



Ministry
of Justice

The Witness Intermediary Scheme

Annual Report 2024



Ministry of Justice

Witness Intermediary Scheme: Annual Report 2024

(For the year ended 31 December 2024)

Alternative format versions of this report are available on request from
registered.interme@Justice.gov.uk

Foreword from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice, Minister Alex Davies-Jones



2024 was marked by a renewed focus on victims and witnesses in our justice system. The Witness Intermediary Scheme (WIS) is an established part of this focus, enabling vulnerable victims and witnesses to give their best evidence in criminal proceedings.

The MoJ is deeply grateful to the dedicated registered intermediaries (RIs) who enable thousands of vulnerable victims and witnesses to give their best evidence and access justice.

In 2024, the WIS saw demand for RIs grow by nearly 6%, with 9,753 requests from the police, CPS and defence lawyers. To help keep pace with this, we recruited 38 new RIs in the Scheme and made changes to the matching process to make more efficient use of the Witness Intermediary Team who administer the Scheme. Satisfaction remained high, with 99.8% positive feedback from the police and CPS who are the end users of the Scheme.

For 2025, we continue to bring new RIs into the WIS, using targeted recruitment campaigns to bolster high-demand geographic areas and skillsets. Sustained, intelligent recruitment will deliver resilience and sustain service quality.

Following the review of intermediary provision which concluded in 2023, we also continue to promote the work of RIs to criminal justice practitioners to ensure their role is properly understood, so everyone can work together in the interests of vulnerable witnesses.

As we celebrate another year of growth for the Scheme, we take stock of the commitment, work and professionalism of RIs who have managed the challenging circumstances in the criminal justice system in 2024. The MoJ would again like to thank all RIs for their continued work with vulnerable victims and witnesses.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alex Davies-Jones".

Alex Davies-Jones MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice

Contents

Terms and abbreviations	5
Introduction: The Witness Intermediary Scheme in 2024	6
Background	6
Summary of 2024	6
Data sources	7
2024: The year in numbers	8
Part One: Overview of the Witness Intermediary Scheme	9
Ministry of Justice (Criminal Special Measures Policy Team)	9
The Witness Intermediary Team	9
The Witness Intermediary Scheme Governance and Standards Board	9
Part Two: Performance analysis 2024	14
Methodology	14
Summary	14
Cancelled requests	15
Unmatched requests	15
Total requests for RIs	16
Requests by witness vulnerability	18
Requests by age of witness (children/adults)	22
Requests by witness type	24
Requests by end-user	26
End-user feedback	28
Active RI figures	30
Part three: key developments in 2024	31
Continued RI recruitment	31
Updated series of WIS policies	31
Refreshed RI procedural guidance	32

WIS annual conference	32
Initiative to support for newly qualified RIs	32
WIS newsletter	33
Part four: finance of the witness intermediary scheme	34
Administrative budget	34
Annual review of remuneration rates	34
Part five: forward look	35
Increasing WIS capability	35
Communication plan continuation	35
Developing WIS efficiency	35

Terms and abbreviations

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
aRI	Accredited Registered Intermediary
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
End-User	The party that requests the services of a Registered Intermediary, usually the police or CPS
GSB	Governance and Standards Board
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NCA	National Crime Agency
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NQRI	Newly Qualified Registered Intermediary
RfS	Request for Service
RI	Registered Intermediary
RIRT	Registered Intermediary Reference Team
Section 28	Section 28 (s.28) of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (YJCEA) 1999 allows eligible witnesses to pre-record their cross-examination or re-examination before the trial.
SLT	Speech and Language Therapist
WIS	Witness Intermediary Scheme
WIT	Witness Intermediary Team
YJCEA	Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999

Introduction: The Witness Intermediary Scheme in 2024

Background

The Witness Intermediary Scheme (WIS) was first piloted in England and Wales in 2004 to implement the intermediary special measure in the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (YJCEA). The WIS was rolled out nationally in 2008 and established a register of intermediaries recruited and trained by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

The intermediaries trained under the WIS are known as Registered Intermediaries (RIs).

RIs are impartial communication specialists whose role is to facilitate complete, coherent and accurate two-way communication between justice system professionals and vulnerable people with communication needs. Intermediaries aim to improve the quality of evidence and facilitate the vulnerable person's understanding and participation in police procedure and criminal proceedings. Their assistance often makes the difference between a vulnerable person being able to give their evidence and not.

Section 16 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 stipulates that a witness in criminal proceedings is eligible for assistance from an intermediary if:

- they are under the age of 18 at the time of the hearing; or
- the court considers that the quality their evidence is likely to be diminished by:
 - a mental disorder (within the meaning of the 1983 Mental Health Act¹); or
 - a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning; or
 - a physical disability or physical disorder.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the governance, operation and performance of the WIS from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

Summary of 2024

In 2024 the WIS has continued to deliver a high-quality service, with matching rates improving against a backdrop of growing demand for RIs.

In 2024, the MoJ continued to recruit and train RIs, as well as reviewing WIS guidance and policies based on feedback from RI community, ensuring a quality service for vulnerable people. This culminated in an updated version of the [Registered Intermediary Procedural Guidance Manual](#) published in October 2024.

The WIS also made operational improvements, introducing a bulk matching process in July 2024 which enabled RIs to pick from a list of cases placed on an online platform. This

¹ The 1983 Mental Health Act defines 'mental disorder' as 'any disorder or disability of the mind'.

has enabled the Witness Intermediary Team to make more efficient use of its resources and focus on matching the highest priority and most complex cases.

The WIS received a total 9,753 requests for RI assistance in 2024, a 6% increase on the previous year and a 709% increase since 2010. 95.8% of requests for RI assistance were successfully matched, a 6.8% increase on 2023. Cases may be unmatched if the court later agrees to adjourn a hearing or if the request is subsequently cancelled.

Feedback from end-users (i.e. the police or the Crown Prosecution Service) remained overwhelmingly positive, with 99.8% of responses recorded as either 'excellent', 'more than satisfactory' or 'satisfactory'.

Continuing with national recruitment remains a priority and the MoJ funded recruitment campaigns during the year which added 38 new RIs to the WIS Register. Work to build Scheme capacity will continue throughout 2025 with four planned training courses planned.

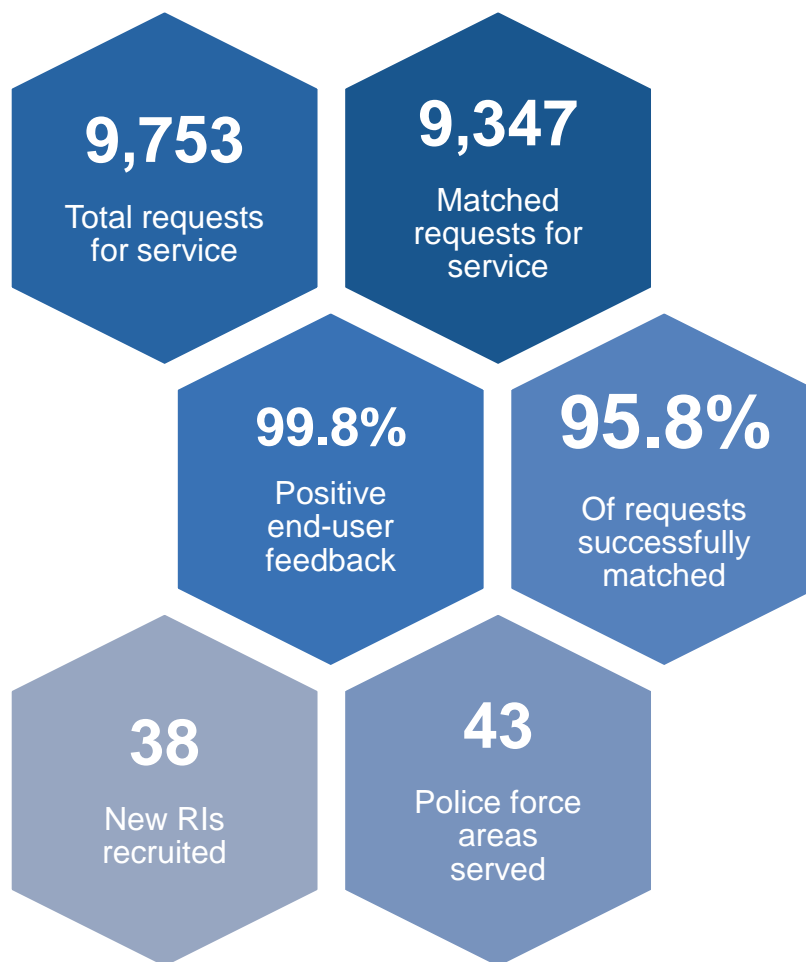
In relation to the WIS community, the MoJ hosted the WIS Annual Conference in early 2024, which was the first to facilitate both online and in-person delegates and provided RIs with continuous professional development (CPD) and networking opportunities. To maintain oversight of the Scheme, the Governance and Standards Board (GSB) met four times in 2024 to provide strategic direction and inform policy revisions.

