



HMCPsi

HM Crown Prosecution
Service Inspectorate

Criminal Cases Review Commission casework

**An inspection by invitation of
how the structure and assurance
processes of the Criminal Cases
Review Commission underpin
effective case reviews**

July 2026

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Who we are

His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) 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 Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Serious Fraud Office (SFO). By special arrangement, we also share our expertise with other prosecution services in the UK and overseas.

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.

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. Chief Inspector's foreword

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) has been operational for approaching 30 years. It plays a critical role in the criminal justice system by providing an independent mechanism for reviewing alleged miscarriages of justice. Over the nearly 30 years of its existence, it has reviewed many thousands of cases and referred hundreds of them, resulting in criminal convictions and sentences being overturned. While there have been some high-profile failures, it has secured justice in numerous cases.

Public attention, however, has focused on the high-profile failures, which have therefore come to shape its reputation. Given the gravity of the failures, this is not surprising and several high-profile cases have clearly illuminated deficiencies in the CCRC's processes and systems.

Recently, both the Westminster Commission¹ and the Henley Review² examined whether the CCRC was operating effectively. They highlighted changes to address shortcomings in the CCRC's practice. The case of Andrew Malkinson (which Henley examined) and the Justice Select Committee's report on the leadership of the Criminal Cases Review Commission³ resulted in the resignation of the then Chair and Chief Executive.

Dame Vera Baird DBE, KC, was appointed as interim Chair in June 2025. As incoming Chair, Dame Vera set out a number of priorities, including establishing whether the CCRC's current structures and systems were effective and capable of delivering its aims.

Having previously served as Solicitor General, Dame Vera was familiar with HMCPSP's inspection methods and reports. She believed HMCPSP's extensive experience in inspecting the quality of legal decision-making in the Crown Prosecution Service would be helpful in providing findings and recommendations to focus and improve current CCRC practice.

Dame Vera approached me in August 2025. She asked if we could conduct an inspection using our 'by invitation'⁴ powers and whether it was feasible for this to

¹ Westminster Commission on miscarriages of justice, *In the interests of justice*; Future Justice Project; March 2021.

futurejustice.org.uk/publications/

² *Independent review by Chris Henley KC of the CCRC's handling of the Andrew Malkinson case*; CCRC; May 2024.

cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/5/2024/07/Integrated-Report-Response-Redacted-Copy.pdf

³ *Leadership of the Criminal Cases Review Commission*; Justice Committee; May 2025. publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmjust/749/report.html

⁴ Section 6(1) of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000. This section of the Act allows HM Chief Inspector to provide assistance to other public authorities for the purpose of the exercise by that authority of its functions.

be done quickly, given current inspection commitments. I agreed that we could undertake an inspection on a cost recovery basis.

Our findings do not highlight a failing organisation. While this report sets out 34 recommendations, the casework decisions in the 60 cases we examined were ultimately sound and reached the right conclusions in their recommendations to Commissioners, the final decision-makers. However, we found several key issues that need to be urgently addressed, which will help the CCRC make better decisions more quickly, become much more efficient, and gain greater assurance in the quality of its own casework.

A commitment to doing the right thing and leaving no stone unturned is tangible when engaging with staff across the organisation. The ethos and values of the CCRC are clearly demonstrated by the extent to which investigations and enquiries are conducted into cases. This ethos is, however, a double-edged sword. In too many cases, this causes a lack of focus, opening unnecessary investigatory avenues that lead to drift, delays, and wasted resources for the CCRC and others.

The report sets out 34 recommendations that will help address certain key issues. This issue is compounded by the lack of clear, proactive quality assurance of casework. Existing quality assurance is focused on timeliness or process rather than on the substantive quality of the casework. The CCRC needs to decide whether the current approach to doing the right thing, leaving no stone unturned, is proportionate, effective and affordable. Our view is that the CCRC needs to clearly articulate that, in every case, a risk-based and proportionate approach to further investigations and enquiries needs to be adopted.

The Westminster Commission shone a light on the CCRC's move away from full-time salaried Commissioners to a fee-based model. The change resulted in Commissioners having less involvement in case reviews, with group leaders filling the vacuum. However, groups leaders we spoke to had differing views on their position; some case review managers (CRMs) who are managed by group leaders appeared reticent about the role, expressing that they felt group leaders should have no part in casework assurance.

In our view, the main issue is a lack of clarity regarding the roles, responsibilities and expectations of group leaders. The CCRC must decide what it expects, set clear internal standards, and ensure that it lands effectively and with accountability.

We also found there was some confusion around the CRM role. In addition to CRMs, there are specialist CRM and senior CRM roles. Those individuals in the

senior roles, who are paid more than CRMs, appear to be being rewarded for long service, as we found that their casework responsibilities did not differ substantially from those of the CRMs. The CCRC needs to consider how it might use these more senior and specialist caseworkers more effectively.

Assurance is critical to an organisation's ability to assess whether the standards and expectations it sets are being met. It is core to driving up quality, identifying training needs on an individual, team and organisation basis, and effective performance management.

We found a great deal of activity to check processes, with key assurance points at specific stages:

- a six-week case MOT
- a 10-month review
- long-running case reviews for cases over two years old.

We found a significant degree of inconsistency in whether and how these were conducted across the casework teams, and few added real value.

The lack of proactive, effective casework quality assurance is a significant gap in the CCRC that must be addressed urgently. The CCRC needs to strategically review its approach to assurance, ensuring that all activity adds value and that the focus is clearly on efficiency and quality, not on process and task completion.

We cannot guarantee that high-profile failures will not happen in the future. However, if the CCRC implements the recommendations set out in this report, addresses some of the cultural aspects that sit behind some of our findings, and develops and delivers a clearly articulated and proportionate approach to the management of casework, it should be able to identify cases with the greatest risk, have a method to manage that risk, and continue to deliver against its strongly held purpose.



Anthony Rogers
HM Chief Inspector

2. Summary

2.1. The Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 (CPSIA) is the framework establishing His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI). Under the CPSIA 2000, HMCPPI has a statutory duty to inspect both the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), after amendment in 2014 to expand the remit to the SFO.

2.2. The CPSIA 2000 also authorises HM Chief Inspector to offer assistance to other public authorities in support of their operational functions⁵. When such assistance is requested, it constitutes an inspection by invitation.

2.3. The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) was created to provide an independent review of alleged miscarriages of justice. It became operational in 1997 under the Criminal Appeal Act 1995.

2.4. An external review by the Westminster Commission in 2021 highlighted concerns about the CCRC's independence, transparency and accountability. The review made over 30 recommendations to address these and other aspects.

2.5. In January 2025, the former Chair of the CCRC resigned in the wake of the case of Mr Malkinson. Mr Malkinson served 17 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. He applied twice to the CCRC for his conviction to be reviewed. On both occasions, his application was refused.

2.6. A review by the Justice Select Committee (JSC) published in May 2025 found "the CCRC's leadership has shown a remarkable inability to learn from its own mistakes".

2.7. On 8 June 2025, Dame Vera Baird DBE KC was appointed interim chair of the CCRC. Given her previous knowledge of the value of HMCPPI's independent inspections in her roles as Solicitor General and Victims' Commissioner, she approached HMCPPI to undertake an inspection by invitation.

2.8. The aim was to assess the effectiveness of structures that support casework decision-making and assurance processes.

2.9. Because of HMCPPI's commitment of resources to existing inspections at that time, it was agreed that the CCRC would fund the inspection to expedite its publication by the end of July 2026.

⁵ Section 6(1) Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006.

Key findings

2.10. All those we spoke to during the inspection were enthusiastic, dedicated and passionate about their work at the CCRC, striving to achieve excellence. Every person we spoke to was committed to doing the best they could, with a demonstrable understanding of the impact their work could have on the lives of applicants and victims.

2.11. The CCRC has strong staff induction arrangements, but continuing professional development is unplanned and not underpinned by an informed understanding of the skills and experience gaps across the organisation, in each team or individually.

2.12. The CCRC was developing a Knowledge Platform for casework guidance at the time of inspection, but many guidance documents were under review or archived at the time of writing, creating uncertainty for those currently accessing guidance. Other content on the platform was helpful, but underutilised.

2.13. The CCRC's processes begin with the casework administration team (CAT) triage, which we found to be accurate and effective in categorising applications. Delays can emerge at the case review manager (CRM) triage and review stages, including long periods without progress and timeliness performance below internal targets.

