



UK Government

Government Response to the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts

October 2026



Government of the United Kingdom

Government response to the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts

Presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
by Command of His Majesty

October 2026



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Foreword

The criminal justice system is one of the foundations of a safe, fair, and democratic society. Through this web of interconnected agencies and organisations, the state can protect the public, uphold the rule of law, support victims, hold offenders to account, and safeguard the rights of every person who comes before the courts.

When that system works well, it puts fairness, accountability, and respect at the heart of the process and gives the public confidence that justice will be done. When it works poorly, the consequences are felt by victims, witnesses, defendants, professionals, families, and communities left waiting for answers, for closure and for accountability.

When we took office in July 2024, this Government inherited a record and rising backlog of cases in the Crown Court. Almost 81,000 cases are now waiting to be resolved, including nearly 24,000 that have been waiting for over a year – a number that is growing by 1,000 cases a quarter.

Behind every one of those cases is an individual waiting for their day in court. Tens of thousands of victims whose lives are on hold, witnesses awaiting the call to give evidence, defendants anxiously seeking to clear their name, and families in limbo. This frustration is compounded when hearings are delayed, sometimes at short notice. For some victims, the experience is just too much, and they withdraw from the process altogether, without getting the justice they deserve. We must not – and do not – accept this.

We cannot meet the challenges of today with a system designed for a different age. Crime has changed and so has the task of prosecuting it. Evidence is increasingly digital. A single smartphone can hold the equivalent of 50 million printed pages. Criminal networks have become more sophisticated. At the same time, we rightly expect our courts to be more accessible to those who use them, such as offering pre-recorded video evidence for vulnerable witnesses, placing additional demands on a system already under intense pressure.

We have no option but to modernise, which is why we asked Lord Brian Leveson to conduct the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts. His reports set out a rigorous blueprint for reform and modernisation, which we have begun to implement at pace.

We have embraced Lord Leveson's central conclusion – that fixing this crisis necessitates us to pull all available levers. So we are investing at record levels in maximising court capacity: unlimited Crown Court sitting days, increasing the size of the magistracy by 50%, and up to £34 million more a year for criminal legal aid advocates, alongside £116 million invested in criminal legal aid solicitors. Across all jurisdictions, £287 million is being invested in the court estate to make vital repairs and upgrade digital systems.

We are improving efficiency and modernising our courts by expanding the use of AI, rolling out specialist case progression staff across all Crown Court centres, and making greater use of remote hearings where appropriate.

And the Courts and Tribunals Bill, currently before Parliament, introduces pragmatic structural reforms to reduce pressure on the Crown Court and help ensure that our criminal courts are never allowed to reach crisis point again.

We have also announced £23 million to deliver specialist courts for rape and sexual offences in the Crown Court, transforming the court's response to these crimes. This is backed by the largest ever investment in victims support services – £550 million over three years – as part of our landmark violence against women and girls strategy.

As Lord Leveson makes clear, every part of the criminal justice system has a role to play and we recognise that.

We are investing an additional £96 million in the Crown Prosecution Service, increasing its funding by more than 10 percent between 2026 and 2029. This means more prosecutors able to make charging decisions, prepare cases for court, and bring offenders to justice.

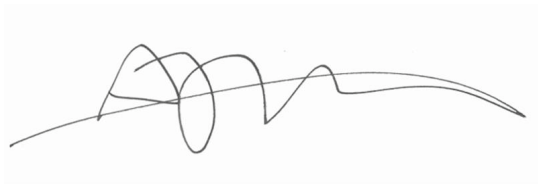
We have set out our plans to establish a National Police Service, improving the consistency of standards across forces and strengthening our ability to tackle terrorism and serious and organised crime. We have launched the independent review of police force structures, to design an optimised model at the local and national levels. And a new National Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Policing will equip police with the data and technology to keep pace with modern criminality and provide the best possible service to the public.

For too long, different parts of the system have been expected to solve interconnected problems separately. We will work collectively across our three departments and with our agencies and partners to build a shared vision and outcomes, so that the system has a common purpose and joint priorities.

We will ensure this vision supports the Government's wider programme of devolution and public service reform, and maximise the opportunities created by stronger local leadership and more integrated public services. This will help us work more effectively across organisational boundaries to prevent and reduce reoffending, support victims, and strengthen community safety.

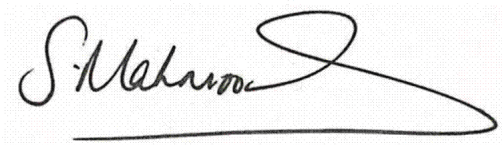
The task ahead is significant. It will require persistence, partnership, and a willingness to change ways of working that no longer serve the public as they should.

At root, the criminal justice system can only operate with the confidence and consent of the public it seeks to serve. Our responsibility is not simply to tackle the delays we face today, but to build a justice system ready for the demands of tomorrow: one that is resilient, responsive, and capable of delivering justice and accountability when people need it. That is the system our citizens should be able to expect, and that is the system this Government is determined to deliver.

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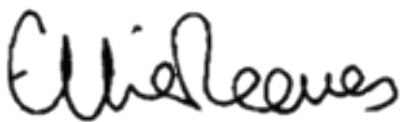
The Rt Hon Alex Norris MP

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

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The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP

Secretary of State for the Home Department

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ellie Reeves', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Rt Hon Ellie Reeves KC MP

Attorney General for England and Wales

Introduction and contact details

This document is the Government response to Lord Brian Leveson's Independent Review of the Criminal Courts.

It will cover:

- the background to the Review
- a summary of the response to the Review
- a response to each recommendation in the Review
- the next steps following this response

Further copies of this response can be obtained by contacting the **Ministry of Justice** at the address below:

General Enquiries

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This response is also available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-the-criminal-courts>

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Background

The criminal courts continue to face significant and sustained pressures. In June 2026, the open Crown Court caseload stood at nearly 81,000, with almost 24,000 cases waiting for a year or longer.

In December 2024, the then Lord Chancellor commissioned Lord Brian Leveson, former President of the Queen's Bench Division, to undertake an Independent Review of the Criminal Courts. The Review was commissioned to consider options for longer-term reform of the criminal courts and to identify measures to improve efficiency in the criminal courts. The Government committed to responding to the Review in full following the publication of its final report.

Lord Leveson conducted the Review in two parts. Part one, published on 9 July 2025, set out 45 recommendations, including options for the structural reform of the criminal courts to ensure cases are dealt with proportionately and efficiently. It considered longer-term reforms intended to reduce demand on the Crown Court by retaining more cases in the lower courts.

On 2 December 2025, the then Deputy Prime Minister announced a package of criminal court reforms intended to support the faster progression of cases through the criminal courts, with the Courts and Tribunals Bill introduced to Parliament in February 2026. Following the change of administration, in September 2026, the Government confirmed the return of the Courts and Tribunals Bill.

Part two of the Review, published on 4 February 2026, focused on improving efficiency in the criminal courts. Lord Leveson made 135 recommendations aimed at improving the operation of the system and supporting the delivery of swifter justice. The report identified opportunities to improve existing processes, make greater use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), and modernise the operation of the criminal courts. It also calls for a single vision for the criminal justice system, underpinned by clear leadership and accountability.

In conducting the Review, Lord Leveson engaged extensively with representatives from across the criminal justice system. A call for evidence was published on GOV.UK, inviting submissions from all those with an interest in the Review. To ensure the Review was informed by lived experience of the system, a series of roundtables were facilitated, and visits across the frontline of the criminal justice system completed, on Lord Leveson's behalf. The evidence and contributions received were essential in informing the Review's findings and recommendations.

The Review builds on previous work examining reform of the criminal courts and wider justice system, including Lord Justice Auld's Review of the Criminal Courts of England and Wales (2001), then-Sir Brian Leveson's Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings

(2015), the Lammy Review (2017), and Lord Christopher Bellamy KC's independent review of criminal legal aid (2021). Its publication also followed the Independent Sentencing Review led by Sir David Gauke and Part I of the Independent Review of Disclosure and Fraud Offences led by Jonathan Fisher KC.

The Government is grateful to Lord Leveson and his expert advisers for their thorough reports. We are also grateful to all who contributed evidence and particularly to those who shared their personal experiences and insights to inform Lord Leveson's recommendations and the Government's response – thank you for sharing your experiences so that we can improve the system for the future and all those who will use it.

Summary

Lord Brian Leveson opens his report, the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts, by stating plainly that criminal justice is facing significant and sustained pressure, with the open caseload in the Crown Court at a record high. We cannot pretend that the world is the same as it was when the Crown Court was introduced by the 1971 Courts Act. Criminal cases are now open longer and have become more complex, with high volumes of digital evidence now central to many prosecutions. This is having a devastating impact on the lives of many victims and witnesses, who are too often left waiting for justice, and on defendants left without resolution. This situation is untenable.

Accountability and respect must be at the heart of the criminal justice system, and the Government is committed to delivering swifter justice, tackling the Crown Court caseload, and making the criminal justice system fit for the future. As Lord Leveson rightly recognises, it is only through the combined impact of his recommendations for financial investment, structural reform, and modernisation that we can put the criminal courts onto a genuinely sustainable footing. We are acting on all three fronts.

Investment

The Government has already taken significant action to correct decades of chronic underinvestment and strengthen capacity in the criminal courts. Following extensive engagement with the Lady Chief Justice, the Senior President of Tribunals, and the Judicial Office, the then Deputy Prime Minister announced a landmark settlement for courts and tribunals in 2026/27.

For the first time, this includes firm assumptions for the following two financial years through to 2028/29, giving His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the judiciary, and partners greater stability to plan for the years ahead.

That settlement included the uncapping of Crown Court sitting days for 2026/27. This is allowing the Crown Court to sit at record high levels and hear as many cases as possible. The magistrates' courts have also been funded to sit an allocation of 125,800 sitting days this financial year, up from 114,000 allocated in 2025/26, with a commitment to funding increases in future years.

The Government has also announced additional funding of up to £34 million more a year for criminal legal aid advocate fees (a consultation on those fee increases has now been completed), and launched a multi-million pound scheme to deliver up to 100 additional criminal barrister pupillages every year. This is on top of the £116 million per year for criminal legal aid solicitors. We are also investing £287 million in the court estate across all jurisdictions this year to deliver vital repairs to court buildings and upgrades to digital systems, and we have committed £550m for victim support services over three years.

Structural reform

Lord Leveson conducted a wide-ranging and comprehensive review. His expert panel gathered evidence from organisations and individuals over many months and the conclusion is clear: investment and efficiencies alone, while critical, are not enough to turn the tide on the backlog. It is only when we implement all three elements – financial investment, system efficiencies, and pragmatic structural changes – that we can sustainably reduce demand, tackle the intolerable delays, and modernise a crumbling system.

The measures in the Courts and Tribunals Bill are designed to reduce demand in the Crown Court, but they are also principled decisions designed to improve our criminal court structures – ensuring cases are allocated according to their seriousness and complexity, resources are used proportionately across the system, and delays are minimised. These measures are:

- Removing defendants' right to elect for trial in the Crown Court for all triable either-way criminal offences. This means that a decision on jurisdiction will be made solely by the magistrates' courts. The requirement for a defendant's consent for the Crown Court to send a case back to the magistrates' courts will also be removed. This measure is designed to ensure that criminal cases are heard in the most appropriate venue, according to their seriousness and complexity. Where a case can be heard appropriately in the magistrates' courts, it will be – prioritising Crown Court time for the cases that need it most, sparing victims unnecessary delays.
- Increasing the maximum custodial sentence in the magistrates' court up to 18 months' or 24 months' maximum imprisonment for single and multiple triable-way offences. This will enable more cases to be retained in the magistrates' courts for both trial and sentencing, where triable either way offences continue to complete more than four times faster than in the Crown Court. It will not alter the statutory maximum penalty for any offences.
- Reforming the appeals process from the magistrates' courts to the Crown Court by replacing the automatic right to appeal to the Crown Court from the magistrates' courts in criminal proceedings with a permission stage. The measure also replaces the full rehearing in the Crown Court with a hearing focused on a specific issue identified in the original proceedings. This is to bring magistrates' court appeals in line with other criminal appeals processes and ensure it is the court that triages cases rather than solely being down to defendant choice. In turn, this approach will spare victims and witnesses the ordeal of a second hearing where this is not necessary in the interest of justice.
- Introducing trial by judge alone in the Crown Court for suitably technical and lengthy fraud and financial cases. The aim is to reduce the time taken to hear particularly lengthy and complex cases by permitting judge-alone trials, thereby freeing Crown Court capacity to hear cases requiring a jury trial, as well as removing the requirement for jurors to sit on these longer trials, which can significantly disrupt their personal and professional lives. Cases will only be eligible for consideration if certain conditions are met – for example, a preparatory hearing (only ordered for complex cases needing additional extra management) must have been ordered.

Modernisation and efficiency

The Government is also committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system.

One Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system spans from preventing crime and responding when it occurs, through investigation, prosecution and the courts – to sentencing, prisons, probation, and rehabilitation. These elements need to operate as a coherent whole: preventing crime where possible, bringing cases to a conclusion quickly, protecting the public, and maintaining confidence that justice will be delivered fairly and effectively. Achieving this requires collective leadership, and so the Government agrees with Lord Leveson’s conclusion that the criminal justice system needs a single vision, defined outcomes, and clearer accountability.

That is why the Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary, and Attorney General are taking collective responsibility for strengthening how the criminal justice system works. They are developing a vision for the criminal justice system to align the whole system around a common purpose: upholding the law, delivering justice, and protecting the public. This includes ensuring join up between criminal justice system reform and police reform, including the reform of police force structures, to provide a whole system approach.

Work is underway to develop clear and robust performance monitoring for the whole system, underpinned by high-quality data to improve cross system accountability and allow progress to be monitored more consistently, and swift, decisive action to be taken where performance is not as expected.

In line with Lord Leveson’s recommendation, the Government has already appointed a Second Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Justice who is overseeing delivery of this work and strengthening governance structures, ensuring cross-system leadership and accountability.

Harnessing data and technology to modernise the system and improve user experience

We completely agree with Lord Leveson that technology is a critical enabler for enhanced efficiency in the criminal justice system, and we are taking decisive action to use new technologies to reduce delays and modernise services for users. We are working to develop a new single digital Justice ID that will enable us to monitor cases and outcomes more consistently, tracking individuals from arrest, through the courts, into custody, and back into the community.

Across the criminal justice system, we are deploying AI behind the scenes safely and responsibly to speed up processes, reduce the time spent on manual tasks, and give frontline staff more time to apply their professional judgement where it matters most. We are building on the successes of the groundbreaking Justice AI Unit and our well-established digital and data science teams: expanding the use of our flagship AI tool Justice Transcribe; exploring AI tools for translation; and rolling out tools to make our prisons safer. The establishment of PoliceAI, a brand-new centre launched in June 2026,

backed by at least £75m over this Spending Review, will accelerate the responsible use of AI across all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

In the Crown Court, we are developing AI-enabled tools to identify case-readiness issues, help caseworkers prioritise the tasks needed to progress cases, and support better listing decisions. In helping cases progress more efficiently and making better use of available court capacity, these interventions aim to reduce delays and deliver swifter access to justice. Alongside this, we are working with industry and justice-sector partners to develop robust benchmarks and safe evaluation standards for AI in legal settings, and build the evidence needed to support its safe and effective use across the justice system.

We are committed to putting public safety first and will only approve tools that have undergone rigorous testing for accuracy, reliability, security, and bias. Aligning with the AI Action Plan for Justice and the MoJ AI and Data Science Ethics Framework, these tools will operate within existing guidelines on safe, responsible AI use in the public sector. As recommended by Lord Leveson, we are also working with the judiciary to enable the greater use of virtual hearings, where it is in the interests of justice to do so, to achieve a more consistent national approach, free up court capacity, save professionals' valuable travel time, and improve access to justice for both defendants and victims.

Getting it right first time

Lord Leveson also places an emphasis on “getting it right first time,” stressing the need for high quality, early decision making from the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the defence. Mistakes, missing information, and avoidable delays at the start of a criminal case can compound over time, leaving victims and witnesses waiting months or years for justice. Every case involves many professions and agencies, and the Government is committed to making it easier for them to work together, share information, and keep cases moving through the system.

Work is ongoing through the CPS and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Joint Operational Improvement Board to build on work undertaken over recent years to improve communication, collaboration, and ensure consistency of engagement between the police and CPS. Both agencies have worked closely to implement greater use of early advice and direct 'real time' communication with investigators, which has helped to improve timeliness and reduce action plans. This focus on collaboration and early engagement has also shown tangible improvements in police file quality ensuring the CPS receive the right information, in the right format to make effective and timely charging decisions and reduce the risk of cracked and ineffective trials.

Alongside this and our continued investment in rehabilitation services to reduce reoffending, we will urgently examine our Out of Court Resolution framework to understand how we can strengthen the use of Out of Court Resolutions to ensure only those cases that need to come to court do so. This will include consideration of the functionality of the uncommenced measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022). Across the system, the aim is the same: to reduce avoidable delay, improve early decision making, and support collaboration.

Efficient and effective case progression through the courts

In 2025, 1 in 4 Crown Court trials were ineffective and could not go ahead on the day. This can be for a variety of reasons including, for example, directions not being complied with, parties not being ready, and defendants not being brought to court from custody on time. Each avoidable delay wastes court time and means victims, witnesses and defendants wait longer for justice. For victims in particular, repeated adjournments and uncertainty about when their case will be heard can be deeply distressing. The Government is taking practical action to keep cases moving.

From this autumn, every Crown Court centre will be supported by dedicated case progression staff. Their job will be to grip cases early, chase outstanding actions, and resolve routine issues before they cause delay in court. The Lady Chief Justice has introduced the first National Listing Framework, which took effect on 1 October 2026, supporting a more consistent approach to criminal listing across England and Wales. Alongside this, HMCTS is developing new scheduling functionality within the digital Common Platform case management system to help courts list hearings more efficiently and make better use of available courtrooms, judges and staff. In addition, the Lady Chief Justice's guidance on Live Links, which came into effect on 1 October 2026, moves us towards a more consistent approach to remote hearings, reducing unnecessary travel, and making better use of court and wider justice-system resources.

Cases also move faster when the defence engages early. We are reforming legal aid fees, supporting early and thorough preparation, and helping with the efficient progression of cases. We are also improving how defendants are brought from prisons to court, working with local authorities to expand the use of bus lanes by prisoner escort vehicles, and improving the timeliness and quality of Pre-Sentence Reports so that judges have the information they need to sentence without delay.

A sustainable and skilled workforce

The criminal justice system depends on the people who keep it running. Magistrates, legal advisers, court staff, judges, jurors, prosecutors, defence practitioners, and prison and probation staff all play a vital role in delivering justice every day. Reform will only succeed if we support and strengthen the workforce on which the system relies.

Magistrates are a critical and valued part of our justice system. They volunteer their time, serve their communities, and are the backbone of local justice. We inherited a magistrate workforce that had more than halved over the previous decade, falling from around 25,000 in 2012 to only 12,500 by 2021. We are rebuilding the magistracy by increasing the total number of magistrates to 21,000 in 2028/29, with more regular regional recruitment and a new national taskforce to support local Advisory Committees. This will help speed up recruitment and training, bring in more volunteers from across society, and ensure magistrates are properly supported in their work. Ensuring the magistracy reflects society remains a priority as we recruit more magistrates. We are investing around £4m annually in marketing – nearly four times previous levels – to help attract a broader and more diverse range of candidates.

To meet growing demand, we also need a healthy intake of judges coming into the system. We are investing in regular, large-scale recruitment across the courts and tribunals system, including in the Crown and the magistrates' courts. Since January 2026,

recruitment exercises have launched for 64 Circuit Judges (including 45 for criminal courts), 30 District Judges (Magistrates' Courts), and 128 Recorders, who sit on a fee-paid basis in the courts. We have also appointed 50 new Deputy District Judges in the magistrates' courts following the most recent recruitment exercise. A further 86 candidates have been recommended for appointment and are currently progressing through the appointments process.

Legal professionals are just as central to a fair and functioning system. Criminal defence practitioners, prosecutors and advocates keep cases moving, protect the right to a fair trial and help ensure justice is done. We have completed a consultation on an uplift of up to £34 million a year for criminal defence advocate fees, and, in September, we launched a multi-million pound scheme to deliver up to 100 additional criminal barrister pupillages every year. We will continue to work with the legal professions to understand pressures in the sector and support a sustainable and diverse workforce. The new Judicial and Legal Diversity Board, jointly chaired by the Lord Chancellor and Lady Chief Justice, will prioritise removing barriers to ensuring that the best legal professionals from all backgrounds can become judges. We are also strengthening the recruitment, retention and development of HMCTS legal advisers, ensuring their expertise, which is vital to the effective operation of the magistrates' courts, is used to best effect.

Taken together, the measures in this response will build a criminal justice system fit for the 21st century by making sure court time is used proportionately and effectively, and harnessing new technology and data to improve the experience of the system for all its users.

Responses to individual recommendations

Definitions

Accept – we agree with Lord Leveson’s recommendation and will take it forward.

Accept in principle – we agree with the purpose of Lord Leveson’s recommendation but taking it forward may be dependent on a future Spending Review, we may take forward one part of the recommendation, or we may deliver it by taking forward a related piece of work.

Reject – we are not progressing this recommendation at this time.

1. **I recommend that in all appropriate cases, when making a charging decision, police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service consider whether an Out of Court Resolution should be offered, including cautions, conditional cautions and other mechanisms for disposal.**

Accept in principle – The Government is committed to strengthening the use of Out of Court Resolutions (OOCRs) where appropriate. We know how valuable these diversionary tools can be to tackle lower-level offending, reducing reoffending and the risk of future escalation of offending while ensuring accountability. These tools also provide swift resolutions for victims of crime. The Ministry of Justice and the Home Office are working closely to urgently examine the existing legislative framework and delivery mechanisms to ensure they support this ambition, subject to decisions taken at the next Spending Review, where required.

2. **I recommend that there be a standard approach to ensure better administration of Out of Court Resolutions with the standard set for training through the College of Policing and the Law Society. Better administration could be in the form of a scrutiny panel conducted by Local Criminal Justice Boards overseen by the Criminal Justice Board.**

Accept in principle – The Government is committed to strengthening the use of OOCRs, subject to decisions taken at the next Spending Review. This will be supported by work to improve the use of data across the criminal justice system, enabling the improved administration of OOCRs. Once we have examined the legislative framework, we will consider how effective delivery can be supported and monitored through appropriate training and oversight.

3. **I recommend that the police and Crown Prosecution Service be encouraged to review appropriate cases in the open caseload to identify whether any of those cases could be suitable for the use of an Out of Court Resolution.**

Reject – OOCRs, specifically cautions, require a suspect to make an admission of guilt and accept the caution in order to be considered for an OOCR. It is therefore not

operationally feasible for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to offer an OOCR in cases that are already within the CPS' open caseload, as these cases have already been charged without an admission being secured or accepted by an offender. In addition, the Home Office is currently undertaking research to explore the extent to which forces could consider cautions as alternatives to charges for summary offences. Based on completed force visits, mechanisms already exist to consider the option for giving offenders cautions as part of routine pre-charge reviews. Introducing additional reviews of the open charge caseload would risk duplication.

4. I recommend that the government undertakes an evaluation study in order to consider the use of digital tools that would help streamline effective use of Out of Court Resolutions across England and Wales.

Accept in principle – We are already exploring how new technologies can support the use of OOCRs through the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) trailblazer project, which is testing how digital tools could support police decision-making in relation to OOCRs. The OOCR Trailblazer has received funding in this Spending Review, with initial trials completing by the end of the financial year. This will include recommendations on all aspects of digitally transforming the current process, including the future use of decision support applications.

5. I endorse the decision of the Home Office to amend Outcome 22 (police counting tool for Out of Court Resolutions) so that Out of Court Resolutions are recognised in the same way as other outcomes.

Accept – The Home Office has already taken forward work to formally recognise the use of Outcome 22 (Diversionary / Educational or Intervention Activity Completed) by forces. In addition, the use of deferred prosecution has been identified as a separate recording category for forces and is split for children under Outcome 23 and adults under Outcome 24 under the Home Office Outcomes Framework (published on 1 April).

6. I recommend further investment in and greater use of rehabilitation programmes for drug and alcohol misuse and other health intervention programmes. This must adhere to a national framework to ensure consistent provision across the country.

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the transformative effect rehabilitation programmes for drug and alcohol misuse can have and is supportive of investment. The Department of Health and Social Care has ring-fenced £3.4bn over this Spending Review period to deliver these programmes in the community, including for people within the criminal justice system. We will consider the benefits of delivering a national framework to ensure consistent provision.

7. I recommend that the government reviews the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 in order to simplify and clarify the system to encourage the recognition of rehabilitation.

Accept in principle – The Government is committed to considering opportunities to simplify the criminal records regime to ensure it is clear and proportionate, particularly in relation to childhood offences. Our criminal records regime must balance public protection with rehabilitation. We will publish a consultation on a

targeted package of reforms to the childhood criminal records regime by the end of the year.

8. I recommend implementing Out of Court Resolutions alongside restorative justice for low-tier offences such as some thefts, public order offences and drug misuse.

Accept in principle – The Government is committed to cracking down on these crimes that harm local communities. We know that in certain cases, OOCRs can be effective for this, and that is why we are committing to a wider examination of the existing legislative framework and delivery mechanisms. We want to strengthen the use of diversionary tools and ensure the right interventions are available. The role of restorative justice will be explored as part of this joint work between Ministry of Justice and Home Office.

9. I recommend an expansion of the Deferred Prosecution Scheme should be introduced by a legislative amendment to the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

Accept in principle – As part of the wider examination of the existing legislative framework, we will consider whether placing deferred prosecutions on a statutory footing is proportionate, or whether alternative, non-legislative measures could deliver the ambition.

10. I recommend that the Crown Prosecution Service and Ministry of Justice agree eligible offences and criteria for Out of Court Resolutions in consultation with the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Accept – Eligibility for statutory OOCRs is already set out in primary legislation, including the Criminal Justice Act 2003. However, as set out above, the Government is committed to strengthening the use of OOCRs and is urgently examining the existing legislative framework to ensure it supports this ambition.

11. I recommend that the College of Policing makes clear that Release under Investigation (RUI) is no longer appropriate and that the only mechanism for releasing a suspect from the police station while an investigation continues should be bail (unconditional or subject to conditions). Alternatively, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 should be amended to include statutory provisions in relation to the use of RUI, identical to those in force on bail. Additionally, applications to the magistrates' court to extend bail (or RUI if it remains) should be heard by the magistrates' court as soon as possible, provided they are served in good time and that, pending such a hearing, bail conditions in place can continue.

Accept in principle – We agree that we can go further in relation to safeguards for Release Under Investigation (RUI). Further work is needed to fully understand the operational implications of any such changes. This would require full engagement with the NPCC and College of Policing to ensure any approach is workable and carefully implemented.

12. I recommend that the police and CPS must consistently follow established guidance to guarantee accurate and fair charging decisions. To do so, I would encourage the police and CPS to establish better communication channels to

facilitate collaborative decision-making and improvement of their decision-making process.

Accept – The Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are continually working together to drive improvements to local and national communication to facilitate collaborative decision-making. They are working to deliver this through the Joint Operational Improvement Board, which is working to improve performance, efficiency, and streamline ways of working between the CPS and the police.

- 13. I accept that the statutory threshold for the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) investigation where an officer has made a decision regarding bail should remain, but I recommend that the Home Office and IOPC guidance should be amended to make it clear that, in the context of bail, only serious failings of judgement falling far below the standards to be expected of an officer when assessing risk would ever trigger a misconduct investigation.**

Accept in principle – The statutory Home Office guidance on ‘Conduct, Efficiency and Effectiveness’ and the IOPC’s statutory guidance on complaints and other matters would not usually cover specific scenarios or types of offences. A police officer will only be investigated for misconduct where there is an indication that there has been a serious breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious that, if proved, it would justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings. We can consider including general advice that police officers who have exercised their judgement reasonably and adhered to guidance would not usually face disciplinary proceedings. Guidance on bail decision-making can ensure police officers have clear guidelines. Work is already ongoing as part of the end-to-end review of the policy accountability system, launched by the Home Office on 30 July 2026 to establish whether the existing system is fit for purpose. The review will include consideration of how cases are referred to the IOPC and the thresholds for investigating misconduct. As such, it may become the vehicle for taking forward this recommendation.

- 14. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice considers removing the right to elect for certain low level offences. The removal should, in my view, apply to offences with a maximum sentence length of less than or equal to two years and which could be expanded to other either way offences by the inclusion of offences on a statutory list (which would facilitate ready amendment).**

Accept in principle – The Government accepts this recommendation in principle but, as Lord Leveson considered, is going further so that all decisions about jurisdiction are made solely by the courts, with parties able to make representations. The Courts and Tribunals Bill will remove the right to elect for all triable-either-way offences. This will ensure cases are heard in the most appropriate venue according to their severity and complexity. The response to other recommendations (23, 25) is consequential to this decision.

- 15. I recommend that the ability to amend magistrates’ sentencing powers by Statutory Instrument should be repealed and that the 12-month maximum should be made permanent.**

Reject – The Government is legislating to introduce the power to extend magistrates’ court sentencing powers up to 18 and 24 months maximum imprisonment for single and multiple triable either-way offences. This will enable magistrates’ court sentencing powers to be varied via secondary legislation subject to the negative

resolution procedure when it is necessary to do so, enabling the retention of more cases in the magistrates' courts and freeing up capacity in the Crown Court.

- 16. I recommend that for either way offences for which the right to elect is to remain, the order of decisions made on allocation should be reversed. Where a defendant indicates a not guilty plea, they should next be invited to elect for Crown Court trial. If the defendant chooses not to elect, only then would the magistrates' court make its decision on allocation: to retain jurisdiction and try summarily or direct to the Crown Court.**

Reject – The Government is removing the right to elect in its entirety. This will streamline the criminal courts' allocation process and ensure that decisions about jurisdiction are made solely by the courts so that cases are heard in the most appropriate venue, according to their severity and complexity.

- 17. I recommend that, to reflect inflation, the existing threshold for criminal damage being tried as a summary only offence be increased from £5,000 to £10,000, as set by section 46 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.**

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation and will bring forward the secondary legislation required as part of the implementation of wider court reform measures.

- 18. I recommend that the government reclassifies a list of either way offences to summary only and that the maximum custodial sentence length for these be set at 12 months. The maximum custodial sentence lengths prescribed for existing summary only offences should remain. Consideration should be given to retaining present police powers and existing time limits for the commencement of a prosecution in relation to these reclassified offences.**

Reject – The Government rejects this recommendation as reclassifying offences has challenging operational impacts, for example on police powers. The Government is already retaining what would be the impacted cohort of cases in the magistrates' courts by removing the right to elect and increasing magistrates' court sentencing powers. This recommendation therefore becomes extraneous.

- 19. I recommend that trial and sentencing proceedings in the magistrates' court be audio recorded and, if necessary for the purpose of appeals, appropriate parts transcribed.**

Accept – This is a necessary enabler to reform the appeals process in the magistrates' court. The Government accepts this recommendation, and it is being legislated for in the Courts and Tribunals Bill. HMCTS started a national pilot of audio recordings in 7 magistrates' courts on 14 September 2026 to support planning for this recommendation.

- 20. I endorse the recommendation made by Sir Christopher Bellamy KC in the 'Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid' in relation to legal aid that committals for sentence should not be remunerated at less than the equivalent remuneration for a guilty plea in the Crown Court.**

Reject – Lawyers have a duty to advise their clients on the entering of pleas based on the clients' best interest. There is limited evidence of litigators encouraging clients to have their case heard in the Crown Court and delaying guilty pleas for financial

purposes. This measure would therefore be a disproportionate response and reduce the appropriateness of committal fees in reflecting work done – a key principle underpinning criminal legal aid fees. We are however proposing to make adjustments to the fee for committals for sentence as part of the £34m funding towards the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme.

- 21. I recommend that the automatic right to appeal is replaced with a requirement for permission to appeal, with grounds to appeal similar to those available from the Crown Court to the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division).**

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation as it brings magistrates' court appeals in line with other criminal appeals processes, saving time in the Crown Court and reducing the impact of appeals on victims and witnesses. We are legislating for this in the Courts and Tribunals Bill.

- 22. I recommend that the requirement for a full re-hearing in the Crown Court should be replaced with a hearing on issues for which leave to appeal has been granted.**

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation for the same reasons as the previous recommendation. We are legislating for this in the Courts and Tribunals Bill.

- 23. I recommend that a Criminal Practice Direction is introduced as a matter of urgency to set an expectation on the judiciary to apply *Goodyear* (advance sentence indications) in all trials, irrespective of a request from the defence, in the Crown Court, preferably at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH), unless good reasons are given not to provide an indication.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 24. I recommend that the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) form should be updated immediately to include a requirement for the defendant's legal representative to confirm that they have asked their client whether they wish to seek an advance indication of sentence at the PTPH.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 25. I recommend that any future reform of the legal aid fee scheme should be adjusted to recognise the work advocates do in order to prepare for the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing.**

Accept – In December 2025, the then Deputy Prime Minister announced up to a further £34 million per year investment in criminal legal aid advocate fees, subject to consultation. Reflecting this recommendation, an uplift to the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing fee formed part of the package for the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme consultation, which aimed to ensure uplifts are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.

- 26. I recommend that there should be a pilot scheme to test whether the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing should be delayed to ensure proper engagement between the parties. Further, I recommend this pilot is implemented forthwith and before my other recommendations have been added to the statute book.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 27. I recommend that the maximum reduction for entering a guilty plea be increased to 40% if the plea is made (or indicated) at the first available opportunity. Further, I suggest it should decrease to one third at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing and, thereafter, be at the discretion of the judge as the case proceeds to trial. This should also apply to magistrates' courts.**

Reject – We recognise that early guilty pleas can have significant benefits for the administration of justice (by saving court time) and victims (by saving them from having to give potentially traumatic evidence). The level of sentence reduction for a guilty plea is set by the independent Sentencing Council. However, the Government does not intend to legislate to change the reduction or the scaling of the reduction. We acknowledge the benefits of early guilty pleas, but we believe that the system must also strike the right balance between those benefits and ensuring offenders are appropriately punished for their crimes. We believe that the current approach provides this balance. We also know that there are a range of reasons why an offender may plead guilty and we do not think that there is sufficiently strong evidence that changes to the sentence reduction framework would deliver the intended benefits. Therefore, we do not intend to take this recommendation forward. We are considering other ways to encourage those who are guilty to plead so at the earliest possible stage.

- 28. I recommend that the Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme should be reformed into a banded scheme with most cases in standard fees. The reliance on the number of Pages of Prosecution Evidence as a proxy for the complexity of a case and assessment of fees should cease.**

Accept in principle – The Government partially accepts this recommendation. The Government will continue to consider how the Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme (LGFS) could be redesigned, but we do not necessarily accept that Pages of Prosecution Evidence should be removed entirely given the importance of capturing case complexity.

- 29. I recommend that a Statutory Instrument be laid in Parliament to increase income thresholds for legal aid in the magistrates' court in line with the current Crown Court criteria for sentencing in either way cases.**

Reject – The Government has carefully considered this recommendation. The recommendation sought to remove the perceived perverse incentive on defendants to elect a Crown Court trial to secure legal aid rather than entering an early guilty plea in the magistrates' court. As the Government is removing the right to elect a Crown Court trial in its entirety, the rationale for this recommendation therefore becomes extraneous. We have addressed Lord Leveson's subsequent recommendation on increasing the lower and upper income thresholds in the magistrates' courts (across all case types) in our response to recommendation 155.

- 30. I recommend the creation of a new Division of the Crown Court: the Crown Court Bench Division. All either way offences would be eligible to be tried in the Crown Court Bench Division. Whether the defendant exercises their right to elect a Crown Court hearing or is sent by the magistrates, in every case, at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH), a judge should make a decision to allocate the case to the Crown Court Bench Division or to the Crown Court with a jury. There would be a presumption of a bench trial for any case which**

carries a prospective sentence of three years or less. Parliament should set a framework within which the PTPH judge would be required to operate.

Reject – The Government carefully considered this recommendation and brought forward proposals in the Courts and Tribunals Bill to create a Crown Court Bench Division, intending to free up jury trial capacity for the most serious cases. Since Bill introduction, the Government has listened to the strength of feeling about judge-only trials for less serious cases in the Crown Court – expressed by parliamentarians, stakeholders, and the sector. The Government has subsequently decided to lay an amendment to the Bill to remove the Bench Division provisions.

We are satisfied that the remaining package of reforms in the Bill, along with the financial investment and work on system efficiency, will free up sufficient Crown Court time to reduce the Crown Court open caseload by the end of this Parliament.

31. I recommend the Sentencing Council creates Crown Court Division Allocation guidelines following its required consultation process.

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

32. I recommend that the Crown Court Bench Division would, as part of the Crown Court, have the same sentencing powers as the Crown Court in its current form.

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

33. I recommend that any judge authorised to sit in the Crown Court in its current form would be eligible to sit in the new Crown Court Bench Division, as part of the Crown Court.

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

34. I recommend that when it is possible (bearing in mind funding, alongside capacity across the Criminal Justice System) the allocation of sitting days in the Crown Court should be increased to 130,000 per year. This will cover both jury trials and the Crown Court Bench Division. His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service should build towards this goal over time, through a range of 110,000 sitting days (the current allocation) to the new target and this sitting day level should be regularly reviewed.

Accept in principle – The Government has announced funding to ‘uncap’ sitting days this year (2026/27) ensuring that the Crown Court is equipped to operate at maximum capacity. We have also published firm multi-year funding commitments for the remainder of the Spending Review period, with sitting days planned to increase to 117,000 in 2028/29. This will allow the Crown Court to sit at record-high levels. As acknowledged in the Review, any future increases would need to be subject to future funding decisions and system capacity. We are ambitious in our plans and will regularly monitor sitting days alongside wider system capacity, but we do not currently believe it is possible at present or in the next few years to increase capacity to 130,000 sitting days per year.

- 35. I recommend that a vacancy request be addressed to the Judicial Appointments Commission so as to generate a specific ‘Circuit Judge – crime’ and ‘Recorder – crime’ recruitment competition.**

Reject – We do not believe that separate crime recruitment is necessary at this time. Circuit Judge (CJ) recruitment is already jurisdictional, with the job description setting out the number of vacancies in each jurisdiction, and candidates are asked to indicate in which jurisdictions they are willing to work. The Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) produces separate merit lists for each jurisdiction. Although previous CJ exercises have resulted in shortfalls in crime, the 2024/25 exercise delivered additional candidates for the crime jurisdiction. Recorder recruitment consistently meets, or exceeds, the vacancies sought, with the majority deployed to the crime jurisdiction. We regularly review our approach to specific recruitment exercises.

- 36. I recommend that the Lord Chancellor makes greater use of the powers under section 94 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 to appoint suitably qualified candidates to conduct criminal work both in the magistrates’ court and the Crown Court over and above the previously agreed vacancy request.**

Accept – This measure is already in place. Under Section 94 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) may be asked to select candidates for reserve lists (future appointment). Reserve lists are already used where appropriate including, for example, in the last Deputy District Judge (Magistrates’ Courts) exercise where the reserve list was increased to reflect the number of selectable candidates. We also work actively with the JAC to monitor whether a vacancy request could be increased should there be more appointable candidates than originally sought.

- 37. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service maximise sitting days for Recorders, and for Circuit Judges and Recorders sitting-in-retirement.**

Accept – We already assess the business need for Recorder sitting days and judges sitting in retirement in order to maximise judicial capacity. For this year, sitting days for the Crown Court have been ‘uncapped’ and we have also published firm funding commitments for the remainder of the Spending Review period. This will allow the Crown Court (and its judges) to plan ahead and sit at record-high levels.

- 38. I recommend that the judiciary considers making greater use of flexible deployment into the Crown Court. This could start with the deployment of a greater number of District Judges (Magistrates’ Courts) and Deputy District Judges (Magistrates’ Courts). Deputy High Court Judges who have not been appointed Recorders could also gain criminal experience sitting in the Crown Court Bench Division.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review’s judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will provide operational support where required.

- 39. I recommend that Crown Court Bench Division hearings should be heard in any available courtroom, provided it has (a) has appropriate access, and (b) recording facilities can be made available. It will also provide for the possibility that Crown Court cases could be heard in buildings in which magistrates’ courts also sit.**

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

- 40. I recommend that only those eligible to appear in the Crown Court would have rights of audience in the Crown Court Bench Division.**

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

- 41. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice implements a match funding scheme for Criminal Barrister pupillages to start immediately to address the shortage of criminal advocates.**

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation. In December 2025, the then Deputy Prime Minister announced the Government’s commitment to match-fund a number of criminal barrister pupillages to open a career at the Criminal Bar to more young people across society. Following close working with the legal sector, we launched the pupillage scheme in September 2026 to deliver up to 100 additional criminal pupillages every year.

- 42. I recommend that appeals from the Crown Court Bench Division be on the same basis as appeals from the Crown Court as currently constituted.**

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous.

- 43. I recommend that defendants in the Crown Court should be allowed to elect to be tried by judge alone, subject to the trial judge’s consent. The judge would make that decision based on the facts and circumstances of the individual case. This decision to elect trial by judge alone should be entered at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing. The trial judge’s decision would be final and there would be no new route to appeal that allocation.**

Reject – The Government will not grant defendants the right to waive jury trial based on the principle that it is for the courts to determine mode of trial.

