



National Crime Agency
Remuneration Review Body

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Eleventh Report 2025

Chair: Zoë Billingham CBE



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Presented to Parliament by the
Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of His Majesty

July 2025



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NCA Remuneration Review Body

The National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body is an independent body which advises the Government on the pay and allowances of National Crime Agency (NCA) officers designated with operational powers.

Terms of reference¹

In considering its recommendations in relation to NCA officers designated with operational powers the Review Body must have regard to the following considerations:

- the operational crime-fighting role of NCA officers;
- the prohibition on NCA officers with operational powers taking strike action;
- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified officers;
- the funds available to the NCA, as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits;
- the Government's wider public sector pay policy and the Government's policies for improving public services;
- the Government's inflation target;
- relevant legal obligations on the NCA in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, including the Equality Act 2010.

The Review Body is also required to consider other specific issues as directed by the Home Secretary, and will be required to take account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, professional representatives and others.

Reports and recommendations of the Review Body should be submitted to the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, and they should be published.

Members² of the Review Body

Zoë Billingham CBE (Chair)
Andrew Bliss QPM
Professor Monojit Chatterji
Richard Childs QPM
Mark Hoble JP
Jacqui Siggers FCIPD

The secretariat is provided by the Office for the Pay Review Bodies.

¹ The terms of reference were set by the Home Office following consultation with the parties on the National Crime Agency (Remuneration Review Body) Regulations 2013, Statutory Instruments 2013 No 1958.

² Members of the Review Body are appointed through an open competition adhering to the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice. Available at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578090/Public_Appointments_Governance_Code_.pdf [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

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List of Abbreviations

AWE	Average Weekly Earnings
CPI	Consumer Prices Index
CPIH	Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
DDaT	Digital, Data and Technology
FYE	Financial Year Ending
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR	Human Resources
IDR	Incomes Data Research
ILO	International Liaison Officer
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LRD	Labour Research Department
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCARRB	National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body
NCOA	National Crime Officers Association
NHS	National Health Service
NITA	Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
PCS	Public and Commercial Services Union
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RRA	Recruitment and Retention Allowance
RTI	Real Time Information
SOC	Serious and Organised Crime
SR	Spot Rate
UK	United Kingdom

Foreword

This is our 11th Report to the Home Secretary on National Crime Agency ('NCA' or 'the Agency') pay. The Home Secretary's remit letter of 30 September 2024 asked us to make a formal recommendation on the remuneration of NCA officers designated with operational powers. It also asked us to consider the implications for the whole workforce. The threat from serious and organised crime (SOC), which is often underpinned by an international dimension, is increasing and becoming more harmful. The changing threat, rapidly evolving technology and the global context means the NCA's mission to protect the public is becoming ever more challenging. We recognise that the NCA, in leading the operational response to SOC in, and impacting on, the UK, will play a vital role in enabling the Government to deliver on its missions to create Safer Streets and tackle violence against women and girls. The NCA's contribution, alongside that of partner agencies, is also fundamental to ensuring UK border and national security. We would like to acknowledge our remit group, including those who represent the UK on behalf of the NCA overseas, for their invaluable work in protecting the nation.

We submit this year's report against the backdrop of what will possibly be the biggest modernisation to law enforcement since the 1960s. We expect that the future role of the NCA will be shaped by the Police Reform White Paper and the new National Security Strategy. The Government has said that it will introduce changes to ensure that policing has the national capabilities it needs to fight fast-changing, complex crimes which cut across police force boundaries. We understand that a number of options are being considered in relation to counter-terrorism and SOC fighting capabilities.

The NCA has shared with us a variety of plans for pay reform over the last nine years. In our last report, we welcomed the NCA's submission of a business case to central government for pay reform. At the time that we submit our 2025 Report, the case is still with central government. As a consequence, the organisation continues to struggle to recruit and retain certain specialists and mid-career police officers, and NCA officers themselves remain marooned on the grade minimum for many years and are leapfrogged by new entrants from other labour markets. We consider both the failure of the NCA to plan, secure agreement to and implement a pay reform programme during the last nine years, and, in spite of the Home Office's best endeavours, the failure of central government to reach a definite decision in the last twelve months on the NCA's most recent pay and contract reform business case, to be wholly unacceptable. In our view this seriously undermines the credibility of the Agency's ambition to be the UK's premier serious crime fighting organisation.

At our request, given they are not yet agreed with central government, no details of the NCA's pay reform proposals were included in the Agency's evidence to us. This means we remain unable to comment in detail on the substantive proposals or endorse them. We do express our reservations about information we have received from the trade unions that the reform package includes the proposal that 40 hours per week will become the standard hours for NCA officers. Our view remains that such a move would be out of step with developments in the wider labour market. It is also vital that the proposals for pay reform are in lock step with the NCA's new workforce strategy.

We emphasise, as we have done in previous reports, that parties need to be ambitious and agree comprehensive solutions. We hope that in thinking about the national capabilities needed as part of the Police Reform White Paper, the Government will consider whether a different organisational form for the NCA would better enable it to act flexibly and to establish a single unified pay structure. We again strongly urge Government to progress pay and contract reform as a matter of urgency.

There have been significant geopolitical changes since we received our remit letter. The international diplomatic and trading environment remains uncertain and there is a risk that this may lead to a further period of economic instability. Inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. As we complete our 2025 Report, the latest annual Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rate of inflation is 3.5% and the CPIH (including owner occupiers' housing costs) is 4.1%. We are also conscious that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and the Bank of England expect CPI inflation to peak in quarter three of 2025 (the OBR at 3.7% and the Bank of England at 3.5%) before declining again. We observe that energy price inflation is higher than the overall rate.

In reaching a pay recommendation for 2025/26 we also considered wider developments in pay. Median pay settlements, which HM Treasury described as the most comparable data with Pay Review Body decisions, ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% in the three months to April 2025. We note the civil service pay remit guidance for 2025/26 which states that departments are able to make average pay awards up to 3.25% with flexibility to use an extra 0.5% to target specific departmental workforce issues. We are also conscious of the 2025/26 pay awards recently announced by the Government for other parts of the public sector. These included: 3.6% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 4% for teachers, prison staff and most doctors (with resident doctors getting an average award of 5.4%); and 4.5% for the armed forces.

We give particular weight to the fact that the NCA is seeking an annual uplift in line with the pay award for policing and that the Home Office and the trade unions have placed great emphasis on the importance of the NCA's pay not falling further behind police pay. The 2024/25 award for the NCA, which was 0.25% higher than the award received by the police service, was the first step on the road to addressing that issue. However, the NCA continues to lose pace in monetary terms with the police service due to the latter's higher salaries. We observe that at the maximum the Grade 5 pay scale is currently 7.6% (nearly £3,700) lower than the top of the police constable pay scale. This is a key grade operationally for the Agency, equivalent to the rank of police constable and containing the largest number of powered officers. We are conscious that the gap is undermining the Agency's ability to recruit high-calibre, adaptable, resilient and more diverse mid-career police officers that are critical to enabling the NCA to meet its unique operational priorities.

In reaching a pay recommendation for 2025/26, we are aware of evidence that morale remains low. Morale and motivation can be damaged by a failure to take adequate action on pay. A pay award that is judged unfair by NCA officers, particularly in comparison with other parts of the public sector especially the police, will do nothing to ameliorate the existing low state of morale and motivation.

We also gave weight to the requirement in our terms of reference to consider the fact that powered officers, in contrast to the vast majority of employees across the public and private sector, are prohibited from taking strike action. In the interests of fairness, it remains our strong view that we, the Home Office and the employer have an obligation to deliver a just, fair and equitable award. We consider the implications of the pay settlements that have been offered by the Government, particularly to the NHS, following industrial action. The most conspicuous instance of this was the pay deal for resident doctors. Resident doctors in England secured an additional 4.05% funding for pay for 2023/24 on top of the previous uplift set out in July 2023. We note that, including the 2024/25 pay uplift, this means the combined average pay award for resident doctors in England across 2023/24 and 2024/25 totalled 22.3%.

We balanced these factors against affordability. The NCA has told us that although uncertainties remain around its budgets, some of which will not be resolved until the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review later in June, there is 2.9% in its budget for a pay award in 2025/26. We are conscious that the Home Office has emphasised that a 2.9% pay award is affordable and that anything above that will have to be met from within the Agency's budget. The NCA is adamant that any reprioritisation to fund an award above 2.9% will impact Government priorities; in contrast the Home Office told us that it felt it would be possible for the NCA to identify efficiencies that would not affect operational delivery. In conclusion, we observe that affordability is about choice. In that context, we highlight the fact that the UK Government announced pay rises for other parts of the public sector which were significantly above levels within its affordability evidence of around 2.8%. Within the NCA's budget, and across central government budgets as a whole, there will be some flexibility as to how any award is funded. For instance, while we recognise the NCA's current need for contingent labour to deal with the challenges it faces in recruiting certain specialists, this needs to be balanced against providing a sufficiently attractive 'offer' to recruit and retain permanent staff.

Given these factors, and considering all our terms of reference, we conclude that an annual pay uplift of 4.4% for all officers in our remit group is the most suitable approach for 2025/26. In addition, we are recommending that London Weighting Allowance and the South East Allowance be uplifted in line with the pay award. It is our strong expectation that this award should be applied to all NCA officers, both powered and non-powered.

This award is again slightly above the pay award recommended by the Police Remuneration Review Body for police officers in England and Wales in 2025/26. It recognises both the invaluable work of NCA officers and the gap between their pay and that of police officers in similar roles. It also signals the urgent need to address pay reform.

Finally, we welcome the fact that NCA officers received their 2024/25 pay award on time on 1 August 2024. Every effort should be made to ensure that this is also the case this year, and that the delays to the NCA pay award in 2022/23 and 2023/24 do not occur again as these delays had a damaging impact on morale.

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6 June 2025

NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY

Eleventh Report 2025

Executive Summary

Our 2025/26 recommendations (from 1 August 2025):

- **A consolidated pay award of 4.4% for all NCA officers within our remit group. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 to be raised by 4.4%.**
- **An increase of 4.4% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group.**
- **The allowances of International Liaison Officers in the NCA to be reviewed.**

1. We received the Home Secretary's remit letter on 30 September 2024 asking us to make a formal recommendation for National Crime Agency ('NCA' or 'the Agency') officers with operational powers. The remit letter also asked that our recommendations on pay consider the implications for the whole NCA workforce. We welcome the delivery of last year's pay to NCA officers on time on 1 August 2024, after a number of years of delayed pay awards. We also set out highlights from our visits programme.
2. We are writing this year's report against the backdrop to what we understand will possibly be the biggest modernisation to policing and law enforcement since the 1960s. We expect that the future role of the NCA will be shaped by the Police Reform White Paper and the new National Security Strategy which will be published before the summer. One part of the work on police reform is a review of national capabilities. The Government has said that it will introduce changes to ensure that policing has the national capabilities it needs to fight fast-changing, complex crimes which cut across police force boundaries. We understand that a number of options may be under consideration in relation to the future organisational form of counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime fighting capabilities in the UK.
3. The threat from serious and organised crime, which is often underpinned by an international dimension, is increasing and becoming more harmful. Technological change is creating new opportunities for criminals. The changing threat, rapidly evolving technology and the global context means the NCA's mission to protect the public is becoming ever more challenging. The 2025 National Strategic Assessment of SOC judged that the NCA and its partners must become more agile in responding to the evolving threat from SOC and that they needed to use the advances in technology and other capabilities to greater effect. The NCA, in leading the

operational response to serious and organised crime in, and impacting, on the UK, will play a vital role in enabling the Government to deliver on its missions to create Safer Streets and tackle violence against women and girls. The NCA's contribution, alongside that of partner agencies, is also fundamental to ensuring UK border and national security.

4. In Chapter 2 we note that a business case setting out the NCA's proposals for pay and contract reform has been submitted to central government. At our request, given the case is not yet agreed with central government, no details of the NCA's proposals were included in the evidence submitted to us for this pay round. This means we remain unable to comment in detail on the substantive proposals or endorse them. We do express our reservations about information we have received from the trade unions that the reform package includes the proposal that 40 hours per week would become the standard hours for NCA officers. Our view remains that such a move would be out of step with developments in the wider labour market. We also observe that it is vital that these proposals are in lock step with the NCA's workforce strategy which we understand from our visits programme is being refreshed.
5. We again set out our concerns regarding the NCA's current pay systems including the two-tier system, the long pay ranges and the fact that experienced NCA officers remain on the grade minimum while some newly recruited candidates from a variety of labour markets join higher up in the pay range. We also highlight the implications for equality. While acknowledging the success of the Agency in achieving some growth in its workforce in 2024, we highlight the challenges it faces in the recruitment of specialist skills and mid-career police officers and the importance of pay reform to addressing those issues and reducing the NCA's reliance on contingent labour and professional services.
6. We emphasise, as we have in previous reports, that parties need to be ambitious and agree comprehensive solutions that will deliver a unified pay structure for NCA staff. In that context, we draw attention to the significance of the Police Reform White Paper for the NCA. We express our hope that in thinking about the national capabilities needed by UK law enforcement, the Government will consider whether a different organisational form for the NCA would better enable it to act flexibly to set common terms and conditions and to establish a single unified pay structure.
7. We express concern, given what we heard from officers during our visits programme, that the continuing delays to pay and contract reform are damaging morale which will have implications for retention. We again strongly urge HM Treasury, the Home Office and other central government departments to progress the pay flexibility case on pay and contract reform as a matter of urgency.
8. We then summarise the issues we took into account in making our recommendation for a basic pay award for NCA officers in 2025/26 and for changes to NCA

allowances. We focus first on the performance of the economy and the labour market. The annual CPI rate of inflation was 3.5% and the CPIH rate was 4.1% in April 2025, the latest available data as we submit our recommendations. We point out that the OBR and the Bank of England expect inflation to peak in quarter three of 2025 (the OBR at 3.7% and the Bank of England at 3.5%) before declining again. We note that inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we continue to emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and NCA officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. We also look at average earnings and pay settlements including median pay settlements which ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% in the three months to April 2025. These were predominantly in the private sector. We are also conscious of the 2025/26 pay awards recently announced by the Government for other parts of the public sector. These included: 3.6% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 4% for teachers, prison staff and most doctors (with resident doctors getting an average award of 5.4%); and 4.5% for the armed forces. We observe that since our remit letter was published there have been a number of largely unexpected geopolitical events and that these may lead to another period of economic uncertainty.

9. We acknowledge the diversity of the markets from which the NCA recruits and note the civil service pay remit guidance for 2025/26 which states that departments are able to make average pay awards up to 3.25% with flexibility to use an extra 0.5% to target specific departmental workforce issues. However, we highlight the importance the Home Office and NCA attach to the police as a key comparator for the Agency. While the NCA's overall attrition rate is comparable with many public and private sector organisations, we are alert to the key gaps in certain NCA capabilities and in particular the need for the Agency to recruit police officers at all levels as well as its requirement for certain niche skills. We have also been mindful of the evidence we received from the Home Office that the increasing disparity with police pay presents a real challenge in retaining officers who bring critical expertise and we highlight the gap between NCA and police pay. We therefore give weight to the fact that the NCA is seeking an annual uplift in line with the pay award for policing and the evidence we received from the Home Office and the trade unions which placed great emphasis on the importance of the NCA's pay not falling further behind police pay.
10. Given our terms of reference and in the interests of fairness, we also place importance on the fact that powered officers are prohibited from taking strike action. We highlight that over the past year some employers, including in the NHS, have agreed significantly enhanced pay deals as a result of industrial action or the threat of such action. We also point out that the absence of detailed evidence on the pay and contract reform proposals means that it has proved impossible to align our recommendation for a pay award for 2025/26 with the pay reform proposals to create a coherent package for change.