2.14. A key factor in the delays we saw was the time taken to obtain material, but the processes for allocating cases within the teams at month's end can also introduce delays, particularly for applications received at the beginning of each month.

2.15. We saw limited use of escalation to expedite the receipt of material required to progress cases. In some cases we examined, this led to lengthy delays of several months, with relatively little activity. The assurance around the quality of casework was limited and did not provide adequate 'grip' of live cases.

2.16. CRMs have high caseloads, and we saw examples of this being cited as a reason for lack of progress on some cases we examined. We found that additional duties, like answering a public-facing telephone helpline, distract from their core tasks and are not proportionate to their role.

2.17. A triage system for calls, leaving the CRMs to deal only with those relevant to their role, could be considered to free up resources to concentrate on casework. The more experienced senior CRMs appeared to be underutilised. Their experience could be used to strengthen the quality of casework across the teams by providing more structured challenge and support; through peer reviews, for example.

2.18. We found that recommendations to Commissioners and draft statements of reasons (SoRs) were generally accurate and thorough. Of the 56 cases we assessed, 52 (92.9%) reached this stage, setting out the issues, action and recommendations to Commissioners following the CCRC's review. There were minor deficiencies in 11 of these cases, but not such as to impair the Commissioner's ability to reach a decision.

2.19. Although we found that the investigative thoroughness of relevant lines of enquiry supported well-reasoned, clear draft SoRs, we also saw too many cases where irrelevant lines of enquiry were pursued unnecessarily. The absence of a case strategy hindered reaching recommendations promptly. If unnecessary enquiries can be eradicated, CRMs would have more time to dedicate to other casework.

There is no assurance of the quality or value added by the group leader screening

2.20. Case type criteria are applied inconsistently, weakening the use of case types for workload balancing across teams and individual CRMs. Some CRMs and group leaders who line-manage them use their own tracking methods, such as spreadsheets, rather

than the case management system, thereby reducing organisational visibility and making first-line assurance harder.

2.21. In some cases, group leader screening can be strong and contains sufficient analysis for an early recommendation to Commissioners, yet the process requires a CRM to repeat familiarisation and analysis. Group leader screening can set direction, preserve material and reduce wasted effort; however, the quality of screening varies.

2.22. There is no assurance of the quality or value added by the group leader screening. This means group leaders are given limited feedback, whether positive or negative, to demonstrate what a good screening looks like; and no method for achieving consistency across the casework teams.

2.23. The group leader role currently includes early case direction and active portfolio oversight. However, there are no clear standards and expectations of how group leaders should fulfil those functions. Group leaders line-manage teams of CRMs. Although the role of the group leader is to provide oversight of casework within their teams, the current processes and structures are not fully effective in driving quality and efficiency in casework.

2.24. Other than monthly conversations with their individual CRMs about casework in general, they are not required to carry out any structured assurance of the quality of casework conducted by the CRMs in their teams.

2.25. Current reviews are structured around timeliness in cases' durations at six-weeks and ten-months, although we saw inconsistent practices emerging around scrutiny and application even at these stages. A critical factor in the ability of group leaders to effectively manage the casework on their teams is the fact that the culmination or end point of the casework, the statement of reasons recommending a course of action for the Commissioners, is with the supporting document.

2.26. Group leaders require clearer minimum expectations for the work they undertake to ensure a consistent application of standards.

2.27. Commissioners amend draft statements of reasons and may provide feedback on the quality of the casework submitted to them for decision, but that is not consistent, and there was a disparity of opinion about whether Commissioners should provide feedback as part of quality assurance or not. Where it does take place, group leaders are usually missed from the feedback loop, which is a significant missed opportunity to improve casework and disempowers the group leaders.

2.28. Clarifying how Commissioners' feedback supports, rather than substitutes, group leader oversight of CRMs is critical to establishing clear accountability. The group leader role is the pivotal first-line assurance point; they need the clarity and authority to positively influence casework quality, and we make key recommendations to support this.

2.29. The CCRC's quality assurance programme includes assurance tools offering multiple safeguards across the life of a case. The key first-line mechanisms intended to assure live casework quality and progression, such as monthly one-to-ones, six-week case plan 'MOTs' and ten-month scrutiny reviews, are either inconsistently applied or often ineffective in driving meaningful action. We found they are administratively burdensome relative to their impact.

2.30. Assurance is driven by cases reaching time limits rather than cases being gripped from the outset, and there is no structured first-line assurance of casework quality. Second-line assurance activity (including the long-running cases committee and dip sampling of ten-month scrutiny reviews) similarly focuses on process, not on casework quality. The CCRC needs to develop effective second-tier assurance mechanisms to improve casework quality.

2.31. The quality management system includes internal audits and closed case dip sampling. These provide useful organisational assurance on procedural compliance but are limited in scope and sample size, and do not assess substantive casework quality. That is because the quality management team

generally lacks the casework expertise to assess whether reviews are proportionate, strategically well-planned and directed to the most relevant lines of enquiry.

2.32. There are a number of processes which are not captured by existing assurance mechanisms. No appeal and reapplication cases sit largely outside the quality assurance programme despite their volume and timeliness challenges. Commissioners' amendments to statements of reasons are not systematically captured as learning for CRMs and group leaders. Responses to internal legal requests, including work by interns, are not quality-assured, resulting in risk when casework teams rely on legal advice.

2.33. The CCRC has a stable workforce with many long-serving staff, but legacy issues from the previous structure persist. The introduction of wider leadership roles has not been fully embedded over time, with some CRMs resisting group leaders' input into and oversight of their casework.

Our judgement

2.34. The Westminster Commission recommended strengthening the CCRC's structural and leadership model. The Justice Select Committee criticised the CCRC for failing to learn from its mistakes. We make similar findings stemming from a lack of systemic casework quality processes and organisational culture.

2.35. The legacy of the flat structure remains. This is especially so for the role of group leaders, where our evidence highlights a lack of control or a systemic approach to the quality of CRMs' work.

2.36. While we found that the CRMs ultimately made the right recommendations in the 60 cases we assessed in this inspection, the route by which they reached those recommendations was often convoluted. The organisation lacks the qualitative casework assurance measures at all levels to drive consistent and sustained improvements in casework quality across the CCRC.

2.37. The roles, standards and expectations of group leaders and the head of casework need to be clearly defined to provide a structured assurance regime at all levels aimed at assessing and refining high-quality, efficient casework consistently. Improving the case analysis and strategy at the outset and reducing the volume of lines of enquiry seeking unnecessary material will reduce delays, free up resources to concentrate on the key issues, and improve casework quality.

2.38. Most CRMs and group leaders come from legal or criminal justice system backgrounds, and these staff are now recruited on the basis that these are essential criteria. Additional or specialist legal expertise required is provided by the CCRC's legal team. Many of the casework queries and issues were dealt with by a team of interns within the legal team.

2.39. Given the importance of high-quality legal support, it was surprising to hear from those we spoke to that the legal team did not implement quality assurance measures for interns' work. CRMs expressed concerns regarding the standard of some of this research, which has contributed to their reluctance to engage with the legal team. Our case file review identified instances where timely, accurate legal guidance could have clarified certain matters at a much earlier stage and facilitated a more efficient review.

2.40. There was also confusion over the role of Commissioners within quality assurance. We heard varying views on whether the Commissioner's role should include quality assurance. This results in uncertainty around the extent to which the group leader should supervise cases, especially in cases where a Commissioner is also a nominated decision maker.

2.41. There is a need for senior leadership to distinguish clearly between procedural compliance and casework quality assurance. Priority actions include:

- strengthening dip sampling to test qualitative aspects of casework
- improving (or replacing) low-value first-line checks
- introducing proportionate group leader oversight of draft statements of reasons in defined circumstances.

2.42. These changes should feed into an integrated 'plan-do-review' action plan that supports organisational learning.

2.43. Accordingly, we make 34 recommendations that, if implemented, will assist the CCRC to deliver high-quality casework. We see some of these recommendations as fundamental to improvement and accordingly suggest that the CCRC should prioritise recommendations 15, 20, 21, 26, 27 and 33 to be addressed within the next 12 months.