- 44. I recommend that serious and complex fraud cases should be tried by judge alone. Eligible cases should be defined by their hidden dishonesty or complexity that is outside the understanding of the general public. The allocation decision should be made at a Preparatory Hearing. The limits of and process for these powers should be set out in a Practice Direction by the Lady Chief Justice.**

Accept – The Government is legislating to introduce a power for the court to direct a trial to be heard by a judge alone in certain technical and lengthy cases involving fraud and financial offences which can place significant burdens on jurors to hear. These offences are set out in the relevant schedule of the Courts and Tribunals Bill. A preparatory hearing must be ordered for a case to be eligible. Cases cannot be heard under this policy if jury trial is in the public interest or if the case involves an excluded homicide or sex offence.

- 45. I recommend that in cases of anticipated exceptional length or complexity (within section 29 of the Criminal Procedure and Investigation Act 1996), a judge should be able to direct trial by judge alone. The allocation decision**

would be made at a preparatory hearing. The limits of and process for these powers should be set out in a Practice Direction.

Accept in principle – The Government supports this recommendation in principle. The provision for judge alone trials for certain complex and lengthy fraud and financial cases includes a power for the Secretary of State to add to or remove offences from the schedule. Adding or removing an offence from the schedule will always require the agreement of Parliament. Excluded offences can only be amended through primary legislation.

- 46. I recommend that the government, and successive governments, set a single vision for the whole criminal justice system. The government should define key outcomes for the delivery of the vision to measure progress and those responsible could then be held accountable for delivery of those outcomes. This vision should remain mindful of the operational independence of the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts and the judiciary.**

Accept – The Government will publish a vision and strategic outcomes for the whole criminal justice system, spanning from preventing crime and responding when it occurs, through investigation, prosecution and the courts, and onwards to sentencing, prisons, probation, and rehabilitation. It will align the system around our common purpose of upholding the law, delivering justice and protecting the public.

Work is underway to develop clear and robust performance monitoring for the system, underpinned by high-quality data to improve cross system accountability and allow progress to be monitored more consistently, and swift, decisive action to be taken where performance is not as expected. As Lord Leveson sets out, this will take into account the operational independence of the police, the CPS, the courts and the judiciary.

- 47. I recommend that the Secretaries of State and Ministers in attendance at the National Criminal Justice Board should meet at a Cabinet sub-committee to coordinate criminal justice policy that meets the needs of the end-to-end system. They should have regard to the priorities set by the centre of government and policy advice received from the National Criminal Justice Board. This approach should not override the operational independence of the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts and the judiciary.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that the Cabinet Ministers with responsibility for the Criminal Justice System (the Secretaries of State for Justice and the Home Department, and the Attorney General) should meet when required to provide strategic leadership and set the overall direction for the system. The Domestic Affairs Committee led by the Cabinet Office provides the Cabinet Committee structure for these Ministers to meet. In doing so, they will set and have regard to the cross-system vision set out in response to recommendation 46, and to the operational independence of the police, the CPS, the courts and the judiciary.

- 48. I recommend that the Prime Minister appoints a new Second Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, to hold the role of the Prime Minister's 'Criminal Justice Adviser'. They should be accountable to the Cabinet Secretary and to Parliament, and the Adviser's powers and responsibilities should be defined in legislation. They should be responsible for the evaluation**

strategy for recommendations made in both parts of this Review. The National Criminal Justice Board Secretariat should report to the Adviser.

Accept in principle – The Government has appointed a new Second Permanent Secretary to provide strategic leadership and strengthen co-ordination across the criminal justice system working across departmental boundaries, bringing together the MoJ, Home Office, Attorney General's Office, and criminal justice agencies around shared strategic outcomes, while respecting their respective responsibilities and operational independence. She is the Chair of the Criminal Justice Action Group and will lead the cross-system work to deliver the shared vision and outcomes for the criminal justice system. The role will not be defined in legislation and will be responsible for the National Criminal Justice Board Secretariat and the evaluation strategy, as recommended.

- 49. I recommend that the National Criminal Justice Board should be put on a statutory footing. The chairing of the board should be split between the Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and it should meet at least four times a year.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that it is vital that governance of the criminal justice system is strong, consistent and transcends departmental boundaries. However, we will strengthen and clarify the role of the National Criminal Justice Board with non-legislative measures, reviewing its Terms of Reference and implementing those recommendations which we accept in this report. We will assess the success of these measures before we consider legislation.

- 50. I recommend that the Secretary of State for Health becomes a permanent member of the National Criminal Justice Board. I recommend that the Secretary of State for Education should attend the Board on an ad hoc basis and I endorse the proposal that the Chief Inspector of the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorate should also attend the National Criminal Justice Board on an ad hoc basis.**

Accept – The Government agrees that criminal justice system governance should consider the breadth of challenges that impact the system. The Secretariat of the National Criminal Justice Board will invite the Secretary of State for Health to be a permanent member of the National Criminal Justice Board, and will invite the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates to relevant Board meetings.

- 51. I recommend that the National Criminal Justice Board agrees and publishes a shared set of performance measures to assess progress. These measures should be followed by other governance boards and supported by agreed reporting structures between the National Criminal Justice Board, the Criminal Justice Action Group and Local Criminal Justice Boards.**

Accept in principle – Following the agreement of the vision and outcomes for the criminal justice system set out in response to recommendation 46, the National Criminal Justice Board and the Criminal Justice Action Group will agree performance measures and assess progress against them. In so doing, they will have regard to the operational independence of the police, the CPS, the courts, and the judiciary.

52. I recommend that a Senior Civil Servant from the Department of Health and Social Care should be invited to attend the Criminal Justice Action Group.

Accept – Criminal justice system governance forums should consider the breadth of challenges that impact the system. The invitation to Criminal Justice Action Group meetings has been extended to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Care.

53. I recommend that Criminal Justice Action Group sub-groups are restructured into an overarching governance board called the Performance Oversight Board. This should be attended by Senior Civil Servants from the Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Attorney General's Office and the Department of Health and Social Care, and should include a senior analyst.

Accept – We are committed to improving accountability and oversight of the criminal justice system as a whole and agree that the Criminal Justice Action Group (CJAG) should have a role in system performance. A CJAG Performance and Insights sub-group has been established.

54. I recommend that all criminal justice agencies, partners and departments should improve data quality for policy-making purposes, drawing upon the work done by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the Ministry of Justice to improve their data quality. All agencies should do further work to align data definitions across the criminal justice system and consider building better cross-system data assets, such as unique identifiers.

Accept – The Government agrees that improving data quality and aligning data definitions across the criminal justice system (CJS) will support effective policymaking. The Ministry of Justice, Home Office and other system partners are working together to achieve this. As part of this work, we will develop Justice ID, a capability which will allow staff to consistently identify and track the same individual from arrest, through the courts and custody, and into the community and are establishing an official-level cross-CJS group to take a whole system approach to CJS data.

55. I recommend that the government rationalise the number and revise the boundaries of Local Criminal Justice Boards alongside work to align the boundaries in which all criminal justice agencies operate.

Accept in principle – We will consider the future role, geography, and organisation of Local Criminal Justice Boards as part of the Government's *Rewiring the State* and devolution agenda, and alongside the wider police reform programme. Local Criminal Justice Boards currently align with police force areas, which are currently subject to an Independent Review, and are (largely) chaired by Police and Crime Commissioners, which are being abolished.

56. I recommend that Local Criminal Justice Boards are put on a statutory footing and that the Chairs of Local Criminal Justice Boards are mandated to follow the direction and vision set by the National Criminal Justice Board. The members of Local Criminal Justice Boards should decide who their chair will be.

Accept in principle – We do not propose to place Local Criminal Justice Boards on a statutory footing at this stage. As part of wider reforms to criminal justice system

governance, the future role of Local Criminal Justice Boards (see recommendation 55) will be expected to deliver the vision set out by the National Criminal Justice Board. Further, as set out in the Government's *Rewiring the State* and devolution agenda, we will consider how best to strengthen accountability, leadership and collaboration across national and local criminal justice structures, while retaining flexibility to reflect local circumstances.

- 57. I recommend that Local Criminal Justice Boards should have a Resident Judge and a representative from the magistracy in attendance, and that the Boards should be held outside court hours. The Resident Judge should receive training on Local Criminal Justice Board operations through the Judicial College as part of the induction training for Resident Judges (that I recommend at Chapter 10 (The Judiciary and Legal Workforce)).**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 58. I recommend that there is a mechanism to examine His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service's operation of the courts, without impeding on independent judicial decision-making. This could be through either a thematic joint inspection via the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, through reporting and audit by the National Audit Office or by reinstating His Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration.**

Accept in principle – It is right that the administration of the courts is subject to independent scrutiny. HMCTS is already subject to significant oversight, including through the Government Internal Audit Agency, the Justice Select Committee, and the Public Accounts Committee, as well as a number of other oversight and assurance mechanisms. These provide valuable, independent scrutiny. In addition, as part of its ongoing Value for Money work programme, the National Audit Office is considering a study relating to HMCTS which will examine value for money and efficiency. The Government welcomes this review.

- 59. I recommend the government introduce a criminal justice system technology leadership role to act as the key coordinator for technology and artificial intelligence across the criminal justice system. The technology leader should report into the Prime Minister's Criminal Justice Adviser.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the importance of coordinating technology and AI across the criminal justice system. We will introduce a new cross-system technology leadership role, the postholder for which will be responsible for collaborating with partners to develop a cross-criminal justice system technology strategy and for delivering key cross-system priorities. They will work across government with partners in CJS and be supported by existing cross-system senior technical leaders such as departmental Chief Digital and Information Officers, Chief Technology Officers, and Chief AI Officers.

- 60. I recommend that, through the new criminal justice system technology leadership role, the government expand capabilities to monitor the development of technology to ensure tools remain fit for purpose and to have an adaptable criminal justice system that takes advantage of emerging technology that enhances productivity and informed decision-making, whilst ensuring interoperability and compliance with data privacy requirements.**

Accept – The Government agrees with the ambition for an adaptable criminal justice system that has fit-for-purpose tools and takes advantage of new technologies. The postholder for the new cross-system technology leadership role will collaborate with partners to develop a cross-criminal justice system technology strategy, working to ensure that full advantage is taken of available technologies where possible.

61. I recommend the continued development and further use of system integrations (such as Application Programming Interfaces) to support digital interoperability across the criminal justice system.

Accept – The Government agrees that we need to further develop and deploy system integrations, including Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), to enable easier data sharing across the criminal justice system. The MoJ, HMCTS, Home Office and wider system partners are working together to support digital interoperability, including through the development of Justice ID and other targeted initiatives to support the exchange of data, such as APIs built by HMCTS and HMPPS to enable partner access to court, prison, and probation data.

62. I recommend that once adopted, artificial intelligence tools are integrated into existing platforms and singular interfaces to ensure a user-friendly experience for criminal justice system staff.

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation. We are pursuing the responsible adoption of AI technologies, supported by appropriate training for relevant staff. In accordance with the standards set out by the Government Digital Service, providing a joined-up experience across all channels is a priority in digital service design.

63. I recommend that the Legal Aid Agency changes the ‘Police Station Telephone Advice Contract’ to allow defence lawyers to have the option of providing initial advice using a remote video link, where this is appropriate (for example, not in cases of those under 18 or otherwise vulnerable persons, nor in relation to offences which are indictable only).

Accept in principle – Increased use of video may provide defence lawyers with more options for delivering advice, which may help to improve their working conditions by allowing them more flexibly. The current 2025 Standard Crime Contract already allows defence lawyers to provide initial advice by telephone. We will make clear that the same applies by video. However, any substantive increase of the use of remote advice will need to be carefully designed to ensure it meets the needs of clients and defence practitioners, as well as the police, and that appropriate infrastructure is in place to support this.

64. I recommend that all police forces should implement an automatic mechanism that can be used to communicate charging outcomes to defence lawyers. To facilitate this process, the Defence Solicitor Call Centre text messages should include a custody reference number.

Accept in principle – The Government supports the aim of this recommendation and will consider the feasibility of implementing it via the national Robotic Process Automation (RPA) programme, which runs out of Lancashire Police on behalf of the NPCC. While there would be some challenges to overcome with this approach (for instance not all 43 forces currently have an RPA capability), the Home Office has a

strong ambition to address this over the next 2–3 years. We will work to ensure that communication with victims is carefully considered as part of a move towards automated information flows. The Government also supports the aim within this recommendation that Defence Solicitor Call Centre text messages to defence lawyers include the custody reference number, and we are considering the feasibility of rolling this out.

- 65. I recommend wider use of an approved artificial intelligence tool for the police to process evidence, prepare files and assist in police disclosure, with human oversight and accountability. This should include administrative functions such as summarising files to enable faster and more effective handover between officers.**

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation. The Home Office has worked with the NPCC, the College of Policing and other key stakeholders to set up PoliceAI, a brand-new centre launched in June 2026 to accelerate the responsible use of AI across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. PoliceAI is focusing on administration burdens in its first year.

- 66. I endorse the existing use of liaison and diversion services and recommend that more investment is needed in those services into which liaison and diversion will refer individuals for further treatment and support. I also recommend that Liaison and Diversion teams should have access to NHS and court systems to enable better sharing of information related to mental health.**

Accept in principle – Liaison and Diversion teams already have access to National Health Service (NHS) systems and work is ongoing to provide access to the court systems. Further investment in community services would be subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 67. I recommend that case file building refresher training should be developed jointly by the College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service and undertaken by relevant officers at appropriate intervals. I also recommend the development and implementation of a central repository for case file building guidance and best practice, overseen by a single, accountable organisation such as the National Police Chiefs' Council or the College of Policing.**

Accept in principle – The College of Policing, NPCC and CPS are already taking forward work to ensure case file building training and guidance is fit for purpose.

- 68. I recommend that case file build support tools for the police should be piloted with a view to roll out nationally to support case file building.**

Accept – In line with our response to recommendation 65, the Government supports this recommendation. The Home Office has set up PoliceAI, a brand-new centre launched in June 2026 to accelerate the responsible use of AI across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. PoliceAI is focusing on administration burdens in its first year, including looking at case file assistants. This includes supporting the testing and evaluation of tools that can assist officers in building case files, summarising material, improving file quality, and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens. PoliceAI will work with policing partners to identify opportunities for piloting proven capabilities and, where appropriate, support their adoption at a national scale. The CPS Joint Operating Procedure will ensure that

any tool with a potential impact on evidence will meet CPS requirements before being deployed.