11. We explain that we balanced all these factors with affordability and we draw attention to the differing evidence we have received on this issue. The NCA was adamant that any reprioritisation to fund an award above the 2.9% it has allowed in its budget for a pay award will impact Government priorities; in contrast the Home Office told us that it felt it would be possible for the NCA to identify efficiencies that would not affect operational delivery. However, we again observe that affordability is about choice and priorities. In that context, we highlight the fact that the UK Government recently announced pay rises for other parts of the public sector which were significantly above levels within its affordability evidence of around 2.8%. We also note that more resources might be made available to the NCA through the CSR and highlight the evidence we received that suggested there might be scope for making trade-offs that would not affect operational delivery. We also draw attention to the Home Office evidence which stated that 27% (£99 million) of the Agency's total pay bill of around £368 million could be attributed to contingent labour and professional services.
12. After taking the above factors into account including the economic situation, our analysis of recruitment and retention, affordability, recent public sector pay settlements, the prohibition on powered officers taking strike action, the increasing gap in monetary terms between NCA and police pay, the importance of the Agency's 'One NCA' policy, motivation and morale, we conclude that an annual pay award in 2025/26 of 4.4% across all grades is a suitable approach. We recommend that London Weighting Allowance and the South East Allowance be uprated in line with basic pay.
13. As we said last year, our strong expectation is that this award should be applied to all NCA officers, both powered and non-powered. We observe that this award is slightly above the 2025/26 pay award recommended by the Police Remuneration Review Body for police officers in England and Wales. We point out that the award signals the urgent need to address the pay gap between the police and the NCA as part of pay reform and that this is vital if the Agency is to be able to recruit and retain the range of high-calibre candidates it requires. We also highlight our concerns about Grade 6 officers who are the lowest paid Agency officers. We acknowledge that, as they generally do not have powers, they are outside our formal remit. However, we encourage the NCA to consider the pay and reward for this group in the context of pay and contract reform and as part of the Agency's efforts to build the long-term operational capabilities of the organisation.
14. We note that the allowances for International Liaison Officers are not being considered as part of pay and contract reform. We therefore recommend that these allowances be reviewed. We also note the outcome of the NCA's review of allowances for its officers stationed in Northern Ireland and we advise the Agency to communicate this information effectively to the officers concerned.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

- 1.1 The National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body (NCARRB) is an independent advisory body which operates within the regulations of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 and in accordance with the Framework Document for the National Crime Agency. We provide advice to the Home Secretary on remuneration and various matters relating to officers designated with operational powers ('the remit group') working within the National Crime Agency ('the NCA' or 'the Agency'). This is our 11th Report on the remuneration of officers within our remit group. In previous years, our pay recommendations have also been applied to non-powered NCA officers.

Our 2024 Report

- 1.2 Our 10th Report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 20 June 2024 (Appendix A).

Our recommendations on pay, allowances and pay reform

- 1.3 Our 2024/25 recommendations (from 1 August 2024):
1. The NCA should redesign its job architecture and evaluate all roles to consider which grades and posts are comparable to police officers and which are comparable to the civil service, police staff or the private sector.
 2. A consolidated pay award of 5% for all NCA officers within our remit group. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by 5%.
 3. An increase of 5% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group.
 4. The allowances of NCA officers in Northern Ireland should be reviewed by the NCA with a view to those NCA officers who are subject to similar risks to Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers receiving the same allowance as PSNI officers.

The Government's response to our 10th Report

- 1.4 On 29 July 2024, the Home Secretary announced the Government's decision on pay for the NCA in 2024/25 and published our report. The Home Secretary fully accepted recommendations 2 and 3. The Home Secretary also partially accepted recommendations 1 and 4, saying that she was supportive of the central premise of the recommendations, but that measures were already underway to develop a set of comprehensive proposals which the Government would seek to implement in a timely fashion.

Our remit for 2025/26

- 1.5 We start work each year on the basis of the remit letter received from the Home Secretary. We received the Home Secretary's remit letter on 30 September 2024 (Appendix B) asking us to commence the 2025/26 pay round and provide independent advice on the remuneration of NCA officers with operational powers.
- 1.6 The Home Secretary told us that, as the NCA advanced its 'One NCA' policy, it was crucial that all staff, both those with and without operational powers, were treated equitably in matters of pay. She therefore asked us to take this into consideration when providing recommendations on the proposed NCA pay award, while giving due regard to civil service pay and relevant guidance.
- 1.7 In considering our recommendations for 2025/26, we were asked to have regard to the following:
- The NCA's productivity, efficiency improvements and the affordability of any proposals within the Agency's existing budget constraints.
 - The pay gap differential between NCA and police officers.
 - Pay in the civil service, aligning recommendations with the average pay across civil service departments.

Our approach to the 2025/26 pay round

- 1.8 We have reached our recommendations and made observations this year following our close examination of several different sources of evidence, including:
- the context provided by the remit letter and our visits to the NCA;
 - the written and oral evidence submissions that we received from all the parties; and
 - our analysis of the economy, labour market, earnings and pay settlements.

Parties giving evidence

- 1.9 Our deliberations are supported by the submission of written and oral evidence from the parties. We received written evidence from the parties listed below. This is available through the links in Appendix C:
- HM Treasury;
 - the Home Office;
 - the NCA;
 - the National Crime Officers Association (NCOA);
 - the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS); and
 - the FDA.

- 1.10 We held a series of oral evidence sessions with the parties in March 2025. These were attended by the Minister for Security (accompanied by Home Office officials), the NCA and representatives from the NCOA, PCS and FDA.

Visits to the NCA

- 1.11 In December 2024, we conducted two in-person visits: one in London and one in the Midlands. We also held an online discussion with a group of NCA International Liaison Officers based around the world.
- 1.12 Powered and non-powered officers based in the UK and overseas took part in our visits and discussion groups. Altogether, we heard from over 60 officers in Grades 1 to 6 carrying out a wide variety of functions in the Agency. We are grateful to all those who organised and took part in the in-person visits and the remote discussion group.
- 1.13 We regard these visits as an essential part of our evidence gathering as they allow us to enhance our understanding of: the evolving NCA role; officers' views of the Agency's ambition to be at the pinnacle of law enforcement; the challenges facing officers; officers' pay priorities, including their response to pay reform; and factors influencing recruitment, retention and motivation. Key points from our visits included:
- Officers welcomed the fact that the pay award had been paid on time this year, and that it was higher than for the police, although only marginally.
 - Officers continued to highlight the lack of progression through the pay ranges. This caused frustration when officers compared their pay with that of police officers.
 - Lack of progression also caused tensions when external appointees could be paid higher up the scales, despite potentially having less experience than, and needing to be inducted by, colleagues on lower pay. It was also leading to officers seeking promotions to jobs they would rather not do and might not be sufficiently experienced for, but they could not afford to remain at the lower grade. There could also be difficulty backfilling the role they left.
 - The retention of specialist staff in the NCA seemed to rely on grade inflation.
 - There was also concern over the continued high use of contingent labour and that such contractors were paid significantly more than NCA staff.
 - Spot rates were seen as divisive. They were seen as a better deal for most despite the extra hours required. There was inconsistency as to which teams/roles had them, with some roles being paid spot rates in some teams but

not others. Officers had been told that the NCARRB had blocked the expansion of spot rates to further posts³.

- Organisational ‘surges’ driven by priority changes took staff from existing critical and hard-pressed NCA teams already left vulnerable by greater inexperience.
- New priorities including illegal immigration were drawing staff from existing teams. Some officers reported being given very short notice that they would be working in a new team, with little information on what this would mean for their location or working patterns.
- Little information was being shared internally on pay and contract reform. While the strength of belief in the NCA’s mission endured, ongoing uncertainty, confusion and pessimism around NCA pay and contract reform seemed an unsettling distraction and bad for morale.
- Workforce morale and confidence levels in the NCA’s leadership seemed lower than two years earlier.
- The pay and allowances of NCA International Liaison Officers needed reviewing.

Environment for our considerations

- 1.14 The work of NCA officers is important, difficult, complex and sometimes dangerous. The increasing challenge of serious and organised crime is being driven mainly by online connectivity and a growth in automated technology, as well as by opportunities for criminality arising from global instability.
- 1.15 In November 2024, the Government announced a programme of change to create a police service fit for the future. It committed to publishing a Police Reform White Paper. In addition, on 25 February 2025, the Prime Minister announced plans to publish a new National Security Strategy. These will both have implications for the NCA.
- 1.16 Underpinning these reviews is the multi-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), which the Government launched in July 2024. The CSR will set out plans for day-to-day spending for three years to the financial year ending (FYE) 2029, and for capital spending for four years to FYE 2030.
- 1.17 We would like to acknowledge our remit group for their invaluable work in protecting the nation. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the parties for engaging with us this year and for the high quality of their input, particularly the representative parties.

³ The NCA clarified that posts could not be changed to spot rates in year without HM Treasury approval. This, combined with comments in our 2024 Report, had been misinterpreted as the NCARRB itself blocking them. However, as an advisory non-departmental public body the NCARRB does not have this power. The NCARRB makes recommendations to the Home Secretary. It is for the Home Secretary to decide whether those recommendations are accepted.

Chapter 2 – Pay Reform, Pay Proposals and Recommendations for 2025/26

Introduction

- 2.1 In Chapter 1 we set out the guidance we had received in the remit letter from the Home Secretary. In this chapter we make our recommendations on the annual pay award for the NCA officers within our remit group and review NCA allowances. We also briefly consider the NCA's plans for pay reform. Our conclusions in this chapter are informed by our analysis of the economic context, NCA workforce, and morale and motivation (Appendix D), and the evidence that we received relating to our standing terms of reference (Appendix E).

Our observations last year

- 2.2 Last year we welcomed the NCA's submission of a business case to central government for pay reform but observed that it was long overdue. However, our knowledge of the proposals was limited as we had only received an embargoed high-level summary of the case and we were therefore unable to comment in detail on the substantive proposals. Nevertheless, we did question whether it would be possible for the Agency as currently constituted to undertake the pay reform it needed. We were concerned that the Agency's current ambitions for reform, as far as we were aware of them, had been constrained by the framework in which it currently operated. We set out our view that a different organisational form for the NCA should be considered to enable it to act flexibly to establish a single unified pay structure and set common terms and conditions in order to recruit staff with the skills it required.
- 2.3 We also advised that the Government would want to satisfy itself that the NCA's proposals for pay reform were sufficiently ambitious to enable the Agency to recruit and retain the staff it needed in order to lead the law enforcement community in tackling serious and organised crime (SOC) and the international dimension that underpinned it. We urged parties to identify comprehensive solutions rather than small adjustments and to take full account of any lessons to be learned from previous 'false starts' on pay reform. We also observed that a robust stakeholder management and communication plan would be critical to the success of any reform programme. We reiterated the strong view, which we had expressed in our 2023 Report, that the implementation of the NCA's pay reform programme should commence at pace during 2024.

Operational context for the 2025/26 pay round

- 2.4 The NCA described the changing nature of the SOC threat and told us the threat was increasing and becoming more harmful. The NCA and the Home Office said

that technological change was creating new opportunities for criminals. The NCA highlighted the National Strategic Assessment published in August 2024 and the role the Agency had been asked to play in delivering the Government's foundational pledge to secure the UK's borders and dismantle the criminal gangs that coordinated the flow of small boats crossing the channel. The Home Office and the NCA both highlighted the Agency's support to the New Border Security Command.

- 2.5 The Home Office noted that the Agency grew by around 4.9% between August 2023 and August 2024 and that attrition was falling, including in key commands such as Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT). However, it also expressed concern about the relative shrinkage of some operational commands in the NCA. The Home Office highlighted the mismatch between the market rate and allowances for some specialist roles and the NCA's rates.
- 2.6 The Home Office said that, as the UK's strategic leader in tackling SOC, the NCA had continued to develop its use of advanced technology and investigative techniques in order to keep pace with modern threats. The NCA explained that while the specialist skills required to deal with the changing threat and rapidly evolving technology involved in SOC were not unique, the Agency had to draw together a multitude of skills across three primary market sectors. These sectors were policing and the UK Intelligence Community, the private sector and the public sector including regulatory bodies. It told us that the NCA's requirements ranged from operational officers with a law enforcement background, to officers with digital and cyber skills to fight online crime, through to social workers who were needed to protect vulnerable individuals.
- 2.7 The NCA said all of the skills across its three primary market sectors came at a premium. It was a challenge for the Agency to recruit officers with such skills because its salaries did not compare favourably with those offered by the private sector, regulators, policing or the intelligence agencies. It described in detail the disparity between the NCA's pay and that of the police and it also outlined the challenges it faced in competing with the civil service. It reported that the differential in salaries between itself and the private sector was not outweighed by the Agency's pension arrangements. The NCA said it recognised it could not match private sector salaries, although it had taken steps to make wider benefits more comparable. The NCA set out evidence to show that, in key specialist roles, pay was the driving factor in officers leaving the Agency. The NCA highlighted the financial and operational implications of high turnover and described the challenges it faced in recruiting officers with specialist technical skills. The Home Office told us it strongly supported further significant investments in upskilling and training existing NCA officers, to enable them to develop critical digital and technical expertise. The NCA described in detail some of the initiatives it had already introduced. However, it also explained that the difficulties it faced in recruiting and retaining officers with certain specialist

skills necessitated the use of contingent labour or the outsourcing of services at significant cost to the Agency.

- 2.8 In oral evidence, the Home Office said that it was committed to supporting the NCA in its vital work of leading the operational response to SOC. It explained that in turn this would enable the Government to deliver on its missions to create Safer Streets, tackle violence against women and girls, and strengthen the UK's borders. The Home Office explained that there were two processes underway across government, in addition to work on the Police Reform White Paper, that had implications for the NCA. One was the strategic security review led by the Home Office and Cabinet Office. It said that this sat alongside and was complementary to the strategic defence review. The Home Office explained that it was the Government's intention to draw both strands together in a national security review and publish it by the end of June 2025. It said that appropriate levels of resource would be attached to the outcome of this work in the context of the CSR.
- 2.9 The Home Office stated that the Government was keen to underline the work done by the law enforcement agencies in the UK. It said that with regards to national security, the media tended to focus on the Ministry of Defence. However, its analysis had highlighted the important contribution made by the security services, counter-terrorism policing and the NCA to fundamentally ensuring UK border and national security. It said it was therefore vital to draw together such work into a coherent strategy with appropriate levels of resource.
- 2.10 The Home Office explained that, in addition, work on the Police Reform White Paper was underway. This would look again at the capabilities provided at local, regional and national level and the way they were coordinated.
- 2.11 In oral evidence, the NCA told us that it was exceeding its targets for the most impactful disruption operations and that the total number of disruptions had also increased. However, there were concerns about the sustainability of this work given the way the NCA was set up and funded. It also informed us that work on the Police Reform White Paper might have implications for the future operation of the NCA.

The National Strategic Assessment 2025 of Serious and Organised Crime⁴

- 2.12 The National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime provided an annual assessment of the SOC threat in the UK, focusing on changes during 2024. The assessment concluded that the SOC threat to the UK increased in 2024, albeit at a slower rate than previously. It reported that there had been continued increases in child sexual abuse, drug crimes, and illicit finance, and that the previous year's decreases in fraud and organised immigration crime had been reversed. The assessment explained that the firearms threat had remained suppressed following

⁴ NCA (March 2025), *The National Strategic Assessment 2025 of Serious and Organised Crime*. Available at: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/nsa-2025> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

the reduction in the previous year. In addition, the growth in cybercrime had been arrested, due to significant law enforcement disruptions. Nevertheless, the assessment recognised that the threat remained high and might increase again if criminals regrouped.

- 2.13 It reported that there had been no material change in the level of threat from modern slavery and human trafficking and organised acquisitive crime. The report noted that the previous year's assessment had observed that the societal shift to people living more of their lives online was being exploited by criminals in the form of cybercrime, fraud, and child sexual abuse. The assessment said that the threat was diversifying between and beyond these threats, with a growing overlap with online radicalisation to serious violence and extremism. It also highlighted technological trends, such as the increased adoption of artificial intelligence and easy access to communications channels with victims without content moderation or other safeguards. It explained that this was allowing offenders to scale their offending more readily. It said that at the same time the physical harms from SOC were growing with drug supply, consumption, and deaths all increasing. It reported that migrant deaths in the Channel were over six times higher than in 2023.
- 2.14 The assessment included a series of case studies on how the threat was being tackled. However, the assessment judged that there was more to do. It said the NCA and its partners needed to become more agile in responding to the evolving threat. It needed to use the advances in technology and other capabilities to greater effect and it should also build new partnerships in the UK and globally, including through seeking common cause with industry.

Pay proposals

- 2.15 The NCA proposed that it should receive a pay award equivalent to the headline police pay award for 2025/26 to ensure the gap between the pay of NCA and police officers did not widen. It also told us that it had budgeted for a 2.9% pay award effective from 1 August 2025. In oral evidence, the NCA told us its pay proposal was for an increase in basic pay in line with the pay award to the police service. The NCA described its current budgetary pressures. It said that 2.9% was as much as it could afford and all that HM Treasury would allow. The NCA added that it did not expect to secure any additional resources from the Home Office. However, it admitted that a pay award below that of the police service would be very problematic for the Agency. We received further correspondence from the NCA, after the oral evidence session, confirming that a pay award above 2.9% was unaffordable.
- 2.16 The Home Office emphasised that the Agency had stated in its evidence that its recommendations were affordable within its existing budget. It warned that any pay award that the NCA agreed for 2025/26 would have to be met from within the Agency's budget.