In 2025, the MoJ anticipates further growth in demand for RI provision. Matching demand through sustained recruitment and training of RIs remains a priority, as well as continuing to promote understanding of the RI role across criminal justice practitioners.

Data sources

All statistics in this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are sourced from the WIT and the MoJ Criminal Special Measures Policy Team.

2024: The year in numbers



Part One: Overview of the Witness Intermediary Scheme

Overall responsibility for the WIS sits within the Ministry of Justice, and includes strategic and policy matters, as well as funding and overseeing its administration. The administration of the Scheme itself is delegated to the National Crime Agency (NCA). Governance is provided via the Governance and Standards Board (GSB).

The Witness Intermediary Team

Since 2013, the NCA's Witness Intermediary Team (WIT) has delivered the operations of the WIS, including use of the Matching Service Database, management of the RI register and the recruitment and registration of RIs.

The WIT is led by the National Vulnerable Witness Adviser, who is regularly involved major crime investigations to assist in the development of interview and witness management strategies in cases that involve particularly vulnerable witnesses.

The key operational element of the WIS is the matching service. This is the mechanism by which the WIT matches RIs to the requirements of witnesses at the request of the service-requester (a police force, the CPS, or solicitor). Through the matching service, the WIT collects data pertaining to RI usage. This includes the number of requests in each regional police force area and the reason(s) for the request (such as type of vulnerability and age of witness). This data is logged on the matching service database and allows the MoJ to monitor emerging changes and trends in demand for RIs.

The Witness Intermediary Scheme Governance and Standards Board (GSB)

The Governance and Standards Board oversees the WIS's performance and strategic direction and aims to ensure high-quality, professional intermediary services are available to victims and witnesses with communication needs. It is responsible for the governance and policy management of the Scheme, as well as the quality assurance, regulation and monitoring of the professional standards of Registered Intermediaries (RIs) working within the WIS.

Members are responsible for representing their organisations on the Board and representing the Board within their organisations to ensure the Scheme continues to meet the needs of those in the criminal justice system.

The objectives of the WIS GSB are to:

- Maintain accountability for the WIS's performance.
- To oversee the supply and recruitment of Registered Intermediaries

- To agree the standards for, and lead on, quality control of recruitment, training, registration and continuing professional development of RIs.
- To maintain the RI register and ensure it is fit for purpose.
- To ensure RIs are supported to act in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics.
- To ensure feedback and complaints are reviewed in accordance with the WIS's feedback and complaints policy.
- To monitor and support development of all aspects of the RI professional role.

The GSB meets quarterly and is comprised of sixteen members. Five of these are independent members who possess professional expertise in governance and quality assurance. The independent members also lead on specific areas of quality assurance, such as CPD, recruitment, or feedback and complaints. An additional seven members are official representatives from the MoJ, NCA, CPS and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT).

GSB: official representatives	
Member	Role
Sally Seaton-Jones	Ministry of Justice / Co-chair of GSB
Tom Henwood	Ministry of Justice
Laura Watts	Crown Prosecution Service
Sonya Baylis / Laura Hynes	National Crime Agency
Genna Telfer / Sally Tidswell	National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
Clare Moser	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Tony Pointer/Sue James	HMCTS
Amy McKay	Citizen's Advice Witness Service representative
Janet Arkinstall	Law Society
Victoria Heron	RI Reference Team
Lindsay Cobain/Rebecca Jackson	Department of Justice Northern Ireland

GSB: independent members (2024)

Member	Profile
Professor Karen Bryan Co-chair of GSB	<p>Professor Karen Bryan is the Vice-Chancellor at York St John University. Prior to that, she was Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Greenwich, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Regional Engagement and Dean of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing at Sheffield Hallam University and held academic positions at the University of Surrey and University College London. In addition, Professor Bryan held posts with the NHS until 2013.</p> <p>Professor Bryan qualified as a speech and language therapist from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, also gaining her PhD there. Her research</p>

	<p>interests are in communication difficulties in young offenders and forensic populations, as well as the impact of communication difficulties on access to healthcare.</p> <p>Professor Bryan is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Neuropsychology at the University of Warsaw, and a Fellow of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. She was also previously a member of the Health Professions Council. She was awarded an OBE for services to higher education in 2018.</p>
<p>Clare Hickey Mentoring, Recruitment and Training Lead</p>	<p>Clare Hickey is a freelance HR Consultant, advising businesses on people strategy, recruitment, training and development, and providing solution focused coaching.</p> <p>Clare combines consultancy work with sitting as a Magistrate in both the Adult and Youth Courts in South Essex. She is also part of the 'Magistrates in the Community' team, visiting schools to deliver workshops on the judiciary and to raise awareness of issues concerning knife crime, cyber bullying and County Lines.</p>
<p>Karen Melvin General Consultant</p>	<p>Karen Melvin is a Speech & Language Therapist who has specialised in working with Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Autism in various NHS Community, Inpatient and forensic settings since 2005. She is a member of a Regional Clinical and Service Leads Group for this population in Northern Ireland and is also a Regional Makaton Tutor. Karen is an experienced Intermediary who works through the Northern Ireland Registered Intermediary Scheme with victims/witnesses and suspects/defendants of all ages who display communication differences.</p> <p>Karen is also a Tutor and content developer for several professional courses on the National Autism Training Programme in conjunction with NHS England and the Anna Freud Centre, London. These include Health & Justice, CAMHS, Community Mental Health and Inpatient Mental Health Services. She has been a visiting lecturer at Ulster University for Undergraduate Speech and Language Therapy students.</p> <p>Karen has personal experience of neurodivergence as the sibling of a learning disabled & Autistic adult and as a parent to an Autistic child who also has ADD. She is passionate about the most vulnerable people within our society having access to the judicial system on a fair and equitable basis with kind and sensitive support. Her particular interests are in the areas of situational mutism, non-speaking individuals and AAC (Augmentative, Alternative Communication).</p>

**Carolyn
McConnell**
Feedback &
Complaints Lead

Carolyn McConnell has worked in social care for more than 25 years, most recently as Chief Quality & Risk Officer for a national charity. A major aspect of this role was setting and monitoring standards of care across more than 500 services. The role also involved managing corporate risk, internal audit, and feedback on service provision.

In the middle of her social care career Carolyn also worked for Merseyside Police Authority before returning to social care. In her role of Deputy Chief Executive, Carolyn was responsible for monitoring the performance of policing, community engagement and professional standards. This experience gives Carolyn a unique perspective into the needs of vulnerable people and the policing environment.

Carolyn has also recently been appointed as Chief Executive of a local charity for people with a learning disability and her passion is ensuring vulnerable people have a voice and are supported to participate in all areas of community.

As lead for negative feedback Carolyn seeks to ensure this aspect of the work of the Board continues to help maintain the high standards of the Registered Intermediaries Scheme.

Benjamin Roe
CPD and RI
Register Lead

Ben Roe is the Lead Knowledge Lawyer for the global disputes and compliance group of a leading international law firm. He has responsibility for the know-how, professional development and training needs of approximately 1400 litigation, arbitration and compliance lawyers across 77 offices.

Ben is an experienced litigation solicitor, and prior to his current role worked in private practice in London. He has managed a number of high-profile cases, often involving cross-border issues. He is well-practised at preparing witnesses for trial and supporting individuals through an often unfamiliar process.

Ben holds higher rights of audience and is a CEDR-accredited mediator. He is an Officer of the International Bar Association's Litigation Committee. Ben is also a member of the Association of Litigation Professional Support Lawyers and a former Committee Member of the London Solicitors Litigation Association.

Registered Intermediary Reference Team (RIRT)

The Registered Intermediary Reference Team is made up of representatives appointed by each of the RI regional groups and aims to represent the interests of RIs to the MoJ. RIRT's role is to:

- Provide a forum for the RI community to raise relevant matters regarding the WIS to a self-selected group of its peers for discussion in a formal environment with the MoJ.
- Achieve representation of the RI community through its membership reflecting, as far as possible, a cross-section of that community by different professions and vocations, different working patterns and backgrounds. To have all regional support group areas represented.
- Ensure that the relationship between the RI community and MoJ, end-users and other stakeholders is being effectively represented and managed.

The RIRT meets quarterly with representatives from MoJ Criminal Special Measures Policy.

Part Two: Performance analysis 2024

Methodology

The NCA collects data pertaining to requests for service (RfS) for RIs, which provides a comprehensive overview of annual WIS services delivered. This is the primary data source for WIS performance analysis.

Data includes:

- Total number of requests for a Registered intermediary
- Requests by witness vulnerability
- Requests by age of witness (child or adult)
- Requests by type of witness
- Requests by end-user (police or Crown Prosecution Service)
- End-user feedback for 2024
- Numbers of active and inactive RIs (monthly figures)

Data is summarised from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. This includes changes in the number of requests and changes relating to the distribution of requests across vulnerabilities, witness age, witness types and end-users, in addition to numbers of matched, unmatched and cancelled requests. This section also covers RI availability and end-user feedback, defined by four assessment criteria from nearly 1,400 cases concerning victims and prosecution witnesses where feedback was received.

To examine wider trends within the WIS and to provide comparisons to interpret the 2024 data, this section will reference matching service data from 2024 (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024). Data from the same annual periods for 2022-2023 has also been included to provide long-term context on demand for WIS services. All references to increases and decreases are measured in terms of percentage change.²

Summary

In 2024, the WIS received 9,753 requests for service for an RI, representing a 6% increase on the previous year and the highest number of requests for RIs in a calendar year since the national WIS rollout in 2008.

The overall increase in service corresponds to an increase in the number of requests for five of the seven recorded vulnerability categories; shown on **figure 4**. The number of requests relating to children with a physical disability decreased by 9.6%, with a small decrease (0.9%) in requests for children without a concurrent vulnerability (the most frequently cited vulnerability overall). The largest increases have been observed among

² As opposed to a percentage point change.

requests for adults with a physical disability (18.4%) and adults with a learning disability (15.1%).

95.8% of requests were successfully matched. This trend does not apply equally across the board, with matching success rates varying in both adult and child requests. The most significant annual variance is observed for adult mental disorder with 90.9% successful matching rate (an increase of 4.1% from 2023). However, overall, the statistics show the WIS matching requests to an RI with the appropriate skillset in the vast majority of cases.

Police forces continue to make up the majority of requests for service with 79.8% originating at investigative phase; as demonstrated by **figure 10** (see page 27). Requests from the police have increased by 6.1% annually to 7,784 requests. Requests from the CPS also saw a 3.5% increase to 1,965.

End-user feedback for RIs throughout 2024 remained substantially positive, with 99.8% of all responses recorded as 'excellent', 'more than satisfactory' or 'satisfactory'.

Cancelled requests

A request for an RI may be cancelled in circumstances such as an early guilty plea, a withdrawal of complaint from the victim, or if the witness is unable or no longer wishes to proceed for any reason (e.g. medical reasons). In 2024, 1.9% of requests for service were cancelled.

Unmatched requests

Unmatched requests refer to instances in which an RI could not be assigned to a case following a request for RI assistance.

If the court agrees to adjourn, the request will still be recorded as unmatched, and a new request (reflecting the new trial date) will be generated. Therefore, unmatched requests do not necessarily indicate the individual in need of assistance did not receive an intermediary for that case.

A request for an RI may go unmatched in circumstances where the WIT is unable to provide an RI within the timeframe specified by the end-user, if no RIs are able to accept a case, or if there are no RIs with availability on the date(s) of a trial. In exceptionally rare circumstances the WIT may be unable to provide an RI with the necessary skills to take on a complex case.

Where it is not possible to match a request from police, the National Vulnerable Witness Adviser will provide specialist advice. This is deployed through telephone or email advice to police investigators which takes account of the latest psychological research and will include the use of appropriate questioning styles and techniques to meet the vulnerable person's communication needs, suitably modified in a manner that is likely to be acceptable to the criminal justice system.

Where it is not possible to match a request at court stage, the National Vulnerable Witness Adviser will not be able to provide bespoke advice. In these circumstances a standard NCA advice statement will be provided.

In 2024, 1.4% of requests for service were unmatched.

Total requests for RIs

A total of 9,753 requests for an RI were made via the WIS in 2024, an average of 813 requests per month. This amounts to a 5.6% increase in requests (up by 513 cases) on 2023, during which 9,240 requests were made annually.

It also represents a 709% increase since 2010, when 1,206 requests were made (**figure 1**).

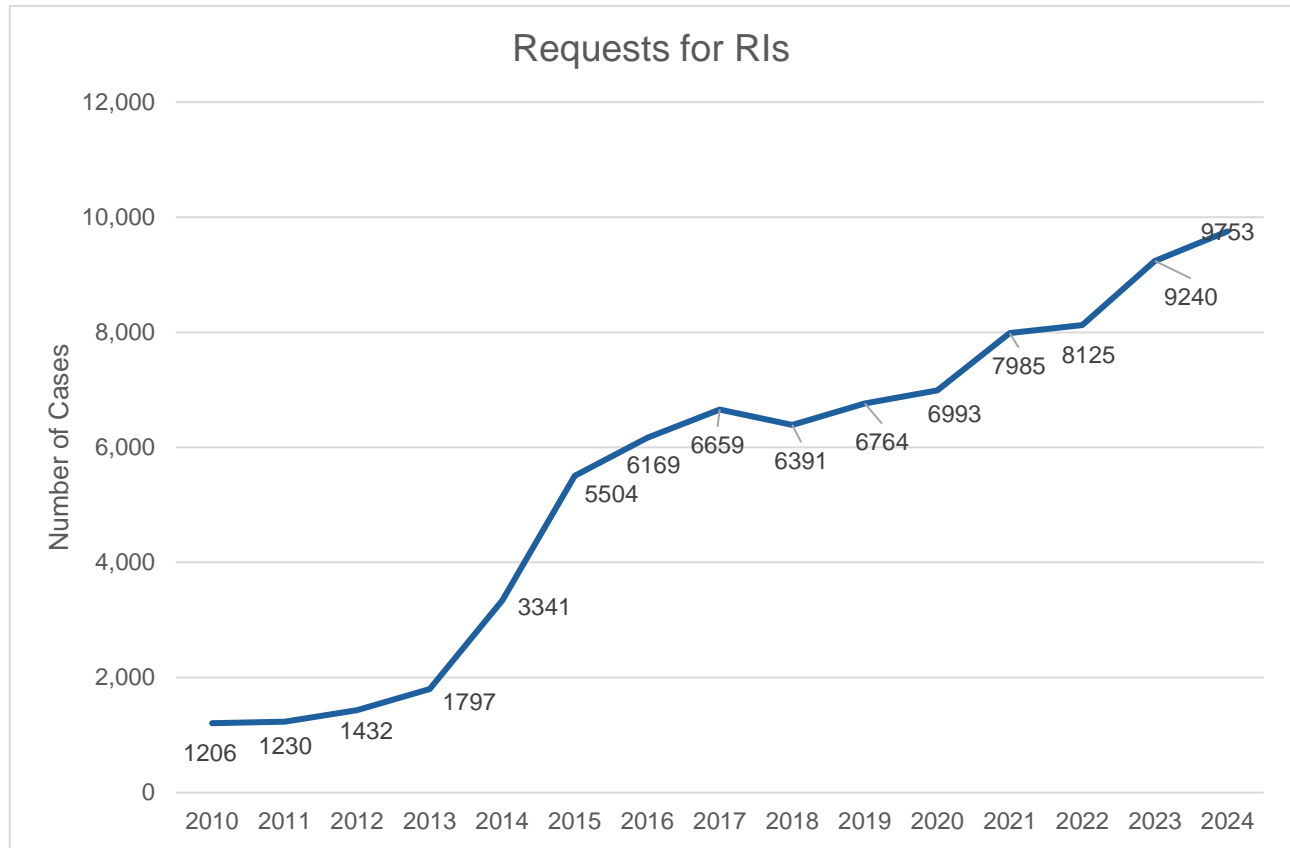


Figure 1

Overall change: matching success rates

Of 9,753 requests in 2024, 95.8% (9,347) were successfully matched by the WIT, with 1.4% (140) unmatched and 1.9% (184) cancelled.³ This represents around 3.3% of all requests for an intermediary and is a 1% decrease in the same figure in 2023.

³ 0.9% (82) cases remained in the process of matching as of January 2025.

