



Ministry
of Justice

The Witness Intermediary Scheme

Annual Report 2025



Ministry of Justice

Witness Intermediary Scheme: Annual Report 2025

(For the year ending 31 December 2025)

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Foreword from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice, Minister Catherine Atkinson



2025 has seen a continued focus on victims and witnesses within our justice system. The Witness Intermediary Scheme (WIS) remains an important part of this work, enabling vulnerable victims and witnesses to give their best evidence in criminal proceedings.

The Ministry of Justice is deeply grateful to the dedicated Registered Intermediaries (RIs) who help thousands of vulnerable victims and witnesses to access justice every year.

In 2025, demand for RIs continued to grow, with the WIS receiving 10,403 requests for assistance from the police, CPS and defence practitioners, an increase of 6.7% on the previous year. Despite this rising demand, matching rates improved, with 96.6% of requests successfully matched. This reflects the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Scheme's capacity and ensure timely support for those who need it most, with 29 new RIs joining the register in 2025.

Satisfaction with the Scheme remains consistently high, with 99.6% positive feedback from the police and CPS. This is a testament to the professionalism and commitment of RIs working across the criminal justice system.

We have also supported the RI community through updates to WIS guidance and policies and initiatives such as the 2025 WIS Conference, which provided opportunities for professional development and collaboration. The Governance and Standards Board met regularly to provide strategic direction and inform ongoing improvements.

Looking ahead to 2026, demand for intermediaries is expected to increase. Meeting this demand through sustained recruitment, training and retention of experienced RIs remains a priority. As we reflect on another year of progress, I would like to thank all RIs for their dedication, professionalism and commitment to vulnerable victims and witnesses

SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Atkinson".

Catherine Atkinson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice

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Terms and abbreviations

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

Introduction: The Witness Intermediary Scheme in 2025

Background

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

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

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

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

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

This Annual Report provides an overview of the governance, operation and performance of the WIS from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

Summary of 2025

In 2025 the WIS has continued to deliver a high-quality service, with matching rates improving against a backdrop of growing demand for RIs.

The WIS received a total 10,403 requests for RI assistance in 2025, a 6.7% increase on the previous year. 96.6% of requests for RI assistance were successfully matched, a 0.8% increase on 2024.

The WIS continued to build on its operational improvements, maintaining the bulk matching process, originally introduced in July 2024. This process enables RIs to select

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

cases from a list on an online platform, allowing the Witness Intermediary Team to use its resources more efficiently and prioritise the most complex and high-priority cases

Feedback from end-users (i.e. the police or the Crown Prosecution Service) remained overwhelmingly positive, with 99.6% of responses recorded as either 'excellent', 'more than satisfactory' or 'satisfactory'.

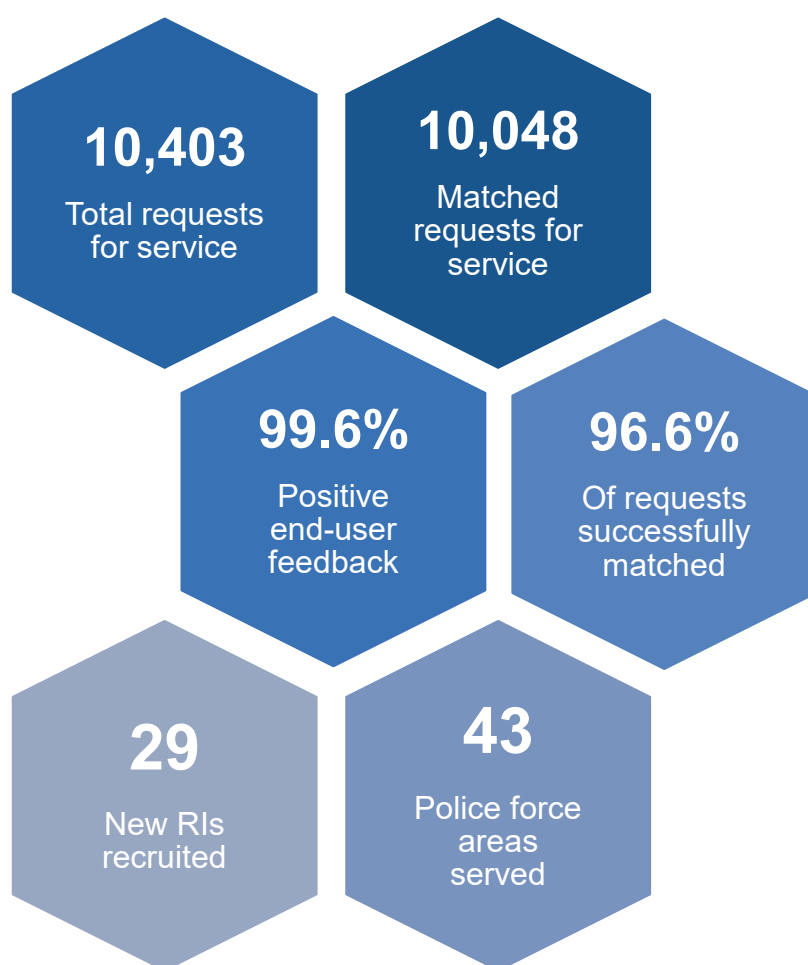
Recruitment remains a priority and the MoJ funded a recruitment campaign at the beginning of the year which added 29 new RIs to the WIS register once they had successfully passed training. The MoJ also reviewed WIS guidance and policies based on feedback from the RI community, ensuring a high-quality service for vulnerable individuals.

In relation to the WIS community, the MoJ hosted the WIS Annual Conference in early 2025, which provided RIs with continuous professional development (CPD) and networking opportunities. The Governance and Standards Board (GSB) met four times in 2025 to provide strategic direction and inform policy revisions.

Data sources

All statistics in this report, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are sourced from the WIT.

2025: The year in numbers



Part One: Overview of the Witness Intermediary Scheme

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

The Witness Intermediary Team

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

The WIT is supported by the National Vulnerable Witness Adviser, who is regularly deployed in major crime investigations to assist in the development of interview and witness management strategies for particularly vulnerable witnesses and complex cases.

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

The Witness Intermediary Scheme Governance and Standards Board (GSB)

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

Members on the Board bring their expertise and insight to ensure the Scheme continues to meet the needs of those in the criminal justice system.

The objectives of the WIS GSB are to:

- Maintain accountability for the WIS's performance.
- To oversee the supply and recruitment of Registered Intermediaries
- To agree the standards for, and lead on, quality control of recruitment, training, registration and continuing professional development of RIs.

- To maintain the RI register and ensure it is fit for purpose.
- To ensure RIs are supported to act in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics.
- To ensure feedback and complaints are reviewed in accordance with the WIS's feedback and complaints policy.
- To monitor and support development of all aspects of the RI professional role.

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

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

GSB: independent members (2025)

Member	Profile
Professor Karen Bryan Co-chair of GSB	Professor Karen Bryan is the Vice-Chancellor at York St John University. Professor Bryan qualified as a speech and language therapist from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, also gaining her PhD there. Her research interests are in communication difficulties in young offenders and forensic populations, as well as the impact of communication difficulties on access to healthcare. Professor Bryan held posts within the NHS until 2013. Professor Bryan is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Neuropsychology at the University of Warsaw, and a Fellow of the Royal College of Speech and

	Language Therapists. She was also previously a member of the Health Professions Council. She was awarded an OBE for services to higher education in 2018.
Clare Hickey Mentoring, Recruitment and Training Lead	Clare Hickey is a freelance HR Consultant, advising businesses on people strategy, recruitment, training and development, and providing solution focused coaching. Clare combines consultancy work with sitting as a Magistrate in both the Adult and Youth Courts in South Essex. She is also part of the 'Magistrates in the Community' team, visiting schools to deliver workshops on the judiciary and to raise awareness of issues concerning knife crime, cyber bullying and County Lines.
Karen Melvin General Consultant	Karen Melvin is a Speech & Language Therapist who has specialised in working with Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Autism in various NHS Community, Inpatient and forensic settings since 2005. She is a member of a Regional Clinical and Service Leads Group for this population in Northern Ireland and is also a Regional Makaton Tutor. Karen is an experienced Intermediary who works through the Northern Ireland Registered Intermediary Scheme with victims/witnesses and suspects/defendants of all ages who display communication differences. Karen is also a Tutor and content developer for several professional courses on the National Autism Training Programme in conjunction with NHS England and the Anna Freud Centre, London. These include Health & Justice, CAMHS, Community Mental Health and Inpatient Mental Health Services. She has been a visiting lecturer at Ulster University for Undergraduate Speech and Language Therapy students. Karen has personal experience of neurodivergence as the sibling of a learning disabled & Autistic adult and as a parent to an Autistic child who also has ADD. She is passionate about the most vulnerable people within our society having access to the judicial system on a fair and equitable basis with kind and sensitive support. Her particular interests are in the areas of situational mutism, non-speaking individuals and AAC (Augmentative, Alternative Communication).
Carolyn McConnell Feedback & Complaints Lead	Carolyn McConnell has worked in social care for more than 25 years, most recently as Chief Quality & Risk Officer for a national charity. A major aspect of this role was setting and monitoring standards of care across more than

500 services. The role also involved managing corporate risk, internal audit, and feedback on service provision.

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

Carolyn is the current Chief Executive of a local charity for people with a learning disability, and her passion is ensuring vulnerable people have a voice and are supported to participate in all areas of community.

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

Benjamin Roe
CPD and RI
Register Lead

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

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

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

Registered Intermediary Reference Team (RIRT)

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

RIRT's role is to:

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

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

Part Two: Performance analysis 2025

Methodology

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

Data includes:

- Total number of requests for a Registered intermediary
- Requests by witness vulnerability
- Requests by age of witness (child or adult)
- Requests by type of witness
- Requests by end-user (police or Crown Prosecution Service)
- End-user feedback for 2025
- Numbers of active and inactive RIs (monthly figures)

Data is summarised from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. This includes changes in the number of requests and changes relating to the distribution of requests across vulnerabilities, witness age, witness types and end-users, in addition to numbers of matched, unmatched and cancelled requests. This section also covers RI availability and end-user feedback, defined by four assessment criteria from 1,231 cases concerning victims and prosecution witnesses where feedback was received.

To examine wider trends within the WIS and to provide comparisons to interpret the 2025 data, this section will reference matching service data from 2025 (1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025). Data from the same annual periods for 2023 and 2024 has also been included to provide long-term context on demand for WIS services. All references to increases and decreases are measured in terms of percentage change.²

Summary

In 2025, the WIS received 10,403 requests for service for an RI, representing a 6.7% increase on the previous year and the highest number of requests for RIs in a calendar year since the national WIS rollout in 2008.

The overall increase in service corresponds to an increase in the number of requests for four of the seven recorded vulnerability categories shown on figure 4. Of the remaining three recorded vulnerabilities, the number of requests relating to children with a physical

² As opposed to a percentage point change.

disability decreased by 12.2% as did requests for children without a concurrent vulnerability (-2.3%) and adults with a physical disability (-1.4%)

The largest increases have been observed among requests for children with a learning disability (14%, the most frequently cited vulnerability overall) and children with a mental disorder (11.6%).

96.6% of requests were successfully matched, which was an overall increase of 0.8% from 2024. This increase does not apply equally across the board, with matching success rates varying across both adult and child requests. The most significant annual increase is observed for children with a physical disability, with a 99.1% successful matching rate (an increase of 3.1% from 2024). However, overall, the statistics show the WIS matching requests to an RI with the appropriate skillset in the vast majority of cases.

Police forces continue to make up the majority of demand, with 79.4% of requests for service originating at investigative phase; as demonstrated by **figure 10** (page 27). Requests from the police have increased by 6.1% annually to 8,259 requests. Requests from the CPS also saw an 8.9% annual increase to 2,140.

End-user feedback for RIs throughout 2025 remained substantially positive, with 99.6% of all responses recorded as 'excellent', 'more than satisfactory' or 'satisfactory'.

Cancelled requests

A request for an RI may be cancelled in circumstances such as an early guilty plea, a withdrawal of complaint from the victim, or if the witness is unable or no longer wishes to proceed for any reason (e.g. medical reasons). In 2025, 1.8% of requests for service were cancelled.

