

Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: Final Report. Response from Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.

Published on 10th July 2025, 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 into how prosecution cases are built by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Phase 1, completed in early 2024, produced interim findings that identified several high-level themes adversely affecting the relationship between the CPS and the police. Phase 2 expanded the scope, examining four additional CPS areas and eight police forces.

A key concern emerging from the inspection remains the effectiveness of communication between the police and the CPS. Misaligned priorities, overly bureaucratic systems, and the absence of shared performance metrics were consistently identified as significant barriers to improved collaboration.

West Midlands Police (WMP) have three recommendations to consider from the report, focusing on governance and gatekeeping processes and strengthening joint operational meetings to ensure better collaboration between Criminal Justice Agencies, as well as enhancing training provisions. These areas are critical to supporting effective policing and ensuring that the police force operates with efficiency and consistency when dealing with cases progressing to the CPS.

A key theme evident throughout the recommendations is levelling up knowledge across WMP, to ensure that staff across all levels are equipped with the skills and understanding needed to work resourcefully with the CPS and in turn, make sure maximum cases are processed to prosecution.

'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'**

This recommendation highlights the importance of governance procedures, communication and the training of colleagues across the criminal justice system, and how this ensures effective and efficient joint case building. Ensuring investigations are timely, sits within the WMP's broader improvement of investigations plan. The Force is therefore, continuously working to improve investigative standards.

Gatekeeping is important, as it provides a second level of quality assurance for case files, to ensure that they meet requirements, before they are referred to the CPS for a charging decision. Positively, I note that WMP already has a gatekeeping process in place, to ensure investigation files are completed to the appropriate standards. However, in the future, WMP aims to further increase the quality of gatekeeping approaches.

In terms of contact arrangements between the police and CPS, both police officers and lawyers are expected to provide their contact details on all communications, in order to facilitate prompt and effective discussion, as well as providing transparency on which personnel is dealing with cases. Furthermore, WMP utilises Microsoft Teams, to enable lawyers and police officers to contact each other directly, further driving efficiency, by cutting email response wait times. Looking ahead, WMP are currently in the planning phase of the implementation of dedicated Teams channel, to enable real time conversation with the CPS.

Furthermore, there is a wide range of training tools available for police personnel, which aim to upskill and improve police case file building. For example, WMP Case Progression Officers attend the Professionalising Investigations Programme Level 1 (PIP1) training course, to increase their knowledge and skills with regard to investigation processes, to further enhance their understanding and ability to make informed decisions, for preparing and submitting investigative outcome reports and case file building.

In the report, the inspectorate was concerned to see that reworked cases were going to the back of the gatekeepers' file queues. WMP currently use a worksheet, to track the management of cases received by the gatekeeping function and monitor timeliness. However, the Force acknowledges that the worksheet system needs developing and modernising, in order to fully capture case readiness and progression, prior to being submitted to gatekeeping.

'Within 12 months of completing recommendation 6, every supervisor responsible for assessing case files before referral to the CPS for a charging decision is fully trained in case file building and the Director's Guidance on Charging. This training must support effective quality assurance and ensure consistency and compliance in the case file review process'

This recommendation stems from the report, finding that case building training varied between police forces and was often inadequate. WMP already ensure that all supervisors are trained in case file building and Director's Guidance on Charging (DG6) quality assurance. As a result of the inspection, the inspectorate recommended for the College of Policing to develop a national supervisors' training course and assessment on case file building. I understand that WMP fully support this approach, therefore, when the training is published, supervisors will complete the course described.

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

The report findings recognise the importance of collaboration between criminal justice agencies and put forward the training opportunity, to break down barriers between agencies and promote greater understanding of respective roles. Currently, WMP do not have a training plan in place with the CPS and JOIM. However, it is considered that the formulation of a plan can be achieved within the required timeframe by JOIM.

Recently, training and support sessions have been implemented, to enable collaboration between the Criminal Justice department and the CPS. They include training on disclosure, DG6, File Quality, Forensic Submissions, Digital Forensics and the National Referral Mechanism process, to level-up knowledge and ensure workforce excellence.

In conclusion, I welcome the recommendations put forward by HMICFRS. Implementing the outlined recommendations successfully, will improve Joint Case Building by the Police and Crown Prosecution Service across the West Midlands. The relationship between WMP and the CPS, is a building block for an efficient and effective criminal justice system. It is therefore important, to maintain and build upon these relationships, through collaboration and joint-working opportunities.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner