



HMCPSI

HM Crown Prosecution
Service Inspectorate

Business Plan

2026-27

March 2026

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Foreword

The statutory remit of His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) is to report to the Attorney General on the operation of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO). The satisfactory functioning of the CPS and the SFO is fundamental to the criminal justice system.

Every year, we consult on our programme of inspection. Our resources are limited and therefore we must make decisions on priorities for inspection. This year's consultation document included a significant programme of work across the CPS and the SFO as well as setting out possible inspections using our section 6¹ powers to assist others. Having considered the consultation responses from both statutory and non- statutory consultees, I have narrowed the list of inspections down to those we can reasonably commit to delivering with our current resource. The inspections I have chosen and that feature in my 2026-27 programme will focus on key priorities: the experience of victims, violence against women and girls, and the effective and efficient operation of the criminal justice system. Our programme of inspections will provide independent evidence for those that hold the CPS and SFO to account. The programme will also allow the public to understand how the CPS and SFO are performing.

This business plan sets out the inspection topics that will form the programme of inspection for the next 12 to 18 months. The programme covers the period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027, but some of the topics included will, due to the nature of inspection, continue after the end of this period into the following year.



Anthony Rogers

HM Chief Inspector

¹ Section 6 of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 as amended.

Who we are

His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) is an independent inspectorate. The statutory remit of HMCPST is to inspect the operation of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), to submit an annual report on the operation of these organisations to the Attorney General, and to undertake any inspection requested by the Attorney General, as set out in Section 2 of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 and amended by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. We also inspect other prosecuting services by invitation.

We are committed to the ten principles of public inspection, which can be found in annex A.

Our purpose

HMCPST inspects prosecution services, providing evidence to make the prosecution process better and more accountable. We have a statutory duty to inspect the work of the CPS and SFO. By special arrangement, we also share our expertise with other prosecution services in the UK and overseas.

HMCPST inspects prosecution services, providing evidence to make the prosecution process better and more accountable.

We are independent of the organisations we inspect, and our methods of gathering evidence and reporting are open and transparent. We do not judge or enforce; we inform prosecution services' strategies and activities by presenting evidence of good practice and issues to address. Independent inspections like these help to maintain trust in the prosecution process.

Our vision

We are part of the solution to improving the Criminal Justice System through high quality inspection.

We have four priorities to enable us to deliver this vision:

- we hold the CPS and SFO to account for what they deliver (we make recommendations that drive improvement)
- victims will be at the heart of inspection (where we can, we will use victim experience in our inspection)
- using our 25 years of experience we will help public prosecutors improve (their legal casework)
- inspection will identify and spread best practice.

Inspections by invitation/request

We inspect other prosecuting agencies by invitation. We will continue to respond to requests for work outside our statutory remit in line with available resource and giving due consideration to the benefit of extending our competencies and abilities.

Our values

We act with **integrity**, creating a culture of **respect**, drive **innovation**, pursue **ambition**, and commit to **inclusivity** in everything we do.

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1. Our programme

This document sets out the inspections that His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) plans to carry out during the business year 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.

In line with our statutory duty to develop the plan for 2026-27, we consulted with our stakeholders on a list of potential inspection topics throughout November and December 2025. As part of the consultation, we engaged with those we inspect, those with whom we have a statutory duty to consult, and a wider range of interested parties and stakeholders; we also published our consultation on the HMCPST website. We considered all the responses received in finalising this programme for 2026-27. There is a list of those we consulted with and those who responded in annex C.

The 2026-27 inspection programme will include follow-up inspections to test progress against and impact of recommendations.

As well as our inspection programme, we also have a commitment to work with other criminal justice inspectorates on topics which benefit from a cross-agency approach and review. Summary details of joint inspections in which HMCPST will be involved during 2025-27 can be found in this plan. [A full programme of joint inspection can be found in the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection \(CJJI\) business plan².](#)

In addition to the planned inspections with other criminal justice inspectorates, we are also considering, in conjunction with OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission, an inspection across education, health and the criminal justice system examining the education, prevention and deterrence elements of female genital mutilation.

What follows is a short summary of the inspections that we aim to carry out in 2026-27. We have also developed a list of options for other inspections which may be added to our programme, should time and resources allow. It is not intended that we cover all the topics listed during this financial year; we will prioritise as necessary and carry forward into 2027-28 depending on future priorities.