Total matched requests: annual comparison

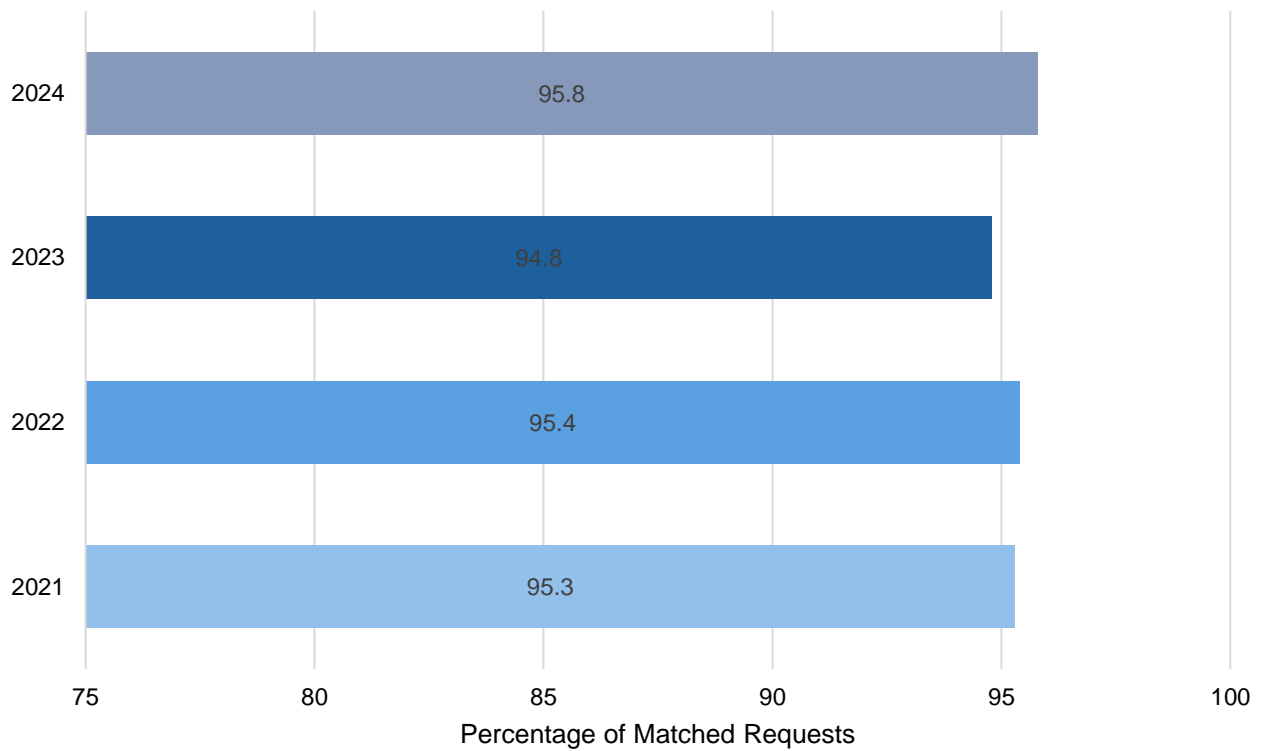


Figure 3

Requests by witness vulnerability

There are seven vulnerability categories which can be recorded on RI Request for Service (RfS) forms to indicate the needs of a witness:⁴

- Child without Concurrent Vulnerability
- Child with Mental Disorder
- Child with Learning Disability
- Child with Physical Disability
- Adult with Mental Disorder
- Adult with Learning Disability
- Adult with Physical Disability

As a witness can have multiple vulnerabilities cited on an RfS form, the combined figures in this section exceed the figures for the total number of requests detailed above.

Definitions and examples

The examples set out in the table below are non-exhaustive. These are just some of the conditions that can affect a person's ability to communicate effectively.

Eligibility criteria for RI assistance (as stipulated by section 16 of the YJCEA 1999) are set out on page 6 of this report.

Vulnerability type	Definition/non-exhaustive examples
Child without concurrent vulnerability	Refers exclusively to children who are entitled to an RI because their sole vulnerability is being under the age of 18.
Mental disorder	Any disorder or disability of the mind. ⁵ Examples may include but are <u>not limited to</u> : anxiety; depression; bipolar affective disorder; obsessive-compulsive disorder; a personality disorder; schizophrenia; dementia (including Alzheimer's disease).
Learning disability	Affects the way a person understands information or how they communicate. This means they can have difficulty: understanding new or complex information; learning new skills; coping independently. ⁶

⁴ To request the assistance of an RI, the end-user (usually the police or CPS) submits a RfS form to the NCA's Witness Intermediary Team. Each request specifies the vulnerability or vulnerabilities that the witness has.

⁵ Mental Health Act 1983, Section 1(2)

⁶ National Health Service, 2018, (www.nhs.uk/conditions/learning-disabilities/)

	Examples may include but are <u>not limited to</u> : ADHD; autism spectrum disorder (including Asperger's Syndrome); dysarthria; language delay/disorder; selective mutism.
Physical disability	<p>A physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative impact on a person's ability to do normal daily activities.⁷</p> <p>Examples may include but are <u>not limited to</u>: Stammer/stutter; a voice disorder (including laryngectomy and tracheotomy); brain or head injury (including a stroke); neurological and progressive disorders (including motor neurone disease and Parkinson's disease); cerebral palsy.</p>

Breakdown of vulnerabilities cited in request for service forms

Of all vulnerabilities cited on the RfS forms in 2024, 23.6% were for adults with a learning disability, making this the most frequently cited vulnerability. This was closely followed by children without a concurrent vulnerability at 23.2%, children with a learning disability at 22.9%, and adults with a mental disorder at 16.6%.

Breakdown of requests by vulnerability: 2024

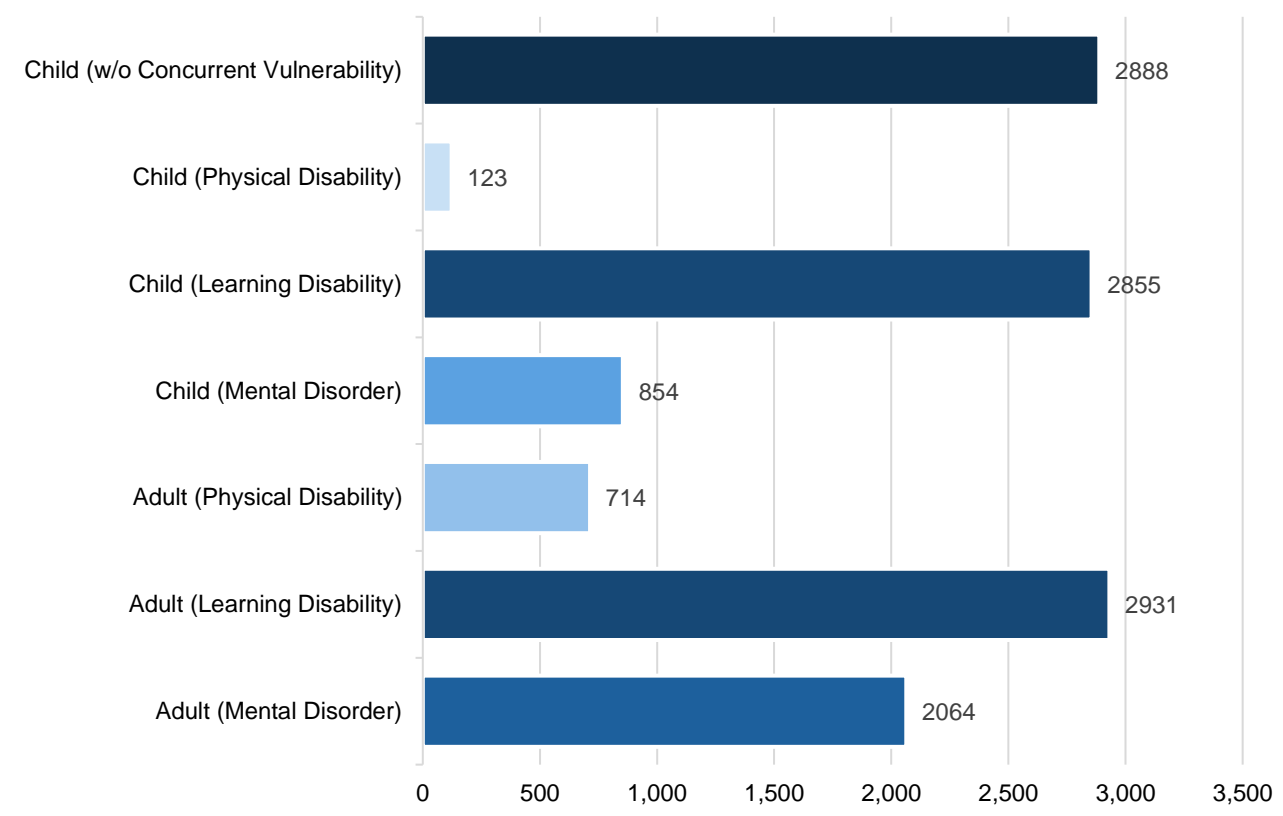


Figure 4

⁷ Equality Act 2010, Section 6(1)

Change across all requests

Since 2023, increases in the total number of RfS form citations were recorded for all except one vulnerability category (children without a concurrent vulnerability) (**Table 1**).⁸