- 69. Where it is proportionate and appropriate to the case, I recommend there should be a requirement for police officers and prosecutors to collaborate before or immediately after the police submit a case file for review, and that this be enabled by secure digital collaboration tools. Action plans should only be used as a last resort.**

Accept in principle – The Police and CPS are taking forward work through the Joint Operational Improvement Board to ensure there are clear communication channels to facilitate collaborative decision-making, improve file quality, reduce the volume of action plans, and support swifter case progression.

- 70. I recommend that the Crown Prosecution Service and all police forces implement and stay up-to-date with the Microsoft 365 Guidance for UK Government. This will ensure effective and safe collaboration between agencies. The Crown Prosecution Service and the police should provide sufficient and accessible education and training to improve staff understanding of the functionalities, and the correct use, of Microsoft services. This guidance should be made readily available such as through the intranet, to ensure staff can confidently use the tools to their full potential.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that training and guidance is a core element of AI enablement. PoliceAI, a brand-new centre focusing on the responsible use of AI in police forces, was launched in June 2026 and will commission training to improve staff understanding of the use and limitations of AI models. Guidance materials, standardised templates, and national evaluation frameworks will also be consolidated and updated regularly. The CPS has implemented Microsoft 365 guidance for UK Government in accordance with its security policies and are also rolling out an improved learning and development offering for Microsoft 365, including the hiring of adoption specialists to build internal capability in the use of new and existing Microsoft tools.

- 71. I recommend that the Crown Prosecution Service should develop clear policy for the use of Microsoft Teams that demonstrably shows the difference between what is deemed to be ‘collaboration’ vs ‘corporate record’.**

Accept in principle – There is already existing work within the CPS to ensure Technology, including Microsoft, is being used effectively. There is existing guidance within the CPS with regards to collaboration.

- 72. I recommend that case and file quality functions should be adopted in every police force, supported by automated case quality checking, and in line with nationally established principles.**

Accept in principle – The NPCC is taking forward work to consider the most appropriate options to support file quality checking.

- 73. I recommend that an automation solution should be used to support case file checking, with a longer-term view to utilise artificial intelligence to support quality checking.**

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation. Police forces together with PoliceAI, a brand-new centre focusing on the responsible use of AI, are already exploring the use of AI in case file preparation. This includes opportunities to automate elements of case file checking. A critical part of this work is ensuring that any AI adoption is responsible, with safeguards that focus on transparency and human oversight.

- 74. I recommend that the police and the Crown Prosecution Service agree a new working protocol and that, before the Crown Prosecution Service submits an action plan request, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service should ensure the case has been reviewed by a senior officer or prosecutor. This step allows any issues to be identified and resolved internally, reducing unnecessary escalation. The action plan should be used only as a last resort by the Crown Prosecution Service, ensuring a more constructive and proportionate approach.**

Reject – The Police and CPS strive continuously to improve file preparation and increase oversight under the Joint Operational Improvement Board (JOIB). They are prioritising the response to recommendation 69 in the first instance. However, they will keep under review whether work on increasing real time conversations and early advice to both reduce the need for action plans and enhance their efficacy has been sufficient.

- 75. I recommend that the service-level agreement for the Crown Prosecution Service charging decision be reduced from 28 days for Green Charge cases (pre-charge police bail) after each action plan to a maximum of ten days.**

Reject – The CPS already actions the most serious threat, risk and harm cases immediately on receipt; namely ‘red’ cases where a charging decision is provided within 3 hours of file receipt. This model is agreed with the NPCC and has been rolled out nationally.

- 76. I recommend that the requirement for the police to redact pre-charge should be removed. The police remain responsible for the material before it is disclosed, but redaction should follow an indication from the Crown Prosecution Service that a charge will be made. There should be some exceptions to this where the material is sensitive, such as material that might identify medical information of the person.**

Accept in principle – We recognise that redaction remains a necessary task but the impact of this should be minimised pre-charge. The Home Office has been working with criminal justice system partners to reduce redaction burdens through simplified guidance, improved use of technology, and piloting a more proportionate approach to disclosure. We continue to explore options with partners for further efficiencies in the casefile redaction process within the existing legal framework.

- 77. I recommend that automation solutions should be adopted by the Home Office, Police Digital Service and individual police forces to support both text and multi-media redaction.**

Accept in principle – The Government is supportive of this recommendation and is already taking work forward. Redaction of audio-visual material such as Body Worn Video is a significant challenge for policing. In 2025/26, we allocated up to £4.5m

which supported 26 police forces to improve their audio visual and multi-media redaction capability through effective AI-enabled technology and processes. In addition, we have allocated additional funding to continue to support policing to improve this capability in 2026/27. We have also shared an Adoption Guide with information on how to make audio visual redaction more efficient with all forces. Most police forces have already implemented or are in the process of adopting effective text redaction tools.

- 78. I recommend a mandated strategy for police digital and technology development and procurement, which should be implemented in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service. This recommendation must be considered alongside recommendation 59 for a technology leadership role in the criminal justice system in Chapter 3 (One Criminal Justice System) and integrated with the work of the National Criminal Justice Board.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that joined-up technology can improve efficiency across the criminal justice system and we are committed to cross-system working. The CPS and policing partners are working together to create a single route into the case management systems used across police forces. The National Policing Information Technology Reform Strategy (NPITRS) sets the overarching direction for the future of police IT. Key elements of this strategy will be delivered through the National Police Service (NPS), the ambition for which was set out in the Police Reform White Paper, published in January 2026. While the full scope of the NPS' powers will be determined through forthcoming legislation, the NPS is expected to have the authority required to ensure compliance with its direction on priority areas, including in relation to national IT. The NPS will be supported by strong partnerships across the criminal justice system and across government, in addition to the wider public and private sectors, to deliver shared outcomes.

- 79. I recommend investment in digital and technological expertise within the Crown Prosecution Service to reduce reliance on external suppliers and drive internal innovation. This includes training of existing staff and considering the creation of new posts to support these aims.**

Accept in principle – Work is underway within the CPS to reduce reliance on external suppliers and drive internal innovation through its Digital Strategy. Any acquisition of further digital expertise would be subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 80. I recommend the investigation of artificial intelligence-enabled tools to enhance Crown Prosecution Service decision-making. Such tools may support evidence-based charging decisions, accessing operational knowledge and standard operating procedures, or identifying next or missing steps based on current case status.**

Accept in principle – The Government supports the intent of this recommendation. Work is ongoing for an AI-enabled capability which will help prosecutors to clearly understand complex case material when they are making their charging decisions. We will ensure any future work remains cautious about the role of AI tools in charging decisions.

- 81. Subject to the outcome of the current reviews and pilots, I recommend that the model of 'rebuttable presumption' material being disclosed within the Attorney**

General's Guidelines on Disclosure be abolished. At the same time, a clearer, more consistent use of the existing framework set out in the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 should be promoted.

Accept in principle – Please see the Government's response to the Independent Disclosure Review.

- 82. I recommend that the Law Society and the Bar Council produce guidance on process and next steps where there have been failings in redaction of material disclosed to the defence. This should include the ethical considerations that must be taken when dealing with redacted or unredacted material.**

For the Law Society and Bar Council – This recommendation is for the Law Society and Bar Council to consider.

- 83. I recommend that the College of Policing and Crown Prosecution Service should co-develop training to deliver practical, scenario-based disclosure training that reflects operational realities. The Performance Oversight Board (as recommended in Chapter 3 (One Criminal Justice System)) should oversee, enforce and evaluate the effectiveness of this training.**

Accept in principle – Please see the Government's response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 84. I recommend that the police, Crown Prosecution Service and other prosecution agencies deploy artificial intelligence summarisation tools to generate clear, context-rich summaries of material listed in disclosure schedules following successful pilots and a positive evaluation.**

Accept – Please see the Government's response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 85. I recommend that the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee update the Criminal Procedure Rules to align with the Transforming Summary Justice Renewal Programme, which states that the Initial Details of the Prosecution Case must be served onto Common Platform a minimum of five days before the first hearing.**

Accept in principle – The Government will invite the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee to consider this recommendation. Please see the Government's response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 86. I recommend the greater use of artificial intelligence tools to summarise the Initial Details of the Prosecution Case based on a set of standardised questions to facilitate His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service staff and other relevant partners in their preliminary reviewing roles. This should be subject to a successful pilot and evaluation before complete rollout.**

Accept – A pilot of an AI tool to summarise case materials to support judicial decision-making is already underway. Decisions on further expansion and rollout of this tool are dependent on its evaluation. Please see the Government's response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 87. I recommend that the defence should be permitted to propose search terms for unused material, subject to any judicial decision. The prosecution should then disclose the results of those searches to the defence.**

Accept in principle – Please see the Government’s response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 88. I recommend that the Lady Chief Justice consider the implementation of a Criminal Practice Direction that empowers judges to prevent new issues from being raised at trial that were not raised or disclosed at the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing, without good cause.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review’s judiciary-related recommendations.

- 89. I recommend that the College of Policing, Crown Prosecution Service and other prosecution agencies should conduct further work in promoting consistency in how existing guidance in rape and sexual offence cases is applied and interpreted across the criminal justice system through enhanced training.**

Accept – Please see the Government’s response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 90. I recommend that should the government implement Jonathan Fisher KC’s recommendation on an intensive disclosure regime, that the Lady Chief Justice should implement a Criminal Practice Direction setting out that the definition of cases within scope should be in line with that of section 29 of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.**

Accept in principle – This is subject to the outcome of exploring an Intensive Disclosure Regime pilot. Please see the Government’s response to the Independent Review of Disclosure.

- 91. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice, His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service (including its executive board) and the Judicial Executive Board look to agree multi-year sitting-day allocations in the criminal courts where possible. I also recommend that they continue to finalise sitting-day allocations, be that single or multi-year, as early as possible in the financial year and continue to hold in-year panels to assess system performance.**

Accept in principle – In March 2026, the Government agreed a multi-year funding settlement for the criminal courts (with a full agreement for the current financial year and firm commitments for the following two financial years). Any agreement of sitting day levels and funding will be made between the Lord Chancellor and the senior judiciary. This settlement for the criminal courts represents a record investment and unprecedented ability to plan for the long term. We continue to hold regular in-year panels to monitor progress and assess wider criminal justice system capacity to deliver record sitting days.

- 92. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary develop and introduce a National Listing Framework for the Crown Court. This should include, as a minimum, consistent terminology, consistent principles on which listing should be based, a prioritisation scheme to include a definitive list of relevant factors to be taken into account and an objective weighting to be attached to each factor based on**

the principles. It must also be designed in such a way as to be readily capable of being turned into a digital listing tool.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. The Lady Chief Justice has published the Practice Direction on Listing in the Criminal Courts, which introduced the National Listing Framework from 1 October 2026. The Framework establishes consistent national principles and terminology for criminal listing. Responsibility for listing remains with the independent judiciary and the National Listing Framework is judicially led. HMCTS has supported implementation through operational guidance, system changes, communications, engagement, and capability activity.

- 93. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service prioritises the development of an in-system feature within Common Platform that enables listing officers and the judiciary to access and analyse relevant operational data directly. This could take the form of a report, dashboard or other part of the user interface that surfaces key metrics and insights in real time. The functionality should be designed to support effective listing practice, reduce reliance on manual data collection and align with the National Listing Framework, including agreed key performance indicators for internal monitoring.**

Accept in principle – The Government supports the development of accessible, time-saving tools to support effective listing practice. We are working closely with the judiciary and operational users to improve access to data and insights that support informed listing decisions. This includes exploring digital capabilities that can provide predictive analysis, operational information and enhanced visibility of court capacity and activity. Any functionality developed within Common Platform will be shaped through ongoing engagement with users to ensure it meets operational needs, supports local decision-making, and delivers meaningful insights for courts and listing teams.

- 94. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service introduces a scheduling tool for Crown Courts within Common Platform. This tool should provide functionality to manage all basic listing functions, replacing locally developed alternatives, and bring together all necessary data to inform listing decisions. Development of this tool will only be possible with the introduction of a National Listing Framework, and the tool should be designed in line with the principles agreed by the judiciary within it.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees with the aim of this recommendation. HMCTS will pilot new scheduling functionality within Common Platform, allowing teams to create digital schedules and manage the volume and type of cases listed, with greater visibility of capacity and case priority under the National Listing Framework. This is intended to provide core scheduling and listing functionality and will continue to be developed with listing teams and the judiciary, in line with the Framework, to reduce and replace reliance on local alternatives where feasible.

Work is also underway to improve and bring together the data available to support listing decisions this will be tested and refined with judicial and listing teams. Learning from implementation and piloting will inform any further enhancements

needed and support any further functionality and consistent adoption of the National Listing Framework.

- 95. I recommend His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service continues to develop its data-driven listing approach for the criminal jurisdiction. This should be used to deploy artificial intelligence capability as part of both the magistrates' court and Crown Court scheduling tools. This should include a clear framework distinguishing objective listing factors from subjective professional assessments, and a method for capturing both so that artificial intelligence tools can be trained, where appropriate, on the full range of considerations currently used by the judiciary and listing officers.**

Accept in principle – Alongside our work on recommendation 94, HMCTS is working with the judiciary to deploy AI capability in support of listing activity in the Crown Court, linked to the National Listing Framework, and underpinned by key operational and listing data. Subject to successful piloting, this enhanced analytical capability will be linked with Common Platform to help streamline the listing process, save the time of overburdened listing officers, and deliver more efficient and effective listing outcomes through predictive capabilities. If this is evaluated as successful in the Crown Court, we will explore the potential for deployment of similar capability into the magistrates' courts.