Recommendations

Priority recommendations

No	Recommendation
15	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should conduct a training needs and development assessment for its casework function at an organisational and individual level to identify training needs and inform a structured training programme. (paragraph 6.9)
20	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review its first-line assurance mechanisms with a view to developing and implementing a new approach to assessing casework quality. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considering the purpose, necessity and frequency of six-week case plan MOTs • reviewing how ten-month scrutiny reviews are conducted • implementing a second-level assurance process to assess the quality of the 10-month scrutiny decision-making. (7.55)
21	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review the effectiveness of the long-running cases committee to ensure the process is founded on a targeted, structured, manageable, risk-based model. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a methodology for identifying key cases • conducting a deeper level of scrutiny on a smaller number of cases • proactive management of longer-running cases by group leaders. (7.64)
26	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should incorporate assurance of internal legal advice into the quality assurance programme. This should include clear processes for the allocation, supervision and review of legal work undertaken by interns and legal staff, proportionate to the complexity and risk of the advice provided. (7.90)
27	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop and implement an action plan to strengthen and integrate its quality assurance arrangements, so that they assess the quality of casework reasoning and decisions. This should be underpinned by a forensic, three-stage 'plan-do-review' cycle ensuring assessment of impact, with clear ownership for assurance of casework quality at each stage of the process. (7.94)
33	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should redefine the group leader role as the primary first-line assurance function for casework quality, case progression and the development of case review managers. This should include clear accountability for assessing training and development needs, early case direction, active portfolio oversight, and proportionate quality assurance of key casework products, supported by appropriate management information and an agreed oversight framework. (8.42)

Recommendations

No	Recommendation
1	The casework administration team should be engaged with when any casework process changes are proposed to ensure their operational experience can be included in the development phase to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the change across the end-to-end process. (paragraph 5.8)
2	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should produce timeliness management information data by case category and case type, including No Appeals and Reapplication cases that are overdue against the 30-day timeliness target, to assist management's grip of the timeliness of casework. (5.29)
3	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should conduct a thematic audit to review the effectiveness of the current case type allocation process to assess whether it is an effective tool for determining the resources required for casework across the Commission. (5.39)
4	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should revise its casework process in review cases to include a fast-track mechanism for submitting a no-referral recommendation to a Commissioner. This would apply in cases where the group leader determines there is sufficient material to reach this conclusion at the screening stage. (5.48)
5	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should revise its casework process in review cases to include a fast-track mechanism for submitting a recommendation to a Commissioner. This would apply in cases where the group leader determines that the discretion not to refer will be exercised, even if the statutory tests are met. (5.52)
6	<p>The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a standardised case review structure, which as a minimum includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the key facts • the case chronology • the applicant's grounds • the case strategy • any legal casework guidance that has been considered and applied • the material needed • whether there is a need for input from others, for example, a specialist case review manager. (5.57)
7	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should audit its compliance with its escalation process and review the effectiveness of the current process. Upon completion of the audit and review, the commission should develop and implement a strengthened process using its findings, setting clear standards and expectations to facilitate assurance of compliance. The strengthened process should also inform a

	stakeholder strategy to improve the timeliness of receipt of requested material. (5.73)
8	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should reduce the time between the receipt of an application and its allocation to a group leader. Group leaders should allocate review cases to case review managers as soon as their screening is completed. (5.76)
9	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should set an expectation that group leaders undertake an urgent assessment of cases that have not had any activity for 60 days to either progress or close them. (5.97)
10	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review the criteria it uses to prioritise senior leadership review, including risk factors other than case duration, to focus scrutiny on sensitive and complex cases. (5.100)
11	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should set out a formal process for appointing a nominated decision maker to ensure there is consistency in the application process and a clear audit trail for accounting purposes. (5.103)
12	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a Case Review Manager triage for post-closure correspondence to determine whether the original case review manager can deal with fresh information related to an application. (5.117)
13	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should carry out assurance to ensure that post-closure guidance is being applied consistently and correctly. (5.119)
14	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should undertake a thematic review of its compliance with its obligations under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, including the quality of the recording of the reasons for its decisions as to whether a victim should be notified. (5.125)
16	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop a casework administration team operations manual that clearly sets out how tasks are to be undertaken in the Dynamics case management system. (6.11)
17	When a specialist case review manager is consulted, they should be responsible for endorsing the case narrative with the guidance provided to the allocated case review manager. (6.19)
18	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should strengthen its internal audit assurance programme by increasing the size and representativeness of samples for audit testing, ensuring that internal assurance assess casework quality as well as procedural compliance, distinguishing between the two. (7.19)
19	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement an alternative mechanism to provide effective oversight of active case management, ensuring that one-to-one meetings are used appropriately

	to support performance, professional development and wellbeing rather than as a vehicle for casework quality assurance. (7.38)
22	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review and formalise when the critical friend process is required and how it is operated. (7.68)
23	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop an effective first-line assurance mechanism to assure the quality of group leader screening and casework decision-making. (7.73)
24	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a quality assurance process for the draft statements of reasons in no appeal and reapplication cases. (7.77)
25	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should strengthen its quality assurance arrangements for draft statements of reasons by introducing a clear and proportionate process for group leader oversight of statements before submission to Commissioners. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined expectations for when group leader scrutiny is required • mechanisms for recording and tracking amendments made at each stage of the decision-making process • a method to provide second-line quality assurance of the draft statement • a mechanism for thematic issues to be considered by senior leadership. (7.85)
28	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop a system whereby any change(s) to the statement of reasons, either made by or at the request of a Commissioner are notified to the group leader who line manages the relevant case review manager. (8.18)
29	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should clearly articulate how Commissioners' responsibilities for the quality assurance of casework align with and differ from the functions of group leaders. (8.18)
30	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should consider whether the functions currently undertaken by the nominated decision maker would be more appropriately carried out by group leaders or senior case review managers. Should the nominated decision maker role be retained, arrangements should be clarified so that feedback on a case review manager's performance is provided by the nominated decision maker to the group leader with line management responsibility. (8.20)
31	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should produce an operational manual for the casework administration team that provides guidance on allocation categories and processes. (8.24)
32	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should define and implement a clearer, more strategic role for senior case review managers, setting out when and how they should be engaged in the casework process. This should include the use of senior case review managers to provide structured challenge and support in more complex or sensitive cases, thereby contributing to consistency in casework quality. (8.31)
34	The Criminal Cases Review Commission should restate and reinforce expectations for using Dynamics and the case narrative as the primary shared case record and portfolio management tools. This should be

supported by targeted refresher training and routine assurance activity to promote consistent use across teams. (8.46)

Strengths

Strength

The Criminal Cases Review Commission has established effective procedures for determining whether tasks have been completed. The quality management system, internal audits, and closed case dip samples provide a level of organisational assurance and are effective at identifying procedural non-compliance and inconsistencies in documentation. (paragraph 7.26)

The clarity of explanation given to the applicant in the statement of reasons would have been understandable and accessible to the applicant in 58 of the 60 cases (96.7%), which is a strength. (5.129)

Effective practice

We highlight effective practice where there is more than one method to achieve a result, but the method employed is the most efficient and effective.

Effective practice

Ineligible cases do not follow the same process as other categories. They are finalised at the casework administration team triage stage and do not require referral to a Commissioner for a determination. In one of the ineligible cases in our file sample, the administrator proactively made extensive enquiries before determining that the applicant was ineligible, potentially saving valuable resources later in the process. It is our opinion that the casework administrations team are adding value in the work they do to ensure that ineligible cases do not proceed incorrectly. (paragraph 5.10)

The group leaders add value by promptly identifying reasonable lines of enquiry at the initial screening stage, providing appropriate guidance for the case from the outset. (5.45)

3. Background and context

3.1. The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) plays a critical role in the criminal justice system by providing an independent mechanism for reviewing alleged miscarriages of justice.

3.2. Before the CCRC's inception, there had been some high-profile miscarriages of justice. These cases exposed investigative failings and highlighted shortcomings in the existing system for correcting wrongful convictions. The CCRC was established under the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (CAA 1995) and became operational on 31 March 1997.

3.3. The primary function of the CCRC is to investigate alleged miscarriages of justice in criminal convictions and sentences. Individuals who believe they have been wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced — or family members or personal representatives, if the aggrieved has died — may apply to the CCRC, ordinarily after conventional appeal routes have been exhausted.

3.4. CCRC data shows a sustained rise in the number of applications received over the past five years. Overall, the trend reflects increasing demand.

Year	Applications	Referrals
2025–26	1,841	45
2024–25	1,541	31
2023–24	1,629	25
2022–23	1,424	25
2021–22	1,198	26

3.5. Referrals to the Court of Appeal, while significantly fewer in number, show a similar upward trajectory. This suggests a marked increase in cases that meet the statutory test or are completed after detailed review. These patterns point to rising applications alongside a gradual increase in the number of cases progressing to referral, ranging between 1.5 and 2.5 percentage points.