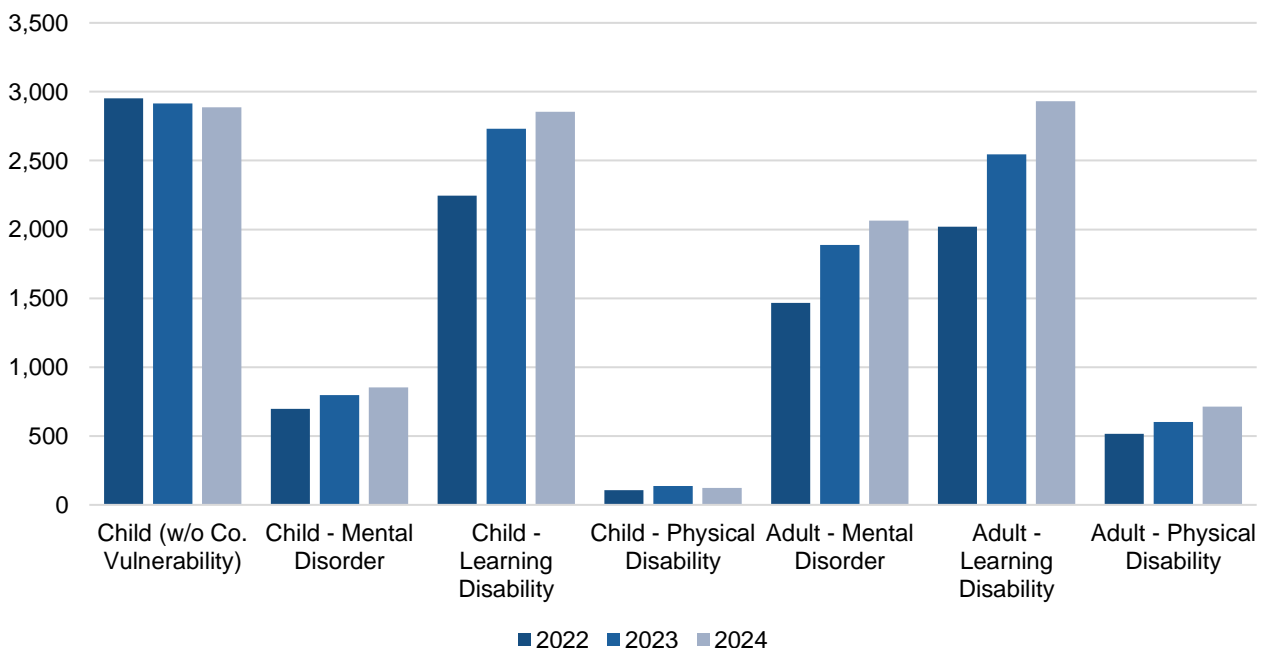
For child victims and witnesses, citations for mental disorders have increased by 7%, and for those with learning disabilities increased by 4.5%, and for those with physical disabilities it has decreased 9.6%. As has been seen in recent years, requests for children without concurrent vulnerabilities decreased (by 0.9%).

For adult victims and witnesses, citations for all vulnerability type increased; mental disorders increased by 9.3%, those for learning disabilities increased by 15.1%, and those for physical disabilities increased by 18.4%.

Change across all requests (Vulnerability types)			
Vulnerability	2023	2024	Change from 2023 (%)
Child (without a concurrent vulnerability)	2,915	2,888	-0.9
Child – Mental Disorder	798	854	7.0
Child – Learning Disability	2,731	2,855	4.5
Child – Physical Disability	136	123	-9.6
Adult – Mental Disorder	1,888	2,064	9.3
Adult – Learning Disability	2,546	2,931	15.1
Adult – Physical Disability	603	714	18.4

Table 1

RI requests by vulnerability: annual comparison



⁸ Figure 4 and Table 1, *NCA Matching Service Data 2022 – 2024*

Matching success rates

Compared with 2023, increases in the percentage of matched requests were recorded across almost all child vulnerability types, with only one decrease noted for children without concurrent vulnerability (1.9%) – see Table 2 and **Figure 6** for depiction.

For adult victims and witnesses, the percentage of matched requests increased for mental and learning vulnerabilities as well as physical disability – also see Table 2 and **Figure 6**.⁹

Change in success matching rates (Vulnerability Types)			
Vulnerability	Matched in 2023 (%)	Matched in 2024 (%)	Change from 2023 (%pt)
Child (w/o Concurrent Vulnerability)	97.7	98.1	0.4
Child – Mental Disorder	96.7	97.0	0.3
Child – Learning Disability	97.2	98.2	1.0
Child – Physical Disability	97.8	95.9	-1.9
Adult – Mental Disorder	86.8	90.9	4.1
Adult – Learning Disability	91.2	93.1	1.9
Adult – Physical Disability	92.0	92.6	0.6

Table 2

RI Requests by vulnerability: percentage of matched requests

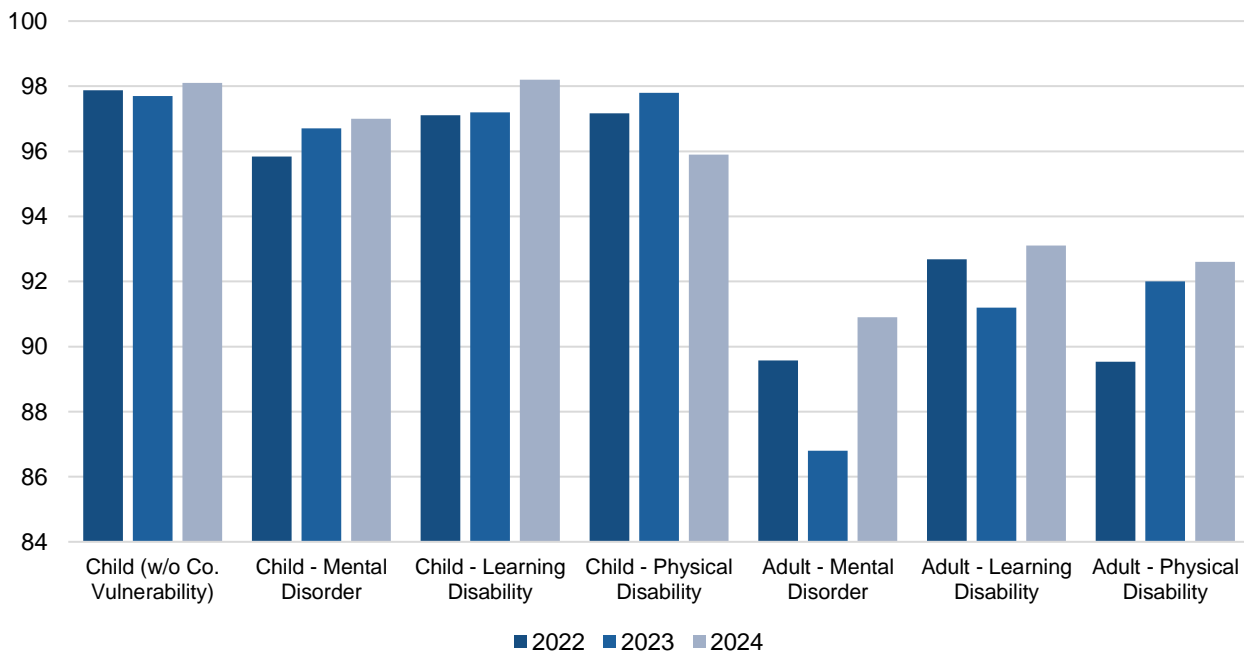


Figure 6

⁹ Table 2 and Figure 6, *NCA Matching Service Data 2023 - 2024*

Requests by age of witness (children/adults)

The NCA records the number of requests made on behalf of adults and children:

- Children (under 18s)
- Adults (over 18s)

Breakdown of requests (children/adults)

Of all 9,753 requests for RIs in 2024, 61.6% of requests (6,003) were on behalf of children. The remaining 38.4% (3,750) were made on behalf of adults.

Breakdown of requests (adult/child): 2024

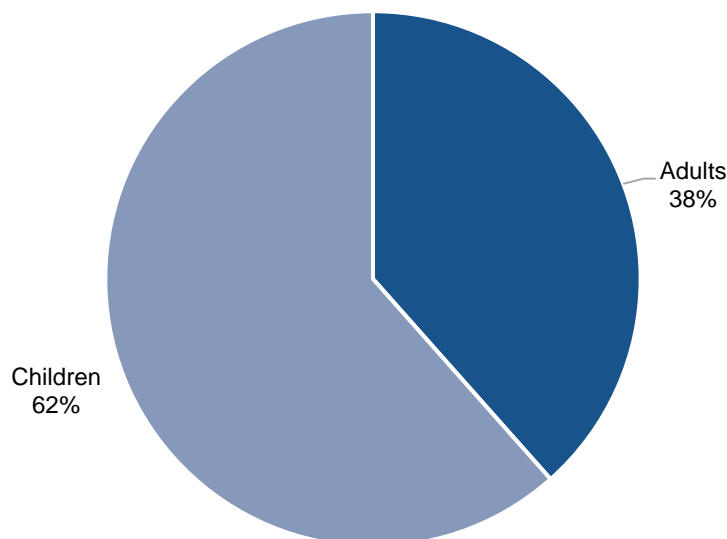


Figure 7

Change across all requests

Compared with 2023, the number of requests for both children and adults has increased by 1.5% (88 requests) and 12.8% (425 requests) respectively with a notable increase particularly in requests for vulnerable adults with learning difficulties.