- 96. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service reviews the employment grading of listing officers to ensure that it provides the appropriate level of seniority required for the role and a consistent approach is applied across all Crown Courts. Consideration should be given to what additional responsibilities listing officers should be expected to undertake to ensure the right level of prioritisation is given to their listing duties. I also recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service updates its learning and development package to provide a clear pathway into the listing officer role, embed the principles of the National Listing Framework and give listing officers the skills and knowledge to be as effective as possible.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the importance of ensuring the grade of Crown Court listing officers reflects the demands, knowledge and skills of the role. While we are confident that the grading of the majority of Crown Court listing officers is appropriate, where anomalies are found appropriate action will be taken to ensure consistency. HMCTS will consider this as part of a broader review of listing support and case progression roles, including responsibilities, training and succession planning. Any changes will need to be proportionate, affordable, and aligned with wider workforce reform.

- 97. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary work to normalise the practice of moving cases between Crown Courts, including across circuit boundaries, to maximise the use of sitting days and available capacity. This should include updating Criminal Practice Directions to a) reflect the wider circumstances in which a case should be moved from one Crown Court to another and b) replace the requirement for Presiding Judge and Delivery Director agreement with a requirement for Resident Judge agreement from both sending and receiving courts. Similar consideration should be given to the practicability of moving cases between magistrates' courts and the local process required to do so.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. Responsibility for listing and transfer decisions sits with the independent judiciary. The Practice Direction on Listing in the Criminal Courts establishes national arrangements for transfers between Crown Court centres, with the level of authority required depending on the circumstances of the transfer, and also permits regional listing arrangements. HMCTS will provide operational support as required.

- 98. I recommend that the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee redesign the Criminal Procedure Rules, ensuring a focus on simplicity and accessibility, to strengthen adherence and understanding for legal professionals, court staff and the general public. The new Rules should be designed in partnership with digital experts to facilitate their digitisation so that an interactive tool can be developed to support legal professionals in decision-making.**

For the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee – The Government supports the intention to ensure the Criminal Procedure Rules are accessible through improved usability. The Criminal Procedure Rule Committee has begun exploratory work with the MoJ providing support on digitisation.

- 99. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service introduces Case Progression Officers, or the equivalent, with authorised officer powers to assist with management and progression of cases in the magistrates' court and have oversight of listing.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the value of strengthened case progression functions in all criminal courts. HMCTS is currently reviewing its approach to case progression in the magistrates' courts as part of a wider review of supporting roles in the criminal courts. The outcome of this work will determine the nature and extent of expansion of case progression activity in the magistrates' courts. Any expansion will be dependent on decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 100. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the Judicial College, as appropriate, place increased emphasis on case management principles in their training materials for magistrates, legal advisers and Case Progression Officers (if implemented), and professional bodies must do the same for their members.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will provide operational support as required to ensure magistrates and legal advisers have the tools they need to support effective case management. HMCTS will be responsible for the training of new case progression staff and will work with the judiciary to deliver high quality training to enable them to fulfil their specialist role.

- 101. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service deploys legal advisers to sit alone in Not Guilty Anticipated Plea Courts. Work should recommence urgently with the Ministry of Justice to review the powers required by a legal adviser to enable this and the Criminal Procedure Rules should be amended to provide legal advisers with all necessary powers, save only that contested allocation and bail decisions should continue to be handled by a Bench.**

Accept – Authorised judicial powers are delegated to HMCTS legal advisers from the judiciary and defined in the Criminal Procedure Rules. Responsibility for the

recommendation rests with the judiciary, but we support the intent of this recommendation and would further support legal advisers having necessary powers in contested allocation cases. An updated Criminal Procedure Rule clarifying the enabling powers comes into effect from October 2026. Subject to judicial decisions on implementing revised listing approaches, we will work with operational partners to explore how best to deliver this and other related reforms of legal adviser powers under consideration to ensure that we are using our skilled legal advisers as effectively as possible.

- 102. I recommend that the Judicial College updates its magistrates' training programme to include effective completion of the Better Case Management form so that magistrates understand the consequences of non-compliance and improve the quality of completed forms.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 103. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service adapts current training for legal advisers to include Better Case Management form completion as part of the legal adviser training to address non-compliance with completing the form and improve the standard of completion so that sufficient detail is included.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will provide operational support as necessary.

- 104. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service update the Better Case Management form to include, at a minimum, a) a standard direction for an advocates' meeting pre-Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing to ensure completion of the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing form in readiness for the hearing; b) any request for an indication of sentence at the pre-Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing; c) dates and times for compliance with directions (including when key materials are to be served); and, d) a tick box to signify an uncompleted form as a result of advocates that have been unable, or unwilling, to provide the information required of them.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. The Government commits to working with the judiciary through the Criminal Courts Improvement Group to consider this recommendation.

- 105. I recommend that the Legal Aid Agency amend fee structures so that attendance by the advocate at the pre-Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing advocates meeting qualifies for an early-engagement payment, irrespective of when paid.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that legal aid investment should support earlier engagement. We are proposing to take forward some of Lord Leveson's other recommendations aimed at encouraging earlier engagement as part of the up to £34m per year increase in investment. We will continue to consider this proposal alongside recommendation 104, and subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 106. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service changes the technical function on Common Platform so that a case cannot be fully resulted**

at the magistrates' court and shared with the Crown Court until the Better Case Management form has been completed.

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the importance of high-quality case management, and the role that Better Case Management forms play as part of that. However, it does not agree that cases should be blocked from being sent into the Crown Court without a Better Case Management form. Rather than amend Common Platform, the independent judiciary through the Criminal Courts Improvement Group is considering how compliance with the Better Case Management could be improved.

107. I recommend that the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee and Ministry of Justice revise and simplify the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing form so that it is accessible and user-friendly.

For the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee – The Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing form is judicially owned. Limited changes have been made to the form as part of implementation of the National Listing Framework, including to support the recording of Priority Tier and Fixed Date/Flexible Date listing decisions. Wider revision and simplification of the form remain a matter for the judiciary and may be considered by the Criminal Procedure Rule Committee.

108. I recommend that the Judicial College reviews its current training offer on Better Case Management to ensure that all those judges sitting in crime are up to date on current practices, and professional bodies must do the same for their members.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

109. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service introduces dedicated Case Progression Officers (or equivalent) at Crown Court level, mirroring the approach suggested for the magistrates' court (see recommendation 99), of an appropriate grade and with the same powers across England and Wales.

Accept – The Government has committed to expanding case progression capabilities in the Crown Court, and we are investing up to £5 million in rolling out specialist case progression staff for all Crown Court centres. This will ensure each court is supported by specialist staff, with some delegated powers from the judiciary, whose job is to move cases forward, work with criminal justice partners to assure trial readiness and handle routine tasks that would otherwise take up judges' time. Recruitment is underway with new staff expected to begin appointments throughout Autumn 2026.

110. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service establishes a Case Progression Officer inbox (powered by an automation tool) for each court to enable them to deal with administrative matters outside the courtroom, via correspondence or meetings.

Accept in principle – HMCTS recognises the value of a consistent and efficient approach to administrative correspondence with the courts outside courtrooms. We are considering the best approach to this, which will be informed by the views of specialist case progression staff, once this function has been rolled out nationally, and by the independent judiciary.

- 111. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update the Criminal Practice Directions to provide guidance on email or other communication to judges via the Case Progression Officer and that the professional bodies provide consistent and clear guidance on the etiquette of writing emails to judges, outlining the appropriate approach to communication outside the courtroom, and safeguarding judicial respect and maintaining professionalism.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will support operationally as required.

- 112. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service expands Case Progression Officer-authorised officer powers to support them in case progression.**

Accept – The Government recognises the value of effective and efficient case progression and of enabling all Crown Court centres to have access to specialist case progression staff. Subject to judicial approval, case progression staff will have the delegated powers to extend a time limit set by a rule or by a judge, give a live link direction, or appoint an advocate to cross-examine a witness. Delegation is determined by the relevant Resident Judge.

- 113. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service develops and implements a digital interactive case progression tool for the magistrates' and Crown Courts, to support more effective and consistent case progression and ensure accountability for adherence to directions. Court staff should receive training to support the effective use of such a tool, and the Judicial College should ensure that the judiciary are also suitably trained on this.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that a digital case progression tool has the potential to support specialist case progression staff to improve the effectiveness and consistency of case progression. HMCTS is working on the introduction of a case readiness assessment tool which will allow case progression officers to easily understand case readiness and chase up parties with automated emails. This tool is in prototype stage and we plan to pilot in October 2026 in Crown Court centres where case readiness has the most effect on hearing effectiveness. Any future judicial training required would be the responsibility of the Judicial College.

- 114. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update Criminal Practice Directions to prevent the routine listing of hearings solely to ensure engagement or adherence to directions.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 115. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary update Criminal Practice Directions so that a newly appointed advocate on a case should be required promptly to review the case upon appointment and submit a formal notification to the court of any outstanding issues impacting trial readiness at the earliest opportunity.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

- 116. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary roll-out the Final Review Hearings process nationally, as piloted by Liverpool Crown Court, subject to robust evaluation.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will support operationally as required.

- 117. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should adopt a 'test, learn and cost' approach to enable first hearings in the magistrates' court to be conducted partially remotely by default for defendants appearing in custody. Evaluation of this should consider impacts on both the process and the quality of justice.**

Accept – The Government agrees that this recommendation has the potential to improve the efficiency and flexibility of first hearings in the magistrates' court and reduce demand on custody services. The Ministry of Justice is committing over £17 million over this Spending Review to pilot this approach and assess the impacts on partner agencies. Progressing this further will be subject to decisions taken at the next Spending Review. The Government remains committed to the principle of open justice, and HMCTS will support the judiciary to ensure this principle is upheld where hearings are held remotely – including by providing information within the court lists about how the public and media can observe a remote hearing.

- 118. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should conduct a proof of concept for fully remote Single Justice Procedure referral hearings, with appropriate provisions made to maintain public access and uphold the principle of open justice. Evaluation of the proof of concept should consider impacts on both system efficiency and quality of justice.**

Accept – The Government agrees that we should conduct a proof of concept for fully remote Single Justice Procedure referral hearings as they have the potential to support efficiency in the magistrates' courts. We remain committed to the principle of open justice, and HMCTS will support the judiciary to ensure this principle is upheld where hearings are held remotely. We will work with HMCTS and the judiciary to test the use of fully remote hearings of these cases, ensuring they can be delivered in a way that maintains efficiency and fairness.

- 119. I recommend that all preliminary hearings other than the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (including mentions, Further Case Management Hearings and Pre-Trial Reviews) should be conducted in a partially remote format by default, with the ability for the judge to move to fully remote hearings if lists are constructed in a way that is suitable to do so. His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should facilitate this and in doing so consider the open justice processes for supporting remote observation of these hearings, including consideration of a secure portal. The impact of this change should be monitored and evaluated.**

Accept in principle – The Government is supportive of this recommendation, although decisions on remote participation remain a matter of judicial discretion in each case. In July 2026, the Lady Chief Justice published new guidance on live links in the criminal courts. This guidance seeks to encourage the greater use of remote participation where appropriate and to promote national consistency in its use. HMCTS will continue to support the judiciary operationally in delivering remote, in-person and hybrid hearings. Work is underway through HMCTS' Remote Participation Programme to maximise the benefits of remote hearings for all users. The Government remains committed to the principle of open justice and HMCTS will

support the judiciary to ensure this principle is upheld where hearings are held remotely. In addition, through our work supporting implementation of the National Listing Framework, we will support the judiciary to construct listing practices that make greater use of remote hearings, if it wishes to do so.

- 120. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should maintain the presumption that trials are conducted in person. However, they should enable police and professional witnesses to attend via video link by default. The trial judge should retain the power in every case to order in-person attendance, including where requested to do so by the defence.**

Accept in principle – The Government is supportive of this recommendation and is exploring the concept with system partners, although decisions on remote participation remain a matter of judicial discretion in each case. As set out above, in July 2026, the Lady Chief Justice published new guidance on live links in the criminal courts. This guidance seeks to encourage the greater use of remote participation where appropriate and to promote national consistency in its use. HMCTS will continue to support the judiciary in delivering remote, in-person and hybrid hearings and in ensuring that the principle of open justice is upheld where hearings are held remotely. Work is underway through HMCTS' Remote Participation Programme to maximise the benefits of remote hearings for all users, including improvements to software, guidance, and user experience to enable professional parties to attend remotely, where appropriate. The police support the use of video links during trials for police officers and professional witnesses, and an IT state of readiness review is being prepared to facilitate this. In practice, professional witnesses will typically give evidence from within their own organisations.

- 121. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should only require remanded defendants to appear in person for sentencing hearings if a victim impact statement will be delivered in court. The Crown Prosecution Service should confirm whether this will take place ahead of time. Otherwise, it should be the presumption that defendants on remand will appear via prison video link, subject to a contrary order by the judge. In addition, I recommend that confiscation and other ancillary order hearings should be conducted partially remotely by default.**

Accept in principle – The Government is supportive of this recommendation, although decisions on remote participation remain a matter of judicial discretion in each case. As set out above, in July 2026, the Lady Chief Justice published new guidance on live links in the criminal courts. This guidance seeks to encourage the greater use of remote participation where appropriate and to promote national consistency in its use. HMCTS will continue to support the judiciary in delivering any hearing in their preferred mode and in ensuring that the principle of open justice is upheld where hearings are held remotely – including by providing information within the court lists about how the public and media can observe a remote hearing. Work is underway through HMCTS' Remote Participation Programme to maximise the benefits of remote hearings for all users, including the benefits of enabling defendants on remand to appear remotely, where appropriate. However, the future scope and scale of this programme is subject to decisions taken at the next Spending Review.

122. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary consider expanding Crown Court sitting-day hours for the Crown Court Bench Division and model the impact this could have.

Reject – The Government is not pursuing a Crown Court Bench Division so this recommendation is extraneous. More broadly, prior evaluations of extended hours have exposed challenges for implementation, resourcing, and funding. We do not consider the sustained and routine operation of extended hours proportionate or feasible. Crown Court judges, advocates, and relevant staff across the criminal justice system are doing vital work, including case preparation, before and after the “court day.” Recognising that listing is a judicial function, HMCTS will continue to support implementation of the National Listing Framework and to support the judiciary in making the most effective use of available court time.

123. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service collects and publishes data on the use of video across all court hearings and trials.

Accept – The Government is supportive of this recommendation, and we have an ambition to be able to publish reliable data on the use of remote participation across the estate and across jurisdictions. We are also considering the manual collection of data as an interim measure.

124. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service and the judiciary should reintroduce their pilot of ‘Simultaneous Interpreting via Cloud Video Platform for Defendants on Remand.’

Accept – We accept this recommendation but do not intend to resume the pilot as simultaneous Interpreting via Cloud Video Platform is already available for defendants on remand and we are exploring ways we can go further. While the mode in which a trial is conducted is a matter for the judiciary, HMCTS is assessing the effectiveness of current guidance, training and processes to facilitate greater use and ensure that we maximise the benefits of this capability, where it is appropriate. We are also assessing opportunities to make improvements to the underpinning software of the remote environment to make simultaneous interpreting, as well as switching between simultaneous and consecutive modes, more efficient, reliable, and effective.

125. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service, His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service and the police should continue to invest in appropriate hardware and software to support all of the recommendations in this Review. This should include continued investment and roll-out of ‘Digital Audio Video Evolution’, Video Conferencing Centres, the ‘Book a Video Link Service’ and the facilities for the police to give evidence remotely and enable defendants to appear remotely at the first hearing.

Accept in principle – The Government supports this recommendation and will continue investing in appropriate digital and video infrastructure across HMCTS, HMPPS, and the Home Office to help to support the recommendations in this review. We are investing at least £9m per annum for the roll-out of ‘Digital Audio-Visual Evolution’ and a further £10m in 26/27 for the rollout of Video Conferencing Centres and the digital Book a Video Link booking service.

- 126. I recommend that His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service collaborate to ensure real-time information on prisoner location and that prison Offender Management Unit contact details are readily available within one system and that Listing Officers circulate the court lists to the prison holding the defendant.**

Accept in principle – We are supportive of this recommendation and recognise the potential efficiency gains from improving data-sharing. Together HMCTS and HMPPS are considering the best approach to taking this forward further, subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 127. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service sends firm lists at least two weeks in advance and daily lists by an achievable but ambitious deadline for service the day before the hearing, the exact timing to be mutually agreed and adhered to nationally, with any subsequent changes made directly with the prison to allow time for prisoner moves to be arranged. An associated key performance indicator for His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service should also be developed to measure accuracy and timeliness.**

Accept in principle – We recognise the importance of timely and accurate listing information in supporting effective prisoner transportation and wider system coordination. HMCTS will support implementation of the National Listing Framework, which took effect on 1 October 2026 and which provides for publication of the Firm List two weeks before the trial week and draft and final Daily Lists on the day before the hearing. As part of its work in listing, HMCTS is developing an initial measure of adoption of the new list publication process. We intend to develop our measures of listing performance and will incorporate an approach to monitoring both accuracy and timeliness of listing.

- 128. I recommend that His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should agree a key performance indicator to assess turnaround times in relation to Prisoner Escort and Custody Services contracted collection from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service establishments.**

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation. Work is underway within HMPPS to define and agree key performance metrics to ensure accountability and transparency across the system.

- 129. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice works with the relevant authorities to make bus lanes across the country accessible to Prisoner Escort and Custody Services vehicles whilst they are actively transporting prisoners.**

Accept – The Government has committed to working with local authorities to expand schemes already used in cities like Manchester, Bristol, and Nottingham which allow prisoner transportation vans to use bus lanes to deliver defendants to court. We have identified and written to high-priority local authorities, and we are currently working with Transport for London to reduce avoidable delays and keep the justice system moving.

- 130. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice continues to develop the capability to capture data on court delays and in addition His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and Prisoner Escort and Custody Services suppliers work collaboratively to develop more**

detailed cross-system performance measures, and to ensure sufficiently detailed performance measures are included in any new Prisoner Escort and Custody Services supplier contracts, to identify wider system failures and drive improvements. This would be an appropriate topic to be raised and prioritised at the Performance Oversight Board.

Accept – The Government is committed to reducing delays across the justice system to deliver swifter justice for victims and defendants. Courts and Prisons Ministers have established the Prisoner Delivery Oversight Board to provide cross-system accountability for court delays. The Terms of Reference for this Board will outline the agreed cross-system performance measures.

- 131. I recommend that, as part of the new interpreter contract, the Ministry of Justice should monitor the performance of the two contracted suppliers particularly in relation to the availability and accuracy of artificial intelligence translation.**

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation. The new language services contract will be managed in accordance with the Contract Management Playbook and will include clear contractual obligations on suppliers to engage in, monitor, and report on their use of AI and innovation, including its impact on interpreting availability and accuracy.

- 132. I recommend that in bail cases the police should check whether the defendant will require an interpreter at court, and there should be an automated system to ensure all the necessary information required to make an interpreter booking is received by the Courts and Tribunals Service Centres.**

Accept in principle – The Government supports this recommendation and recognises the importance of ensuring that information on the interpreter requirements for defendants on bail is shared with HMCTS consistently and at an early stage. We will explore how this might work in practice, including whether an automated process would be the best approach and whether this could be accommodated within existing systems. Any changes to police systems would be subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 133. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service investigates the use of artificial intelligence for translation purposes for use in courts and sets up a monitoring regime of artificial intelligence with metrics to determine and hold to account the level of accuracy and error. Subject to the approval of the judge, following testing, artificial intelligence translation should also be used in pre-trial and preliminary hearings where traditional interpreters are not available. This will ensure progress is made, even if minimal.**

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that this recommendation has the potential to support more reliable access to interpreting services in the courts, and we are funding a pilot to explore how AI interpreting could be deployed in the criminal courts. However, there are vital interests of justice tests that must be met and AI translation and interpreting cannot be rolled out until they have been robustly and thoroughly evaluated to give confidence in their accuracy and reliability.

134. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and police forces explore the use of artificial intelligence translation in frontline services of the police and the Courts and Tribunals Service Centres.

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation and recognises the significant potential for AI-assisted translation. We have now introduced a new contract for language services in HMCTS. It includes clauses which encourage innovation and new ways of working including audio transcription. We are discussing this with suppliers as part of ongoing contract management. We are also exploring a pilot in partnership with Justice AI. Work is underway to explore how AI can assist HMCTS contact centre agents by triaging and contextualising calls such that agents can respond more quickly and effectively, with relevant information to help the caller with the problem at hand. The Home Office has worked with the NPCC to set up PoliceAI, a brand-new centre launched in June 2026 to accelerate the responsible use of AI across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. PoliceAI will be actively exploring the use of different tools and accelerating AI adoption in frontline policing, including on transcription and translation capabilities.

135. I recommend that artificial intelligence transcription be piloted and, subject to findings and appropriate arrangements for audit, be adopted in criminal courts by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, and that all new transcription contracts in the magistrates' courts include artificial intelligence transcription as the default.

Accept in principle – The Government supports this recommendation to explore how AI may be used to support transcription capabilities. Work is underway for a feasibility test to explore the viability of AI transcription in the criminal courts, following rollout of the Judicial Transcribe product in the Immigration and Asylum Chamber (IAC). Work is also ongoing to ensure that any new transcription contracts provide the potential for exploring the use of AI. Given the vital need for transcripts to be accurate and reliable, any rollout will be subject to extensive and thorough evaluation, established through human review, as well as demonstration of value for money.

136. I recommend that the Judicial College keeps under review training available for judges in the Crown Court and for District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) on the use of expert scientific evidence. A consultation should take place with the Forensic Science Regulator and the police to ensure this training is fit for purpose. I also encourage the Royal Society to continue publishing and updating primers for judges.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

137. I recommend that the police and Crown Prosecution Service invest in digital forensics and recruit more digital forensic experts.

Accept in principle – High-quality digital forensics is increasingly important to fair and efficient investigations and criminal justice outcomes. To improve national capability and resilience in digital forensics, the Home Office Policing Reform White Paper set out the intention to establish a national forensic service within the National Police Service. In preparation for this, work has started on a new delivery model with police chiefs and forensic leaders.

- 138. I recommend that the government take steps to record data on the prevalence of synthetic evidence in the criminal courts, including collecting data on the extent to which deepfakes have an impact on court proceedings, and identifying which types of offence may be more impacted by deepfakes or suspected deepfakes.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the importance of understanding the level and nature of synthetic evidence in the criminal courts. Work has started to establish a mechanism for capturing this data, and we have established a new Policing AI Threat Hub to respond to the threat of the criminal misuse of AI, including the risk of deepfake or synthetic evidence.

- 139. I recommend greater collaboration between the Forensic Science Regulator, Forensic Science Laboratory and appropriate agencies across the criminal justice system – Home Office, Crown Prosecution Service and His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service – to ensure an appropriate level of governance and thereafter, subsequent compliance with the Forensic Science Regulator’s Code to understand its impact on court proceedings.**

Accept in principle – The Home Office is responsible for the system of forensic science provision to policing (that includes both in-house police forensic services and those provided by commercial forensic science laboratories – there is no one single ‘Forensic Science Laboratory’), and through them to the prosecution, and the Ministry of Justice is responsible for ensuring defence and courts have sufficient resources and expertise to evaluate forensic evidence. We recognise the need for strengthened cross government working between the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, together with policing, the CPS and relevant criminal justice system partners. There is engagement between the Ministry of Justice, Home Office, the Regulator, and operational partners including the CPS, via the Forensics Reform Steering Group.

- 140. I recommend that the College of Policing reviews training for conducting Achieving Best Evidence interviews, including refresher training, and develops a quality assurance framework to assess the quality. I also recommend that the College of Policing considers the use of specialist officers to complete Achieving Best Evidence interviews.**

Accept in principle – The Home Office funds the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP), which is strengthening police training across all operational levels and setting consistent standards of practice to improve the way officers engage, including those who should be interviewed used Achieving Best Evidence guidance. We are working with them to consider options to address this recommendation.

- 141. I recommend as part of a national listing model that consistency should be introduced into the way in which section 28 hearings are scheduled and could include considering piloting partially remote section 28 cross-examinations.**

Please see the judicial response to the Review’s judiciary-related recommendations. There is existing national capability to complete section 28 evidence remotely. This includes options to not attend the same court as the defendant and other bespoke remote arrangements. HMCTS will continue to work closely with the CPS, police, and judiciary to embed these options and will test and confirm what is visible to each

participant in fully remote hearings to ensure that protections available in person can be replicated.

142. I recommend that His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service reviews the level of detail required in Pre-Sentence Reports to make it more proportionate.

Accept – The Government supports this recommendation aimed at ensuring that probation staff are able to deliver assessments aligned with an individual's needs and help courts proceed to the most appropriate sentence. Work is already underway to improve the quality and efficiency of Pre-Sentence Reports ensuring that they are timely, proportionate, and appropriate for a digital service.

143. I recommend the adoption and national roll-out by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service of the 'verification report' pilot, that can be produced faster than a traditional Pre-Sentence Report to support on-the-day court advice as soon as refinements from the pilot permit.

Accept – The Government has delivered this recommendation. As of July 2026, the Verification Report has been implemented across all twelve probation regions in England and Wales. It provides a shorter report for lower complexity offences that require only a punitive sentence. This saves probation court staff time which can be reinvested into more complex Pre-Sentence Reports and, in turn, supports improved timeliness of Pre-Sentence Report delivery.

144. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice continues work on improving the digital process for Pre-Sentence Reports, including designing a new digital Pre-Sentence Report template and introducing a new case management system.

Accept – The Government is on track to deliver this recommendation. A new case management system for probation court teams, Prepare a Case for Sentence (PACFS), is operating in all probation teams in magistrates' courts in all 12 probation regions across England and Wales. We are also testing a new digital Pre-Sentence Reports service in fourteen courts with the aim of subsequent wider rollout in early 2027. AI system for transcribing Pre-Sentence Report interviews (the Justice Transcribe tool) is currently being tested in eleven courts. All these initiatives are designed to support improved timeliness in the delivery of Pre-Sentence Reports.

145. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice should be considering a sustainable and appropriate level of funding allocated to the Probation Service, reflecting the increased pressure on the Probation Service following Sentencing Bill changes.

Accept – The Government is increasing investment into probation and community services by up to £700 million by 2028/29. To further manage the increased pressure, we will recruit at least 1,300 trainee probation officers by March 2027, on top of the 1,389 onboarded in 2025/26, alongside introducing new digital technology. This investment aims to reduce administrative burdens and free up probation officer capacity to focus on better management of caseloads – ensuring the quality of intervention. In the long term this, alongside measures from the Sentencing Act, could result in fewer cases returning to court.

- 146. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice coordinates the development of carefully curated artificial intelligence on GOV.UK for use by the general public to improve access to knowledge about the criminal justice system.**

Accept in principle – The Government supports this recommendation. GOV.UK Chat, an AI tool provided by the Government Digital Service (GDS) to help users navigate GOV.UK content, including information on the criminal justice system, was launched by the then Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) on 14 May 2026. We are working closely with GDS to ensure that responses draw on accurate, robust and carefully curated criminal justice system content.

- 147. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service implements pay parity with Crown Prosecution Service lawyers to support the retention of legal advisers.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the vital work of legal advisers in the criminal courts and is committed to taking measures to improve retention. A range of measures are being delivered, including the introduction of a new Senior Legal Adviser role in HMCTS. A wider holistic piece of work is also underway, led by Ministry of Justice, to consider legal pay frameworks across all Government departments and arm’s length bodies, intended to provide greater alignment.

- 148. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service establishes clearer career paths and development opportunities for legal advisers, including providing pupillages.**

Accept – Legal advisers have a crucial role in the operation of the criminal courts. The Government agrees with this recommendation and work is already underway to provide stronger career pathways for legal advisers and expand wider development opportunities. This includes exploring pupillages for legal advisers and new apprenticeships for other staff wanting to build legal careers.