- 2.17 In oral evidence, the Home Office said that the key for 2025/26 was the NCA's commitment to ensuring that its pay offer did not fall further behind police pay. It reported that the pay gap between the two organisations was growing by almost 1% each year. It said that what was initially a marginal impact would get bigger over time if repeated in future years. It asserted that the NCA needed to stop the pay gap growing as it created problems for the Agency in trying to recruit high-calibre, adaptable, resilient and more diverse mid-career police officers. The Home Office said it did not want the NCA's current recruitment challenges to be exacerbated. It emphasised that it did not want the pay gap between the NCA and the police service to grow in the short term. It said that the pay gap between a Grade 1 officer in the NCA and a police chief superintendent had grown significantly since the Agency's inception. It observed that the NCA's pay flexibility case to HM Treasury was designed to address this in the medium and long term. The Home Office emphasised that a lower pay award for NCA officers than for police officers in 2025/26 would be a very challenging outcome for the NCA.
- 2.18 However, the Home Office also pointed out that the UK was facing a challenging economic environment. It said that it had accepted our recommendations last year and that this had given workers the first real-terms pay rise for many years. It said that this decision was the right thing to do but it had not been made lightly. It drew attention to the Government's inheritance of a £22 billion spending pressure on the public finances this year and that wage growth was in a downward trend. It said it was vital the Government ensured that pay awards were fair for both workers and the taxpayer. It said it was imperative that the NCA pay award struck a balance between supporting the recruitment and retention of talented and specialised staff and remaining affordable within the bounds of the NCA's existing budget. It emphasised that there was no scope for additional funding from the Home Office to support a pay award above the affordability parameters set out in the NCA's evidence.
- 2.19 The Home Office, in oral evidence, said that the outcome of the CSR would not be known until June 2025. It reported that the NCA was facing the same financial pressures as other departments, although it might secure additional resources in relation to small boats and illegal immigration. It explained that standing still in budgetary terms would be very hard for the Agency because all its costs were continuing to rise. It pointed out that if the NCA did receive a significant increase for tackling small boats, this would mean that there would be a significant extra task for the organisation. It added that work on the Police Reform White Paper was also underway, which might have implications for the future operation of the NCA.
- 2.20 The FDA told us it was seeking an increase of 5% to salaries or the same increase as recommended for the police, whichever was the greater. It pointed out that additional resources had been provided to departments in the 2024 Autumn Budget. It expected that much of the increased funding would be used for pay.

- 2.21 In oral evidence, the FDA explained that the gap between police pay and that of the NCA remained a significant issue. It said that the Agency could not afford to fall further behind police pay. It pointed out that its proposal that pay should be uplifted by 5% reflected pay settlement data. It said that when it had produced its written evidence, median settlements in the private sector had been around 5%.
- 2.22 The FDA recognised that the Agency would face a real challenge to afford a 5% uplift and would need to review all its internal costs and expenditure. However, the FDA pointed out that the threat from SOC did not stand still and that there was a significant annual cost to the country. It argued that if the Government was serious about tackling serious and organised crime, then the Agency needed the appropriate skills to adapt and tackle the evolving threat effectively. It said that to attract such skills, the Agency needed to be able to offer an appropriate salary.
- 2.23 The PCS told us that as part of its national campaign it was seeking pay restoration for the real-terms reduction in pay, national pay equality across departments, a living wage of £15 per hour and a cost-of-living rise with an inflation-proofed increase, plus pay restoration.
- 2.24 In support of their proposals, the FDA and PCS drew attention to the real-terms decline in public sector pay and the continuing gap between the pay of NCA officers and that of the police service. The FDA and PCS pointed to a report from the National Audit Office which had found that, across almost all civil service grades, real-terms median salaries had fallen since 2013.
- 2.25 The PCS also informed us that it did not accept that the 2023/24 pay round was concluded as its members still needed a resolution to the unpaid £1,500 non-consolidated payment.
- 2.26 The NCOA requested that, as a minimum, the 2025/26 NCA pay award should be aligned with that of the police service. It noted that a higher award would help to close the pay gap between the NCA and the police service. In its oral evidence, it said that the Agency had allocated 2.9% within its FYE 2026 budget for an uplift to pay. However, the NCOA asserted that it was very important that NCA pay did not slip further behind that of the police service. The NCOA was therefore recommending a pay award in line with that of the police service. It said that an 8% uplift to pay would address a significant amount of the existing disparity between police pay and that of Grade 5 officers. However, it acknowledged that such an uplift would be significantly above the NCA's affordability envelope. On the other hand, the NCOA judged that there was scope within the Agency to deliver efficiencies to offset the cost of a pay award above 2.9%.
- 2.27 In addition, the NCOA said it was proposing that starting salaries for Grade 6 officers be raised to £28,000. It explained that one of the reasons for the proposal was that spot rate roles were not available at Grade 6.

Geographical allowances

London and the South East

- 2.28 The NCA described the disparity between its London Weighting Allowance and the location allowances of the police, the civil service and parts of the public sector. It proposed that the London Weighting Allowance and the South East Allowance should be uplifted by a higher percentage than the main pay award to reduce the gap with police allowances, particularly those offered by the Metropolitan Police Service.
- 2.29 The Home Office pointed out that location allowances should be specifically intended to compensate employees for the higher cost of living in certain geographic areas, such as London, rather than being utilised as a targeted recruitment method. It observed that a more appropriate method would be a targeted retention strategy focussed on role-specific incentives to address the compensation gaps without undermining the broader framework of location allowances.
- 2.30 In oral evidence, the Home Office told us that raising NCA location allowances in line with police London and South East Allowances for recruitment and retention purposes was a blanket measure and blunt tool. The Home Office said it hoped that the NCA would instead identify areas struggling with recruitment and retention and then target roles within those areas to uplift them where they could.
- 2.31 The FDA told us it was seeking an increase of 5% to location allowances or the same increase as recommended for the police, whichever was the greater. In response to the NCA's proposal that location allowances should be uplifted by a higher percentage than the pay award, the FDA told us in oral evidence that its priority was the increase in consolidated pay rather than allowances.
- 2.32 The PCS proposed that officers working in a specific NCA site in the south east who were not currently eligible for the South East Allowance, should receive a geographic allowance that matched it. It also highlighted that its national pay campaign was pushing for London Weighting to be a minimum of £5,000 per year.
- 2.33 The NCOA again proposed that the current NCA London Weighting Allowance and NCA South East Allowance should be replaced by a zonal model for payment of geographical allowances in London and South East England. We described this proposal in detail in our last report.
- 2.34 The NCOA told us in oral evidence that it was not in favour of the NCA's proposal that location allowances be raised by a higher percentage than the pay award. It pointed out that this would only apply to London and the South East and would have a negative impact on morale across the Agency as a whole, as it risked reducing the budget available for the main pay award. The NCOA remained committed to its zonal approach for allowances.

Northern Ireland

- 2.35 Officers in the PSNI receive the Northern Ireland Transitional Allowance (NITA). The NCOA proposed that NCA officers based in Belfast should receive a geographical allowance aligned to, and which should subsequently track, the NITA. The PCS also set out its concerns about the allowances for NCA officers in Northern Ireland and the NCA's response to our 2024 Report.
- 2.36 The NCA told us that it had reviewed the allowances of NCA officers in Northern Ireland, in response to the request in our last report, with a view to those officers who were subject to similar risks to the PSNI officers receiving the same allowance as PSNI officers. The NCA explained that it undertook a study including comprehensive research with comparator organisations. However, it concluded that there was not a justification for introducing or increasing an allowance. The NCA provided us with more detail regarding the study in oral evidence.
- 2.37 The NCOA also told us in oral evidence that it had seen the results of the NCA's review of the Northern Ireland allowance and did not accept its conclusions. The NCOA said that its understanding was that the NITA was a reflection of the stress and difficulties placed on officers and their families. The NCOA pointed out that many of the NCA's recruits in Northern Ireland were former PSNI officers who still faced the same level of difficulties and stress as when they were police officers. The NCOA also said that the comparators used by the NCA in its study were not appropriate. It explained that its position was that all NCA officers in Northern Ireland should receive the NITA. It pointed out that such an approach would facilitate movement within the NCA in Northern Ireland and support career development.

International Liaison Officers

- 2.38 The NCOA proposed that the NCA should conduct a comprehensive review of all NCA International Liaison Officer (ILO) allowances. ILOs work in fixed-term posts to further the NCA and wider UK Government interests across the world.
- 2.39 The NCA, in oral evidence, said ILOs were not considered a top priority for pay reform. It explained that the allowances were not included in the NCA's pay and contract reform proposals. The Agency told us that it did not experience any difficulties recruiting ILOs.

Other allowances

- 2.40 The Home Office observed that the NCA needed to assess the effectiveness of its Recruitment and Retention Allowances (RRAs) closely. It added that market allowances for DDaT roles could exceed the NCA's rates by as much as £15,000, especially in senior roles. The Home Office informed us that this disparity had added to recruitment challenges in the area and had led to the NCA's heavy reliance on contingent labour.

- 2.41 The NCA told us that its non-consolidated pay pot accounted for 1% of the overall wage bill, which was smaller than that of many civil service departments whose pots averaged 2%. It explained that the pot was used to fund its RRAs. These allowances were allocated to officers to encourage them to remain in hard-to-fill roles. It told us that these were low-value payments, with an average payment of £1,900 a year. It observed that this was insufficient to support the necessary recruitment and retention. It said that some roles that attracted an RRA experienced greater turnover than the NCA average.
- 2.42 On 8 May we received a further letter from the NCA proposing a change to the Shift Allowance. It explained that it required greater flexibility to ensure that resources were available at the times required by the business. The NCA therefore proposed the introduction of an additional level for the Shift Allowance that would cover rosters for an 18/7 period for certain teams. It said that the 18/7 allowance would be set at 20% of consolidated pay. The Agency also proposed an uplift to the allowance for officers on a 24/7 shift pattern, from 20% to 30% of consolidated pay.
- 2.43 The PCS again highlighted problems with the RRAs. It told us that RRA payments, along with spot rates, remained a sticking plaster solution to a deeper underlying problem consisting of decades of pay erosion. The NCOA again proposed a redesign of the non-consolidated pay pot to ensure that payments targeted hard-to-fill roles.
- 2.44 The NCOA told us that it favoured changes to the shift pay system. The NCOA proposed a 'building blocks' approach, whereby consolidated payments were between 10% and 30% of consolidated pay, depending on the level of inconvenience and disruption linked to the role. In response to the NCA's letter of 8 May, the NCOA wrote setting out its support for the NCA's proposed changes to the Shift Allowance and outlining the benefits the change would deliver.
- 2.45 The PCS told us that shift payments in the NCA were still behind other government departments and law enforcement agencies requiring similar attendance patterns. The PCS highlighted the findings of an internal review, and sought a 30% shift allowance for control centre staff. In response to the NCA's letter of 8 May, the PCS informed the NCARRB secretariat that it had not had an opportunity to consider the issue of the possible winners and losers that might result from implementation of the proposals. It remained concerned that such measures detracted from the negotiations on the wider pay and contract reform proposals.
- 2.46 The NCOA and PCS proposed that the current rate of the On-call Allowance should be increased to £35 per period and its scope expanded to cover more grades. The PCS explained it was also seeking a security allowance for officers with higher security clearance.

- 2.47 The PCS also told us it was seeking at least a 15% increase to the Border Investigator Allowance. It explained that a number of investigators had been transferred from Border Force to the NCA and that in 2017 they were assimilated onto Agency terms and conditions. It told us that the Allowance had not been raised since it was established.
- 2.48 The PCS also informed us that it was seeking annual leave pro-rated for the extra hours worked for staff in spot rated roles. It proposed that the sickness rates of those in spot-rated roles should be reviewed in order to understand the consequences for officers of working longer hours. It said that as part of its national campaign it was seeking an increase in annual leave and a reduction in working hours for all PCS members.

Pay reform

- 2.49 The NCA told us that it had submitted its pay and contract business reform case to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. The case proposed a multi-year transformational reform package. The Agency hoped that the proposals would enable it to address the workforce challenges it faced including:
- problems with recruitment and retention in hard-to-fill roles;
 - tensions in industrial relations following previous delays to pay awards and low employee motivation and engagement;
 - legal risks associated with equal pay claims (estimated to be over £200 million risk); and
 - lack of workforce agility and movement between roles; and a lack of pay parity with policing and the UK Intelligence Community.
- 2.50 The Agency explained that its intention was to implement the reforms via collective agreement as the changes and savings were contingent on contractual reform and would entail removing the vast majority of overtime and on-call payments and changes to hours worked. Therefore, the NCA said that it would need to secure majority agreement to the reforms from its whole workforce through collective bargaining.
- 2.51 The NCA told us in oral evidence that it regretted being unable to confirm cross-government agreement on pay and contract reform. It explained that if the proposals were rejected, the NCA would hold discussions with the Government on bringing an alternative plan to us. In those circumstances, the NCA would be proposing measures around increasing the non-consolidated pay pot to 1.5% and the reform of shift allowances. The NCA expressed confidence that, if the proposals secured Whitehall approval, pay and contract reform was deliverable and that the workforce would agree to it.

- 2.52 The Home Office observed that balancing the tension between civil service and police pay was at the heart of the issue facing the NCA. It emphasised that satisfying both might prove impossible without significant long-term reform.
- 2.53 In oral evidence, the Home Office confirmed it had provided political backing for the NCA pay flexibility case to HM Treasury for pay and contract reform. It reported that discussions between the NCA, HM Treasury, the Cabinet Office and the Home Office were ongoing. It said it was hopeful that it would be resolved in the very near future. The Home Office emphasised that it was very supportive of the aims of the NCA in wanting to resolve its longstanding pay issues.
- 2.54 The FDA welcomed the NCA's active pursuit of its pay reform business case. It again told us that the priority for the reform package needed to be the enabling of pay progression. The FDA explained that it favoured a system which enabled progression through pay ranges based on officers developing competency within a role. It told us that such an approach would facilitate better visibility of how decisions on pay were linked to the knowledge, capability and experience of each staff member.
- 2.55 In oral evidence, the FDA told us it was looking for a solution that would deliver a sustainable improvement and include a mechanism that offered some form of pay progression. It said that it needed to be a structure that staff would understand and offered adequate reward as people progressed. Ideally, pay reform in the civil service and the NCA should reduce churn and encourage stability.
- 2.56 The NCOA highlighted the continued slow pace of reform. The NCOA told us that it had been another year of wait and see and that the NCA had still not shared its future pay reform plans with either its trade unions or workforce. The NCOA said the majority of officers remained on the standard pay ranges without any means of progression.
- 2.57 The NCOA proposed the revaluation of the NCA pay ranges at Grades 1–5 in line with equivalent police officer ranks. It advised that this should be combined with the introduction of a contractual pay progression mechanism across Grades 1–6 and the assimilation of officers onto the pay range at the appropriate point. It also sought the revaluation of NCA Grade 6 pay with a minimum starting salary of £28,000 and the assimilation of officers at the appropriate point in the updated range.
- 2.58 The NCOA told us in oral evidence that there had been no substantive engagement with the Agency on pay reform in the last twelve months. There was no sense that the Agency had developed an alternative approach if pay reform was not approved. It said that around a year ago, the Agency had shared with the NCOA a set of principles on which pay reform would be based. It explained that it had received no further details since then and there had been limited engagement.

- 2.59 The PCS explained that it was not sighted on the details of the proposed pay and contract reform. However, it said the Director General of the NCA had hinted that 40 hours per week would become the standard hours to justify any extra pay. It pointed out that its members would be expecting a significant pay increase in exchange for working an extra four weeks (156 hours) plus unpaid lunch per year. It argued that it should be involved at the earliest stage of pay and contract reform and that all parties should be made aware of proposed timings for the reform and any impact on the 2025 pay award. The PCS said it wanted differentiated pay and spot rates to be replaced by a fairer and long-term pay framework. It told us it was seeking a 37-hour working week for all staff. It said that its members would welcome a long-term Agency pay strategy which included the harmonisation of working hours and a reduction of spot rate roles to a 37-hour working week.
- 2.60 In oral evidence the PCS told us that there was a sense of déjà vu in the Agency and of a never-ending transitional period on pay reform. It said that the current message from NCA management was that its pay and contract reform proposals were being considered by HM Treasury but with no indication on whether they would be accepted. The PCS observed that it was frustrating that it was yet another year of waiting. It told us that NCA engagement with the PCS on pay and contract reform was minimal. It reported that the NCA Director General had spoken in generalities at NCA staff open forums about a 40-hour working week and a review of location pay but the detail had been embargoed.

The pay process and the role of the NCARRB

- 2.61 The NCA informed us that it was currently working closely with the Home Office to support the review of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. It said that work would include opportunities for codifying our responsibilities for the whole workforce. The FDA told us it welcomed the review.