Change across all requests (by age of witness)			
Age	2023	2024	Change (%)
Child	5,915	6,003	+1.5
Adult	3,325	3,750	+12.8

Table 3

Matching success rates

When comparing 2024 with 2023, the matching success rates increased for both children and adults. As shown in Table 4, the percentage variance was +0.6% and +2.3% respectively.

Change in success rates (age of witness)			
Age	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%pt)
Children	97.5	98.1	+0.6
Adults	89.9	92.2	+2.3

Table 4

Requests by witness type

The NCA divides matching service request data into three witness types.

- Victims
- Prosecution Witnesses
- Defence Witness

Breakdown of requests

Of all 9,753 requests for RIs in 2024, 93.9% of recorded requests (9,155) fell into the 'Victims' category, 6% (594) were made for 'prosecution witnesses, and <0.1% were made for defence witnesses.

Breakdown of requests (witness type): 2024

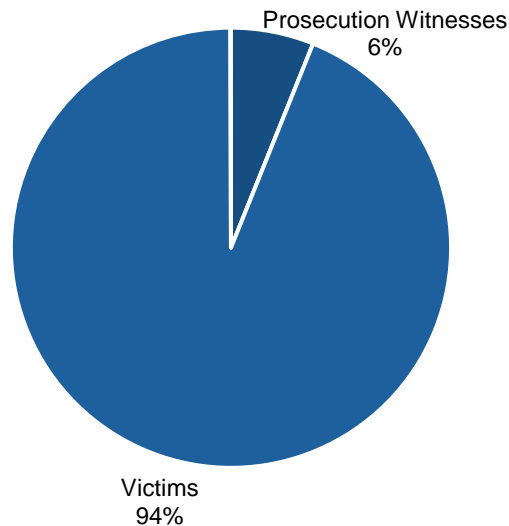


Figure 8

Change across all requests

Comparing to 2023 shows an increase in the number of requests for victims by 7.4%. The number of requests for prosecution witnesses decreased by 17.3%.

Change across all requests (witness type)			
Witness Type	2023	2024	Change (%)
Victims	8521	9155	7.4
Prosecution Witnesses	718	594	-17.3

Table 5

Matching success rates

The matching success rate for victims slightly increased and for prosecution witnesses marginally decreased since 2023. A further data breakdown has not been provided for defence witnesses due to the low volume of cases.

Change in success rates (witness type)			
Witness Type	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%pt)
Victims	94.8	96	1.2
Prosecution Witnesses	94.4	93.3	-1.1

Table 6

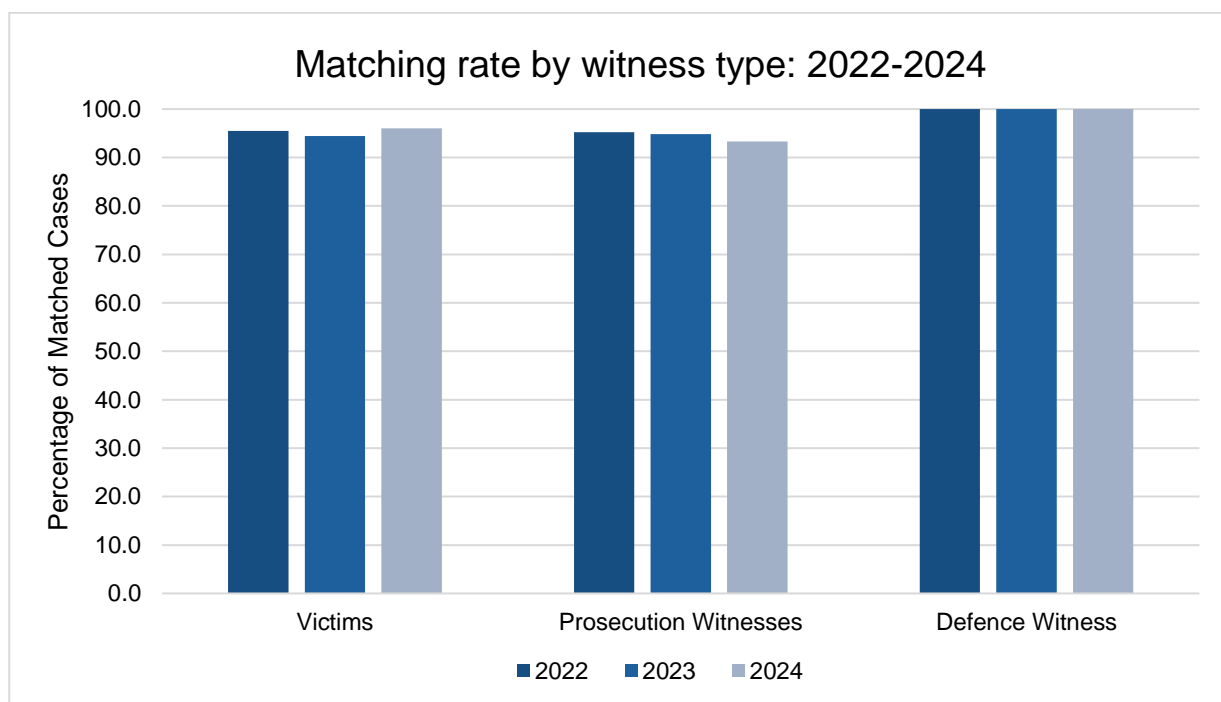


Figure 9

Requests by end-user

There are four categories of end-user that have submitted requests to the NCA in 2023:

- Police
- CPS
- Solicitor
- Court

Breakdown of requests

Requests from police forces continue to constitute the majority (80%, 7,784) of all requests for RIs in 2024, with requests from the CPS accounting for 20% (1,965 requests).¹⁰

Requests from solicitors and courts correspond with requests for defence witnesses and volumes remain exceptionally small (<0.1%); a further data breakdown has not been provided for this reason.

Breakdown of requests (end-user): 2024

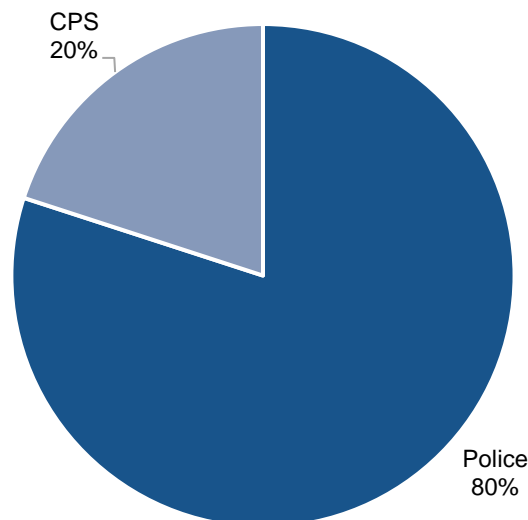


Figure 10

Change across all requests

When comparing 2024 with the previous year, the number requests from police forces have increased by 6.1%, and requests from the CPS have increased by 3.5%.¹¹

¹⁰ Figure 10, *NCA Matching Service Data 2023/24*

¹¹ Table 8, *NCA Matching Service Data 2023– 2024*

Change across all requests			
End-User	2023	2024	Change (%)
Police	7,339	7,784	6.1
CPS	1,898	1,965	3.5
Solicitor	1	4	300
Court	2	0	-100

Table 8

Matching success rates

The matching success rate for requests from the police increased by 1.3% from 2023, and the success rate for CPS requests also slightly increased by 0.3%.¹²

Change in success rates (end-user)			
End-User	2023 (%)	2024 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%)
Police	95.8	97.1	1.3
CPS	90.6	90.9	0.3
Solicitor	100	100	0