- 149. I recommend that His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service establishes pools of Court Associates around the country to enable more flexible and readily available support to the judiciary in the magistrates’ court.**

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the value of Court Associates and their role in supporting the judiciary in the magistrates’ court. Additional Court Associates are already being recruited, and we will continue to assess how best to deploy them as part of ongoing workforce planning and in alignment with our wider review of court support functions.

- 150. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice match-funds the Police Station Qualification and Magistrates’ Court Qualification training for duty solicitors.**

Accept in principle – The Government accepts that this recommendation may help increase the number of solicitors who are available to take on duty work across the country. This is subject to further evidence gathering on the impact of such a measure and decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 151. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice provides grants to registered criminal legal aid law firms to fund training contracts for junior criminal lawyers and that the Ministry of Justice works with professional bodies to design**

recruitment initiatives to attract junior lawyers to undertake criminal legal aid work.

Accept in principle – The Government accepts that funding criminal training contracts may help increase the total number of criminal solicitor trainees. If firms retain trainees beyond their training contract, this initiative may help increase the total number of solicitors who are available to take on duty solicitor work. This is subject to further evidence gathering and decisions at the next Spending Review. We support further consideration of targeted training contracts, but we believe the legal sector itself is best placed to take forward work to design wider recruitment initiatives to attract junior lawyers into criminal defence.

152. I recommend that the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives enhances its training to allow lawyers to be formally recognised as duty solicitors upon qualification.

For the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) – This recommendation is for CILEX, but the Government supports the intention of the recommendation for CILEX to enhance its training. This will reduce a barrier and enable CILEX lawyers to more easily take on duty solicitor work, which will increase the pool of lawyers available.

153. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice considers how best to re-engage the criminal legal aid workforce who have left because of caring responsibilities, working collaboratively with the criminal legal workforce to address this issue for both barristers and solicitors.

Accept in principle – This recommendation provides an opportunity for the Government and the legal aid sector to work together to re-engage practitioners who have left the criminal legal aid workforce due to caring responsibilities. We will take this forward through focussed discussions of the Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board. This Board was established in October 2022 following the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR) recommendation and provides independent advice to the Lord Chancellor on criminal legal aid. It includes various representative bodies, including The Law Society, the Bar Council and the Criminal Bar Association.

154. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice and Legal Aid Agency commit to reviewing legal aid fees and reporting on this on an annual basis from 2027.

Accept in principle – The Government agrees that there is merit in the idea of reviewing fees on a more regular basis. This has the potential to improve financial planning of the Government and legal aid providers and thereby support the market. The development of any review mechanism should take place after court reforms have bedded in, and after current funding discussions including and uplift of £34 million on the AGFS) have concluded. Accepting in principle means the Government will need to consider various factors, including the scope and frequency of any review, as well as the role of structures alongside fee levels.

155. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice increases the lower and upper income threshold limits for criminal legal aid in the magistrates' court to £13,000 and £34,250, respectively, in line with recommendations from the Means Test Review.

Accept in principle – The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that legal aid is available in the magistrates' courts for those who need it most and it is

important that the financial eligibility thresholds reflect this. Once court reforms have been fully implemented, we will be better placed to take final decisions on income threshold levels, subject to future funding decisions and operational considerations.

156. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice collects and publishes data on the number of unrepresented defendants and the impacts on court efficiency.

Accept in principle – The Government intends to publish data on the impact of unrepresented defendants once the data is of sufficient quality for publication. Official guides and resources are currently provided by the courts to unrepresented defendants to help them understand the legal process and the support available to them.

157. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice lowers the threshold for wasted preparation payments. This will see instructed advocates appropriately remunerated for their preparation work and the proportionate distribution of fees earlier in the process, encouraging early engagement and improving case preparation.

Accept – The Government agrees with this recommendation and has already implemented this measure in July 2026.

158. I recommend that the Legal Aid Agency promotes the pre-charge engagement fee to duty solicitors and actively encourages its usage to facilitate more out of court resolutions.

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation. The Legal Aid Agency will continue to work with the sector to ensure the availability of this fee is understood, including through the Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB). In the response to the Independent Disclosure Review, the Government agreed that the criminal legal aid fee schemes should support early engagement with the disclosure process, and early preparation of cases more broadly. Payment for pre-charge engagement was introduced in 2021, though we acknowledge take-up remains low. We therefore committed in the response to the disclosure review to consider how best to encourage take-up, including discussing it with the relevant sub-group of the CLAAB. Although providers are already able to ‘self-grant’ for pre-charge engagement, we will consider if there are opportunities to streamline the application process further with the CLAAB.

159. I recommend that the Legal Aid Agency implements a new payment system in the distribution of legal aid fees and moves to a staged payment system to incentivise earlier engagement, remunerate lawyers in a more timely fashion and incentivises good performance.

Accept in principle – The Government accepts the principle of this recommendation, though implementation is subject to exploring options for reform and their feasibility. The recommendation may help sustain providers in the legal aid sector by improving cash flow levels. However, we will need to consider further how staged payments could be designed or targeted to ensure they reflect work done and court timings.

160. I recommend that the Legal Aid Agency and the Ministry of Justice gather more detailed workforce data on barristers and solicitors, using the existing data-

sharing agreement they have with the Law Society and the Criminal Bar Association, to understand the sustainability of the workforce.

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation. We have established an annual data-sharing arrangement between the Ministry of Justice, the Legal Aid Agency, and stakeholders. Outputs of this work are published through our official statistics website. We are grateful for the continued cooperation of the Law Society and the Bar Council in the sharing of data, and we are keen for this to continue. We will keep the scope of the current agreement under review and, where new datasets become available, will work with the Bar Council and the Law Society to explore their inclusion where appropriate.

161. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice works with the legal professions to determine the best operating model of the legal aid market in the light of current conditions.

Accept in principle – The Government agrees with this recommendation, which provides an opportunity to consider changes which could sustain the sector in the longer term.

162. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice continues efforts to address the challenges in attracting and recruiting magistrates, with solutions addressing the speed at which the recruitment process moves and how often recruitment takes place. I urge the Ministry of Justice to act on findings from the pilots with expedition to recruit the required number of magistrates as quickly as possible.

Accept – The Government accepts this recommendation. We are investing in recruitment, and in April 2026 announced the introduction of more regular regional recruitment and a new national taskforce to support local recruitment Advisory Committees to speed up recruitment to at least halve recruitment and training times.

163. I recommend that the Senior Judiciary continue working closely with the Ministry of Justice as it aims to reform the role of magistrates, including how they are trained, inducted into the magistracy and the nature of the roles.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. The Government commits to continue to work closely with the judiciary to support magistrates.

164. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice moves the power found in primary legislation detailing volunteer expenses into secondary legislation to allow more flexibility when making changes to magistrates' expenses, enabling faster responses to changes in expense requirements.

Accept in principle – We will explore opportunities to make it easier to update the categories of expenses that can be reimbursed to magistrates. Doing so would provide greater flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the magistracy and ensure that support arrangements remain relevant and effective. The Government has included a provision in the Courts and Tribunals Bill to move the power, currently set out in section 15 of the Courts Act 2003, to secondary legislation. If agreed, this provision will make it easier for the Government to make changes to the types of expenses that can be reimbursed so we can more nimbly react to what the magistracy requires.

165. I recommend that Judicial Office considers how best to recognise the contributions of magistrates.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations; the Government acknowledges the huge value of our magistracy.

166. I recommend that the Judicial Appointments Commission reviews recruitment processes, moving towards a more flexible model by 2027 (allowing for current recruitment campaigns to end) to facilitate better forecasting of resources within courts.

For the Judicial Appointments Commission – The responsibility for judicial recruitment processes sits with the independent Judicial Appointments Commission. It would therefore not be appropriate for the Government to comment.

167. I recommend that the Judicial Office implements required notice periods on retirement for the judiciary, working closely with the Judicial Appointments Commission in the design and implementation of this period to account for wider recruitment processes. Suitable notice should also be required in relation to the taking of leave.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. Terms and conditions for judicial office holders, for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible, generally stipulate that they should give the lengthiest possible notice period (generally no less than six months) of their intention to resign or retire. Practical implementation of this is a matter for the judiciary. Any changes to the requirements already set out in judicial terms and conditions to provide notice of resignation or retirement could be considered by the Lord Chancellor following the outcome of the wider recruitment process (recommendation 166).

168. I recommend that the Judicial Office works with the Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate) to review the deployment process for District Judges and Deputy District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) and implements a model that more effectively balances local needs and appropriate national oversight.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will support operationally as required.

169. I recommend that the Judicial College, in collaboration with His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, reviews training resources for newly appointed Resident Judges, with particular focus on the oversight of court processes, to support their induction and ensure the smooth running of the Crown Courts.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations. HMCTS will support operationally as required.

170. I recommend that the Judicial Appointments Commission and the Judicial College survey sitting judges to understand barriers to career progression and understand their support needs to develop a career pipeline within the judiciary.

Please see the judicial response to the Review's judiciary-related recommendations.

171. I recommend the use of artificial intelligence tools that are targeted to improve the operational skills and knowledge of workforces across police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

Accept in principle – The Government supports the responsible use of AI to improve the skills, knowledge, and effectiveness of frontline staff across the criminal justice system. We are focusing on the safe adoption of AI, including tools that can provide timely guidance and question-and-answer support. In HMCTS, we are exploring the potential of AI tools for listing, case summarisation, translation and transcription, and AI-powered knowledge assistants to support court staff to make more effective use of their time. In HMPPS, we are also exploring the potential for AI tools to enhance the way that staff can access learning and practical guidance. PoliceAI is exploring the potential of AI-powered knowledge assistants, including to enhance access to practical guidance and frameworks for officers.

172. I recommend that His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Services publishes a post-2031 estate strategy, which should consider the impact of recommendations from both parts of this Review. To support this, it should review and publish how the criminal estate capacity can be maximised to take account of the recommendations from both parts of this Review.

Accept – The Government recognises the value of a new estate strategy for the impacts of criminal court reform. Work is already underway and HMCTS will complete this exercise as part of its ongoing strategic planning.

173. I recommend that the government commissions an inspection of the courts, delivered in line with the mechanism for inspection of courts administration as outlined in Chapter 3 (One Criminal Justice System), to provide independent assurance on the physical court estate and identify areas for improvement.

Accept in principle – The Government accepts this recommendation in principle. We are committed to improving accountability and oversight of the criminal justice system, including the physical court estate. We are considering the best way to do so.

174. I recommend that the government evaluates the case for problem solving courts regionally, guided by a national framework to ensure consistency, enable impact measurement, and inform resource allocation.

Accept – The Government agrees with the recommendation to evaluate the case for problem solving courts, through piloting and evaluating a specific model. We are currently conducting a pilot of Intensive Supervision Courts (ISC), a type of problem-solving court, which is operating in a number of regions and tests a defined, evidence led model. Alongside the pilot is a comprehensive evaluation strategy including: a process evaluation examining delivery, the final report of which was published in November 2025; a planned impact evaluation measuring reoffending rates and exploring health and wellbeing outcomes; and an economic evaluation assessing value for money. A further seven ISC sites have been announced for launch by 2029, and outcomes from this phased expansion will be monitored, strengthening the evidence base, enabling comparison between regions and informing future decisions on wider rollout.

- 175. I recommend that the government develops a comprehensive cross-government strategy on mental ill-health and its impact on the criminal justice system. This should include mental ill-health where it relates to defendants, victims, and witnesses.**

Accept in principle – The Government has announced its intention to develop a cross-government Mental Health Strategy to improve outcomes. The strategy will recognise the interface between the mental health and criminal justice systems.

- 176. I recommend that the remit of the Drug Partnership Boards is expanded to include mental health provisions. Their membership should also be expanded to include representatives from magistrates' courts and the Probation Service (part of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service).**

Accept in principle – Guidance for Combating Drugs Partnerships already sets out that representation should include the National Probation Service and mental health service providers, and we agree to invite representatives from magistrates' courts.

- 177. I recommend that the Ministry of Justice expands funding for community-based facilities for women as an alternative to custody.**

Accept in principle – The Government is taking forward work to fund community-based support for women via the Women's Diversion Fund, which may include residential alternatives. Funding for further expansion of community-based facilities would be subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

- 178. I recommend standard training for police officers to ensure better administration of Out of Court Resolutions for children. This should be delivered through the collaborative efforts of the College of Policing and the Law Society, underpinned by central administration through the Local Criminal Justice Boards.**

Accept in principle – As set out above, the Government is committed to strengthening the use of OOCRs. The Youth Justice White Paper sets out this government's commitment to deliver standardised training for police using OOCRs. The Policing White Paper set out a programme of major reforms aimed at building a more coherent, better coordinated and more consistently delivered police service. As part of this transformation, this government will ensure that changes within policing also strengthen officers' capability and confidence in working with children.

- 179. I recommend that the government reviews the current legislative policy for rehabilitation periods of criminal records applicable to defendants who committed offences when they were under 18, irrespective of their age at conviction.**

Accept in principle – The criminal records disclosure regime is designed to protect the public, in particular children and vulnerable adults, while balancing the aim of rehabilitation of those who offended in the past. We are committed to supporting children in turning their lives around and recognise that having a criminal record can have a significant impact on children (and adults who offended as a child). We will publish a consultation on a targeted package of reforms to the childhood criminal records regime by the end of the year.

- 180. I recommend that judges and all others involved in criminal justice, including the Crown Prosecution Service and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, collaborate on targeted cross-system initiatives to improve efficiency in rape case handling, informed by research into systemic barriers and building on previous reforms like Operation Soteria, and report on measurable outcomes.**

Accept – The Lord Chancellor announced in September 2026 that he will chair a new Rape Justice Taskforce, a cross-system forum which will bring together senior justice partners to drive forward improvements to efficiency and other challenges that are particularly acute in rape cases. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has commissioned an expert in sexual violence, Professor Katrin Hohl, to conduct research to better understand how the principles of Operation Soteria are followed at court and establish areas for learning and improvement. This project brings together criminal justice partners to ensure that these cases are built around best practice principles from report to conviction.

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