Unmatched requests

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

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

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

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

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

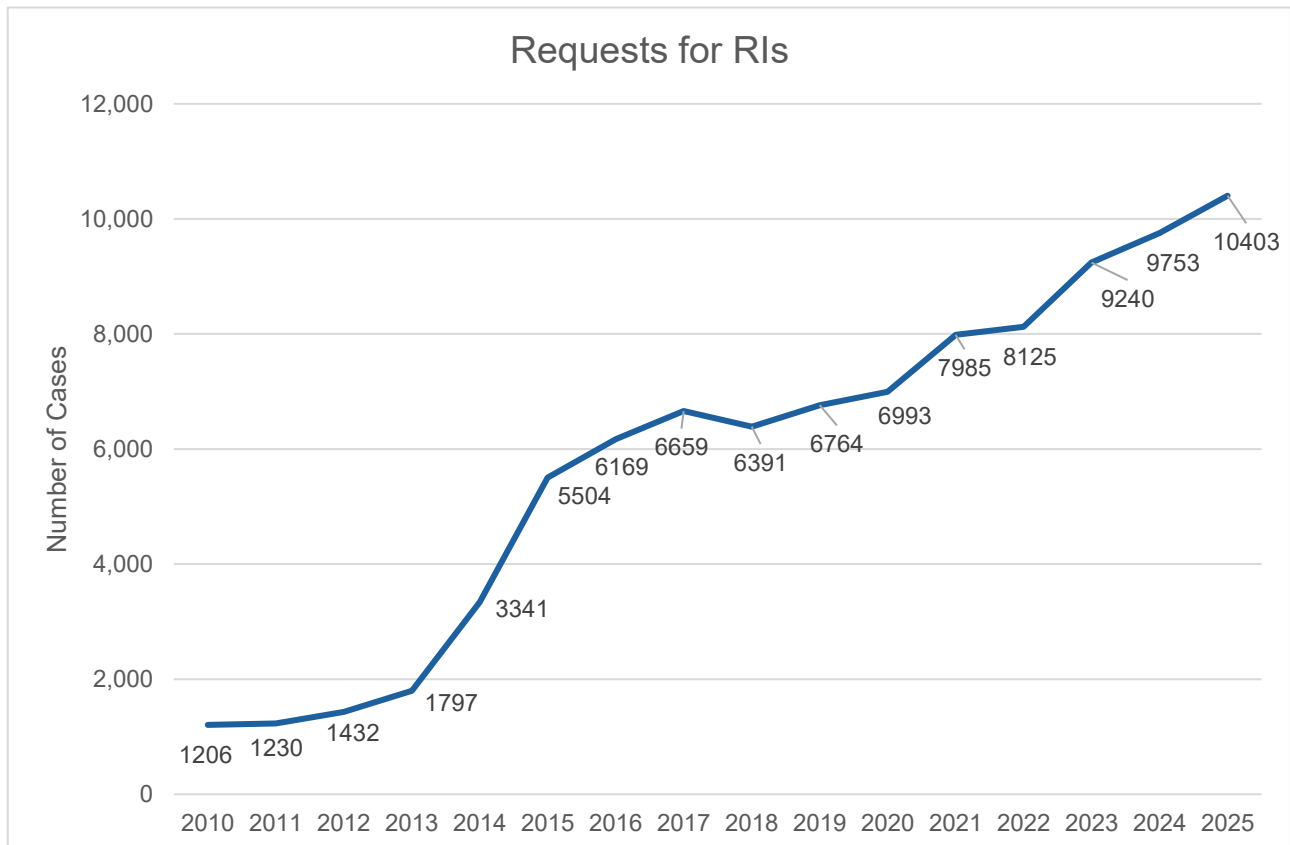
In 2025, 1.2% of requests for service were unmatched.

Total requests for RIs

A total of 10,403 requests for an RI were made via the WIS in 2025, an average of 867 requests per month. This amounts to a 6.7% increase in requests (650 cases) on 2024, during which 9,753 requests were made annually.

It also represents a 762.6% increase since 2010, when 1,206 requests were made (**figure 1**).

Figure 1



Overall change: matching success rates

Of 10,403 requests in 2025, 96.6% (10,048) were successfully matched by the WIT, with 1.2% (129) unmatched and 1.8% (191) cancelled.³

³ 0.9% (82) cases remained in the process of matching as at January 2026.

Total matched requests: annual comparison

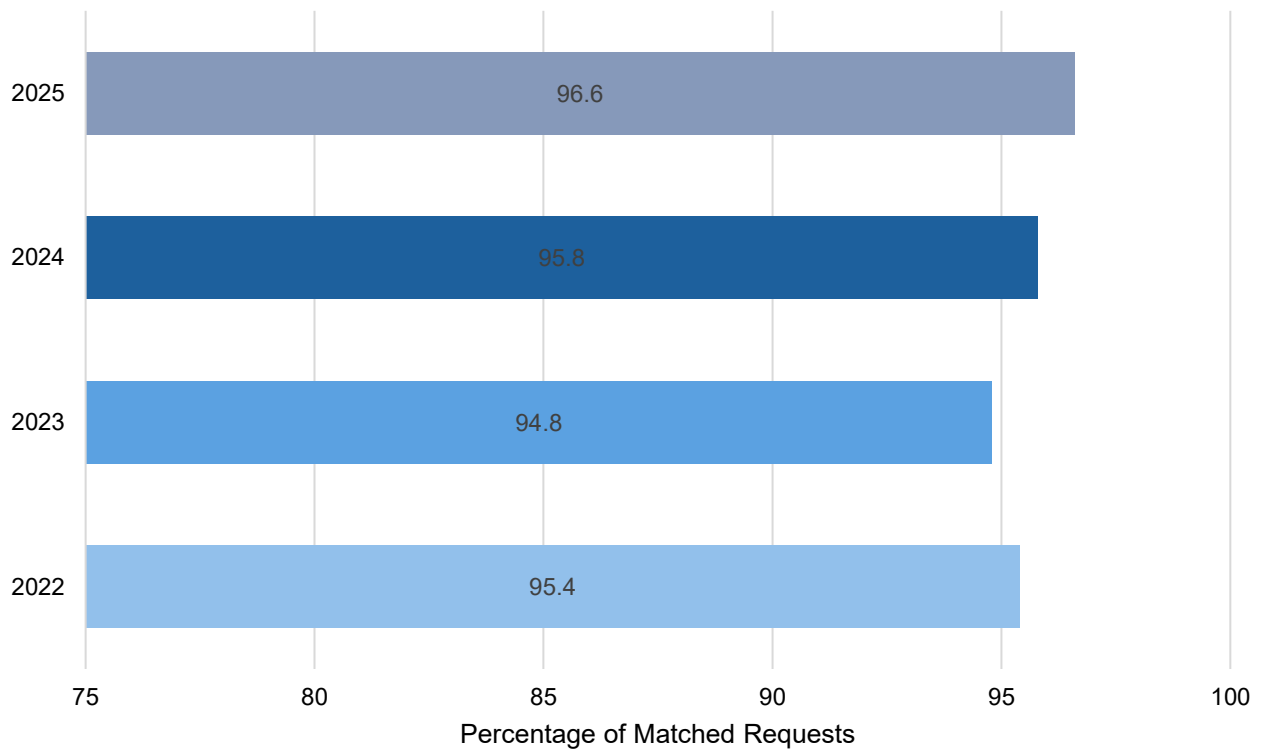


Figure 3

Requests by witness vulnerability

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

- Child without Concurrent Vulnerability
- Child with Mental Disorder⁵
- Child with Learning Disability
- Child with Physical Disability
- Adult with Mental Disorder
- Adult with Learning Disability
- Adult with Physical Disability

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

Definitions and examples

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

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

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

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

⁵ A mental disorder is within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983

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

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

Breakdown of vulnerabilities cited in request for service forms

Of the vulnerabilities cited on the RfS forms in 2025, 24.4% were for 'Child with learning disability', making this the most frequently cited vulnerability type. This was closely followed by adults with learning disability at 24%, Child without concurrent vulnerability at 21.2%, and Adults with Mental Health Disability at 17.2%.

Change across all requests

When compared with data from 2024, increases in the total number of RfS form citations were recorded for all except one vulnerability category (children without a concurrent vulnerability) (**Table 1**^{8,9}).

For child victims and witnesses, citations for mental disorders have increased by 11.6%, and for those with learning disabilities increased by 14.0%, and for those with physical disabilities it has decreased by 12.2%. As has been seen in recent years, requests for children without concurrent vulnerabilities decreased (by 2.3%).

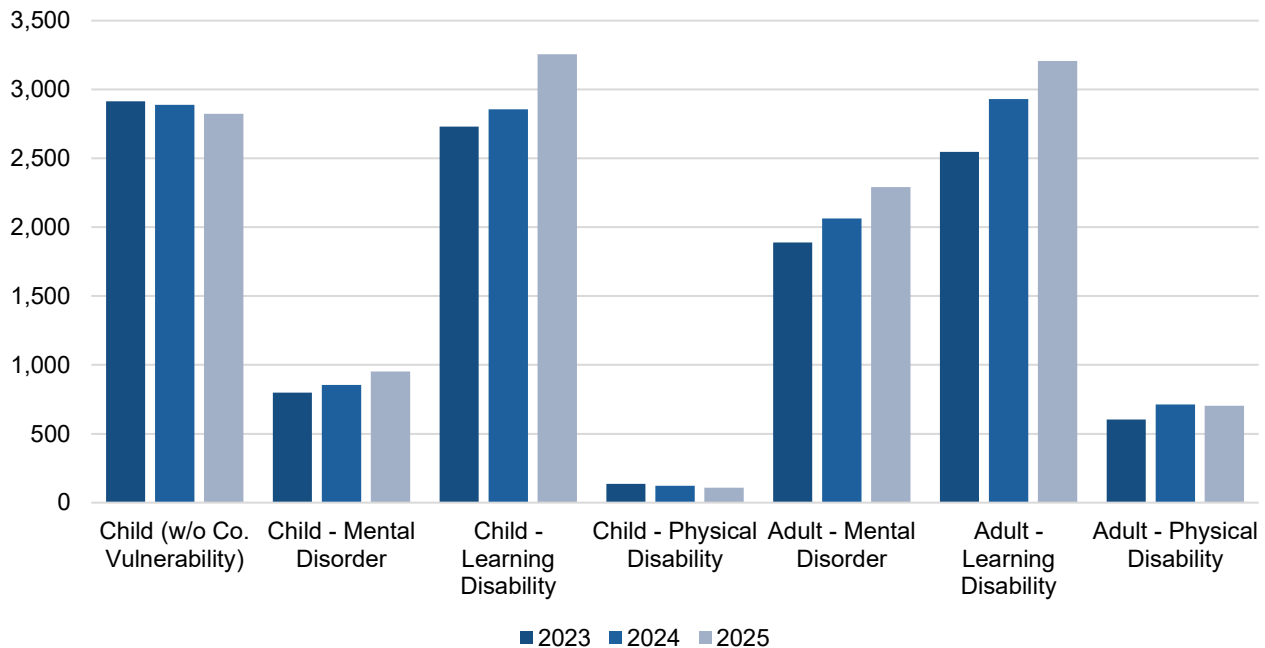
For adult victims and witnesses, citations for mental disorders increased by 11.0%, those for learning disabilities increased by 9.5%, and those for physical disabilities decreased by 1.4%.

Change across all requests (Vulnerability types)			
Vulnerability	2024	2025	Change from 2024 (%)
Child (without a concurrent vulnerability)	2,888	2,823	-2.3
Child – Mental Disorder	854	953	11.6
Child – Learning Disability	2,855	3,255	14.0

⁷ Equality Act 2010, Section 6(1)

⁹ Figure 4 and Table 1, *NCA Matching Service Data 2023 – 2025*

Child – Physical Disability	123	108	-12.2
Adult – Mental Disorder	2,064	2,291	11.0
Adult – Learning Disability	2,931	3,208	9.5
Adult – Physical Disability	714	704	-1.4

Table 1**RI requests by vulnerability: annual comparison****Matching success rates**

Compared with 2024, increases in the percentage of matched requests were recorded across all child vulnerability types, the percentage of matched requests increased for mental and learning vulnerabilities as well as physical disability (see Table 2 and Figure 6).

For adult victims and witnesses, the percentage of matched requests increased across almost all adult vulnerability types with only one decrease noted for adults with physical disability (-1.5%) – also see Table 2 and **Figure 6**.¹⁰

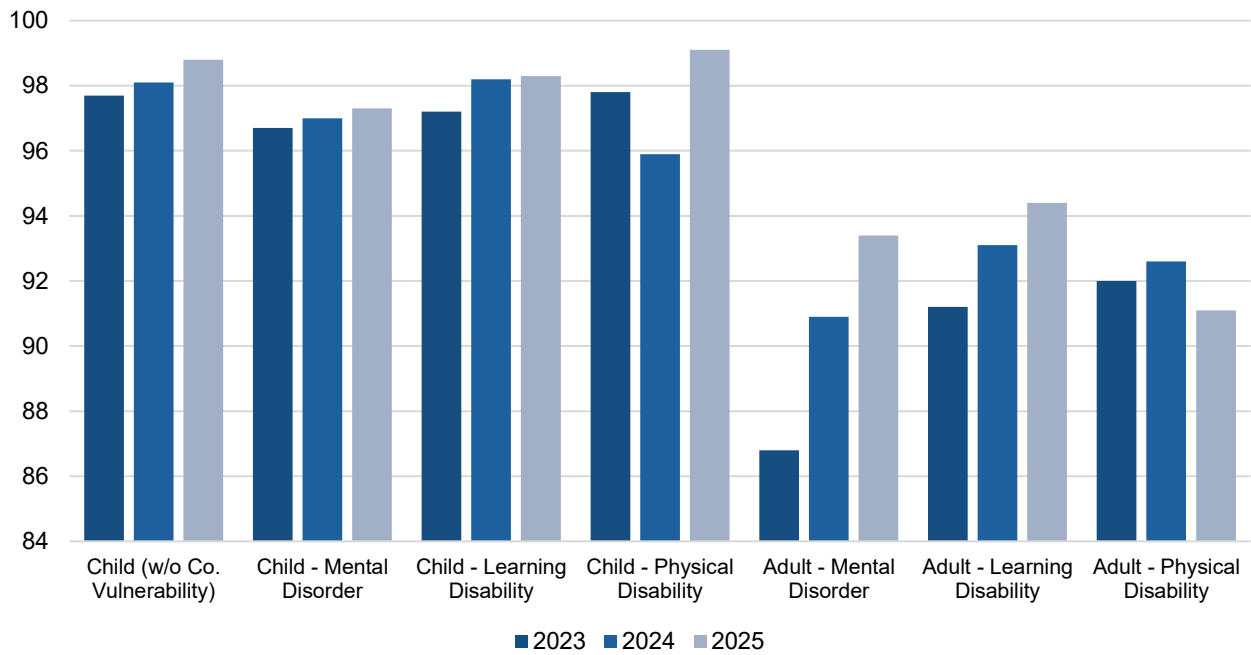
Change in success matching rates (Vulnerability Types)			
Vulnerability	Matched in 2024 (%)	Matched in 2025 (%)	Change from 2024 (%)
Child (w/o Concurrent Vulnerability)	98.1	98.8	0.7
Child – Mental Disorder	97.0	97.3	0.3
Child – Learning Disability	98.2	98.3	0.1
Child – Physical Disability	95.9	99.1	3.2
Adult – Mental Disorder	90.9	93.4	2.5
Adult – Learning Disability	93.1	94.4	1.3

¹⁰ Table 2 and Figure 6, *NCA Matching Service Data 2024 - 2025*

Adult – Physical Disability	92.6	91.1	-1.5
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Table 2

RI Requests by vulnerability: percentage of matched requests

**Figure 6**

Requests by age of witness (children/adults)

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

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

Breakdown of requests (children/adults)

Of all 10,403 requests for RIs in 2024, 61.2% of requests (6,371) were for children. The remaining 38.8% (4,032) were made on behalf of adults.

Breakdown of requests (adult/child): 2025

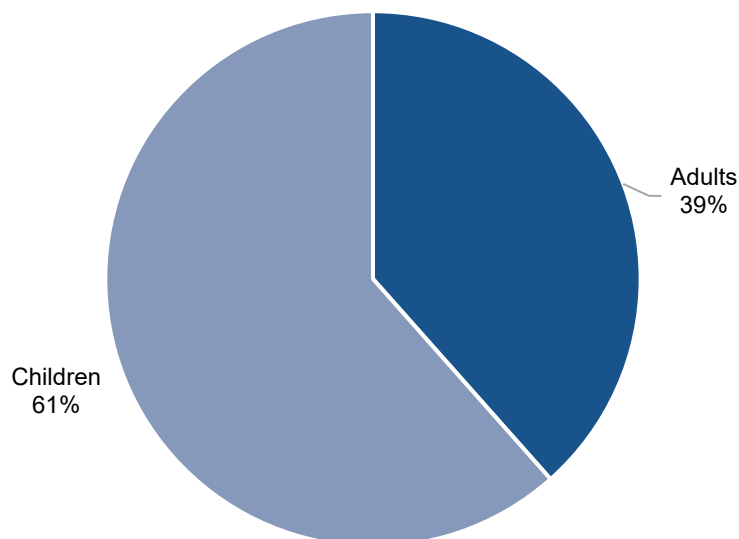


Figure 7

Change across all requests

Compared with 2024, the number of requests for both children and adults has increased by 6.1% (368 requests) and 7.5% (282 requests) respectively with a notable increase particularly in requests for adults with learning difficulties.

Change across all requests (by age of witness)			
Age	2024	2025	Change (%)
Child	6,003	6,371	+6.1
Adult	3,750	4,032	+7.5

Table 3

Matching success rates

When comparing 2025 with 2024, the matching success rates increased for both children and adults. As shown in Table 4, the percentage point variance was +0.3% and +1.5% respectively.

Change in success rates (age of witness)			
Age	2024 (%)	2025 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%)
Children	98.1	98.4	+0.3
Adults	92.2	93.7	+1.5

Table 4

Requests by witness type

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

- Victims
- Prosecution Witnesses
- Defence Witness

Breakdown of requests

Of all 10,403 requests for RIs in 2025, 94.6% of recorded requests (9,839) fell into the 'Victims' category, 5.4% (560) were made for 'prosecution witnesses, and <0.1% were made for defence witnesses.

Breakdown of requests (witness type): 2025

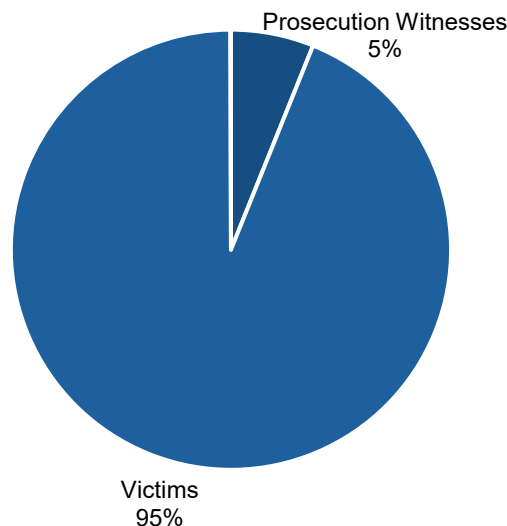


Figure 8

Change across all requests

Comparing to 2024 shows an increase in the number of requests for victims by 7.5%. The number of requests for prosecution witnesses decreased by 5.7%.

Change across all requests (witness type)			
Witness Type	2024	2025	Change (%)
Victims	9155	9839	+7.5
Prosecution Witnesses	594	560	-5.7
Defence witnesses	4	4	0

Table 5

Matching success rates

The matching success rate for victims and prosecution witnesses slightly increased since 2024. The defence witness matching rate decreased by -25% between 2024 and 2025, reflecting a single case due to the low volume of defence witness cases.

Change in success rates (witness type)			
Witness Type	2024 (%)	2025 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%)
Victims	96	96.7	+0.7
Prosecution Witnesses	93.3	93.9	+0.6
Defence witnesses	100	75	-25

Table 6

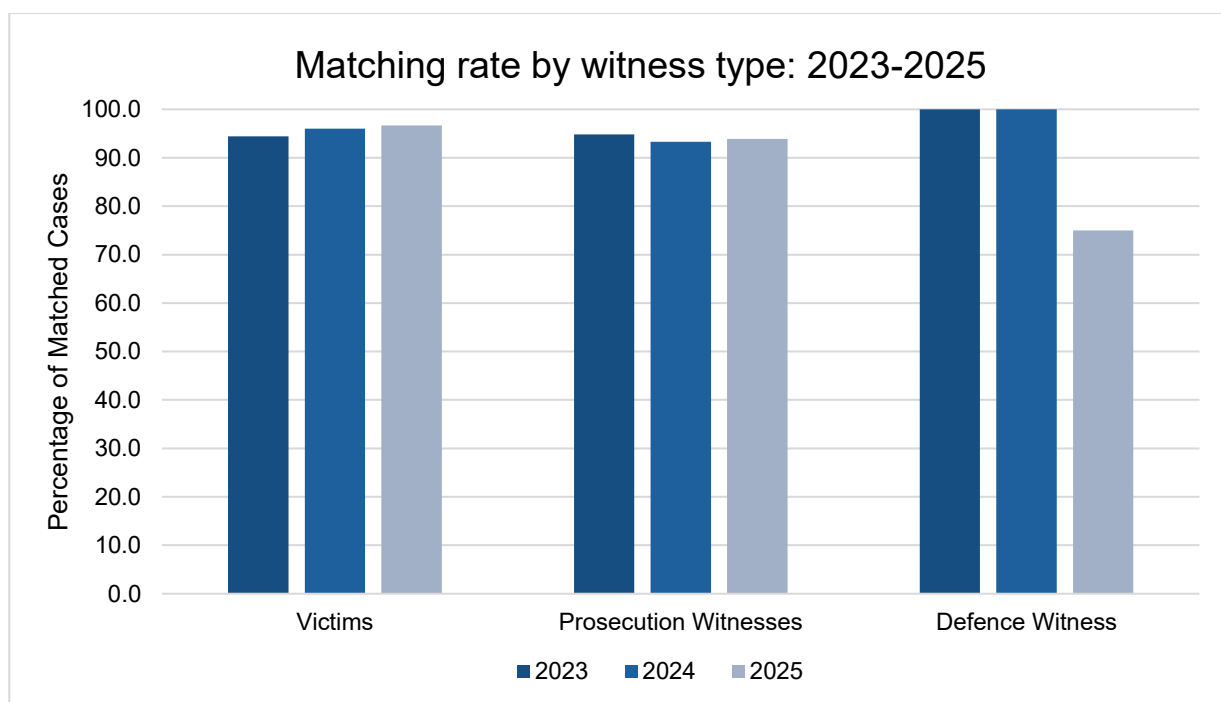


Figure 9

Requests by end-user

There are three categories of end-user that have submitted requests to the NCA in 2025:

- Police
- CPS
- Solicitor

Breakdown of requests

Requests from police forces continue to constitute the majority (79.4%, 8,259) of all requests for RIs in 2025, with requests from the CPS accounting for 20.6% (2,140 requests).¹¹ Requests from solicitors and courts correspond with requests for defence witnesses and volumes remain exceptionally small (<0.1%); a further data breakdown has not been provided for this reason.

Breakdown of requests (end-user): 2025

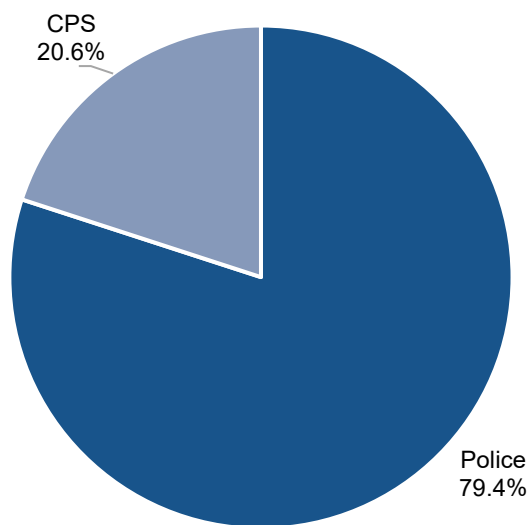


Figure 10

¹¹ Figure 10, NCA Matching Service Data 2025

Change across all requests

When comparing 2025 with the previous year, the number requests from police forces have increased by 6.1%, and requests from the CPS have increased by 8.9%.¹²

Change across all requests			
End-User	2024	2025	Change (%)
Police	7,784	8,259	+6.1
CPS	1,965	2,140	+8.9
Solicitor	4	4	0

Table 8

Matching success rates

The matching success rate for requests from the police increased by 0.6% from 2024, and the success rate for CPS requests increased by 1.5%.¹³

Change in success rates (end-user)			
End-User	2024 (%)	2025 (%)	Change in Matched Requests (%)
Police	97.1	97.7	+0.6
CPS	90.9	92.3	+1.5
Solicitor	100	75	-25.0

Table 9

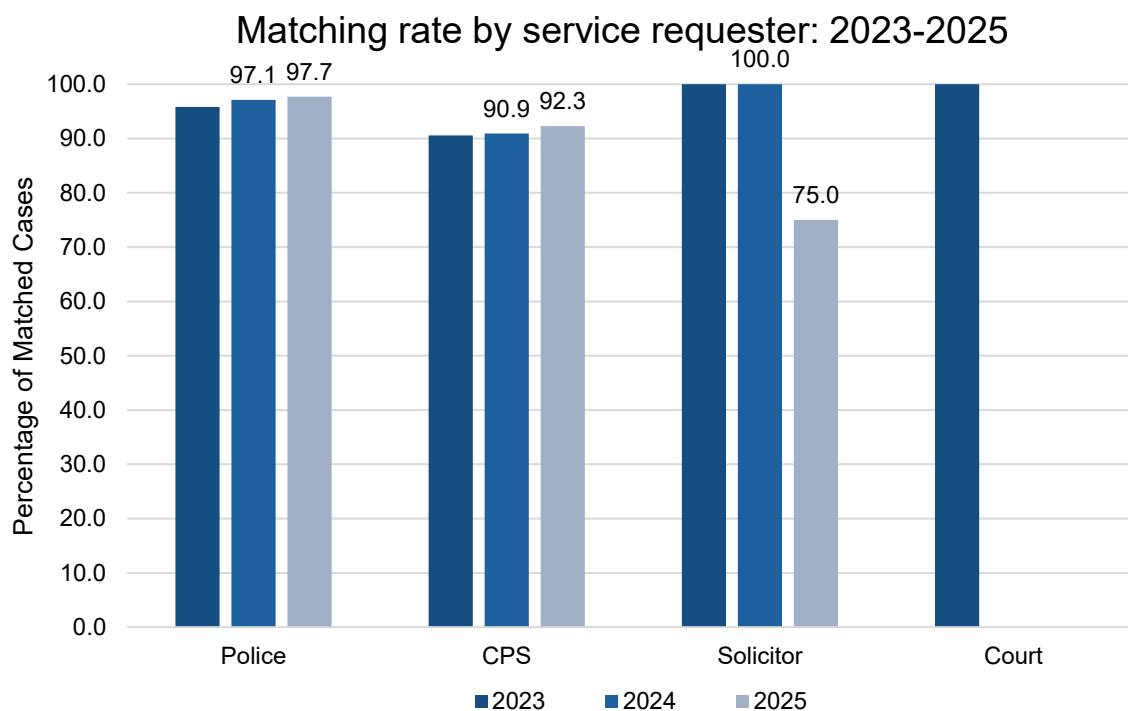


Figure 11

¹² Table 8, NCA Matching Service Data 2023 -2025

¹³ Table 9, NCA Matching Service Data 2023 - 2025

End-user feedback

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

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

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

Feedback overview

Feedback across all four criteria and both witness types has been averaged to provide an insight into RI performance reflected through feedback from end-users in 2025.

Against 1,231 cases where feedback was received, 99.6% received 'satisfactory', 'more than satisfactory' or 'excellent' feedback. Of the remaining 0.4%, 17 instances of feedback were 'less than satisfactory' and there were 3 instances of a 'poor' rating. All feedback falling below a 'satisfactory' rating is examined by the GSB feedback and complaints lead to establish whether further action is needed.

Breakdown of feedback received (end-user)

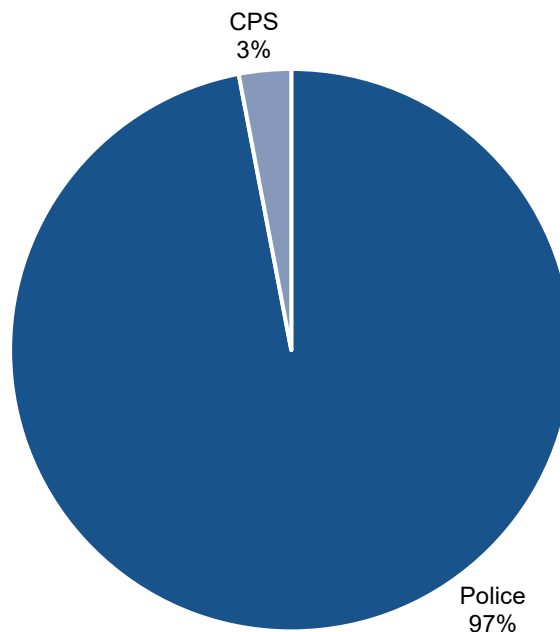


Figure 12

Feedback across all criteria

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

Victims' cases						
Feedback Criteria	'Excellent' (%)	More than Satisfactory (%)	Satisfactory (%)	Less than Satisfactory (%)	Poor (%)	Responses
Compliance with criminal procedures	92.4 (1,114)	7.2 (87)	0.2 (3)	0.2 (2)	Nil	1,206
Personal conduct and professionalism	94.5 (1,143)	4.7 (57)	0.6 (7)	0.2 (3)	Nil	1,210
Quality of information provided by the RI	93 (1,124)	5.9 (71)	0.7 (9)	0.2 (3)	0.1 (1)	1,208
Usefulness of the RI in the proceedings	92.5 (1,056)	6.3 (72)	0.5 (6)	0.5 (6)	0.2 (2)	1,142

Table 10

Prosecution witnesses' cases						
Feedback	'Excellent' (%)	More than Satisfactory (%)	Satisfactory (%)	Less than Satisfactory (%)	Poor (%)	Responses
Compliance with criminal procedures	92.3 (36)	5.1 (2)	Nil	2.6 (1)	Nil	39
Personal conduct and professionalism	94.9 (37)	2.6 (1)	2.6 (1)	Nil	Nil	39
Quality of information provided by the RI	92.3 (36)	5.1 (2)	Nil	2.6 (1)	Nil	39
Usefulness of the RI in the proceedings	92.3 (36)	5.1 (2)	Nil	2.6 (1)	Nil	39

Table 11

Active RI figures

The number of active and inactive RIs varies throughout the course of the year. The figures below correspond to active and inactive figures on the 16th day of each month between January 2025 and December 2025.

Active RIs

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

Inactive RIs

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

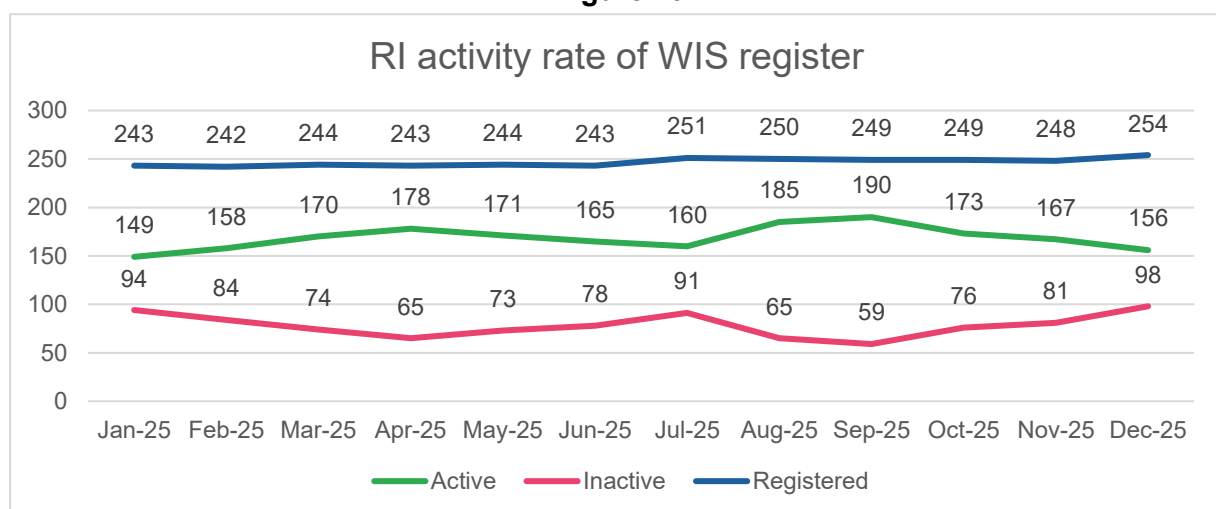
Reasons for inactivity vary widely and include primary employment commitments, maternity leave, sabbatical periods, academic study, and holiday periods. The duration of this inactivity varies accordingly. For most these periods are short; RI work is managed around them and the NCA is kept informed of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

RI availability overview

The number of active RIs fluctuated during 2025 with an average of 169 active RIs; equivalent to 68.4% of the average total number of RIs on the WIS register over this period (247). This is an increase on the previous year where the average number of active RIs was 160.

A total of 29 RIs were added to the WIS register in 2025, with 16 RIs leaving the Scheme, resulting in an overall increase of 13 RIs – a 5.26% increase in the capacity of the WIS¹⁴

Figure 13



¹⁴ WIS attrition rate 6.5% (UK national average 34% [UK Business: activity, size and location 2025 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-business-activity-size-and-location-2025))

Part three: key developments in 2025



RI recruitment

In January 2025, the MoJ ran a targeted recruitment campaign, with a focus on recruiting candidates with a professional background in mental ill health and learning disabilities in Lincolnshire, Devon and Cornwall, South Wales, West Midlands, Staffordshire, Greater London, Thames Valley, Sussex, Northumbria and North, South and West Yorkshire – where specific needs were identified through gap analysis carried out by the NCA.

Four training courses resulted in 29 new RIs joining the Scheme in 2025. Recruitment based on detailed analysis of demand has enabled the Scheme to respond to growing demand and meet the evolving needs of service users.

Updated WIS policies

Having reviewed the majority of WIS policies in 2024, the MoJ focussed on updating the Sanctions and Feedback and Complaints policies in 2025 to make these easier to operate and navigate. As ever we are grateful to the RIRT, the Governance and Standards Board and operational colleagues whom we consulted on the policy revisions, offering valuable feedback and insights for incorporation.

WIS annual conference

The 2025 WIS Annual Conference was delivered as a virtual event with up to 140 participants. It provided a valuable opportunity for RIs to engage with peers, stakeholders and the MoJ, enabling discussion of key aspects of their work, collaboration with agencies such as the police and courts, and opportunities to strengthen professional networks.

The annual conference remains a valued and well supported event within the WIS calendar, bringing practitioners together to explore specific areas of RI practice and the application of special measures within the justice system.

The programme featured contributions from a range of speakers, including RIs, criminal justice professionals and academics. Sessions included input from a National Vulnerable Witness Advisor, exploration of the intermediary's influence in shaping cross-examination, and guidance on working with Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) cases and an overview from an umbrella organisation representing Independent Sexual Violence Advisers.

Support for newly qualified RIs

We have continued to encourage the completion of Early Performance and Support Reviews for newly qualified RIs (NQRIs) building on the initiative introduced last year 2024. These reviews provide an opportunity for reflection at the six-month stage of practice, supported by an experienced RI.

During 2025, 27 NQRIs provided feedback through this process, which is being used to inform ongoing improvements to the scheme. The initiative continues to draw on the expertise of experienced practitioners to support early career development and help maintain the quality of the WIS.

WIS newsletter

The Criminal Special Measures Policy Team has remained up to date with developments and emerging issues that may affect the RI community. During 2025, the team issued quarterly WIS newsletters to share this information with RI practitioners.

These newsletters provided updates on key examples of RI work, positive feedback, and procedural and legal guidance. They also highlighted the range of RI activity through peer reflections and illustrated the quality of the WIS service using feedback from police and CPS partners.

Improving understanding of the RI role

During 2025, we have continued work to improve understanding of the RI role in the justice system to ensure other criminal justice practitioners can work effectively with RIs. We held sessions with Lime Culture, The Survivors Trust and Rape Crisis England and Wales to increase awareness of the Witness Intermediary Scheme among Independent Sexual Violence Advisers and how RIs support communication needs. We are very grateful to those RIs who presented as well as those who attended the sessions.

Training

In April 2025, the Registered Intermediary Training Team introduced several updates to their training course, including a full day dedicated primarily to training in relation to Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) and a transcription exercise as well as acting out the transcript of a real-life ABE so the trainees can discuss to explore their own thoughts and reactions to some of the more difficult information and how the RI contributed positively to the interview

Part four: finance of the witness intermediary scheme

Administrative budget

The WIS budget for 2025/26 was around £832,000 with roughly £690,000 of this allocated to fund the NCA's Witness Intermediary Team and WIS matching service.

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

Annual review of remuneration rates

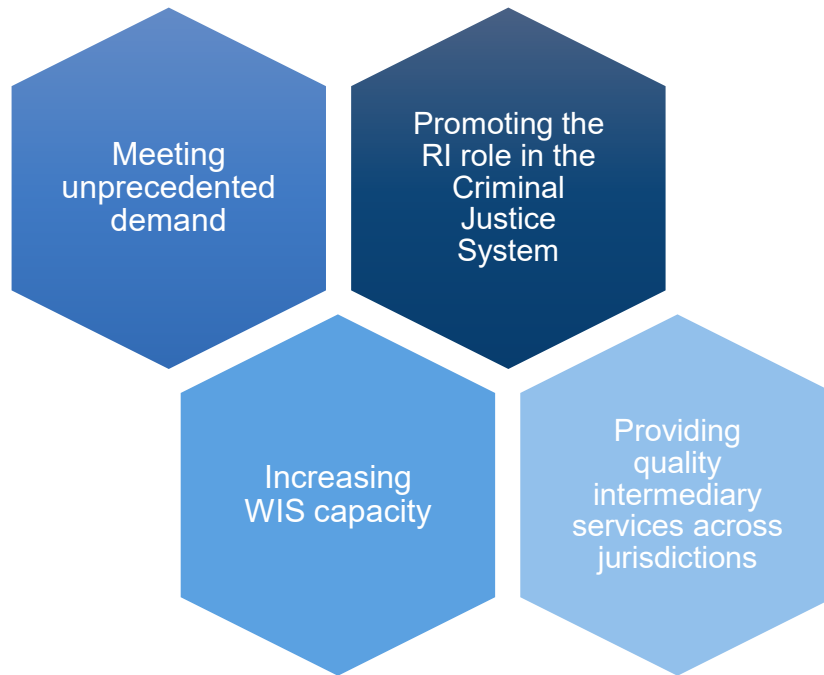
RIs must invoice according to a nationally agreed rate. Fees are based upon an hourly rate, covering face-to-face appointments and report writing, with reimbursement of travel and subsistence within policy limits.

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

Remuneration rates are agreed by the CPS and the NPCC. A review of remuneration rates takes place annually and follows an agreed procedure, with RIs invited to submit a remuneration proposal. RIs were awarded a 2.8% increase to the 2025/26 core hourly rate of remuneration (this increase also applied to the unsocial and travel time rates).

Registered intermediaries pay awards (recent history)		
Financial Year	Award (% Increase)	Core Hourly Rate Post-Award (£)
2019-20	1	39.33
2020-21	1.5	39.92
2021-22	Nil	39.92
2022-23	3	41.20
2023-24	3.5	42.64
2024-25	3	43.92
2025-26	2.8	45.15

Part five: forward look



Increasing WIS capability

The MoJ remains dedicated to investing in the recruitment and training of new RIs to increase WIS capability. In 2026, we continue our recruitment strategy with a national campaign informed by WIT data analysis to target areas and skillsets in high demand. This should allow us to train a further four cohorts of RIs and ensure that the needs of service users are met.

Awareness Raising

We will continue to promote the role and understanding of the RI role and how they support communication needs, using opportunities to raise knowledge and understanding about the distinctive nature of the role and how RIs are uniquely qualified to enable children and vulnerable adults with mental health conditions, learning and physical disabilities to give their best evidence.

Developing WIS efficiency

We will continue to look at ways to ensure that the Scheme is improving for RIs and end users alike. For example, the National Vulnerable Witness Advisor ran workshops during 2025, with a focus on conducting effective pre-interview planning and preparation assessment of children. This framework is helping the Police meet the requirement of pre interview groundwork, including a needs assessment and to help establish if there are communication difficulties. This aims to help identify what support a vulnerable person might need to complete a video recorded interview and to inform their decision on when they need to use an RI, as well as aiding the development of rapport, and preparing a witness for the interview process.



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