Table 9

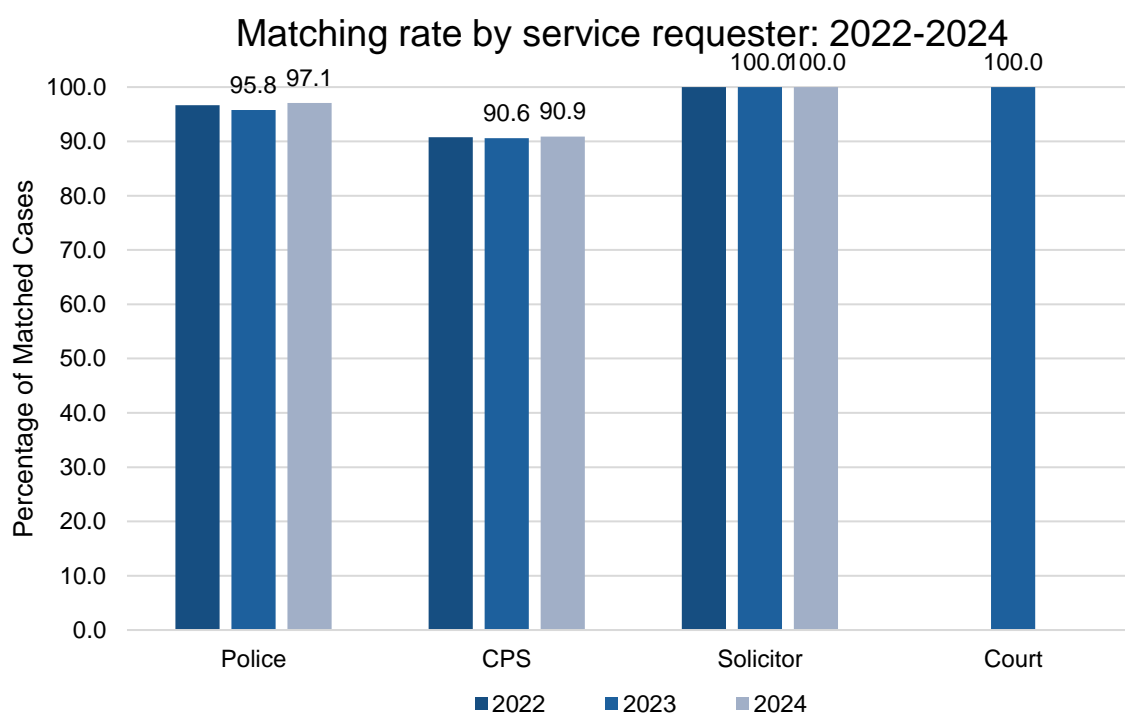


Figure 11

¹² Table 9, NCA Matching Service Data 2023 - 2024

End-user feedback

End-user feedback (typically from the police or the CPS) is assessed using a five-tier scale (excellent, more than satisfactory, satisfactory, less than satisfactory, and poor). Feedback is provided against four specific criteria:

- Compliance with criminal procedure
- Personal conduct / professionalism of the RI
- Quality of information provided by the RI
- Usefulness of the RI in the Proceedings

The feedback under each criterion is disaggregated between RI provision for victims and prosecution witnesses. When feedback for a particular case falls below 'satisfactory', the GSB will investigate.

Feedback overview

Feedback across all four criteria and both witness types has been averaged to provide an insight into RI performance reflected through feedback from end-users in 2024.

Against 1,383 cases where feedback was received, 99.8% received 'satisfactory', 'more than satisfactory' or 'excellent' feedback. Of the remaining 0.2%, 7 instances of feedback were 'less than satisfactory' and there were 4 instances of a 'poor' rating.

Breakdown of feedback received (end-user)

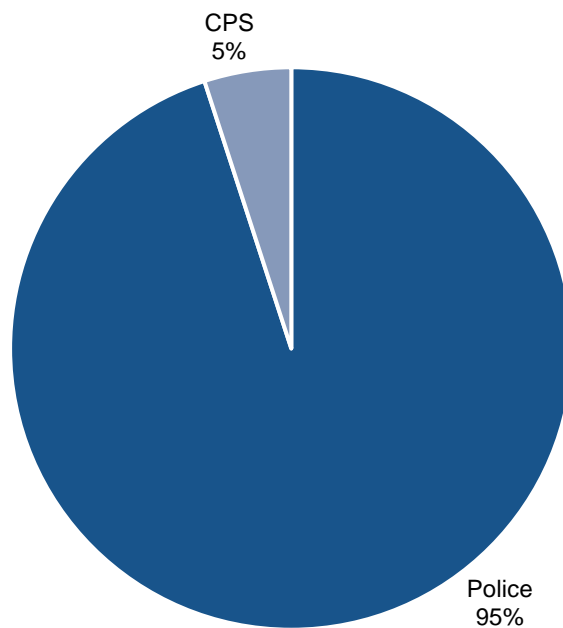


Figure 12

Feedback across all criteria

Below, all results, encompassing both witness types and all feedback criteria have been presented. This further demonstrates the high-quality service provided by RIs across the WIS.

Victims' cases						
Feedback Criteria	'Excellent' (%)	More than Satisfactory (%)	Satisfactory (%)	Less than Satisfactory (%)	Poor (%)	Responses
Compliance with criminal procedures	92.1 (1,211)	7.2 (95)	0.6 (8)	1 (0.1%)	Nil	1,315
Personal conduct and professionalism	95.2 (1,262)	4.3 (57)	0.4 (5)	0.1 (1)	0.1 (1)	1,326
Quality of information provided by the RI	93.8 (1,242)	5.7 (75)	0.3 (4)	0.2 (3)	Nil	1,324
Usefulness of the RI in the proceedings	91.5 (1,170)	7.0 (90)	1.0 (13)	0.2 (2)	0.2 (3)	1,278

Table 10

Prosecution witnesses' cases						
Feedback Criteria	'Excellent' (%)	More than Satisfactory (%)	Satisfactory (%)	Less than Satisfactory (%)	Poor (%)	Responses
Compliance with criminal procedures	95.8 (69)	4.2 (3)	Nil	Nil	Nil	72
Personal conduct and professionalism	95.9 (70)	4.1 (3)	Nil	Nil	Nil	73
Quality of information provided by the RI	95.9 (70)	4.1 (9)	Nil	Nil	Nil	73
Usefulness of the RI in the proceedings	95.7 (6)	4.3 (3)	Nil	Nil	Nil	69

Table 11

Active RI figures

The number of active and inactive RIs varies throughout the course of the year. The figures below correspond to active and inactive figures on the 16th day of each month between January 2024 and December 2024.

Active RIs

An 'active' RI is one that is actively accepting new cases, as assigned by the NCA.

Inactive RIs

An 'inactive' RI is one that is recorded on the Intermediary Register as being unavailable to be offered and accept new cases. An inactive RI may still work on ongoing cases. It is acknowledged that RIs will have other commitments that may result in them becoming inactive for periods of time.

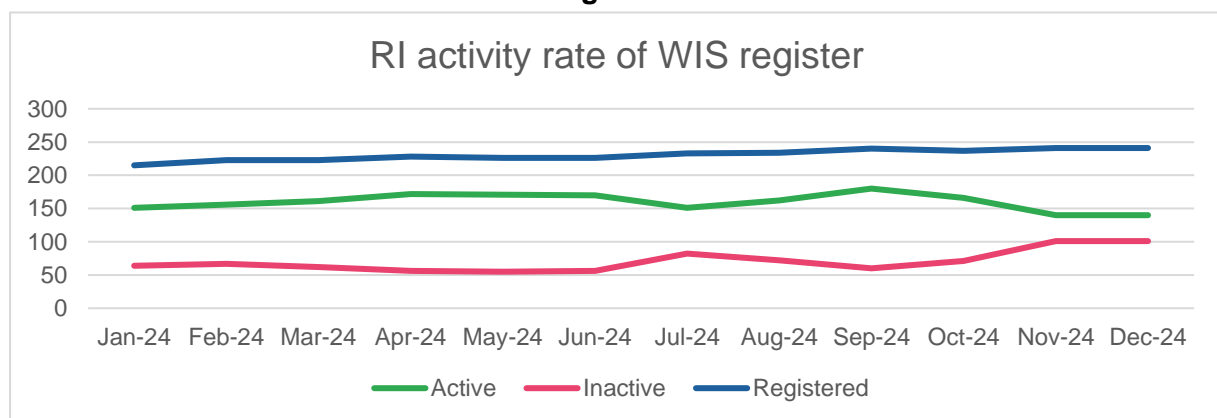
Reasons for inactivity vary widely and include primary employment commitments, maternity leave, sabbatical periods, academic study, and holiday periods. The duration of this inactivity varies accordingly. For most these periods are short; RI work is managed around them and the NCA is kept informed of their status.

RI availability overview

The number of active RIs fluctuated during 2024 with an average of 160 active RIs; equivalent to 69% of the average total number of RIs on the WIS register over this period (231). This is an increase on the previous year where the average number of active RIs was 144.

A total of 38 RIs were added to the WIS register in 2024, with 14 RIs leaving the Scheme, resulting in an overall increase of 24 RIs – a 12% increase in the capacity of the WIS.¹³

Figure 13



¹³ WIS attrition rate = 10.4% compared to national average of 16%

Part three: key developments in 2024



RI recruitment

In the autumn of 2024, the MoJ ran a targeted recruitment campaign, with a focus on recruiting candidates with a professional background in learning disabilities and complex mental health in Lincolnshire, Devon and Cornwall, South Wales, Norfolk and Suffolk – where specific needs were identified through gap analysis carried out by the NCA.