² <https://ciji.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/about/joint-business-plan/>

Inspection topics carried forward

Crown Prosecution Service

Inspections carried forward
Rape – the service to victims
Rape – post-charge legal decision making and case progression
Victims – the bereaved family scheme
Serious economic and organised crime division (starting April 2026)
Victims – assessing the universal offer
Cases involving honour-based abuse
Racially and religiously aggravated hate crime

In developing this plan, we considered consultation responses around those inspections we had in our 2025-26 business plan that were to be carried forward to assess whether they remained a priority for inspection.

Given our limited resources, we have decided that in this business plan period, we will only be able to carry out one hate crime inspection; consequently, we have prioritised the racially and religiously aggravated inspection given the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism.

We have developed a scope for the inspection of how the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) deals with so-called honour-based abuse. In that, we include a case file examination that will feature Crown Court cases flagged as domestic abuse. We have therefore not included a specific inspection on Crown Court domestic abuse casework as given the recent inspection of domestic abuse, it is unlikely to add additional value.

The honour-based abuse inspection and the serious and organised crime and international division inspection are being developed and will commence within the 2026-27 business period.

Serious Fraud Office

The proposed inspection of deferred prosecution agreements (DPAs) in the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), although not completed in 2025-26, has not been included in this programme for 2026-27. This decision has been reached following consultation with the SFO and the Attorney General's office on the priorities for inspection in the SFO and the value that such an inspection would add given the limited use of DPAs in the last two years.

2. Inspections planned for 2026-27

Inspections planned for 2026-27

In this section, we set out all the inspections we plan to conduct during the 2026-27 business plan period. In setting the plan and priorities, we have considered all the responses received following our consultation on the proposed long list of inspections.

The inspection programme is challenging and ambitious, with priority given to those inspections that will add most value. Although the programme covers the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027, some early work has commenced on some of the inspection topics and others will continue after the end of this period into the following year. The list below is not in priority order for inspection. Instead, it is a list of topics only and priorities for inspection will be decided on the basis of resource availability.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) inspections

	Inspection topic	Inspection type
1	Serious economic and organised crime division (starting April 2026)	Thematic
2	Victims – assessing the universal offer	Thematic
3	Cases involving honour-based abuse (starting April 2026)	Thematic
4	Racially and religiously aggravated hate crime	Thematic
5	Rape – the service to victims	Thematic
6	Rape – post-charge legal decision making and case progression	Thematic
7	Victims – the bereaved family scheme	Thematic
8	Rape – pre-charge	Follow-up
9	The experience of victims in the magistrates’ courts	Thematic
10	An examination of Victims’ Right to Review (VRR)	Thematic
11	Domestic abuse: non-fatal strangulation cases	Thematic
12	How effective is the CPS in delivering a service that meets victims’ rights under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime?	Thematic
13	Transforming Summary Justice (TSJ)	Thematic
14	Effective preparation for the plea and trial preparation hearing and the quality of briefs to counsel and brief returns	Thematic

15	An examination of cases requiring consent to prosecute (if resources allow)	Thematic
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Serious Fraud Office inspections

	Inspection topic	Inspection type
1	Induction and training	Thematic
2	Disclosure	Follow-up

By invitation inspections

	Inspection topic	Inspection type
1	The Military Court Service	Assistance provisions
2	Criminal Cases Review Commission – commenced January 2026 and due to be published May 2026	Assistance provisions

3. Further detail of proposed inspections

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Serious Economic Organised Crime and International Division (SEOCID)

This inspection has been carried forward from the 2025-26 business plan and will assess how effective the assurance and casework mechanisms are in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Serious and Economic Organised Crime and International Division (SEOCID). This inspection will commence in April 2026.

Victims – assessing the universal offer

Following our 2020 inspection³ in which the Chief Inspector called upon the CPS to review whether the arrangements it had in place were the right ones to deliver on its commitments to victims, the CPS has undergone a transformation programme to change their service to victims. The programme comprises of two proposed levels of service; the enhanced offer and the universal offer. We will inspect the enhanced offer within the victim focused rape inspection in an inspection we will conduct in 2026.

The plan for this inspection is to assess the level of service provided by the CPS to victims receiving the universal offer. We will assess against the CPS's expectations and standards as set out within the offer, with regards to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. This inspection will also consider how court facilities support victims to give their best evidence.

The CPS has piloted different approaches to delivery of the universal offer. The pilots are being assessed by an independent body engaged by the CPS to report on impact and scalability to assist in strategic decision making about what the universal offer that will ultimately be rolled out across England and Wales should be.

This is a priority inspection given the passage of time since our 2020 recommendation. However, to add value, it is not sensible to conduct an inspection until a decision has been made by the CPS about what the universal offer will be, and how it will be rolled out. This timing of this inspection is therefore dependent upon the speed at which the CPS progresses this work.