Our comment and recommendations on pay and reform

Pay reform

- 2.62 The NCA has shared with us a variety of plans for pay reform over the last nine years. In our last report, we welcomed the NCA's submission of a business case to central government for pay reform. We also observed that it was long overdue and that further delays were not acceptable. At the time that we received evidence from parties regarding a pay award for the NCA for 2025/26, the pay flexibility case for pay and contract reform was still with central government.
- 2.63 We note that the NCA has managed to grow its workforce between August 2023 and August 2024 and that attrition across the Agency, including in some technical commands such as DDaT, has fallen. However, we observe that there is a difference in view between the NCA and the Home Office about how far this is due to the internal efforts of the NCA and the extent to which it can be attributed to

changes in the wider labour market. Notwithstanding that, the enduring problems facing the Agency remain. We note that both the Agency and the Home Office are clear that the NCA struggles to recruit certain specialisms and mid-career police officers.

- 2.64 While pay reform proposals are being considered, the long-term structural deficiencies in the NCA's existing pay system remain. These include a dual and complicated pay system of spot rates and standard pay scales, the absence of a mechanism for pay progression and unduly long pay ranges. As the NCA pointed out in its evidence, there is a pay imbalance within the Agency. We are concerned that experienced NCA officers remain on the grade minimum while some newly recruited candidates from a variety of labour markets join higher up in the pay range. We agree with the NCA that this can create morale issues for NCA officers who do not have any form of pay progression. We observe that the NCA is probably correct to conclude that this leapfrogging adversely impacts staff retention.
- 2.65 In our view, this two-tier pay system continues to undermine the NCA's ambition of achieving its 'One NCA' policy. We remain concerned about the implications of the current pay systems for equality. We note that the NCA estimates that the legal risks associated with equal pay claims amount to over £200 million.
- 2.66 Notwithstanding the fact that NCA officers received a slightly higher percentage uplift to their pay in 2024 than police officers in England and Wales, we observe that across most grades the pay gap between the Agency and its main comparators, including the police, continues to grow in monetary terms. We note that the Home Office and NCA evidence highlight the difficulties the Agency faces in recruiting mid-career police officers which are key to its operational teams. The challenges the Agency faces in terms of recruiting niche technical skills in competition with the private sector is very significant. We were concerned by the large turnover rates, in some cases over 30%, in some specialist NCA teams that receive Recruitment and Retention Allowances. We also share the Home Office's concern about the amount of resources being expended on contingent labour by the NCA. We were struck by the Home Office evidence which stated that 27% (£99 million) of the Agency's total pay bill of around £368 million could be attributed to contingent labour and professional services. We assume that this reflects the NCA's reliance on these groups to undertake some of the core work of the Agency.
- 2.67 We note the NCA's position that it recognises the need for reform and shares our desire to address this in order to resolve a number of challenges. In addition to the legal risks mentioned above, the NCA highlights difficulties with recruitment and retention in its 'hard-to-fill' roles, the lack of pay parity with both policing and the UK Intelligence Community and a lack of workforce agility. We note it also hopes that pay reform will reduce the tension in industrial relations caused by delays to previous pay awards. We observe the NCA's difficulties in recruiting key technical skills because of competition with the private sector are considerable and tackling

this problem effectively through pay reform will be a very significant challenge. We observe that this is particularly important given, as the Home Office told us, “the Agency must leverage technology and the opportunities afforded by artificial intelligence, using these tools to balance increasing costs and drive future productivity”.

- 2.68 In the absence of central government agreement to the NCA’s pay and contract reform business case, we requested that no details of the proposals be included in the evidence submitted to us for this pay round. Therefore, as in our last report, we are unable to comment in detail on the substantive proposals or endorse them. However, we observe that it is vital that these proposals are in lock step with the NCA’s workforce strategy which we understand from our visits programme is being refreshed.
- 2.69 Since our last report, the Government has announced its plans for a Police Reform White Paper. We understand that one of the focuses for that work is considering national capabilities and we assume the role of the NCA within that. The Government has said that it will introduce changes to ensure that policing has the national capabilities it needs to fight fast-changing, complex crimes which cut across police force boundaries. In our previous reports, we highlighted the evidence we have received in recent years regarding the organisational constraints the NCA has faced in attempting to drive forward pay reform. We hope in thinking about the national capabilities needed by UK law enforcement, the Government will consider whether a different organisational form for the NCA would better enable it to act flexibly to set common terms and conditions and to establish a single unified pay structure in order to recruit staff with the skills it requires. In our view, consideration would also need to be given to how far the current regulations governing public sector pay are constraining the Agency’s ability to recruit some of the skills it requires.
- 2.70 It is our strong view that in considering the NCA’s current proposals for pay reform, the Government will want to satisfy itself that the solutions proposed are both comprehensive and sufficiently ambitious to enable the Agency to recruit and retain the staff it needs to deliver the Government’s priorities on serious and organised crime. It may also wish to consider whether the pay reform proposals are in line with the principles for NCA pay reform we set out in our 2022 Report. As in our previous reports, we again emphasise that a single pay structure and set of terms and conditions within the Agency are required. That pay structure should also facilitate movement across the wider law enforcement community. Greater alignment of NCA pay with police pay is, in our view, key to enabling officers to transfer to other law enforcement organisations at all stages of their careers. More broadly, we observe that movement would also be facilitated by universal accreditation standards for key qualifications.

- 2.71 However, we also note that the PCS has told us that the Director General of the NCA had hinted that 40 hours per week would become the standard hours to justify any extra pay. We raised our concerns about this in our previous report. We pointed out that one of our reservations about spot rates was that NCA officers who were moved to that pay structure were obliged to increase their hours from 37 to 40 hours. Our view remains that such a move would be out of step with developments in the wider labour market. We also note the point made to us by the PCS that a move to 40 hours is likely to have implications for annual leave. We recognise that the work of the NCA means there are a number of security constraints on the Agency. Nevertheless, our position remains that to attract and retain high-calibre applicants it should have due regard to the attractions of new working practices, hybrid and flexible working and shorter hours.
- 2.72 Finally, we again emphasise the need for urgent action on NCA pay reform. We observe that the ongoing delay is inevitably reflected in the continuing cost to the Government and Agency of the NCA's expenditure on contingent labour. As the NCOA observed in its evidence, NCA expenditure on contingent labour is more than twice the cost of a potential 2.9% NCA pay award in 2025/26. We note that other departments which are significantly larger than the NCA, such as HM Revenue & Customs and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, have managed to reform their pay systems. We understand that a number of options may be under consideration in relation to the future organisational form of counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime fighting capabilities in the UK and we encourage the Government to seize this opportunity to also deal with the pay and contract issues facing the NCA. We are concerned that the current pay arrangements are divisive, dysfunctional and may inhibit the NCA's operational effectiveness. In tackling these issues, the lessons of previous organisational changes should be taken into account.
- 2.73 Given what we heard from officers during our visits programme, we are concerned that the continuing delays to pay and contract reform are damaging morale which will have implications for both retention and the delivery of the Agency's core mission. While we welcomed the accounts from the NCA and the Home Office regarding the effectiveness of the Agency's operational activity, we point out that successfully reforming pay will boost morale which is a key driver of productivity, thereby enhancing the Agency's ability to address SOC in both the UK and internationally.
- 2.74 We understand that, to date, the NCA has taken the view that it would be better not to share its reform proposals with staff and the trade unions in advance of securing the agreement of central government. However, we judge that this lack of communication risks heightening staff concerns about the proposed changes and thereby risks further damaging morale. We reiterate the point we made in our previous reports about the trade unions being a valuable source of innovative ideas

and that they provide a direct line to frontline officers. We observe that in our discussions with the unions they were keen to engage with the NCA and contribute to the reform process.

2025/26 pay award

2.75 In making our pay award recommendation we considered a number of factors. We have assessed the pay proposals we received in evidence from parties in the context of our terms of reference, the Home Secretary's remit letter and the evidence submitted.

Economic factors

2.76 The wider economy including the increased cost of living and the level of pay settlements are factors in our deliberations. We note that inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we continue to emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, and officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. The CPI rate of inflation was 3.5% in the year to April 2025 and the CPIH (including owner occupiers' housing costs) rate was 4.1%. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and the Bank of England expect CPI inflation to peak in quarter three of 2025 (the OBR at 3.7% and the Bank of England at 3.5%) before declining again. We observe that energy price inflation is higher than the overall rate. In addition, there continues to be uncertainty about the economic climate particularly given recent geopolitical events.

Labour market

2.77 Recent data suggest that the labour market continues to weaken, with vacancies falling and the unemployment rate rising. The OBR considered that the increase in employer National Insurance contributions was likely to be contributing to falling recruitment and rising redundancies. However, average earnings growth remains strong: annual growth in Average Weekly Earnings excluding bonuses was 5.6% for both the whole economy and the private sector in the three months to March 2025. The OBR expected average earnings growth of 4.3% in 2025. Median pay settlements ranged between 3.0% and 3.8% in the three months to April 2025. These were predominantly in the private sector. We are also conscious of the 2025/26 pay awards recently announced by the Government for other parts of the public sector. These included: 3.6% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 4% for teachers, prison staff and most doctors (with resident doctors getting an average award of 5.4%); and 4.5% for the armed forces.

NCA operating environment

2.78 The evidence we have received from the NCA and the information set out in the Strategic Assessment of SOC for 2025 shows that the threat has been increasing and becoming more harmful. We note the Assessment's conclusion that physical

harms from SOC were growing, with drug supply, consumption, and deaths all increasing.

- 2.79 We are also mindful of the evidence from the Home Office that the NCA plays a critical role in the Government's mission to tackle SOC and the evolving digital and cross-border advances in criminality. We are conscious that the Home Office told us that the NCA's contribution, alongside that of partner agencies, was fundamental to ensuring UK border and national security. We also note the Strategic Assessment's judgement that the NCA and its partners must become more agile in responding to the evolving threat from SOC and that they needed to use advances in technology and other capabilities to greater effect. We observe that, alongside the right technology, the NCA needs people with the right skills to tackle this challenge and we remain concerned that the Agency's ability to recruit and retain specialist skills will make this more difficult for the NCA to achieve.

Competitiveness with key comparators

- 2.80 We recognise that the wide range of skill sets and specialisms the NCA requires means it needs to attract candidates from a diverse set of labour markets. We note that since 2022 the NCA has been recruiting 25% of candidates from policing, 24% from the private sector and 28% from the civil service. We also note the civil service pay remit guidance for 2025/26 which states that departments are able to make average pay awards up to 3.25% with flexibility to use an extra 0.5% to target specific departmental workforce issues. However, we recognise that, in spite of this diversity, the Home Office and the NCA attach great importance to the police as a key comparator for the Agency. We observe that the NCA has told us that the primary aim of the Agency's pay and contract reform is to reduce the gap in pay between the NCA and police.
- 2.81 We have given weight to the evidence provided by the NCA that the difference in pay between itself and the police service has grown during the last decade. We are conscious that the 2024/25 pay award, in which the NCA received an award that was 0.25% higher than policing, has meant the gap was reduced slightly in percentage terms for all grades except Grade 1, but that in monetary terms the gap increased for all grades except Grade 4 (where it narrowed by just £60). We observe that the maximum of the Grade 5 pay scale is currently 7.6% (nearly £3,700) lower than the top of the police constable pay scale. We are mindful that the NCA is seeking an annual uplift in line with the pay award for policing. The Agency has emphasised that this is necessary, in part, to improve the shortfall in NCA officer pay at each grade compared with policing, due to the lack of pay progression in the NCA. We have also given weight to the evidence we received from the Home Office and the trade unions which placed great emphasis on the importance of the NCA's pay not falling further behind police pay.

2.82 We recognise that the annual pay award will not substantively increase the competitiveness of NCA pay in relation to the specialist skills that are highly prized by the private sector. However, we observe that an award above median pay settlements may go some way to prevent the pay gap with the private sector getting significantly wider. We also note the relatively positive position of the Agency in relation to civil service pay. The Home Office evidence emphasises that at Grades 1 and 2 the NCA median salary is higher than the civil service equivalent median and at Grades 3 and 4, the NCA median of £48,900 significantly exceeds the civil service median of £39,940. At the same time, we are also aware of the challenges the Agency faces in terms of the disparity between its recruitment and retention allowances and grading policy and those of the civil service. We observe that these are issues which need to be tackled through pay reform.

Recruitment and retention

2.83 We agree with the NCA that its workforce is critical to its success. We note the evidence that the NCA managed to grow by around 4.9% between August 2023 and August 2024 and that attrition has fallen, including in key commands such as DDaT. However, we note the Home Office's evidence that the DDaT command continues to face challenges in attracting and retaining the skilled professionals it requires to counter sophisticated criminality effectively. We also note that financial pressures have led to a recruitment freeze in the NCA during the final months of FYE 2025 and that turnover and attrition rates remain high in a range of intelligence and investigation teams, such as biometrics, technical operations, armed operation units and covert support, as well as enabler teams. We share the Home Office's concern that Intelligence and Investigation commands have seen a reduction of around 2% within the last year.

2.84 The constant churn of staff in key areas has important operational and financial consequences for the Agency. As we said in paragraph 2.66, we are increasingly concerned about the amount of resources being expended on contingent labour by the NCA. We also remain concerned that the Agency continues to struggle to recruit mid-service police officers. We note that such experienced officers are critical to enabling the NCA to meet its unique operational priorities. We understand that the Agency needs a mixture of those with experience from the police service at all levels and home-grown recruits to deal with its ever-widening range of responsibilities. It also needs an increasingly diverse workforce in order to enhance its operational effectiveness. The ability to recruit experienced mid-service police officers from a range of communities would help strengthen the Agency's frontline capabilities. We have given weight to the evidence we received from the Home Office that the increasing disparity with police pay presents a real challenge in retaining officers who bring critical expertise. We are mindful that the Home Office has asserted that the gap is an issue for the Agency in trying to recruit high-calibre, adaptable, resilient, mid-career police officers. We accept the Home Office's view that bridging this pay divide would ensure the Agency can sustain the demands on its operational

commands and in the long run reduce pressures on the Agency's budget. In addition, we observe that the Agency's current inability to recruit mid-career police officers also has adverse implications for the wider diversity of the NCA.

Morale and motivation

- 2.85 Good morale drives productivity and supports retention. In reaching a pay recommendation for 2025/26, we are aware of evidence that morale remains low. Morale and motivation can be damaged by a failure to take adequate action on pay. A pay award that is judged unfair by NCA officers, particularly in comparison with the police and other parts of the public sector, will do nothing to ameliorate the existing low state of morale and motivation. The 2022/23 and 2023/24 pay awards for the NCA were significantly delayed and, as we observed in our last report, this undermined staff morale and damaged industrial relations. We were pleased that the 2024/25 pay award was paid on time. We note the satisfaction rate for pay and benefits in the NCA's Civil Service People Survey was 34% which was 13 percentage points above the 2023 data. We observe that the pay and benefits theme remained the lowest scoring of the themes in 2024 but that it came into line with the civil service benchmark. We point out that it is very important that the Agency and central government do everything they can to ensure future pay awards reach staff on time on 1 August each year.
- 2.86 We note that, according to the survey, around a quarter of respondents wanted to leave the NCA either as soon as possible or within the next twelve months, which is similar to responses from 2022 and 2023 but around 2 percentage points higher than in 2021. We observe that as in previous years, the most common reason given for this intention was better pay. However, a similar number of respondents cited poor leadership as their reason for wanting to leave. The most common reason given in exit interviews by those leaving the NCA remains career development and promotion. We observe that pay, as in 2023, remained the fifth most important reason given by officers for leaving the Agency. That said, we observe that the desire for a pay rise may have been driving external promotions given the absence of pay progression in the Agency. We point out again that on our visits programme, we heard that the same problem was leading staff to seek internal promotion, often before they were ready.

'One NCA' policy

- 2.87 We note that the remit letter we received from the Home Secretary again asked us to give consideration to the Agency's 'One NCA' policy in formulating a pay recommendation for the Agency. We note the Home Office's view, with which we strongly agree, that it is crucial that all staff, both those with and without operational powers are treated equitably in matters of pay.
- 2.88 We are aware that NCA teams often consist of a blend of officers, with backgrounds in the civil service, police, intelligence community and private sector. We were

struck by the evidence we received from the NCA regarding the pay imbalance in the Agency. We understand that due to pay differences in the respective markets, the pay of new recruits may vary significantly when securing a role in the NCA. However, we share the NCA's concern that the absence of pay progression means that experienced NCA officers remain on the grade minimum while some newly recruited candidates join higher up in the pay range. We agree with the NCA that this creates morale issues for NCA officers on the grade minimum and adversely impacts staff retention.