3.6. The proportion of referrals resulting in convictions or sentences being quashed is high. In 2021–22 and 2022–23, rates exceeded 89%. Although there was a decline during 2023–24 and 2024–25, the results for 2025–26 available to date indicate a rate of 77.8% as of 13 March 2026.

The ‘real possibility’ test

3.7. The CCRC may refer a case to the Court of Appeal (CoA) where there is a real possibility that the conviction or sentence would not be upheld.

3.8. Where the conviction is the subject of the application, the test requires the CCRC to assess whether new evidence or argument could realistically lead the Court of Appeal to find the conviction unsafe.

3.9. The CCRC must decide whether new evidence or submissions create more than “an outside chance or a bare possibility but which may be less than a probability or a likelihood or a racing certainty”⁶ that the conviction would not be upheld. This requires a forward-looking assessment of how the Court of Appeal is likely to respond to the new material.

3.10. In relation to sentences, the test is whether there is a real possibility the Court of Appeal would find the sentence not justified in law, manifestly excessive or wrong in principle.

3.11. For summary convictions or sentences in the magistrates’ courts, the CCRC must consider whether there is a real possibility that the Crown Court would not uphold the outcome.

Recent scrutiny

3.12. In 2021, the Westminster Commission on Miscarriages of Justice published *In the interests of justice*, examining the CCRC’s role more than two decades after its creation⁷. The review reaffirmed the CCRC’s importance as a safeguard against wrongful convictions but concluded the organisation was increasingly struggling to operate as effectively or independently as Parliament had intended.

3.13. The report identified that the body’s leadership and governance arrangements had become increasingly “flat”. Commissioners, originally envisaged as full-time and central decision-makers, had become largely part-time and fee-paid. This flattening of the internal hierarchy was seen as undermining independent decision-making, weakening oversight and distancing the organisation from its original statutory design.

⁶ R v CCRC (ex parte Pearson) [2001] 1 CR App R 141

⁷ Westminster Commission on miscarriages of justice, *In the interests of justice*; Future Justice Project; March 2021.

futurejustice.org.uk/publications/

3.14. The Westminster Commission recommended a wide programme of reform. This included strengthening the CCRC's structure and leadership model, revisiting the referral threshold, enhancing transparency and providing significantly improved investigative and financial resources.

3.15. Scrutiny of the CCRC intensified following the case of Andrew Malkinson. Mr Malkinson was convicted of rape in 2004 and served 17 years in prison before the Court of Appeal quashed his conviction in July 2023⁸ after new DNA evidence identified another individual, who was subsequently convicted in April 2026. Mr Malkinson had applied to the CCRC on two separate occasions. His first application in 2009 and his second in 2018 were both refused. His third application, submitted in 2021, was referred by the CCRC to the Court of Appeal in January 2023, ultimately leading to a successful appeal.

3.16. The independent review led by Chris Henley KC⁹ found that earlier referrals should have occurred, and that significant investigative opportunities were missed during the first two reviews, including obtaining the complete police file and commissioning further forensic work.

3.17. Following the Malkinson case, on 14 January 2025, the chair of the CCRC, Helen Pitcher, resigned. The Justice Select Committee reported their findings on the leadership of the CCRC on 23 May 2025.

3.18. As part of their findings, they concluded, "the CCRC's leadership has shown a remarkable inability to learn from its own mistakes", and "We are concerned that the current structure of the CCRC does not appear to be functioning as it should".

3.19. The appointment of the new interim chair, Dame Vera Baird DBE KC, in June 2025 reflects a shift in approach, demonstrated by the decision to seek independent assurance through this inspection.

⁸ Court of Appeal (Criminal Division), R v Malkinson [2023] EWCA Crim 1257

⁹ *Independent review by Chris Henley KC of the CCRC's handling of the Andrew Malkinson case*; CCRC; May 2024.

cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/5/2024/07/Integrated-Report-Response-Redacted-Copy.pdf

Background to the inspection

3.20. In July 2022, the government commissioned the Law Commission to review the legal framework governing criminal appeals, with the objective of ensuring that courts are equipped with effective and proportionate powers for resolving appeals.

3.21. The Law Commission broadened the scope of this work to encompass compensation and post-exoneration support for wrongly convicted individuals. As part of its public consultation, published in February 2025, the commission sought views on a proposal to introduce independent inspection arrangements for the CCRC.

3.22. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) contributed to this consultation in June 2025. It emphasised the well-established value of external scrutiny in strengthening public confidence, driving improvement, and providing transparent assurance regarding the quality of decision-making.

3.23. The interim chair of the CCRC, Dame Vera Baird DBE KC, approached Anthony Rogers, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of HMCPsi, in late 2025 to undertake an inspection by invitation at pace, to assess the effectiveness of structures that support casework decision-making and assurance processes. This was part of the thorough review of the CCRC's operations that the Lord Chancellor asked Dame Vera to carry out to increase public confidence in the organisation.

3.24. After discussion with the CCRC, a preliminary review of its organisational structure and quality assurance documentation, and discussions with senior staff, HMCPsi developed a scope for the inspection. A copy of the scope is in Annex A.

3.25. Given HMCPsi's limited resources, which were already allocated to existing inspections at the time, it was agreed that the CCRC would fund the inspection to expedite its publication by the summer of 2026.

Current structure and responsibilities

3.26. The CCRC is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, with statutory independence in all aspects of casework decision-making. The head office is in Birmingham.

Chair

3.27. The chair of the CCRC provides overall strategic leadership to the board, ensuring the organisation acts independently and meets its statutory duties in reviewing potential miscarriages of justice. The Chair works closely with the chief executive to oversee performance, governance and the effective use of resources, while representing the CCRC externally and maintaining ministerial confidence.

3.28. The chair is appointed by His Majesty the King on the recommendation of the prime minister, following a public appointments process regulated under the Cabinet Office Governance Code.

3.29. The former chair, Helen Pitcher, resigned in January 2025 after an independent panel found the CCRC failed Andrew Malkinson. The panel's findings led the then Lord Chancellor, Shabana Mahmood, to commence the formal process of sending a recommendation to the King that Ms Pitcher should be removed from her role.

3.30. At the time of this inspection, Dame Vera Baird DBE KC was interim chair. She was appointed on 8 June 2025 for a term expiring on 8 December 2026.

Commissioners

3.31. Commissioners are appointed through the public appointments process. They bring expertise from fields such as law, investigation, forensics, academia and public administration and hold the statutory responsibility for determining whether cases should be referred to the appellate courts.

3.32. The chair and Commissioners together form the body corporate, which is expected to provide strategic leadership, uphold statutory functions, and protect the CCRC's independence.

Non-executive directors

3.33. The non-executive directors (NEDs) sit alongside the executive leadership and the board of Commissioners to provide independent scrutiny and strengthened accountability. Unlike Commissioners, NEDs do not undertake casework decision-making. NEDs offer objective challenge, strategic oversight and assurance, helping to ensure that governance arrangements are robust and that organisational performance is subject to effective external scrutiny.

Senior leadership team

3.34. Operational leadership is provided by the senior leadership team, which is responsible for ensuring that the commission is effectively managed on a day-to-day basis. The team is led by the Chief Executive, whose role includes organisational oversight, delivery of strategic objectives and responsibility for corporate governance.

3.35. Karen Kneller, the CCRC's Chief Executive for 12 years, resigned in July 2025 following criticism from the Justice Select Committee over the Malkinson case failures. During the inspection, Amanda Pearce served as interim Chief Executive while also fulfilling her substantive role as director of casework operations. In March 2026, Tracey Calleia was appointed interim Chief Executive.

3.36. Other senior roles include the director and head of casework operations, in-house counsel, the finance and corporate services director, casework operations manager, head of business planning and performance, and head of communications and external affairs. Collectively, they are expected to lead casework operations, manage resources, ensure legal compliance, maintain organisational planning processes and oversee both internal and external communications.

3.37. The CCRC's wider leadership team comprises the senior leadership team, group leaders and other line manager roles.

Group leaders

3.38. The casework function is divided into six groups, each led by a group leader. Group leaders supervise and support case review managers (CRMs), provide quality assurance within their teams, promote consistent casework practice and ensure that reviews progress efficiently and to appropriate standards.