³ <https://cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/24/2024/11/2020-11-12-VCL-letters-to-victims-1.pdf>

Cases involving honour-based abuse

This inspection will assess the quality of casework in cases involving honour-based abuse. The inspection will gather evidence of victim experience, engaging with the third sector. It will include examination of magistrates' courts and Crown Court domestic abuse cases and forced marriage. There is currently a significant amount of change in the CPS relating to this area of casework and consequently the timing of this inspection will be dependent upon an assessment of when independent inspection will add most value.

Hate crime - racially and religiously aggravated (RARA) hate crime

This inspection will examine the CPS's response to religiously and racially aggravated (RARA) hate crime given the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism. We will engage with third sector agencies supporting and representing victims to understand the victim voice and experience. We will examine the CPS's handling of RARA cases and their service to victims.

Rape – the service to victims

This inspection will focus on how the CPS engages with adult victims of rape, considering the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the impact of the implementation of the CPS's national operating model that incorporates enhanced services for adult victims of rape. The inspection will engage with victims of crime and third sector groups to gain evidence of victims' experience. This inspection will also consider how court facilities support victims to give their best evidence. We aim to commence this inspection in the latter part of 2026.

Rape – post-charge legal decision making and case progression

This inspection will complement our pre-charge rape casework inspection published in July 2025⁴, which assessed the quality of pre-charge legal decisions and case progression. It will use similar methodology to assess the quality of the post-charge stages of cases, considering the impact of the CPS's national operating model based upon principles of Operation Soteria. This inspection will commence once we have concluded the follow-up inspection of early advice and pre-charge decision making in rape cases, and the service to victims of rape inspection.

⁴ [A Thematic Rape Inspection Report – HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

Victims – the bereaved family scheme

This inspection is intended as a follow-up to the recommendation made in our report into the CPS's actions in the Valdo Calocane case published in March 2024⁵. The inspection will assess victim experience of engagement following the CPS's review of guidance to assess where consultation is appropriate and meaningful. The CPS is currently reviewing its approach. This inspection will be timed to assess the impact of those changes on the service offered.

Rape – pre-charge

This will be a follow-up inspection assessing progress against the recommendations set out in our report published July 2025. Activity to assess progress against recommendations will commence in the first half of 2026.

The experience of victims in the magistrates' courts

This inspection will involve inspectors attending magistrates' courts hearings, meeting with the witness service, seeking to speak to victims at the conclusion of their cases, observing trials and a consideration of CPS compliance with the speaking to witness(es) at court scheme. It will also include an assessment of the facilities in the courts, using our powers to inspect HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)⁶, and how they support the delivery of special measures to support victims to give their best evidence.

An examination of Victims' Right to Review (VRR)

This inspection will assess the Victims Right to Review (VRR) scheme across CPS Areas and Divisions, including the cases that are escalated to the Appeals and Review unit (in the Serious Crime and Counter Terrorism Division). We plan to commence this inspection in the first half of 2026.

Domestic abuse: non-fatal strangulation cases

This inspection will review a range of successful and unsuccessful outcomes in cases where non-fatal strangulation offences were charged, to provide an assurance of the consistent and effective application of this new legislation across all CPS Areas.

⁵ [An inspection of Crown Prosecution Service actions in the Valdo Calocane case – HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

⁶ Paragraph 9 of the Schedule to the Crown Prosecution Service Act 2000

How effective is the CPS in delivering a service that meets victims' rights under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime?

This inspection will assess the CPS's approach to special measures, Victim Personal Statements, speaking to witness(es) at court scheme, pre-court visits, meetings with bereaved families, meetings with victims of rape and serious sexual offences, the Victim Care Letter scheme, and explaining decisions to charge or not to charge.

Transforming Summary Justice (TSJ)

An efficiency inspection assessing compliance with the ten principles of Transforming Summary Justice (TSJ) and whether the front-loading of cases is timely and effective in increasing early guilty pleas and reducing hearings in contested cases in the magistrates' courts.

Effective preparation for the plea and trial preparation hearing and the quality of briefs to counsel and brief returns

An assessment of the effectiveness of the CPS's preparation for the plea and trial preparation hearing (PTPH) of cases in the Crown Court. The inspection will assess liaison and engagement with HMCTS administrative staff with regard to case progression and listing, as well as the effectiveness of stakeholder relationships in addressing issues at operational and strategic levels. Inspection findings on recent inspections indicate that as caseloads have increased and securing counsel in cases becomes more difficult due to reduced counsel numbers, that the quality of briefs and the volume of late brief returns from counsel has increased. This inspection will also therefore consider the value added by the CPS to casework and instructions to counsel for PTPH as well as the impact of returns of effectiveness and efficiency.

