement Plan is managed through Operational JOIM and the File Quality Silver group is the joint CPS and Police forum for management of the joint improvement plan.

DCP have introduced a centralised team of Evidential Review Officers (ERO's) for PIP1 offences and clear guidance for RASSO and PIP2 investigators based on the PIP1 principles. This approach to file quality management has seen Director Guidance Compliance score rise from 40% to 71% in the last 12 months with 75% predicted for July 2025.

Case file submission and finalisation queues are managed by the Criminal Justice Chief Inspector and their team, reported into the CJ Commander on a weekly basis and monitored through Assistant Chief Constable led Crime and Vulnerability Governance Board.

Statutory time limits (STL's) are managed through the ERO hub meaning early intervention to ensure deadlines are met. This has seen significant improvement in timeliness and submission to CPS.

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

Action planned/taken: All supervisors in Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP) were mandated for attendance at the National File Standards 1 (NSF1) and National File Standards 2 (NSF2) training sessions which have now been completed. These full day courses were led jointly by DCP and CPS with specialists utilised to improve depth of learning.

Supporting this, DCP have introduced the MyCJ app which is an interactive file build support tool, and a Criminal Justice helpline which provides face to face support to investigators and supervisors.

One-page guides have been produced in areas recognised as being most impactful then supported by 5-minute videos adding depth and context. This has included statements, exhibits, Multimedia, disclosure and victims.

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.

Action planned/taken: The Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIM) structures have been refreshed aligning to the national guidance and are now proving effective as joint management and governance of all file quality matters, including training. The NFS1 and NFS2 training for police included inputs from CPS, who are also aiding in delivery of Disclosure training packages.

Mandatory Disclosure training modules have been implemented with CPS oversight and a full disclosure improvement plan progressed in consultation with CPS.

The force have recently implemented a NICE DEMS system and Digital Case File anticipated for launch 2026/27 with training and familiarisation of these systems shared across both organisations.