- 2.89 Therefore, with regard to the annual pay award, we strongly agree with the Agency that all its officers should receive the same annual uplift to pay. We observe that to do otherwise, would further undermine the cohesion of the Agency. However, as we have said in previous reports, creating a unified pay structure for all staff should be a central priority for the forthcoming pay reform as, in our view, that is the key to the successful delivery of the 'One NCA' policy.

Pay reform

- 2.90 As we set out in paragraph 2.68 above, we have not been briefed on the detail of the NCA's pay reform proposals. This means we have not been able to create a coherent package for change by aligning our recommendation for a pay award for 2025/26 with the pay reform proposals. However, in formulating a pay award, we have given weight to the NCA's assertion that the primary aim of the Agency's pay and contract reform is to reduce the pay gap between the NCA and police.
- 2.91 We also considered carefully the argument presented by the NCA that its pay was losing pace in monetary terms with that of the police service, despite Agency pay awards over the past three years equivalent to 5%, 7% and 5%. This was due to the higher salaries in the police service. We observe that the 2024 award for the NCA, which was 0.25% higher than the award received by the police service, was the first step on the road to addressing that issue.

Affordability

- 2.92 We note that as part of the 2024 Spending Review, the NCA received a £58 million uplift to its core budget, increasing the Agency's total budget for FYE 2026 to almost £1 billion. However, we recognise the need for the Agency to invest in new technology and the financial pressures on the organisation that the NCA and the Home Office set out in their evidence. We are also aware that additional funding, which would benefit the NCA, is being sought through the CSR to support work on the Government's priority of tackling the risks posed by small boats and illegal immigration, although we observe that such funding is likely to place extra responsibilities on the NCA. Given that the outcome of the CSR will not be announced until later in June, the Agency's medium-term financial trajectory remains unclear at the time we submit our report.

- 2.93 We note that the NCA has told us in its written evidence that it has budgeted for a 2.9% pay award effective from 1 August 2025. We also note that each 1% increase in pay and location allowances in 2025/26 would cost £1.7 million including employers' National Insurance and superannuation.
- 2.94 We note that both the Home Office and HM Treasury have emphasised that there would be no additional funding available from HM Treasury for a pay award above the amount budgeted for by the Agency. We understand from the Home Office that any pay award that the NCA agrees in 2025/26 will have to be met from within the Agency's budget.
- 2.95 We are aware of the Agency's assertion that it recognises that pay awards must strike a careful balance in recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, while ensuring affordability and delivering value for the taxpayer. We also note the Home Office's view that workforce spend must be targeted and cost effective to ensure value for money for the UK taxpayer. However, we observe that the Home Office's comments were made in the context of the Agency's spend on contingent labour. We are therefore conscious that the Agency needs a pay award that does not further reduce the competitiveness of its pay, and thereby increase its requirement for yet more contingent labour.
- 2.96 We are conscious that the current financial position and higher inflation in recent years have already led to the NCA reprioritising its budgets and adopting efficiency and cashable savings targets. We are also aware of the Agency's assessment any further reprioritisation to fund the 2025/26 pay award will impact on the NCA's ability to deliver the priorities set out by the Government including the degradation of the most harmful organised crime groups, and its leadership of the national operational response to SOC in the UK. However, we note that the Home Office told us that in the event of a pay award of above 2.9% it would look to the NCA to identify trade-offs to release additional resources to fund the award while protecting operational delivery. The Home Office emphasised that such decisions were a matter for the NCA but the Agency might consider making further trade-offs in FYE 2026 in its 6,000-strong workforce; for example, by reducing the proportion of staff not involved in purely operational work. The Home Office said that it might be able to save £3–4 million. We also note that the Home Office's written evidence appeared to raise questions as to whether NCA workforce spend was sufficiently targeted and cost effective to ensure value for money and it highlighted a possible imbalance in staffing that might be diverting significant resources away from junior grades in critical roles. However, we note that in contrast after oral evidence the NCA wrote again confirming its previous evidence that a 2.9% pay award was the most it could afford.
- 2.97 In conclusion, given the different evidence we have received, reaching a view on affordability is not straightforward. However, in addition to the evidence we have received from the Home Office, the NCA itself suggested that we consider raising

location allowances by a higher percentage than the pay award, and the NCA's letter of 15 April suggested that it was considering further pay related measures for 2025/26. From this we conclude that there is some additional flexibility in the NCA budget. We are also mindful that there is potential for the NCA to receive extra resources in the CSR albeit alongside additional responsibilities. Affordability is about choice. In that context, we highlight the fact that the UK Government recently announced pay rises for other parts of the public sector which were significantly above levels within its affordability evidence of around 2.8%. Within the NCA's budget and across central government budgets as a whole there will be some flexibility as to how any award is funded. For instance, while we recognise the NCA's current need for contingent labour to deal with the challenges it faces in recruiting certain specialists, this needs to be balanced against providing a sufficiently attractive 'offer' to recruit and retain permanent staff.

Absence of the ability to take strike action

- 2.98 We also gave weight to the requirement in our terms of reference to consider the fact that powered officers, in contrast to the vast majority of employees across the public and private sector, are prohibited from taking strike action. As we have said in our previous reports, it is our strong view that the NCA as the employer, the Home Office and ourselves as the Pay Review Body have a moral obligation to deliver a just, fair and equitable pay award.
- 2.99 We are conscious that over the past year some employers have agreed significantly enhanced pay deals as a result of industrial action or the threat of such action. The most conspicuous instance of this was the pay deal for resident doctors. Following the submission of our 2024 Report, resident doctors in England secured an additional 4.05% funding for pay for 2023/24 on top of the previous uplift set out in July 2023. We note that, including the 2024/25 pay uplift, this means that the combined average pay award for resident doctors in England across 2023/24 and 2024/25 totalled 22.3%. Given these outcomes, we have therefore given weight to the inability of powered officers to take equivalent action in formulating our recommendation for a pay award for 2025/26.

Pay recommendation

- 2.100 After taking the above factors into account, including the economic situation, recent public sector pay settlements, our analysis of recruitment and retention, affordability, the prohibition on powered officers taking strike action, the increasing gap in monetary terms between NCA and police pay, the importance of the Agency's 'One NCA' policy, motivation and morale, we conclude that an annual pay award in 2025/26 of 4.4% across all grades is a suitable approach.

Recommendation 1. We recommend a consolidated pay award of 4.4% for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2025. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by 4.4%.

2.101 It is our strong expectation that this recommended award should be applied to all NCA officers both powered and non-powered.

Grade 6 salaries

2.102 We note that the NCOA has again proposed that the minimum salary for Grade 6 officers should be uplifted to £28,000. We were concerned to learn from the NCOA that the rate of attrition for Grade 6 officers was 13.3% which was twice the rate for Grade 2 officers.

2.103 Our understanding is that Grade 6 officers act as support staff and are seen by the Agency as the equivalent to civil servants at the Administrative Officer level. We note that the majority are women and more than 60% of Grade 6 officers are on the grade minimum and will, of course, remain so unless they are promoted due to the absence of pay progression. We observe that none of the Grade 6 roles are eligible for spot rates so officers are unable to enhance their salaries by opting into spot rates.

2.104 We recall that the NCA told us last year that the recruitment of Grade 6 officers was not currently proving particularly challenging. However, in our previous reports we have expressed our concern about the impact of the unusual levels of economic volatility and sharp increases in the cost of household bills as a result of the unprecedented rise in prices on lower paid officers. As we have said elsewhere in our report, inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years, but this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices. NCA officers continue to experience the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. In our visits programme this year, we heard from Grade 6 officers struggling financially. For instance, one officer outside London told us they would be unable to do the job if it required five-day-a-week attendance in the office due to the costs of travel and parking. While the NCA recruits officers into the Agency at all of its grades, we observe that Grade 6 officers provide an important pool of young ambitious officers which, with appropriate training and support, can develop and progress into the NCA operation cadre. We observe that, if our recommended pay award is accepted, the minimum Grade 6 hourly rate will be around 14% higher than the National Living Wage. We question whether this is sufficient to attract and retain the high-calibre recruits with the necessary capabilities, skills and aptitudes to take advantages of all the opportunities that a long-term career in the NCA can provide.

2.105 However, we are conscious that only a tiny proportion of Grade 6 officers currently have powers⁵. As a consequence, the overwhelming majority of officers at this grade are outside our formal remit. Nevertheless, although we judge it is not appropriate for us to make a formal recommendation regarding Grade 6 officers for this reason, we hope the NCA's plans for pay reform will consider these issues and identify additional measures that might be needed to tackle equality and diversity concerns. We encourage the Agency to seize the opportunity to put in place a pay and reward package that enables it to recruit, retain and develop Grade 6 officers effectively and in a way that supports the NCA's efforts to build the future operational capabilities of the organisation.

Geographical allowances

London and the South East

2.106 We note the concerns of the NCA that the Agency's geographical allowances, particularly in London, do not compare well with those of the police and some, but not all, parts of the civil service and wider public sector. We also note the Home Office's view that location allowances should be specifically intended to compensate employees for the higher cost of living in certain geographic areas, such as London, rather than being utilised as a targeted recruitment method. Nevertheless, we observe that geographical allowances are part of the overall remuneration package that will attract new recruits to the Agency as well as retaining existing officers. We also observe that in response to the Police Remuneration Review Body's 2024 recommendation that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service be given additional flexibility on starting salaries to assist with recruitment, the Home Secretary announced instead, that the London Allowance for police officers appointed on or after 1 September 1994 would be increased by £1,250. We understand that the London Allowance for Metropolitan Police Service officers has been raised to its maximum for all officers of the rank of chief superintendent and below from April 2025. We recognise that this may have implications for NCA offices in London and the South East.

2.107 However, we also note that the NCOA and FDA emphasised in oral evidence that the priority for their members was an uplift to consolidated basic pay rather than increasing location allowances by a higher percentage than the main pay award.

2.108 Looking to the future, we note the NCOA's concern that the opportunity for a review of the geographical allowances in the context of the NCA's estate strategy has been missed because the Agency's move to another part of London is imminent. We hope that the future of location allowances will be considered in the context of the Agency's overall pay and contract reform proposals.

⁵ No number for Grade 6 officers with powers was given in the formal evidence we received from the NCA. The NCA explained that it did not provide numbers for groups of less than 10 officers for security reasons.

Recommendation 2. We recommend an increase of 4.4% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2025.

Northern Ireland

2.109 With regard to other geographical allowances, we note the briefing we received from the NCA on its review of the allowances for its officers stationed in Northern Ireland. We note that the environmental allowance for eligible NCA officers is £3,150 a year, the NITA received by police officers is £4,110 and the environmental allowance for police staff is £1,365 a year with effect from 1 April 2025. We advise the NCA to communicate clearly to all NCA officers in Northern Ireland, the outcome of the review, its rationale for not extending the environmental allowance to all its officers in Northern Ireland and not aligning the environmental allowance with NITA.

International Liaison Officers

2.110 We note the evidence we have received from the NCA that it is not experiencing any difficulties in recruiting ILOs. However, during our visits programme we heard about some of the challenges that are facing this group and we observe that addressing them might enable the NCA to draw on a more diverse pool of officers in filling these positions. We also note that the allowances for ILOs are not explicitly part of the pay and contract reform proposals.

Recommendation 3. We recommend the allowances of International Liaison Officers in the NCA be reviewed.

Other allowances

2.111 The evidence we have received from parties continues to raise concerns about other allowances for shift work, being on-call and RRAs. We are aware that the NCA's non-consolidated pay pot, from which RRAs are allocated, is smaller than that of many other government departments. It remains our view, that the future of all these allowances needs to be considered alongside the NCA's plans for pay reform.

2.112 We note the additional proposals we received from the NCA very late in the round regarding changes to its Shift Allowance. We understand from the Agency that these are critical operationally to the NCA and that they are affordable within the pay envelope. We observe that the NCOA and PCS have this year, and in previous years, put forward proposals for changes to the Shift Allowance which bear some similarities to the NCA's proposal. We are also conscious that the NCOA has told us that it supports the proposals. However, we note that the PCS has not had an

opportunity to consider the implications for individual officers given the timing of the NCA's proposal.

2.113 In our view the delivery of a comprehensive pay reform package to address the fundamental problems facing the NCA should remain the priority. We observe that we only received these proposals at the end of the 2025 pay round and that it has not been possible for us to fully consider the matter including with parties at oral evidence or through other means. We are also unable to judge from the material shared with us whether the implications for equality have been fully explored. We would assume that the NCA's proposal is aligned with its plans for pay and contract reform but we cannot be certain, given that the details of its wider reform package have not been shared with us.

2.114 On principle, we would, in any case, only produce a formal recommendation on a proposal of this nature when all the parties involved had been given a proper opportunity to consider the relevant evidence. In this case, given the previous proposals from the trade unions regarding changes to the Shift Allowance and the NCOA's support for the NCA's recent proposals, it seems as though there may be scope for the proposals to be agreed by all relevant parties relatively quickly. Therefore, we encourage the Agency to work with the trade unions and any other parties to resolve any outstanding concerns, including in relation to equality, in order to implement a measure it considers to be operationally critical.

Future role of the NCARRB

2.115 We note the work to review the Crime and Courts Act 2013. We observe that it has been the NCA's practice for a number of years to apply the pay award we recommend for powered officers to all officers across the NCA. We are conscious that the remit letters and evidence that we have received from the Government and the NCA in recent years have emphasised the importance of the Agency's 'One NCA' policy. Our 2025 remit letter said that "as the NCA advances its 'One NCA' policy, it is crucial that all staff, both those with and without operational powers are treated equitably in matters of pay". The Home Secretary went on to "ask that the NCARRB annual review took this into consideration and provides clear recommendations on the proposed NCA pay award, while giving due regard to Civil Service pay and relevant guidance".

2.116 As we have emphasised elsewhere in our report, we strongly support the Agency's 'One NCA' policy. We also agree that treating all officers equitably in matters of pay is one of the keys to delivering that policy. We observe that clarifying both the remit of NCARRB in relation to non-powered officers, and the elements of the NCA's pay and reward structure about which NCARRB should be consulted would assist this process. Therefore, we urge the Home Office to expedite the work to review, and if appropriate adjust, the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

Appendix A – Previous NCARRB Reports

2024 Report

We submitted our 2024 Report on 20 June 2024 and the Government responded on 29 July 2024⁶. The recommendations were as follows:

Our 2024/25 recommendations (from 1 August 2024):

- The NCA should redesign its job architecture and evaluate all roles to consider which grades and posts are comparable to police officers and which are comparable to the civil service, police staff or the private sector.
- A consolidated pay award of 5% for all NCA officers within our remit group. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by 5%.
- An increase of 5% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group.
- The allowances of NCA officers in Northern Ireland should be reviewed by the NCA with a view to those NCA officers who are subject to similar risks to Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers receiving the same allowance as PSNI officers.

Previous recommendations

All of our previous recommendations, along with the Government responses, are set out below.

