

‘Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service: final report’
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Avon & Somerset PCC response dated 4 September 2025

A primary role of policing is to bring offenders to justice. To do this successfully the police need to conduct effective investigations that are perpetrator focused, and prepare high quality files to support successful conviction. The police are the start of the criminal justice process and their work is essential to secure justice both for victims of crime and for society more broadly.

The Constabulary have already made improvements in their case building, and have done this by working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which you will see in response to the recommendations below. I welcome the recommendations from this report which relate to both local and national policing and criminal justice agencies. A whole system approach is essential to improving the service to the public.

It should be noted that I have a legal duty to respond to inspection reports within eight weeks of their publication. However, the Constabulary have longer to address these recommendations. Below I set out the recommendations applicable to Chief Constables and the initial response to each of these.

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 standard
- 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.

Response

The Constabulary already have a focus on their investigative standards as a result of the Areas For Improvement highlighted in their most recent PEEL (Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) Report. This work is overseen at the strategic level by the Investigative Standards Committee, chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable. An operational group, chaired by the Superintendent responsible for Criminal Justice reports into this committee. Crime outcomes are one of the Constabulary's Key Performance Indicators that are regularly discussed and scrutinised by Directorate Leadership Meetings and the Constabulary Management Board.

For several years the Constabulary have been using digital messaging with the CPS to deal with administrative case file issues. This has improved relationships and understanding, and has helped improve the Constabulary's triage (error) rate, which is now one of the best nationally. Following this success, in the last year the digital messaging platform is being used to support communication between operational supervisors (decision-makers) and the CPS to be able to resolve issues more quickly and efficiently whilst also ensuring more routine dialogue between the investigators and the lawyers.

The Constabulary also work with the CPS through a Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (JOIM) overseen by a Strategic JOIM. This process includes a local joint action plan to improve performance.

The Constabulary are currently running three pilot programmes, looking at different models of 'gatekeeping' files. These different approaches will be evaluated to understand which to implement on a permanent basis.

The Constabulary have Criminal Justice teams that support case file building and submission, working 24/7, to match operational officers and to help minimise delays in cases being progressed.

Supervisors have oversight of the timeliness of all cases their teams are holding through the data visualisation software (Qlik). Automatic reminders are also issued to officers, in order to remind them of statutory time limits on their cases.

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.

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

Response

The national supervisors' training course – on which this recommendation is predicated – has not yet been fully launched. However, the Constabulary are a pilot force set to deliver this proposed training between November 2025 and March 2026. Having been engaged in the pilot, the Constabulary will be well prepared for full implementation when the final product is released by the College of Policing.

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.

Response

The Constabulary already deliver joint training with CPS South West, where appropriate, and have created a number of joint videos to assist officers with various relevant subject matters. The CPS have also provided inputs at various Continuous Professional Development days within the Constabulary.

The Case Building Report will be discussed at the JOIM in September 2025: where any further activity required will be agreed and added to the JOIM action plan.

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