3.39. The head of casework operations carries overall responsibility for the effectiveness and performance of all operational casework activity and is expected to ensure that casework teams maintain high standards of rigour and timeliness.

Case review managers

3.40. Casework forms the core function of the CCRC. CRMs are responsible for conducting reviews of applications, including analysing evidence, identifying and pursuing relevant lines of investigation and producing recommendations to Commissioners.

Legal team

3.41. The legal team is responsible for providing specialist legal support. The team is led by in-house counsel and also comprises a lawyer and four interns who provide the in-house legal services. Another lawyer specialises in judicial review challenges and civil litigation.

Investigation team

3.42. The investigation team is responsible for providing specialist evidential support. The team advises on potential lines of enquiry and assists with securing evidence and notifying victims where appropriate.

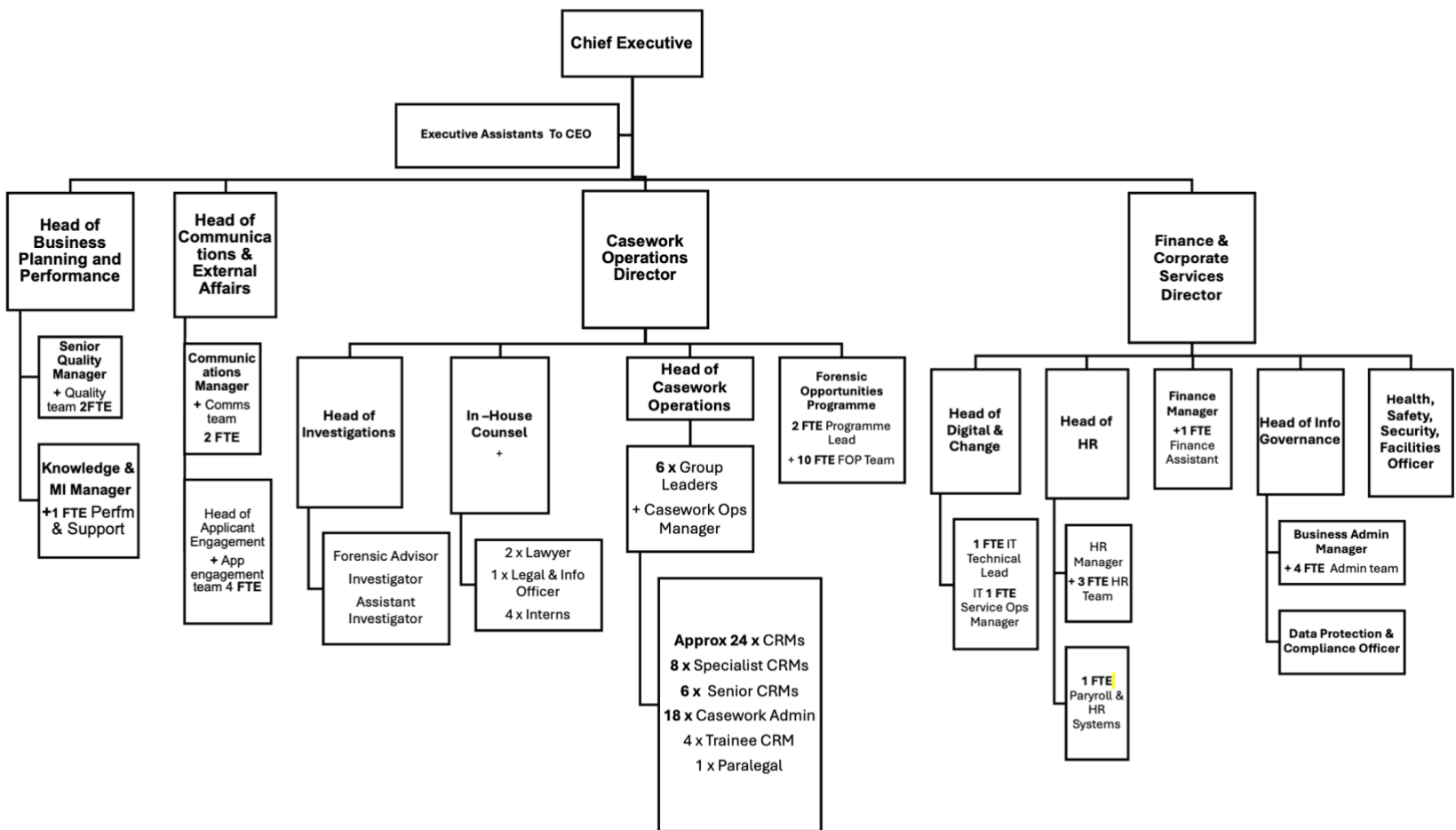
Casework administration team

3.43. The casework administration team provides administrative and triage support across the CCRC's casework function, ensuring that new applications are registered, prepared, organised and ready for substantive review. It manages its own portfolio of cases prior to allocation, sets up new applications, extracts and organises material received from public bodies, and responds to written and telephone enquiries about eligibility to support the wider process.

Business planning and performance team

3.44. The business planning and performance team, incorporating a quality management team, is responsible for coordinating corporate planning processes, overseeing performance reporting, supporting risk management and ensuring organisational priorities are translated into clear, measurable actions.

3.45. Business and information services provide administrative support, such as setting up applications in the case management system and managing incoming calls and post.



4. Framework and methodology

Framework

4.1. Our methodology establishes an overarching question to guide our inspection. For this inspection, the central question was: “Are the structure of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) and its assurance processes effective in delivering high-quality case reviews?”

4.2. The inspection considered the structures and processes for the management of casework. The inspection framework was designed to achieve four key objectives:

- to identify and evaluate whether the assurance processes used are implemented consistently and are effective
- to identify whether structural arrangements are effective in delivering high-quality case reviews
- to assess if current management assurance processes are effective and drive the right culture of learning and improvement
- to highlight examples of good practice.

4.3. The inspection framework is set out in full in Annex A.

Methodology

File examination

4.4. To support our assessment of the quality of the CCRC’s casework reviews, inspectors involved undertook training on the application of the ‘real possibility’ test as well as on the CCRC’s case management system and casework processes. This training, combined with our extensive expertise in examining casework within the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and other prosecuting bodies, enabled us to independently evaluate the quality of the CCRC’s casework reviews.

4.5. We examined 60 casework reviews closed during the 2025 calendar year (save for one exception: a case closed in early 2026). We reviewed and assessed the case reviews against a question set in Annex B.

4.6. To capture a representative sample, the cases we considered used the categorisations derived from the CCRC’s list of eligible applications (see chapter 5):

1. No appeals
2. Reapplications
3. Review cases.

4.7. The sample additionally recognised that the CCRC categorises review cases into types 1 through 4, based on a group leader’s assessment of the complexity and estimated time required for a case review manager to address each case:

- type 1 cases usually involve up to three days’ work with no new issues, or are obviously unmeritorious and should generally be capable of resolution on the papers
- type 2 cases may take ten days’ work, with limited issues to resolve, and will require reviewing some material and/or minimal investigation
- type 3 cases can involve up to 30 days’ work and generally have multiple issues requiring further review or investigation, or a single issue requiring significant investigation; these cases may require the CCRC to obtain its own expert evidence
- type 4 cases are the most complex and will require over 30 days of significant investigative work.

4.8. We included a proportionate mixture of application classifications and types to ensure a broadly representative file sample.

Type of case	Volume of cases examined
Type 1	13
Type 2	9
Type 3	6
Type 4	0
Reapplication	10
No appeal	18
Ineligible	4

4.9. Cases were randomly selected from across the six CCRC casework groups (Argon, Krypton, Neon, Radon, Xenon and Zircon) and included a mixture of applications where the original conviction venue was the magistrates' court and Crown Court.

4.10. Type 4 cases and cases originating from Northern Ireland were excluded from the sample. Type 4 cases are the most complex and the least common among CCRC cases. No Type 4 case had concluded in the period the sample was drawn from. Northern Ireland cases fall outside the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system and HMCPSP's statutory remit.

Observations

4.11. Our scope was originally defined to encompass real-time observations of three cases overseen by case review managers (CRMs), specialist CRMs and senior CRMs.

4.12. Following inspector inductions, which included presentations on actual cases by both a casework administrator and a senior CRM, we evaluated the necessity, value, and feasibility of additional real-time observations. We determined that expanding our original file sample from 18 to 60 cases would better support the inspection's objectives.

Interviews and focus groups

4.13. The inspection team spent time on-site conducting interviews and holding focus groups with a range of CCRC staff, including senior managers and Commissioners. They included:

- interviews and focus groups with CCRC staff across all grades involved in casework, including casework administrators, the casework operations manager, CRMs, senior CRMs, specialist CRMs, trainee CRMs, group leaders, the head of casework operations, and the casework operations director (and former interim CEO)
- interviews with business planning and performance staff who are involved in quality and assurance, including the head of business planning and performance, members of the quality team, and the knowledge and management information manager
- interviews and focus groups with staff in the CCRC legal team, including in-house counsel, lawyers, and interns.

4.14. As set out in our scoping document, given the independent nature of Commissioners, the scope of these interviews was strictly limited to discussions

about the quality of case reviews referred to them for decision-making and the mechanisms by which they provide feedback on the quality of casework on the reviews provided.

4.15. Interviews were conducted in two phases. The first wave of interviews and focus groups was with members of the wider leadership team and took place in January 2026, before our file examination. We then conducted our file examination before returning on-site in February 2026 for the second wave of interviews.

Document review

4.16. We requested documents from the CCRC both before and during the inspection. We examined material relating to casework analysis, process, standards, expectations, learning and development and quality assurance.

Inspection team

4.17. This inspection was led by senior legal inspector Dan Richardson.

4.18. He was assisted by legal inspectors Oriana Frame, Asma Hopkinson and Joanne Milner, and associate inspector Jonathan Carver. Business service support was provided by Ben Hayter.

4.19. Deputy chief inspector (inspection) Lisa Morris supervised the inspection.

5. Casework quality

Casework administration team triage

5.1. When the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) receives an application, the casework administration team (CAT) assigns it to an application pathway during the first triage phase. This process can present challenges, as applications may lack sufficient detail or clarity regarding the events in question, particularly when applicants are unrepresented and uncertain about specific issues.

5.2. The application pathway categories are:

- ineligible (which will go no further than the CAT triage stage)
- no appeal (referred to case review manager)
- reapplication (referred to case review manager)
- no appeal, which is also a reapplication (referred to case review manager)
- review (referred to group leader for screening).

5.3. We found the CAT triage stage to be effective in progressing cases. The categorisation of an application during the CAT triage stage is provisional and may be revised by a CRM or group leader.

The casework administration team triage stage is effective in progressing cases

5.4. In 58 of the 60 cases (96.7%) in our file sample, the categorisation was correct. The two incorrect cases had been categorised as reviews when one should have been a reapplication and the other a no appeal. In these two cases, the incorrect categorisation

was not identified and corrected on the casework management system by the CRM.

5.5. Applications initially classified as no appeal or reapplication are directed to a case review manager (CRM) to apply the statutory criteria. In no appeal cases, the CRM will consider whether there are exceptional circumstances, and in reapplications, whether there is anything new or any flaws in the CCRC's previous reasoning. Those categorised as 'Review' are forwarded to a group leader for screening.

5.6. During the CAT triage stage, an initial assessment is conducted to ascertain whether the application relates to sentence, conviction, or both. The information provided in applications does not always clarify which classification is applicable. For instance, while an applicant may select only the sentence appeal option, the case outline details on the application may subsequently introduce issues concerning the validity of the conviction.

5.7. In our case file sample, there were cases at the CAT triage stage where the application was classified as sentence-only, but upon analysis at the CRM triage stage, it was correctly changed to both sentence and conviction.

5.8. The CAT has an important role to play throughout the life of the case. They should be engaged with when any casework process changes are proposed to ensure their knowledge and operational experience can be included in the development phase to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the change across the end-to-end process. We found that this was not happening; for example, they were not engaged at all in the changes to the escalation process (see paragraph 5.73).

Recommendation 1

The casework administration team should be engaged with when any casework process changes are proposed to ensure their operational experience can be included in the development phase to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the change across the end-to-end process.

Ineligible applications

5.9. A case may be ineligible for several reasons, including:

- where the applicant has yet to be sentenced
- the case was dealt with in another jurisdiction: for example, Scotland
- it is a civil case
- it is still a live case in the Court of Appeal.

5.10. There were four ineligible cases in our file sample, each of which had been categorised correctly.

5.11. Ineligible cases do not follow the same process as other categories. They are finalised at the CAT triage stage and do not require referral to a Commissioner for a determination.

5.12. In one of the ineligible cases in our file sample, the administrator proactively made extensive enquiries before determining that the applicant was ineligible. They potentially saved valuable resources later in the process.

5.13. It is our opinion that the CAT are adding value in the work they do to ensure that ineligible cases do not proceed incorrectly.

No appeals

5.14. A no appeal case is where the applicant has not exhausted all their rights of appeal against conviction and/or sentence. The one exception in this category is magistrates' court cases where the applicant pleaded guilty. There is no automatic right to appeal the conviction in these magistrates' court cases, although there is an automatic right (within time limits) to appeal to the Crown Court against the sentence.

5.15. After initial screening at CAT, no appeal cases are triaged by a CRM unless they fall into the magistrates' courts' guilty plea category, which should be referred to a group leader for screening.

5.16. We examined 27 no appeal cases which went through the CRM triage process. In seven of the 27 (25.9%), the CRM found exceptional circumstances under which the applicant could not themselves pursue an appeal. The most common exceptional circumstance was the applicant's mental health, which prevented them from undertaking the appeal without the CCRC's assistance.

5.17. In 26 of the 27 (96.3%), the CRM correctly assessed whether there were exceptional circumstances.

5.18. An exceptional circumstance finding does not mean the case will automatically be referred to the Court of Appeal. The statutory tests (see chapter 3) must still be met. However, it changes the allocation pathway to review and moves the case to the group leader for screening (see paragraph 5.40).

5.19. The CCRC has a timeliness target of 30 days from receipt of the application to a decision at the CRM triage stage. In our file sample, 15 out of 27 no appeal cases (55.6%) met this timeliness target. A CCRC snapshot conducted on 11 March 2026 indicated there were 72 cases which had been at the CRM triage stage for more than four months, which is concerning given the 30-working-day target.

5.20. The CCRC produces detailed timeliness data but categorises it by case type. All no appeal and reapplication cases are 'type 0' and are not distinguished in the data. The average time at the CRM triage stage for type 0 cases was 42.2

days. We discuss our concerns about the current use of case types from paragraph 5.32.

5.21. In addition to timeliness by case type, managers would be better informed and able to grip cases if timeliness by case category were included to ensure no appeals and reapplications can be properly monitored.

5.22. In some of the cases we examined that did not meet the timeliness target, the CRM had cited the pressure of other work for the delay in an entry on the case narrative (the document that provides a running log of key matters and is discussed in more detail below). In others, the case narrative was silent or showed that the CRM was seeking guidance on an aspect before reaching a decision.

5.23. In one case in our sample, the CRM requested input from a specialist CRM, and there was an almost two-month delay before that was provided. There was no evidence in the case narrative of any monitoring or escalation of this process to reduce delay.

5.24. The group leaders do not have any involvement in these types of cases at the CRM triage stage unless the CRM refers an aspect or a specific case to them. This means that group leaders will be unaware of delays and the reasons that diminish their capacity to effectively manage and grip the full extent of the casework within their teams. Group leaders should have a proactive role in identifying blockages at this stage and directing remedial action.

Reapplications

5.25. A case is classified as a reapplication when the applicant has previously applied to the CCRC regarding the same conviction or sentence, and the CCRC has issued a final determination on that previous application. If the CRM determines that the reapplication introduces new matters, the case will be forwarded to a group leader for screening and may be redesignated as a review if new relevant information is available.

5.26. Similarly, if the CRM considers that there have been legal, scientific, or technical developments that require the case to be revisited, the case will be forwarded to the group leader for screening.

5.27. We examined 12 cases categorised as reapplications. In three of the 12 cases, the CRM correctly identified new issues raised by the applicant which had not previously been considered by the CCRC. In the remaining nine cases, there were no new issues for CCRC to consider.

5.28. However, in one of the nine cases, we found that the CRM's decision was unreasonable because new matters were raised that warranted further review. This case was reassigned to the review pathway by a senior CCRC leader.

5.29. CRMs told us that reapplication cases (initially categorised as type 0) could be as complex and time-consuming as those in the review category. As with no appeal cases, the group leader has limited oversight of this case category, which impedes their ability to proactively and effectively manage the full extent of casework within their teams.