Report	Recommendation	Government response
1 st (2014)	NCA officers designated with operational powers assessed as at least 'good' under the NCA's performance management system should receive consolidated pay increases from 1 August 2014 at the following values: below target range £540; within target range £270; and above target range £135 (non-consolidated where above the pay range maxima).	Accepted
	Border Investigators (former UK Border Agency officers) designated with operational powers not offered assimilation should receive a pay increase of 1% (non-consolidated where above the pay range maxima) from 1 August 2014.	Accepted
	No changes in the values of NCA allowances within our remit.	Accepted
	The NCA should conduct a full review of the design, purpose and value of the London Weighting Allowance and present proposals in evidence to us.	Accepted

⁶ House of Commons (July 2024), National Crime Agency Workforce Update: Written statement – HCWS34. Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-29/hcws34> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

Report	Recommendation	Government response
2 nd (2015)	<p>NCA officers designated with operational powers assessed as at least 'good' under the NCA's performance management system should receive consolidated pay increases from 1 August 2015 at the following values: below target range £540; within target range £270; and above target range £135. The pay range maxima should be increased by £135 to ensure consolidated pay increases for those at the pay range maxima.</p> <p>For those officers yet to be assimilated: (i) those offered NCA terms but electing to remain on precursor terms should remain on their 2014/15 pay rates; and (ii) Border Investigators not offered assimilation should receive a pay increase of 1% (non-consolidated where above the pay range maxima) from 1 August 2015.</p> <p>London Weighting Allowance should increase by 1% from 1 August 2015.</p> <p>No changes in the values of other NCA allowances within our remit.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
3 rd (2016)	<p>A 1% consolidated pay increase (including Border Investigators) from 1 August 2016.</p> <p>Other officers offered NCA terms but electing to remain on precursor terms should remain on their 2015/16 pay rates.</p> <p>A 1% increase to London Weighting Allowance from 1 August 2016.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
4 th (2018)	<p>A variable pay award, reflecting the NCA proposal for 2017/18, is implemented, and backdated to 1 August 2017. The award should be modified so that officers on the existing pay ranges receive a minimum consolidated pay award of 1%. The maxima of all the pay ranges should be uplifted by 1% and the minima of Grades 1 and 2 should be uplifted by 1%.</p> <p>A variable pay award, reflecting the NCA proposal for 2018/19, is implemented from 1 August 2018. The award should be modified so that officers on the existing pay ranges receive a minimum consolidated pay award of 1%. The maxima of all the pay ranges should be uplifted by 1% and the minima of Grades 1 and 2 should be uplifted by 1%.</p> <p>NCA officers designated with operational powers electing to remain on precursor terms should remain on their 2016/17 pay rates.</p> <p>London Weighting Allowance for 2017/18 for NCA officers designated with operational powers should be increased by 2% to £3,291 and be backdated to 1 August 2017.</p> <p>We make no recommendation as to the London Weighting Allowance for 2018/19, on the understanding that the NCA management will carry out a review of the allowance.</p>	<p>A minimum 1% award for all officers not eligible for the new pay structure and not already receiving the pay range maximum for their grade.</p> <p>A 1% award made up of consolidated and non-consolidated elements for officers not eligible for the new pay structure and already in receipt of the maximum for their grade or reaching it.</p> <p>A minimum 1% award for all officers not eligible for the new pay structure and not already receiving the pay range maximum for their grade.</p> <p>A 1% award made up of consolidated and non-consolidated elements for officers not eligible for the new pay structure and already in receipt of the maximum for their grade or reaching it.</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Increased London Weighting Allowance by 1%.</p> <p>London Weighting Allowance for 2018/19 to be determined following a formal review.</p>

Report	Recommendation	Government response
5 th (2019)	<p>An overall pay bill uplift of 2.5% from 1 August 2019.</p> <p>The pay band minima for Grades 5 and 6 should be uplifted by 4.25% and 4.5% respectively from 1 August 2019.</p> <p>All officers should receive a consolidated pay uplift of at least 1% and the NCA should aim to provide all officers with a minimum consolidated uplift as close as possible to 2% from 1 August 2019.</p> <p>London Weighting Allowance for 2019/20 for NCA officers designated with operational powers should increase by 2.5% to £3,339 from 1 August 2019.</p> <p>Shift Allowance is revised to 15% of base pay from 1 August 2019.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
6 th (2020)	<p>From 1 August 2020, the standard pay ranges should be revalorised as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the pay range minima for Grades 1 to 4 increase by 2.5%; the pay range minima for Grades 5 and 6 increase by 4.25% and 4.5% respectively; and the pay range maxima for Grades 1 to 6 increase by 1.5%. <p>In conjunction with Recommendation 1, from 1 August 2020, all officers on the standard pay ranges should receive a consolidated pay award of at least 1.5% that maintains their percentile position on the pay range.</p> <p>The spot rates for Grades 4 and 5 should increase by 3% and 4.5% respectively from 1 August 2020.</p> <p>London Weighting Allowance should increase by 2.5% to £3,424 from 1 August 2020.</p> <p>Shift Allowance should increase to 20% of base pay from 1 August 2020.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
7 th (2021)	No recommendations made.	
8 th (2022)	<p>By 30 November 2022, the NCA should provide a plan outlining the next steps in its reform strategy to NCARRB. This should set out the workforce component of its transformation programme, and in particular the relationship between the NCA's expenditure priorities, organisational priorities and strategy, its HR strategy, and its reward strategy. It should also provide an update on discussions with HM Treasury regarding a multi-year pay agreement.</p> <p>All officers in our remit group should receive a consolidated increase of £1,900 to their full-time equivalent annual salary from 1 August 2022. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by £1,900.</p> <p>London Weighting and South East Allowances for 2022/23 for NCA officers designated with operational powers should increase by 5%.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
9 th (2023)	<p>A consolidated pay award of 7% for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2023. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by 7%.</p> <p>An increase of 7% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2023.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>

Report	Recommendation	Government response
10 th (2024)	<p>The NCA should redesign its job architecture and evaluate all roles to consider which grades and posts are comparable to police officers and which are comparable to the civil service, police staff or the private sector.</p> <p>A consolidated pay award of 5% for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2024. The spot rates for Grades 1 to 5 and the minima and maxima of the standard pay ranges for Grades 1 to 6 should be raised by 5%.</p> <p>An increase of 5% to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance for all NCA officers within our remit group from 1 August 2024.</p> <p>The allowances of NCA officers in Northern Ireland should be reviewed by the NCA with a view to those NCA officers who are subject to similar risks to Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers receiving the same allowance as PSNI officers.</p>	<p>Partially accepted – while the Home Secretary was supportive of the central premise of this recommendation, measures were already underway to develop a set of comprehensive proposals which the Government would seek to implement in a timely fashion.</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Partially accepted – while the Home Secretary was supportive of the central premise of this recommendation, measures were already underway to develop a set of comprehensive proposals which the Government would seek to implement in a timely fashion.</p>

Appendix B – Home Secretary's Remit Letter



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Zoë Billingham
Chair of the National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body

BY EMAIL ONLY

30 September 2024

Dear Zoë,

NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY REMIT 2025/26

I would like to express my gratitude to the NCA Remuneration Review Body (NCARRB) for your diligent work over the years and your valuable recommendations on the 2024/25 pay round. I look forward to receiving the 11th NCARRB report, which I am confident will provide the expert, independent advice necessary to fairly compensate NCA officers as they continue their critical and tireless work in the fight against serious organised crime.

I write to you now to formally commence the 2025/26 pay round. In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, and with your terms of reference, it is important that I receive independent advice on the remuneration of NCA officers with operational powers.

During this pay round, you will receive evidence from my department, HM Treasury, and key stakeholders (including trade unions). My department's evidence will, as usual, cover the recruitment and retention context for NCA, alongside pay and earnings data, as well as the Agency's workforce strategy, and the expected position following the implementation of the 2024/25 pay award. It will also set out the funds available to the Home Office and NCA for 2025/26, which will be finalised through the Spending Review and announced at the Autumn Budget on 30 October. This comes against the backdrop of the challenging financial position this government has inherited, including a £22 billion pressure against the spending plans set out for departments at Spring Budget 2024.

My department will continue to strive to deliver mission-led public services to ensure they are equipped to efficiently deliver the vital, high quality public service we rely on, whilst ensuring value for money for taxpayers.

Additionally, as the NCA advances its 'One NCA' policy, it is crucial that all staff, both those with and without operational powers are treated equitably in matters of pay. I would, therefore, ask that the NCARRB annual review takes this into consideration and provides clear recommendations on the proposed NCA pay award, while giving due regard to Civil Service pay and relevant guidance.

In considering your recommendations, you should therefore have regard to the following:

1. NCA's productivity, efficiency improvements and the affordability of any proposals within the Agency's existing budget constraints.
2. The pay gap differential between NCA and Police officers.
3. Pay in the Civil Service, aligning recommendations with the average pay across Civil Service departments.

We know that public sector workers delivering our vital public services deserve timely pay awards, so, as the Chancellor said in her July Statement, the Government's intention is to announce pay awards as close to the start of the pay year as possible for 2025/26. For the NCA, this means building upon the excellent work of the last year to ensure Agency officers continue to receive their pay awards on time.

To this end, where possible I would be grateful if NCARRB would deliver its recommendations to the Government on the 2025/26 pay award for the National Crime Agency at the earliest point that allows you to give due consideration to the relevant evidence, whilst ensuring the Agency can implement the pay award by 1 August 2025, in line with the pay year. To support this, the Government will publish its written evidence (alongside the Agency's evidence to NCARRB) as soon as possible after the Spending Review is finalised and 2025/26 budgets are set on 30th October, as these will inform the affordability position.

Thank you once again for your dedication to this important process. I look forward to reviewing your recommendations in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Home Secretary

Appendix C – The Parties’ Website Addresses

The parties’ written evidence should be available through these websites.

Home Office	https://www.gov.uk/homeoffice
HM Treasury	https://www.gov.uk/hm-treasury
National Crime Agency	http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/
National Crime Officers Association	http://www.ncoa.org.uk/
Public and Commercial Services Union	https://www.pcs.org.uk/
FDA	https://www.fda.org.uk/

Appendix D – Our Analysis of the Economic Context and NCA Workforce Data

D.1 In this appendix we set out our analysis of the economic context and the NCA workforce data.

The economic context

D.2 We set out below the latest economic and labour market indicators (summarised in Table D.1) as at 4 June 2025, available to us when finalising our recommendations:

- *Inflation.* Inflation was falling as we wrote our last report and continued to do so until September 2024, before starting to pick up again. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) increased by 2.2% in the year to August 2024 (when the 2024/25 NCA pay award took effect), and the CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) increased by 3.1% over the same period. In the year to April 2025 the CPI increased by 3.5% and the CPIH increased by 4.1%.
- Core CPI (which excludes the effects of price changes in energy, food and alcohol) was higher at 3.8% in the year to April 2025, while core CPIH was 4.5%.
- The Bank of England base interest rate decreased from 5.25% in July 2024 to 4.25% from May 2025 as inflationary pressures eased. However, it will take time for falling interest rates to affect mortgage payments.
- In its March Economic and Fiscal Outlook⁷, the OBR expected CPI to peak at 3.7% in the third quarter of 2025 driven by higher energy prices, higher food prices, and the increase in regulated water bills from April 2025. However, it expected CPI to fall back to 3.1% in the fourth quarter of 2025 and to be around the 2% target from 2026 onwards.
- In its May 2025 Monetary Policy Report⁸, the Bank of England's median projection expected CPI to peak at 3.5% in the third quarter of 2025, before gradually falling back to the 2% target at the start of 2027.
- *Economic growth.* UK real gross domestic product (GDP) figures showed that the UK economy grew by 1.1% over 2024 as a whole, but was flat over the second half of the year. The first estimate of GDP for January to March 2025 showed growth of 0.7% on the previous quarter and 1.3% on a year earlier. Real GDP per head of population was unchanged over 2024 as a whole, but the first estimate for January to March 2025 showed increases of 0.5% on the previous quarter and 0.3% on a year earlier.

⁷ OBR (March 2025), *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Available at: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2025/> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

⁸ Bank of England (February 2025), *Monetary Policy Report*. Available at: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2025/may-2025> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

- In March 2025, the OBR estimated that annual real GDP growth would be 1% in 2025 and would increase to 1.9% in 2026 reflecting monetary policy loosening, falls in energy prices, and a gradual easing of uncertainty resulting in spare capacity in the economy being used up. It estimated that real GDP per head would increase by 0.3% in 2025 and 1.5% in 2026.
- *Labour market.* Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) indicated that the number of employees on payrolls in April 2025 was 30.3 million, 0.3% lower than a year earlier. Estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) put total employment at 34.0 million in the three months to March 2025, 1.9% higher than a year earlier, with increases in both the number of employees (up 1.5%) and self-employment (up 2.5%). The LFS unemployment rate (for those aged 16 and over) was 4.5% in the three months to March 2025, 0.2 percentage points higher than a year earlier. The Claimant Count rate in April 2025 was 4.5%, 0.4 percentage points higher than a year earlier. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded 761,000 job vacancies in the three months to April 2025, 14.7% lower than a year earlier.
- *Average earnings.* In the three months to March 2025, Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) annual growth for the whole economy was 5.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 5.6% for regular pay (excluding bonuses).
- Including bonuses, AWE annual growth in the three months to March 2025 was 5.4% in both the public and private sectors. Excluding bonuses, the figures were 5.5% in the public sector and 5.6% in the private sector.
- In March 2025, the OBR estimated that average earnings growth would fall from 4.7% in 2024 to 4.3% in 2025 and then to average just over 2% a year from 2026.
- *Pay settlements.* The latest estimate for median pay settlements in the three months to April 2025 ranged from 3.0% to 3.8%. Pay awards made during this period will have been predominantly in the private sector. Our analysis of Brightmine data indicated that around one-third (33%) of pay awards it recorded so far in 2025 had been worth 4% or more. The National Living Wage increased by 6.7% from 1 April 2025.
- In May 2025 the Government announced 2025/26 pay awards for many other parts of the public sector. These included: around 3.25% for civil servants (with additional flexibility for departments to have up to an extra 0.5%); 3.6% for NHS Agenda for Change staff; 4% for teachers, prison staff and most doctors (with resident doctors getting an average award of 5.4%); and 4.5% for the armed forces.

Table D.1: Latest economic and labour market indicators, as at 4 June 2025

	Figure
Inflation indicators	
Annual CPI inflation	3.5%
Annual CPIH inflation	4.1%
Annual Retail Prices Index inflation	4.5%
Pay settlement indicators	
Brightmine median pay settlements	3.0%
Incomes Data Research (IDR) median pay settlements	3.2%
Labour Research Department (LRD) median pay settlements	3.6%
LRD lowest basic rates median pay settlements	3.8%
Average earnings indicators	
PAYE median annual change in pay	5.0%
Annual growth in AWE – public sector	5.4%
Annual growth in AWE – private sector	5.4%
Annual growth in AWE – whole economy	5.5%
Annual growth in AWE – public sector excluding bonuses	5.5%
Annual growth in AWE – whole economy excluding bonuses	5.6%
Annual growth in AWE – private sector excluding bonuses	5.6%
PAYE annual change in median pay	6.4%
Labour market indicators	
PAYE employees on payroll annual growth	-0.3%
LFS annual employment growth	1.9%
LFS unemployment rate (aged 16 and over)	4.5%
Claimant count rate	4.5%
LFS employment rate (aged 16 to 64)	75.0%

Source: ONS – Labour Market Overview⁹, Consumer Price Inflation¹⁰, Claimant Count¹¹, and Earnings and Employment from PAYE RTI¹²; Brightmine¹³; IDR¹⁴; and LRD¹⁵.

Notes: The employment rate measures the proportion of the population (aged 16 to 64) in employment; the unemployment rate gives the number of unemployed people as a proportion of the total number of people (aged 16 and over) either in work or unemployed; and the claimant count rate is the number of people claiming unemployment benefits as a proportion of the total number of workforce jobs and claimants of unemployment benefits.

D.3 We note that inflation has been lower over the last year than in preceding years. However, we continue to emphasise that this represents a slowing in the rate of overall price increases and not a fall in prices, NCA officers continue to experience

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/may2025> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2025> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/outofworkbenefits/datasets/claimantcountcla01/current> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/realtimeinformationstatisticsreferencetableseasonallyadjusted/current> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹³ <https://www.brightmine.com/uk/products/hr-compliance-centre/> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

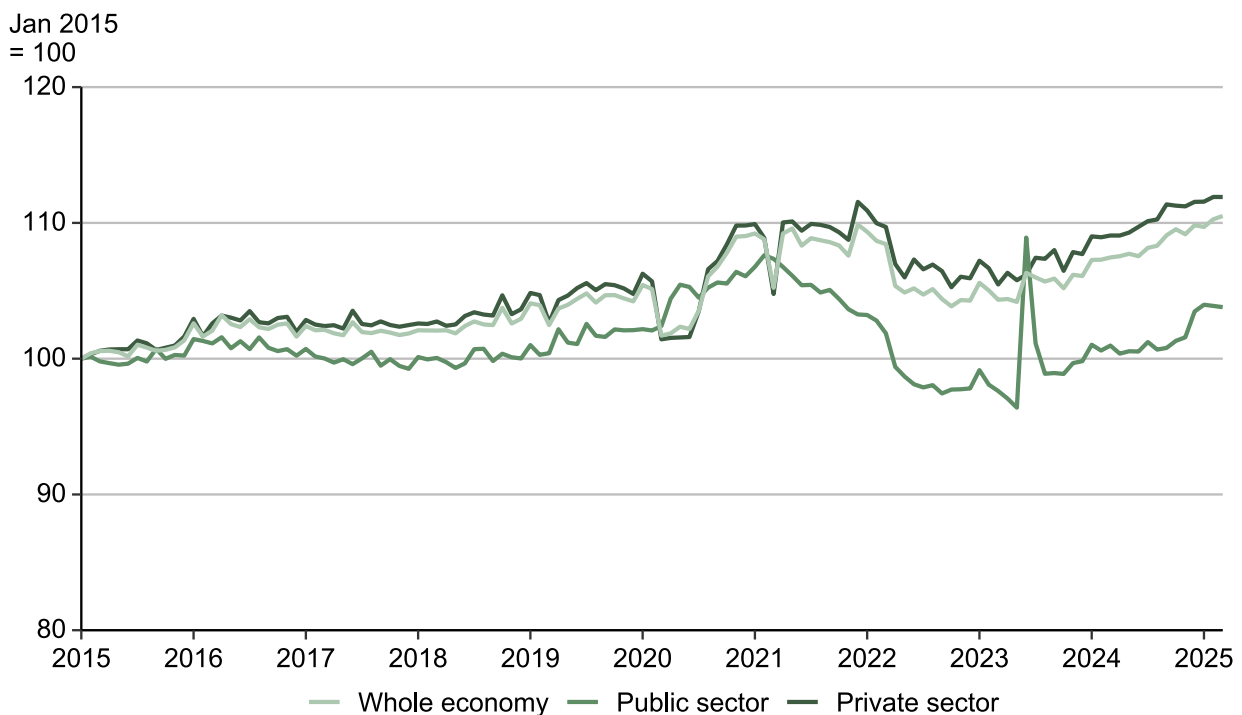
¹⁴ <https://www.incomesdataresearch.co.uk> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹⁵ <http://www.lrd.org.uk/index.php?pagid=29> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

the effect of past high inflation in their cost of living. We observe that energy price inflation is higher than the overall rate.

D.4 We also observe that measures of average earnings growth and median pay settlements have not fallen as quickly as inflation. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in the gap between private and public sector pay over recent years, with Average Weekly Earnings in the private sector having grown by 11.9% in real terms since 2015, compared with an increase of just 3.8% in the public sector (Chart D.1). Developments in private sector pay continue to play a role in our considerations. However, AWE are only a part of these developments and we are mindful that pay settlements are more akin to the pay award recommendations we make each year, as pay settlements look at recent pay awards whereas average earnings figures reflect historic pay growth. Furthermore, average earnings figures are affected by structural changes in the workforce and hours worked in addition to changes in underlying rates of pay.

Chart D.1: Real Average Weekly Earnings (January 2015 = 100), by sector, 2015–2025



Source: Office for the Pay Review Bodies analysis of Average Weekly Earnings and Consumer Prices Index, ONS.

D.5 Our recent reports were produced in periods of significant economic uncertainty. This year, we observe that there have been significant geopolitical changes since we received evidence from HM Treasury. The international diplomatic and trading environment remains uncertain and there is a risk that this may lead to a further period of economic instability.

NCA workforce, recruitment and retention

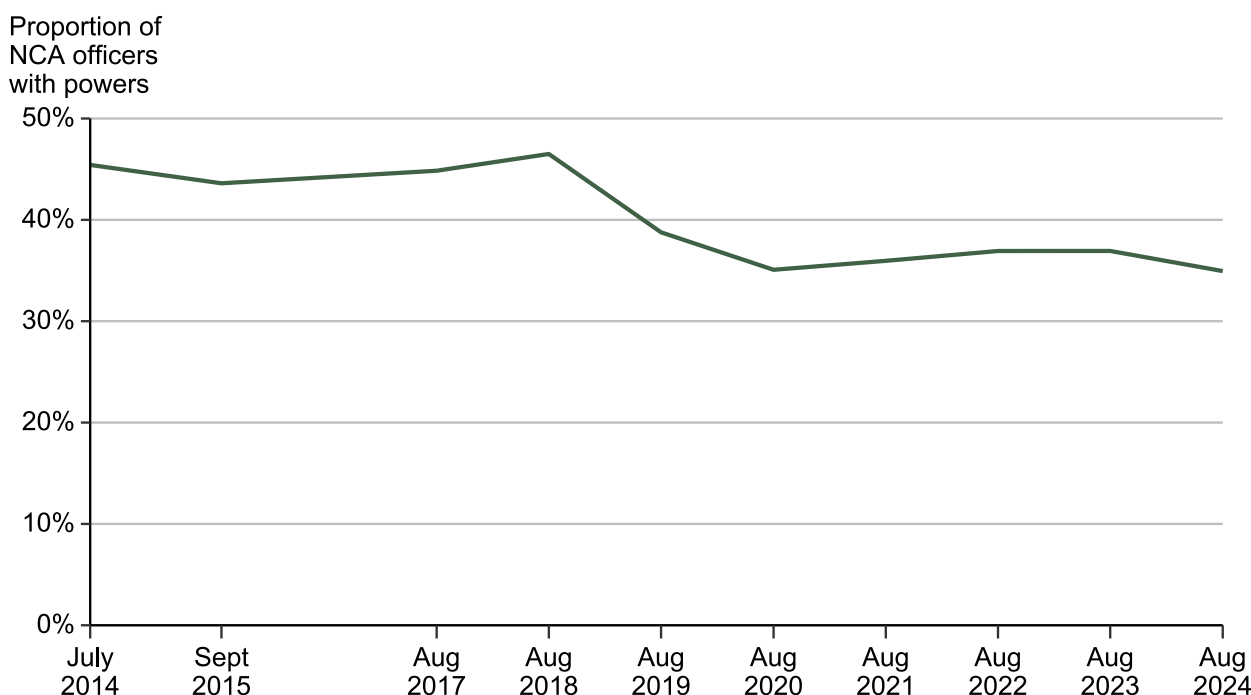
D.6 The NCA provided workforce data as at August 2024 in the Annex to its evidence submission. In this section we present our analysis of some of the key points from this dataset and those provided in previous years.

NCA workforce overview

D.7 The NCA reported that on 31 August 2024 it had 6,264 officers (on a headcount basis) in Grades 1–6¹⁶. This was 4.9% higher than a year earlier when there were 5,973 officers.

D.8 The number of officers within our remit group (those officers with powers) stood at 2,189 (headcount) on 31 August 2024. This represented just over one-third (35%) of the NCA workforce (Chart D.2), 2 percentage points down on a year earlier.

Chart D.2: Proportion of NCA officers with powers, 2014–2024



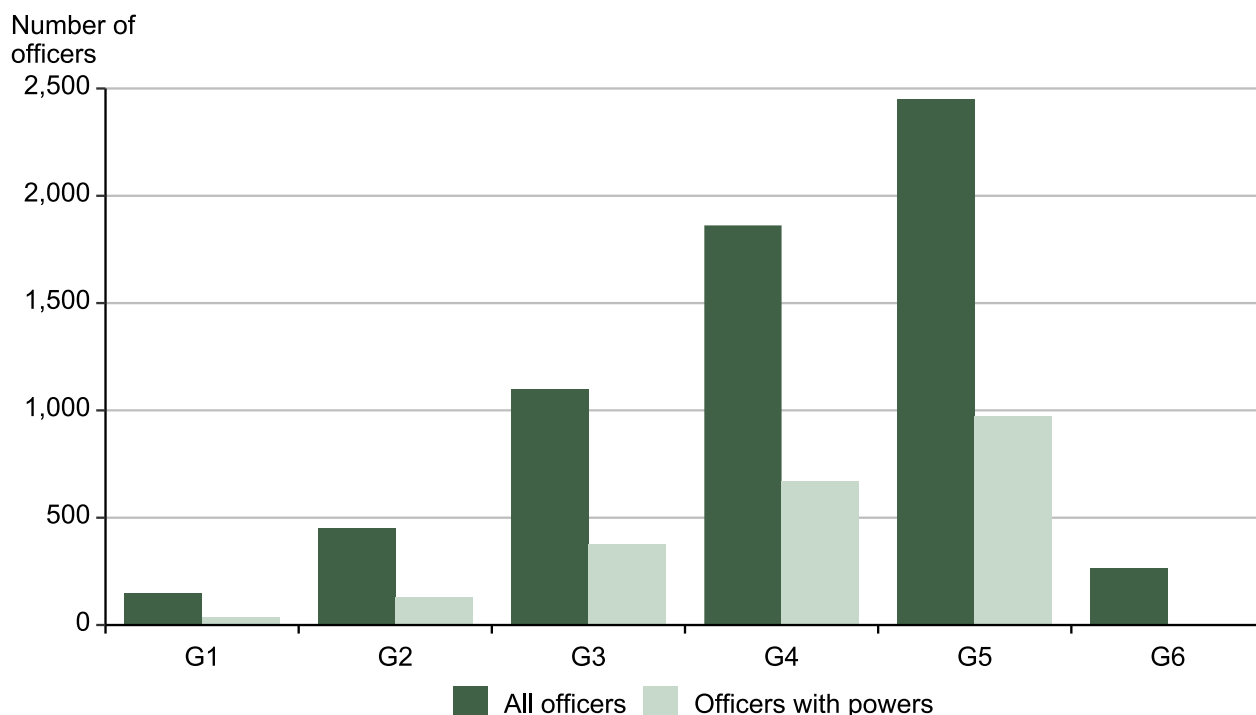
Source: NCA evidence submissions 2015–2024.

Note: NCA did not provide 2016 data to the NCARRB.

D.9 Grade 5 contained the highest number of officers (2,448 or 39% overall), and nearly two-fifths (40%) of officers in this grade had powers (Chart D.3). Grades 3–5 contained 92% of all officers with powers.

¹⁶ Throughout this analysis 'workforce' relates to Grades 1 to 6 and excludes senior civil servants (who are covered by the Senior Salaries Review Body).

Chart D.3: Number of NCA officers, by grade, August 2024



Source: NCA evidence.

Note: Numbers of officers with powers are not available for Grade 6 due to low numbers.

D.10 Part-time workers accounted for 10% of the overall workforce. However, among officers with powers this proportion was lower, at 7.2%.

D.11 Officers in operational roles made up 68% of the NCA workforce. Most officers with powers (91%) were in operational roles, and those with powers accounted for nearly half (47%) of officers in such roles.

Diversity

D.12 The proportion of female officers has been increasing since August 2018, and in August 2024 they accounted for 47% of the workforce, 9 percentage points higher than in 2018. However, the proportion of female officers in our remit group was much lower at 32%. This also represented an increase since 2018 (up 7 percentage points).

D.13 The following diversity figures have been provided for the whole workforce but not for the remit group more specifically:

- 10.7% of officers had declared themselves to be from an ethnic minority. This was slightly higher than a year earlier, but lower than in 2018.
- 5.6% of officers had declared a disability, slightly higher than in previous years.
- 4.2% of officers declared their sexuality as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This was slightly lower than the previous year but up from 2% in August 2018.

- 36.4% of officers declared their religion to be Christian, slightly down on a year earlier. A slightly higher proportion of officers (38.9%) declared themselves as having no religion, and 5.9% had another religion.
- 39.7% of officers were under the age of 40, 1.5 percentage points higher than the previous year.

D.14 The NCA provided data showing the distribution of officers on the standard pay ranges and spot rates, it also broke these down by gender and ethnicity. These figures showed that higher proportions of males and white officers were on spot rates than females and ethnic minority officers, and that the proportions of officers on the lower 'Developing' spot rates and at the minima of the standard pay ranges were higher for females and ethnic minority officers for most grades.

Officers on spot rates

- D.15 Spot rates were introduced for Grades 4 and 5 in 2017/18, and for Grades 1 to 3 on 1 August 2020. Officers on spot rates have different terms and conditions of employment to those on the standard pay ranges, the most notable non-pay difference being a 40-hour working week (compared with a 37-hour working week for officers on the standard pay ranges). When spot rates were introduced, existing NCA officers in qualifying posts were given the option to move onto spot rates or remain on their existing terms and conditions. New recruits to qualifying roles were put directly onto spot rates.
- D.16 In August 2024, 38.9% of the workforce (around 2,440 officers) were on spot rates, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points (around 190 officers) from a year earlier. A further 5.4% of officers were eligible for spot rates but had chosen to remain on the standard pay ranges (down from 6.5% a year earlier).
- D.17 Three-fifths (61%) of officers with powers were on spot rates, an increase of 1.3 percentage points on the previous year, and over half of officers on spot rates had powers (56.6%).

Recruitment

- D.18 The data provided by the NCA on recruitment only cover the number of applicants, offers made and candidates in its pipeline, without giving any indication of how many went on to take up a role in the NCA. The NCA added 1,604 candidates to its pipeline in the year to July 2024, 477 (42%) more than in the previous twelve months.
- D.19 The NCA has provided data on the sectors from which candidates are coming from for the period from 2022 to 2024. Overall, the main sources of candidates were the civil service (28%), the police (25%), and the private sector (24%). For operational commands, 29% of candidates were from the police, 25% from the private sector and 24% from the civil service.

Retention

- D.20 The NCA attrition rate rose year-on-year from 6.2% in FYE 2017 to 9.0% in FYE 2020. Following a significant reduction during the pandemic it rose to 8.8% in FYE 2023 but dropped to 6.9% in FYE 2024.
- D.21 The NCA has redesigned its exit questionnaire with an aim to provide more valuable data. Pay and benefits was the fifth highest leaving factor (Table D.2), although the NCA reports that this tends to be a linked factor for officers with promotion and new opportunities which were the top two factors. The NCA highlighted that the pay and benefits score had improved from 2.92 in 2021 and 2.50 in 2023. It highlighted the change since 2023 may have been a result of the implementation of two pay awards within six months.

Table D.2: Top 10 leaving factors from exit interviews, February – November 2024

Leaving factor	Likert Scale (out of 5)
Career development/promotion	2.85
To gain new opportunities or experience	2.71
Leadership	2.61
Technology	2.60
Pay and benefits	2.10
Work life balance/workload	2.05
To seek different working conditions	1.97
NCA values not adhered to	1.96
Workplace stress	1.87
Retirement	1.67

Source: NCA evidence.

- D.22 In a separate question, however, pay featured as the third reason for being attracted to the new organisation (Table D.3).

Table D.3: Top 10 reasons for joining new organisation as given in exit interviews, February – November 2024

What attracted you to that organisation	Percentage of respondents
The role/responsibilities	12.6%
Learning and development opportunities	11.0%
Pay and wider benefits	9.2%
Promotion prospects	8.8%
Equipment of tools (e.g. technology)	8.1%
Location	7.9%
Feeling valued/recognition	7.0%
Organisational culture	7.0%
Reputation of organisation	6.8%
Working arrangements (e.g. flexible working)	6.8%

Source: NCA evidence.

Motivation and morale

- D.23 The 2024 Civil Service People Survey¹⁷ took place in September and October 2024. In this section we provide our analysis of some of the NCA results.
- D.24 The overall NCA engagement index was 57% in 2024, unchanged from a year earlier. The NCA engagement index was 7 percentage points below the civil service benchmark¹⁸ of 64%. The civil service benchmark was also unchanged from a year earlier.
- D.25 The survey is split into various themes, most of which saw NCA results that were similar to 2023 but remained below the civil service benchmark. The pay and benefits theme remained the lowest scoring theme within the NCA, but saw an increase of 13 percentage points between 2023 and 2024 which brought it into line with the civil service benchmark.
- D.26 The results on officers' intentions to stay in the NCA were similar to the previous year:
- 45% of respondents said they wanted to stay working in the NCA for at least the next three years;
 - around one-third of respondents wanted to stay working for the NCA for at least the next year;
 - nearly one-quarter of respondents wanted to leave the NCA either as soon as possible or within the next twelve months; and
 - the most common reasons respondents cited for their intention to leave the NCA were: better pay; poor leadership; and organisational culture.

¹⁷ Cabinet Office (January 2025), Civil Service People Survey: 2024 results. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-people-survey-2024-results> [Accessed on 4 June 2025]

¹⁸ Defined as the median across all participating civil service organisations where data were not suppressed.

Appendix E – 2025/26 Evidence from Parties

- E.1 In this appendix we set out the key points from the evidence provided to us by parties on matters that form part of our standing terms of reference.

The NCA operating environment

- E.2 The Home Office said that SOC was a major threat to the national security and prosperity of the UK. SOC cost lives, blighted communities, hampered economic growth, and corroded the global reputation of the UK and its institutions, with an estimated annual cost running into tens of billions of pounds. The Home Office also told us that criminal networks were increasingly adaptive and sophisticated, and that the criminal landscape remained dynamic, shaped by global challenges and the rapid evolution of technologies, including artificial intelligence.
- E.3 The Home Office explained that as the NCA was the UK's strategic leader in tackling SOC, and continued to develop its use of advanced technology and investigative techniques to keep pace with modern threats. The Home Office informed us that in FYE 2024, the NCA had achieved significant outcomes including the disruption of over 5,000 criminal groups, leading to more than 1,000 arrests and 600 convictions. The Home Office considered that these results highlighted the Agency's pivotal role in maintaining the UK's security and prosperity through effective law enforcement. It stressed that the Government recognised the valuable work being carried out by the NCA and remained committed to supporting the Agency to fulfil its essential role in tackling serious organised criminality in and impacting on the United Kingdom.
- E.4 The NCA said that it led the UK's fight against SOC, which threatened national security, damaged the economy, undermined communities and had a visceral impact on the lives of the most vulnerable citizens. The Agency protected the public by leading the system in disrupting and bringing to justice SOC criminals who posed the highest risk to the UK.
- E.5 The NCA informed us that SOC was increasing in scale in response to a number of drivers, including geopolitical instability, economic challenges and most significantly advances in technology. The Agency said that SOC actors were highly capable adversaries and the NCA needed to constantly adapt to the ever-changing threat. The NCA highlighted that almost all SOC threats had several aspects in common: they had a significant overseas dimension; they were enabled by technology; and, for growing threats such as cyber and fraud, they were taking place increasingly online.
- E.6 The FDA said that the NCA was a pivotal law enforcement agency with national and international reach, and the mandate and powers to work in partnership with other law enforcement organisations to bring the full weight of the law to bear in cutting SOC. The FDA highlighted that NCA employees were civil servants subject to the

civil service code and may be designated with one or more of the powers and privileges of a constable, powers of a customs officer and powers of an immigration officer.