An examination of cases requiring consent to prosecute

An inspection examining cases where the consent of the Attorney General or the Director of Public Prosecutions is required to initiate proceedings. The inspection will assess compliance with the procedures and the timeliness and efficiency of the process.

Serious Fraud Office

Induction and training

An inspection examining the effectiveness of the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO's) induction and training offer to new staff, to provide the relevant skills and tools for the job to enable them to contribute effectively at an early stage. This inspection will take place in 2026.

Disclosure

A follow-up inspection to independently assess progress against the six recommendations made in the April 2024 SFO disclosure. We expect to publish this follow-up report in late 2026.

By invitation inspections

The Military Court Service

This will be an inspection of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Military Court Service.

Criminal Cases Review Commission

This inspection has commenced and will assess the quality of the casework and processes of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) to provide high quality casework to enable appropriate and proportionate decisions to be made about referral for appeal.

Criminal Justice Joint Inspections 2025-27

The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (CJJI) Business Plan 2025-27 contains four inspections that His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) will either lead or contribute to. For completeness the list is below.

Criminal Justice Joint Inspection topic
Young witness protocol – brought forward from 2023-25
Inspection of the communication of key decisions with victims of child sexual abuse
Operation Soteria

A spotlight report on victim-facing communications from first appearance to sentence

For more information on these inspections and joint inspection more generally, please visit the CJI website: [Joint business plan – Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates](#).

4. Supporting processes

Resources

The costs of His Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) are met from the Estimate of the Government Legal Department.

Financial year	Budget (£)	Reduction/increase from previous year
2020–21	3,148,000	0%
2021–22	3,148,000	0%
2022–23	3,039,000	-3.5%
2023–24	3,070,000	+1.0%
2024-25	2,800,000	-8.8%
2025-26	3,133,000	+11.9%
2026-27	3,233,000	+3.2%

The budget will be deployed as follows.

Category of spend	Budget (£m)
Staff costs	2.86
Fixed costs	0.20
Variable costs	0.17
Full year budget	3.23

The majority of the budget (88.5%) is spent on staffing.

Six-and-a-half percent of the budget is spent on fixed costs. These are costs that HMCPPI is committed to so, if changes were to be made, we would need to buy or negotiate ourselves out of contracts or agreements. These costs include accommodation costs, National Audit Office fees, website/publication costs and so on.

The remainder of the budget is spent on variable costs. These are costs where HMCPPI has some choice and includes travel and hotel costs, training, stationery and printing costs.

Managing risk

It is important to have a robust risk management process in place, as it provides a framework for anticipating potential problems and allows them to be dealt with in a systematic way. HMCPST manages its internal risks in line with the approach commonly adopted in the public sector, which includes regular reviews.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Objectives for HMCPST ensure that we meet our General Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The objectives were reviewed in 2025 and will be reviewed again in 2027 to ensure that they remain relevant. The objectives can be found on our website here: [Our equality objectives – HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

Annex A
**The ten principles of public
sector inspection**

In 2003, the Government introduced ten principles of public sector inspection which were included in the Office of Public Service Reform's report, *Inspecting for improvement*⁷. These principles place clear requirements on inspection providers and the departments sponsoring them. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPST) is fully committed to upholding these values and expectations and we take them into account in our strategy and planning programme.

The ten principles state that public service inspection should:

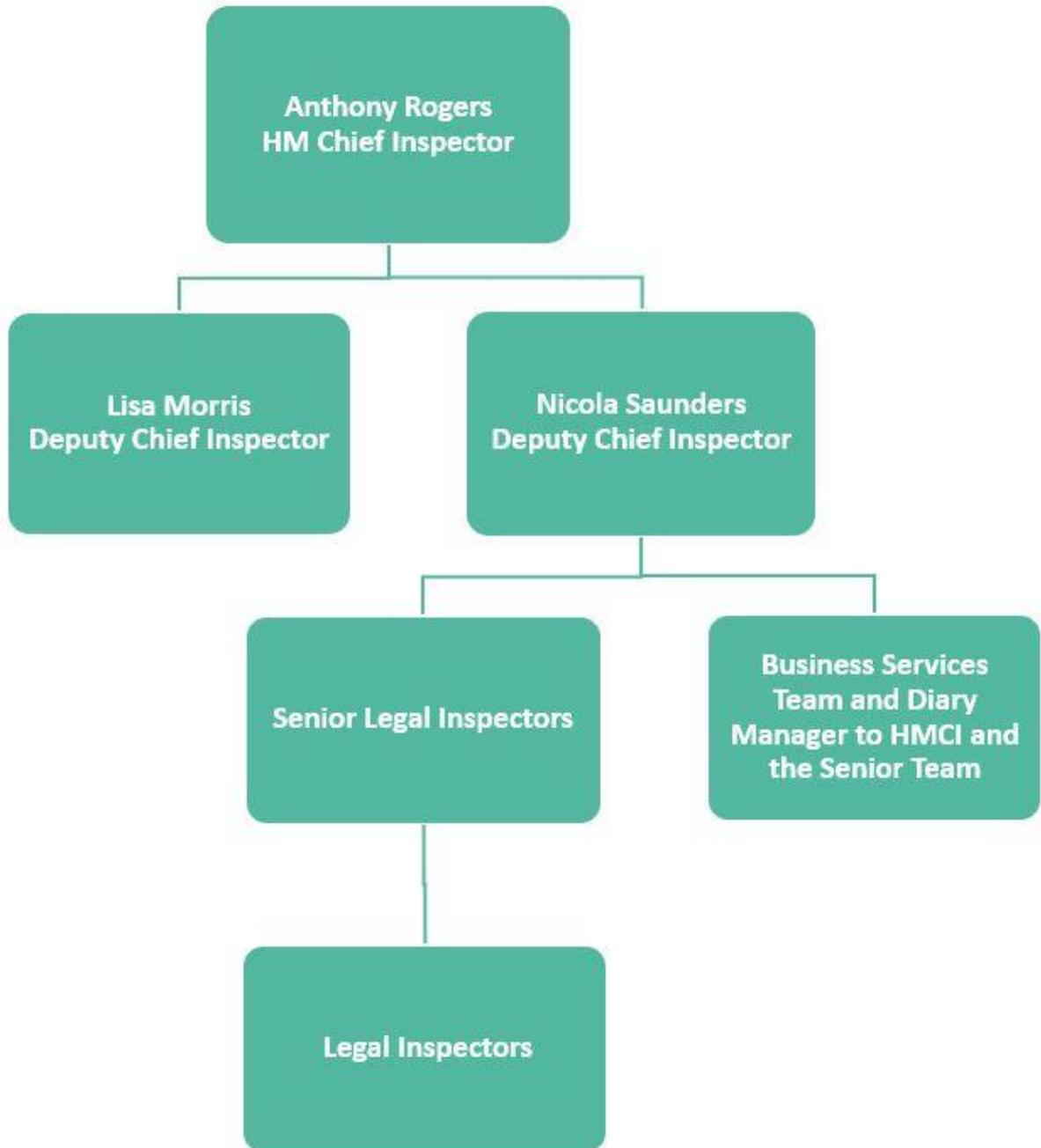
- pursue the purpose of improvement
- focus on outcomes
- take a user perspective
- be proportionate to risk
- encourage self-assessment by managers
- use impartial evidence wherever possible
- disclose the criteria used for judgements
- be open about the processes involved
- have regard to value for money, including that of the inspecting body
- continually learn from experience.

We continually seek feedback on our reports and the interviews undertaken with staff of inspected bodies. We track the implementation of the recommendations we make, and we are conscious of the need to keep to a minimum the burden of work on the inspected organisations. The form of our inspections and practices are kept under regular review.

⁷ The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services; Cabinet Office; July 2003

Annex B

Organisation chart



Annex C

List of consultees

Consultees	Response Received
Attorney General & Solicitor General	Yes
Director of Public Prosecutions	Yes
Director of Serious Fraud Office	Yes
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services	No
HM Inspectorate of Prisons	No
HM Inspectorate of Probation	Yes
HM Chief Inspector NI	No
HM Chief Inspector Scotland	Yes
Shadow Attorney General & Solicitor General	Yes
Lady Chief Justice	Yes
Chief Executive Victim Support	No
Victim's Commissioner	Yes
Victim's Commissioner for London	No
Domestic Abuse Commissioner	No
Chief Executive HMCTS	No
Chief Magistrate	Yes
Magistrates Association	No
Justice Committee	Yes
Bar Council	No
Association of Police & Crime Commissioners	No
CPS Audit & Risk Committee	No
SFO Audit & Risk Committee	No
OFSTED	Yes
Government Internal Audit	No
Care Quality Commission	Yes

Barnett Survivors Ltd	Yes
Transform Justice	Yes
Whitehall Prosecutors Group	No
HM Chief Inspector Office of Rail and Road	No
End Violence against women	Yes
Centre for Women's Justice	Yes
Rape Crisis	Yes
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	Yes

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