Recommendation 2

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should produce timeliness management information data by case category and case type, including no appeals and reapplication cases that are overdue against the 30-day timeliness target, to assist management's grip of the timeliness of casework.

Review cases

5.30. Review category cases are allocated to one of the six casework groups at the CAT triage stage. In the 12-month period from which the file sample was taken, there were 676 review cases. There are no case-specific distribution criteria; allocation is done on rotation, balancing volumes across the six groups.

5.31. A group leader can request a temporary suspension of the distribution of review cases to a particular member of their team if they believe the member has no capacity. When a review case is distributed to a team, the group leader undertakes several functions, including:

- determining the case type
- screening
- securing material.

5.32. All review cases are assigned a case type, ranging from 1 to 4 (although type 4 cases are rare). Other case categories — for example, no appeal — will have been assigned type 0 at CAT triage but will be re-categorised by the group leader at screening.

5.33. The CCRC uses an assessment of complexity and the number of days' work that will be required on the case review by the CRM to determine the case type:

- type 1: up to three days' work
- type 2: up to 10 days' work
- type 3: up to 30 days' work
- type 4: over 30 days' work

5.34. Below is a snapshot of the breakdown of allocation by case type as on 11 March 2026.

Type of case	Number of cases
Type 1	318
Type 2	621
Type 3	92
Type 4	1

5.35. The CCRC does not measure the number of days' work actually taken for each case to provide assurance that the metric used for determining case type is accurate. It does assess how long cases remain open at each stage of a case's lifecycle. The average duration by case type at the review stage was:

Type of case	Duration as of 11 March 2026
Type 1	167.2 days
Type 2	322.5 days
Type 3	781.4 days

5.36. Within our snapshot of cases, the fact that 939 (91%) are categorised as type 1 or 2 is not helpful in determining complexity or sensitivity. The CRMs we spoke to perceived limited benefit in the case type allocation process and questioned the consistent application of its criteria across teams by group leaders.

5.37. Our file sample included reapplication cases that required as much work to finalise as those categorised under review. While some CRMs would consult with the group leader regarding the allocated case type if they believed it was inaccurate, others did not see sufficient merit in doing so because they did not see the strategic impact it would have.

5.38. The timeliness of the progress of the application is measured by case type as part of the CCRC suite of performance measures. However, as currently operated, it provides only limited value.

5.39. Case type allocation is used as a case weighting mechanism to assist in evenly distributing work to CRMs. We see merit in this approach if coupled with a robust assurance process to ensure the criteria are being applied correctly. The benefit of any such system is lost unless the process is applied consistently by all group leaders and recognised by CRMs. This could be combined with a 'critical friend' or peer review process.

Recommendation 3

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should conduct a thematic audit to review the effectiveness of the current case type allocation process. This is to assess whether it is an effective tool for determining the resources required for casework across the Commission.

Group leader screening

5.40. Applications initially categorised, or subsequently re-categorised, as review must undergo screening by the group leader. The screening process enables the group leader to have an overview of the casework in their team and to manage and control the CRMs' caseload.

5.41. As currently structured, we found that, despite the obvious quality of some of the screenings in our file sample, this stage of the process adds little value. In chapter 8, we set out our proposals for enhancing the group leader role.

5.42. The purpose of the group leader screening is to:

- prepare a short summary of the case and application
- offer thoughts as to how the review may proceed
- establish what material needs to be preserved
- decide the case type (1, 2, 3 or 4)
- consider the need for victim notification
- consider whether there is anything to suggest a risk assessment is required.

5.43. We examined 29 review cases, of which nine had been categorised initially as a no appeal or reapplication. On screening, the group leader agreed that the nine cases were correctly sent for review.

5.44. In 22 of the 29 (75.9%) cases, the group leader had addressed all the criteria. In one (3.4%), they had not carried out a risk assessment when required, and in six (20.7%), we found that one or more of the first four criteria were not considered. Issues included not setting out a clear strategy to direct the CRM's focus for the review or failing to identify which material needed to be preserved.

The quality of the screening was such that the narrative could have been used to draft a recommendation to a Commissioner at that stage

5.45. Other screenings were very thorough. These set out, in detail, the group leader's view on the case and the likely outcome. In some we saw, it was apparent at this stage that the CCRC had all the available information to properly conclude that there would be no recommendation to refer the application to the appropriate appellate court. The quality of the screening was such that the narrative could have been used to draft a recommendation to a Commissioner at that stage.

5.46. Despite this, the current process requires the group leader to allocate the case to a CRM for review. The CRM must then reread all material already assessed by the group leader and compile a detailed analysis of the case. Some CRMs told us they saw limited value in the group leader screening, considering the case and the recommendation that Commissioners be responsible for it alone.

5.47. This perspective partially stems from the CCRC's structure prior to the group leader role being implemented, when cases were allocated directly to a CRM. However, it is not a view we share. The group leader screening, when conducted properly, can yield significant value through the early identification of genuine lines of inquiry and, in some instances, allow conclusions to be reached from the outset, saving further work.

5.48. The current approach is a duplication of effort. When the decision is clear at the screening stage, the amount of work carried out is disproportionate and unnecessarily extends the time required to make a recommendation to a Commissioner.

Recommendation 4

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should revise its casework process in review cases to include a fast-track mechanism for submitting a no-referral recommendation to a Commissioner. This would apply in cases where the group leader determines there is sufficient material to reach this conclusion at the screening stage.

The discretion to refer

5.49. The CCRC has discretion not to refer a case to the appropriate appeal court even where the statutory criteria for referral are satisfied (see chapter 3). There is internal guidance on the criteria to consider when deciding whether to exercise the discretion.

5.50. There will be cases at the screening stage where it will be obvious that even if the statutory criteria were met, the case would never be referred. If these cases are correctly identified at the screening stage, they could also be subject to a fast-track process instead of being allocated to a CRM.

5.51. There was one case in our file sample in which the CCRC exercised its discretion not to refer the case after it had been through the full process and had been referred to a Commissioner¹⁰. The information necessary to reach that decision was available at the screening stage.

5.52. In accordance with the current process, the case was then allocated to a CRM for review. It was nearly a year before the case was assigned to a Commissioner for a decision. Not only had the applicant been waiting a considerable time for a decision, but the CRM had also done unnecessary work that did not progress the case.

Recommendation 5

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should revise its casework process in review cases to include a fast-track mechanism for submitting a recommendation to a Commissioner. This would apply in cases where the group leader determines that the discretion not to refer will be exercised, even if the statutory tests are met.

¹⁰ The CRM recommendation had been not to refer, which is why the data in question 39 reflects a nil result for 'exercise discretion'.

Case narrative

5.53. Group leaders record their assessments at the screening stage on the case narrative. This is a core CCRC document used by everyone who has an input into the case. It should provide an accurate audit trail of the decision-making process. This document was used effectively to provide a clear audit trail in 57 of the 60 (95.0%) cases we examined.

5.54. Whilst this appears positive, as we set out in paragraph 8.34, there were inconsistencies in recording one-to-one case conversations and the rationale for tasks being detailed, sometimes leaving a gap in the audit trail.

5.55. Although the audit trail is clear to follow in terms of the chronology, there is no standard set for how either the group leader or the CRM should structure their reviews. Standardising the review structure would achieve consistency, ensure that all aspects required to be included in the review have been addressed, and ensure a clear case strategy.

5.56. This would facilitate earlier recommendations and more effective assurance of the quality of the reviews. It should also reduce the time the CRM spends on a case review, as the group leader will have set out in their screening the aspects to focus on.

5.57. Every case should have a case plan. The case narrative houses straightforward case plans. There is also a separate standalone document for case plans, which should be used for complex plans. CRMs exercise discretion as to the format of the document. However, in our file sample, we found that, when completed, many only contained a list of tasks and were not regularly revisited or revised.

Recommendation 6

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a standardised case review structure which, as a minimum, includes:

- the key facts
- the case chronology
- the applicant's grounds
- the case strategy
- any legal casework guidance that has been considered and applied
- the material needed
- whether there is a need for input from others, for example, a specialist case review manager.

5.58. We found that group leaders addressed the applicant's core submissions in 26 of the 29 cases (89.7%) in our file sample. Where it was evident that there were further reasonable lines of enquiry that should be pursued, group leaders identified all reasonable lines of enquiry in 23 of the 29 cases (79.3%). Where the lines of enquiry were not fully identified, this was primarily because of not securing material at the screening stage, which could contribute to the overall assessment of the case.