Government pay policy and affordability

- E.7 HM Treasury said that the 2024 Autumn Budget had set the spending envelope across the parliament, and that public sector pay awards for 2025/26 and beyond would need to be funded from departmental settlements. It highlighted that there would be no additional funding for pay if pay recommendations exceeded departmental affordability. It also explained that departments would have to consider the justification if Pay Review Bodies recommended awards above the level budgeted for by departments, and whether the additional costs could be borne either through offsetting savings or through further productivity gains. HM Treasury also considered that, in the medium to long term, real-terms pay increases were only sustainable if they were matched by productivity gains.
- E.8 The Home Office told us that the NCA's budget had increased consistently over the past five years, by approximately 48.2%, and as part of the recent Spending Review, the NCA had received a £58 million uplift to its core budget, increasing the Agency's total budget for FYE 2026 to almost £1 billion. The Home Office reported that this reflected the Government's commitment to supporting the NCA's efforts in tackling SOC, notwithstanding challenging fiscal constraints, and stated that this would enable the Agency to continue investment in its high-end capabilities. However, the Home Office cautioned that despite these efforts, significant affordability challenges persisted as rising operational costs, higher pay awards driven by macroeconomic factors, and cost-of-living pressures continued to strain budgets. The Home Office told us that these pressures made affordability challenging, and it also informed us that the Agency had committed to delivering targeted efficiency savings in FYE 2026, in accordance with the Government's drive towards a more efficient public sector.
- E.9 The Home Office reported that the NCA continued to manage significant financial pressures which presented an ongoing challenge to its financial position. These included its forthcoming exit from Spring Gardens and progressing elements of its Transformation Portfolio which the Agency was undertaking in order to modernise its digital infrastructure. Additionally, the Agency had to manage the increasing commercial procurement costs associated with these programmes.
- E.10 The Home Office informed us that the main cost pressures affecting the NCA's affordability ceiling were pay awards, grade inflation and contingent labour, alongside procured services. In particular, it highlighted that the Agency's contingent labour and professional services currently took about 27% of the Agency's pay bill.

- E.11 The Home Office also advised that its own budgets continued to experience significant pressures, leaving no scope for supplementary financial support to the Agency.
- E.12 The NCA told us that recommendations for change to NCA pay this year had to be affordable and any longer-term costs from increased pay needed to be sustainable for the future. It explained that it had budgeted for a 2.9% pay award effective from 1 August 2025. The NCA highlighted that the financial landscape had changed in recent years, including inflation rising substantially higher than expected, and that this had led to re-prioritisation of budgets and challenging cashable savings targets. It explained that if further reprioritisation were required then this would have an impact on the NCA priorities set by Government.
- E.13 The FDA welcomed the increase in total departmental budgets for FYE 2026 provided in the 2024 Autumn Budget and Spending Round. It expected that much of this increased funding would be used for pay, given that the work of Government and delivery of public services consisted in large part of people's hard work, expertise and skills.
- E.14 The PCS expressed concern at the lack of evidence that the NCA had the budget to seek a pay system that was right for the Agency and its staff. It said that long-term central funding was a yearly corporate risk which the NCA had yet to fully mitigate.

The economy and labour market

- E.15 HM Treasury reported that across different indicators, 2024 data had shown a decline in earnings growth. It also pointed out that wage growth was forecast to moderate over the coming months, and be materially lower over FYE 2026 than FYE 2025, at 3.0% according to the OBR's forecast.
- E.16 The Home Office and NCA explained that low and stable price inflation was an essential element of a stable macroeconomic environment, and a pre-requisite for sustainable economic growth and improving living standards. It highlighted that inflation was normalising after unprecedented shocks and was expected to remain close to the 2% target throughout the OBR's forecast period, and average 2.6% across FYE 2026.
- E.17 The NCA cited the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development which had highlighted that the declining UK job market had led to more professionals opting for job security over pay.
- E.18 The NCOA reported that economists were predicting a poor economic outlook for 2025, with inflation remaining higher than the 2% target.
- E.19 The FDA said that the economic and financial context continued to be uncertain, despite inflation having fallen from the unprecedented heights of previous years. It

also reported that pay settlements were expected to be between 3.5% and 4% in 2025, and that median awards in the private sector continued to outpace those in the public sector.

NCA earnings and pay comparators

- E.20 The Home Office and NCA reported that the 2024/25 NCA pay award of 5% had been ahead of the wider economy, based on Brightmine median pay settlements. These had been 4.8% and 4.0% in the second and third quarters of 2024 respectively, and OBR's forecast of average earnings growth of 4.5% across 2024/25.
- E.21 The NCA said that it played an essential role within a set of overlapping communities: the law enforcement community with wider policing, HM Revenue and Customs and other executive agencies; the National Security Community along with the UK Intelligence Community and defence; and the Government strategic community as part of the Home Office family and constitutionally within the civil service. As a result, the Agency said the specialist skills it required were not unique and it competed with the civil service, police, UK Intelligence Community and private sector.
- E.22 The NCA said that its teams often consisted of a blend of officers, with backgrounds in the civil service, police, intelligence community or private sector. It explained that pay differences in the respective markets meant that their pay may vary significantly when securing a role in the NCA, and that this had created a pay imbalance within the NCA, with experienced NCA officers on the grade minimum while some newly recruited candidates joined higher up in the pay range.
- E.23 The NCA said that its reward strategy did not seek to completely replicate police pay, but that it needed to be able to support the retention of its specialist officers through matching pay for comparable roles. It reported that its pay arrangements were not attractive enough to enable the Agency to recruit serving police officers at an early- or mid-stage of their career. However, the NCA highlighted that there were inherent differences between the status of police and NCA officers since the latter were designated as civil servants.
- E.24 The NCA reported that differences between NCA and police pay had been an issue for a number of years. The Agency highlighted that the differences had grown over the last decade, and higher policing salaries and pay progression meant that policing continued to move away from the NCA even when pay awards were in line.
- E.25 The NCA explained that NCA median salaries were generally higher on a grade-by-grade basis than civil service comparators, but that the NCA lost more officers than it gained to the wider civil service. It informed us that NCA business areas reported that much of this attrition was due to the wider civil service offering roles at higher grades than the Agency was able to, due to its rigorous grading standards.

- E.26 The NCA said it was at considerable risk of losing officers in enabling capabilities to civil service departments even though its pay scales were often higher. It explained that other areas of the civil service offered recruitment and retention payments of up to £15,000, or graded roles higher in comparison with the Agency.
- E.27 The NCA also highlighted that its offer for social workers was considerably weaker than that of local government, which offered around £12,000 more for a new starter as a results of higher base salaries, pay progression, market supplements of 10–15%, welcome bonuses of £2,000, and relocation expenses.
- E.28 The NCOA highlighted that many of its members remained at the grade minimum of the standard pay range. It considered that there was inequality with the current differentiated pay models, as officers on spot rates had an element of progression whereas those on the standard pay ranges did not.
- E.29 The FDA reported that Brightmine figures showed median pay awards had moved between 4.5% and 4.8% in the first half of 2024 and then held at 4% through to the latest available data, with one in four awards still at 5% or above. The FDA compared these figures with the 2024/25 NCA settlement of 5% and said that while it was somewhat higher than the median for the economy, the difference was not as significant as might be thought.
- E.30 The FDA said that pay in the Agency remained significantly behind comparable pay in the police, and the overall employment offer was becoming less competitive for senior skilled staff in the wider civil service. The FDA considered that as the NCA delivered a prominent role in combatting the challenge of SOC to security it was appropriate to compare the position of NCA staff with similar roles in the police and other law enforcement agencies. It also highlighted that many NCA staff worked in teams with police staff.
- E.31 The FDA highlighted significant disparity in pay levels between senior NCA officers and their comparable grades in the police service, and that this disparity had widened since 2016. It also noted that police scales provided incremental progression which was not available in the NCA. The FDA did not consider that the Agency's arguments that NCA pay compared well with other civil service departments were persuasive, given the poor relative position of the civil service in competing for the skills that the NCA needed.
- E.32 The FDA highlighted the number of NCA officers who remained at the minima and in the lower quartiles of the standard pay ranges, and that many of these had significant lengths of employment.
- E.33 The PCS expressed concern that officers who had not signed up to spot rates had received below inflation pay increases for many years. It also cited 2024 staff survey results that showed only 30% of NCA officers felt their pay was reasonable when compared with people doing a similar job in other organisations.

Workforce, recruitment and retention

- E.34 The Home Office reported that the NCA's workforce had increased by 4.9% between August 2023 and August 2024. It noted a reduction in overall turnover which the Agency had attributed to wider UK economic conditions. The Home Office considered these developments as positive indicators reflecting the Agency's efforts to strengthen its workforce capacity and retention rates. It highlighted that understanding and replicating this positive trajectory would be essential to addressing broader recruitment and retention issues across the Agency beyond pay.
- E.35 The Home Office stressed that the NCA needed to ensure it retained a streamlined and balanced workforce. It pointed out that workforce data showed that the Agency appeared to be tilting towards corporate services and threat leadership, as there had been growth in officer numbers in non-operational commands and senior management grades, while officer numbers in operational commands and lower grades (which tended to be more operational) had shrunk. The Home Office said it was unclear to what extent the proportional increase in senior management was driven by underlying factors, such as a shift in the type of work the Agency is undertaking, or by grade inflation within the Agency caused by issues in recruitment. The Home Office stated that this imbalance may be diverting significant resources away from junior grades in critical roles, and it would be important to understand and address this trend if the operational effectiveness of the Agency was to be maintained.
- E.36 The Home Office also pointed out that workforce data reflected the NCA's continued struggle to fill its specialist roles, specifically within the Intelligence and Investigations commands which had seen reductions of 2.3% and 2.0% respectively within the last year. The Home Office considered that this would have driven further undesirable spend on contingent labour at the Agency, given the critical nature of these roles.
- E.37 The NCA informed us that its workforce had increased from 5,973 in 2023 to 6,264 in 2024, and that the Government had announced funding for an additional 100 specialist investigators in September 2024. The Agency said that 35% of its 2024 workforce had operational powers, but that a large number of operational staff were not required to hold powers.
- E.38 The NCA said that it was a complex organisation and required a wide range of skillsets and specialisms which meant that it needed to attract candidates from a more diverse set of labour markets.
- E.39 The NCA told us it had made significant improvements in its recruitment approach and timeframes, but that its rigorous vetting requirements meant it still took considerably longer than most organisations to appoint staff.

- E.40 The NCA highlighted that its overall turnover had reduced but that there were acute difficulties in recruiting and retaining officers in specialist and technical roles. It explained that its requirements ranged from operational officers with a law enforcement background, to officers with digital and cyber skills and social workers, and highlighted that all these skills came at a premium.
- E.41 The NCA explained that pay was a primary factor driving turnover in roles which received RRAs. It said that total turnover in some areas remained unsustainable even with the use of RRAs.
- E.42 The NCA told us that turnover represented a significant loss to the Agency in light of the specialist skills it required. It said that this was part of the reason for the use of contingent labour in backfilling some vacancies.
- E.43 The NCOA raised concerns at the growing volume of senior leaders while numbers in more junior grade had either been stable or reduced.
- E.44 The NCOA said that the number of commercial contractors had increased by 25% over the last twelve months. It informed us that expenditure on contingent labour was more than twice the cost estimated by the Agency of a potential 2.9% pay award for 2025/26.
- E.45 The NCOA highlighted that the attrition rate remained highest at Grade 6, where it was twice as high as at Grade 2.
- E.46 The FDA cited a Public Accounts Committee report that had identified that morale in the civil service was being lowered by chronic pay issues, risking an inability to recruit and retain staff. The report had also raised concerns that low pay damaged departments' ability to attract and keep staff, including specialists who could expect competitive private sector salaries.
- E.47 The FDA reported that the NCA had struggled in recent years to attract the staff it needed. It highlighted that poor retention and the consistent need to induct new staff had a detrimental impact on productivity.

Motivation and morale

- E.48 The Home Office stated that the 2024/25 pay award and increases to the London Weighting Allowance and South East Allowance had made a positive impact on staff morale in 2024.
- E.49 The NCA said that pay imbalance within the Agency created morale issues for its officers who did not have any form of pay progression.
- E.50 The NCA recognised that building an inclusive workplace culture impacted on all officers' wellbeing, productivity and the reputation of the Agency. It considered a healthy culture to be key to the NCA's success and essential to secure the trust of

its officers and the public. It explained that the NCA Strategy emphasised its commitment to establishing a more diverse workforce and inclusive culture. The Agency said that to succeed it needed to continue to develop a culture which attracted and retained a high performing workforce who felt they belonged at the NCA, were safe and respected, and were valued for what they did and who they were. The NCA also said that work was planned to develop a new bullying, harassment and discrimination strategy to tackle these issues across the Agency and reduce workplace conflict. The NCA reported that this was a priority to help with retention as well as officers' wellbeing and morale.

Relevant legal obligations on the NCA

- E.51 The NCA informed us that work was planned to publish its gender pay gap report. Analysis for FYE 2024 had shown a slight increase in the mean gender pay gap but that the median gender pay gap had continued to decrease. The NCA said that further analysis was ongoing to determine the specific reasons for the mean increase and that an action plan would set out the Agency's response. The NCA also told us that work was planned to produce its first internal ethnicity pay gap report which would act as a baseline for future monitoring and reporting.

Appendix F – NCA Pay Ranges, Spot Rates and Allowances for the 2024/25 Pay Year

The pay ranges, spot rates, and allowances for the 2024/25 pay year for officers within our remit are set out below:

Standard pay ranges

Grade	Minimum	Maximum
G1	£78,847	£96,384
G2	£64,759	£79,099
G3	£53,232	£65,169
G4	£43,415	£52,594
G5	£34,537	£44,546
G6	£25,785	£32,475

Spot rates

Grade	SR1	SR2	SR3	SR4
G1	£81,437	£87,868	–	–
G2	£70,658	£76,214	–	–
G3	£53,232	£57,165	–	–
G4	£47,310	£51,238	£53,284	–
G5	£38,955	£40,488	£43,046	£44,751

Allowances

Allowance	Rate
London Weighting Allowance	£4,040 per annum
South East Allowance	£3,231 per annum
Overtime ¹⁹	
– In excess of weekly contracted hours	Time and a half
– Rest day and bank holiday working with less than 14 days' notice	Double time
Shift Allowance	20% of basic pay
On-call Allowance ²⁰	£25.28 per period

¹⁹ Overtime is only payable to officers on the standard pay ranges in Grades 3–6 and officers on spot rates in Grades 4 and 5.

²⁰ On-call Allowance is only payable to Grades 3–6.

Appendix G – NCA Pay Ranges, Spot Rates and Allowances for the 2025/26 Pay Year

The recommended pay ranges, spot rates, and allowances for the 2025/26 pay year that are within our remit are set out below:

Standard pay ranges

Grade	Minimum	Maximum
G1	£82,317	£100,625
G2	£67,609	£82,580
G3	£55,575	£68,037
G4	£45,326	£54,909
G5	£36,057	£46,507
G6	£26,920	£33,904

Spot rates

Grade	SR1	SR2	SR3	SR4
G1	£85,021	£91,735	–	–
G2	£73,767	£79,568	–	–
G3	£55,575	£59,681	–	–
G4	£49,392	£53,493	£55,629	–
G5	£40,670	£42,270	£44,941	£46,721

Allowances

Allowance	Rate
London Weighting Allowance	£4,218 per annum
South East Allowance	£3,374 per annum
Overtime ²¹	
– In excess of weekly contracted hours	Time and a half
– Rest day and bank holiday working with less than 14 days' notice	Double time
Shift Allowance	20% of basic pay
On-call Allowance ²²	£25.28 per period

²¹ Overtime is only payable to officers on the standard pay ranges in Grades 3–6 and officers on spot rates in Grades 4 and 5.

²² On-call Allowance is only payable to Grades 3–6.