Four training courses resulted in the appointment of 38 new RIs in 2024. Recruitment based on detailed analysis of demand has enabled the Scheme to respond to growing demand and meet the evolving needs of service users.

Updated WIS policies

Throughout 2024, we reviewed four of the six policies which make up the full suite of WIS policies.

- Continuing professional development – reviewed in 2024
- Mentoring and support – reviewed in 2024
- Fitness to practise – reviewed in 2024
- Managing the register – reviewed in 2024
- Sanctions – due to be reviewed in 2025
- Feedback and Complaints – due to be reviewed in 2025

A range of amendments were made to the four policies to ensure they are fit for purpose and reflective of operational aspects of the Scheme. As ever, we are grateful to the RIRT, GSB and operational colleagues whom we consulted on the policy revisions, offering valuable feedback and insights for incorporation.

Refreshed RI procedural guidance

We have published a new iteration of the Registered Intermediary Procedural Guidance Manual in Autumn 2024. This document incorporates the latest procedural developments in the WIS, ensuring RIs are equipped with the knowledge, guidance, and procedural information to help navigate and perform the intermediary role within the criminal justice system. This comprehensive update benefitted from extensive contributions from across the intermediary community, including the NCA, RIRT and the RITT.

Enhancements included:

- Reference to an intermediary's duty to the court, as set out in Rule 18.26 of the Criminal Procedure Rules 2020.
- Clarification on insurance requirements for RIs.
- Addition of guidance on the protocols around recording of an assessment at investigative stage for evidential or operational reasons.
- Clarification to guidance on additional assessment and the handover of court cases to allow another RIs to pick up the case where the first RI is no longer available. This was in recognition of the unpredictable nature of court listings, with the aim of facilitating flexibility in RI practice in the interests of the witness.
- Addition of information on the role of ISVA and IDVAs.

WIS annual conference

The 2024 WIS Annual Conference was held as a hybrid event combining a virtual event with in-person attendance in Birmingham. It was a good opportunity for RIs to meet with peers, stakeholders and the MoJ either face to face or online to discuss specific strands of their work, their involvement with agencies like the police and courts, and to network.

The event was attended by over 70 individuals in person, as well as another ~100 online. The annual conference continues to be a key event in the WIS calendar and provides attendees with the opportunity to come together and learn more about specific areas of RI practice and special measures in the justice system.

The event featured sessions from a variety of speakers, including RIs, justice system professionals and academics. Sessions included an introduction from the new National Vulnerable Witness Advisor, specialised information on using Makaton in RI work, research on police experiences of working with RIs, and a detailed session on wellbeing and vicarious trauma which is an aspect to consider in the role of RIs due to their involvement in criminal cases.

The WIS Annual Conference received overwhelmingly positive feedback and continues to be a significant and well-attended event in the WIS calendar.

Initiative to support for newly qualified RIs

We introduced a new measure for newly qualified RIs to support their early practice. The early performance and support reviews provide newly qualified RIs with the opportunity to reflect on their performance at the 6-month of practise mark with the support of an

experienced RI. The initiative utilises the expertise of mentors to support our newly qualified RIs at an early stage in their career and in their learning and development, to ensure the continued quality of the WIS.

WIS newsletter

The Criminal Special Measures policy team has continued to stay abreast to developments and news that may impact the RI community. Throughout 2024, they have provided quarterly WIS newsletters to the RI community to disseminate this information.

The WIS newsletter shared information on updates to team structure, recruitment successes, highlights of RI work, positive feedback and procedural and legal guidance. The newsletter demonstrated the breadth of RI work through peer reflection and the quality of the WIS service through feedback from police and CPS.

Improving understanding of the RI role

Following the completion of the policy review in 2023, we have been working to improve understanding of the RI role in the justice system to ensure other criminal justice practitioners can work effectively with RIs.

In 2024, we worked with the Judicial College to update the Equal Treatment Bench Book to more accurately reflect the role and responsibilities of RIs. We also liaised with the Bar Standards Board, the Bar Council and the Criminal Law Solicitors Association to increase awareness of the Witness Intermediary Scheme.

Part four: finance of the witness intermediary scheme

Administrative budget

The WIS budget for 2024/25 was around £780,000 with roughly £640,000 of this designated for the NCA's Witness Intermediary Team to fund the WIS matching service and the GSB Secretariat.

The remaining funds are allocated across the WIS, this includes financing the work of the GSB, RITT and RIRT as well as corporate duties undertaken by RIs.

Annual review of remuneration rates

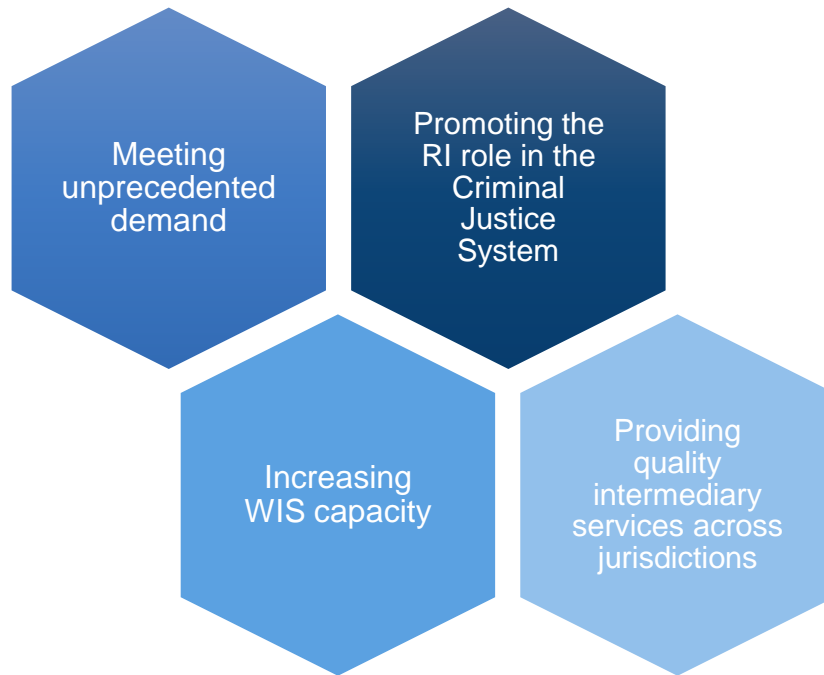
RIs must invoice according to a nationally agreed rate. Fees are based upon an hourly rate, covering face-to-face appointments and report writing, with reimbursement of travel and subsistence within policy limits.

A contractual arrangement is entered into at the point that the RI accepts a Request for Service. This arrangement is between the RI, a self-employed individual, and the service from which the request originates – usually the police or CPS.

Remuneration rates are agreed by the CPS and the NPCC. A review of remuneration rates takes place annually and follows an agreed procedure, with RIs invited to submit a remuneration proposal. RIs were awarded a 3% increase to the 2024/25 core hourly rate of remuneration (this increase also applied to the unsocial and travel time rates).

Registered intermediaries pay awards (recent history)		
Financial Year	Award (% Increase)	Core Hourly Rate Post-Award (£)
2019-20	1	39.33
2020-21	1.5	39.92
2021-22	Nil	39.92
2022-23	3	41.20
2023-24	3.5	42.64
2024-25	3	43.92

Part five: forward look



Increasing WIS capability

The MoJ remains dedicated to investing in the recruitment and training of new RIs to increase WIS capability.

In 2025, we will be continuing our recruitment strategy with a national campaign informed by WIT data analysis to target areas and skillsets in high demand. This should allow us to train four more cohorts of RIs and ensure that the needs of service users continue to be met.

Communication plan

We will continue to promote the role and understanding of RIs through a justice-wide communication plan. We also regularly seek opportunities to raise knowledge and understanding about the distinctive nature of the role and how RIs are uniquely qualified to enable children and vulnerable adults with mental health conditions, learning and physical disabilities to give their best evidence.

Developing WIS efficiency

We will continue to look at ways to ensure that the Scheme is continuously improving for RIs and end users alike. For example, the National Vulnerable Witness Advisor will be running workshops in the early part of 2025, with a focus on conducting an effective pre-interview planning and preparation assessment (PIPPA) of children. This framework helps the Police meet the requirement of pre interview groundwork, including a needs assessment and to help establish if there are communication difficulties. This aims to help identify what support a vulnerable person might need to

complete a video recorded interview and to inform their decision on when they need to use an RI, as well as aiding the development of rapport, and preparing a witness for the interview process.



© Crown copyright 2024

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.