5.59. In our file sample, there were 16 cases where lines of enquiry were commenced at the screening stage. In 15 of those cases (93.8%), it was reasonable for those enquiries to have been made. The group leader added value by promptly identifying these at the initial stage, providing appropriate guidance for the case from the outset.

Securing material

5.60. The CCRC has far-reaching powers to obtain material held by a public body¹¹ if it believes it may assist the commission in the exercise of any of its functions¹².

5.61. Additionally, the commission has similar powers to obtain material from non-public bodies¹³. In our file examination, this was mostly in respect of material held by the applicant's legal advisers (subject to the applicant waiving legal privilege).

5.62. In respect of non-public bodies, the CCRC may apply to the Crown Court for an order requiring the production of the material. We were told that there had been only one application since the inception of the CCRC in which it sought a court order to enforce the production of material, which we find surprising in light of the delays we observed in obtaining material.

5.63. If an applicant has already applied to the Court of Appeal (CoA), the CCRC is able to use established protocols to directly access material held by the CoA without making a formal application. This would normally be done by an administrator at the CAT triage stage.

5.64. Not all cases require the securing of additional material. There were examples in our file sample where an appropriate recommendation to a Commissioner was made on the consideration of the court's material only.

¹¹ Save for medical records, which are subject to the applicant granting the commission the right to access.

¹² Section 17 Criminal Appeals Act 1995.

¹³ Section 18 Criminal Appeals Act 1995.

5.65. If the group leader considers that there may be a need to consider documentation held by a public body, a notice will be sent at the screening stage to secure that material. The request will be sent by an administrator. At this point, the decision on whether there is a need to examine the material may not have been made. The notice will ensure the material is preserved and that efforts are underway to deliver it to the CCRC, which can save time later in the review process.

Escalation

5.66. In January 2024, the CCRC implemented a formal escalation process for when material is not supplied promptly.

5.67. A CAT member is required to follow up with the public body if no initial response is received within ten working days, and again at 20 working days if there is no indication that the requested material is forthcoming. Subsequent reminders should be sent at intervals of ten working days. If 40 working days have elapsed without response, a warning regarding potential formal action should be issued. If there is no reply within five days of the warning notice, the legal team is expected to consider preparing a formal complaint or a pre-action letter indicating the possibility of judicial review.

5.68. There were no cases in our file sample where a warning letter was sent. We found that there would be multiple ineffective email requests, either from the CAT or the CRM. In one case, when the legal team was contacted, we noted a reluctance to escalate the matter, suggesting to send another email.

5.69. The escalation process is not routinely followed. In reality, the CAT is tasked with obtaining the necessary material; however, due to workload constraints, a follow-up email is sent at the appropriate interval. The task is then marked as completed based on this action, rather than upon actual receipt of the material. Consequently, when the CRM revisits the file, they find that the only action taken in the interim was sending an email.

5.70. If the matter is later referred to the legal department, there is hesitation to pursue legal proceedings immediately without clear evidence that the CRM or CAT has attempted alternative methods of contacting the recipient.

5.71. The overriding cause for delay in the files we examined was the non-receipt of requested material. Where delays are experienced from professionals, such as solicitors and counsel, referrals to regulatory bodies might be appropriate, or escalation internally to the Chief Executive to engage the third party at a senior level.

5.72. The volume of applications to the CCRC continues to rise. Due to the current implementation of the escalation policy, delays occur, resulting in periods where the sole activity documented on a file is chasing emails. Such circumstances are unlikely to inspire public trust and confidence.

5.73. A new escalation toolkit has been drafted but is yet to be published, and we understand that the CAT was not consulted during the process, despite playing a major role in its implementation.

Recommendation 7

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should audit its compliance with its escalation process and review the effectiveness of the current process. Upon completion of the audit and review, the commission should develop and implement a strengthened process using its findings, setting clear standards and expectations to facilitate assurance of compliance. The strengthened process should also inform a stakeholder strategy to improve the timeliness of receipt of requested material.

Allocation to a case review manager

5.74. Once an application has been screened, it is assigned to a CRM for further review.

5.75. The CCRC expects allocation to occur by the end of the third month following the month in which the application was received. For example, if an application is received in June, it should be allocated no later than the end of September. Allocations are scheduled for the last working day of the month during which the group leader completes screening. This procedure introduces a delay; for instance, if the group leader screens a case early in the month, action will not be taken until allocation occurs at month's end.

5.76. As we discussed above, if the case type process was used effectively to assess CRMs' caseload, allocation could take place as soon as the case has been screened. In our file sample, allocation to a CRM was made in accordance with the CCRC timescales in 22 of the 29 cases (75.9%). We see no reason why allocation cannot be made more expeditiously. Building in a delay of up to nearly four months is unnecessary.

Recommendation 8

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should reduce the time between the receipt of an application and its allocation to a group leader. Group leaders should allocate review cases to case review managers as soon as their screening is completed.

Case review

5.77. After allocation, the CRM must undertake a case review. This may duplicate work already done by the group leader during the screening process. The CCRC requires the CRM to consider four elements at this stage:

1. familiarisation, which covers understanding the case at trial and on appeal, and understanding the applicant's submissions
2. issue identification: identify aspects of the case the applicant takes issue with and other lines of enquiry or developments in the law; offer thoughts as to how the review may proceed
3. analysis: identify those issues which require investigation and those that do not, including those that are unanswered
4. actions and milestones: exercise reasonable judgement when contemplating the tasks associated with the review and the order in which they should be prioritised.

5.78. We found the CRM had properly planned the review by addressing most of these elements correctly in 23 of the 29 cases (79.3%) — although in seven of these, there were some actions or milestones that had not been properly recorded. However, these had a marginal impact and did not sufficiently affect our assessment to mark it down.

5.79. In the other six cases (20.7%), some of the elements were not addressed effectively. These included:

- setting tasks before adequate familiarisation with the case
- no clear strategy, just a recitation of the facts and task setting
- matters for investigation which had no bearing on the merits of the application.

5.80. Where the CRM identified lines of enquiry, we found that they were reasonable, in that they might produce evidence or arguments capable of affecting the safety of the conviction or sentence. But in six of the 29 cases (20.7%), there were additional reasonable lines of enquiry to those flagged by the group leader at the screening stage, which the CRM should have identified but did not.

5.81. In our sample of files, there were instances where decisions could have been made earlier during the case review process. In such cases, unnecessary

additional material had been gathered and reviewed despite the outcome being clear.

5.82. There were 13 cases in our file sample where the CRM identified reasonable lines of enquiry. While some were capable of producing evidence which might affect the safety of the conviction or sentence, we also found lines of enquiry that would not go towards establishing whether the conviction was unsafe. Many of these enquiries were time-consuming, not only for the CCRC to request, wait for and then analyse, but also for the body providing the material.

5.83. Below, we have set out two examples where unnecessary work caused unreasonable delay. In one case, the decision was to refer the application to the Court of Appeal; in the other, it was not to refer.

Case study

The applicant (A) was convicted of rape. A substantial time after their conviction, another suspect (B) was arrested. At this stage, the complainant informed the police that some of the significant evidence she gave in the applicant's trial was incorrect, thereby undermining her credibility.

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) were in communication. The CPS discontinued the case against the other suspect (B) after determining there was no realistic prospect of conviction.

There was no material difference in the evidence against the applicant (A) and the suspect (B). At this stage, there was sufficient material to refer the applicant's case to the Court of Appeal. However, no such recommendation was made.

After the CPS had discontinued the case against the new suspect (B), the CCRC requested from the police:

- the papers in respect of the suspect
- the local authority records in respect of the complainant (this last took considerable time and effort to be provided).

The CRM conducted an in-depth analysis of the complainant's history. The examination of the complainant's history and the case against the suspect was disproportionate and unnecessary.

The recommendation was made to the Commissioner that the case be referred to the Court of Appeal. The Commissioner agreed, and the case was referred. The CPS did not oppose the applicant's appeal against conviction.

Case study

The applicant had been convicted of serious drug offences. He contended that he was a victim of modern slavery.

During the Criminal Cases Review Commission's (CCRC) consideration of the case, the Home Office concluded the applicant was not a victim of modern slavery. The facts of the case also pointed strongly away from the applicant being a modern slavery victim.

At that point, a decision could have been made to recommend that the application should not be referred to the Court of Appeal. However, it was decided to consider the charging advice given by the Crown Prosecution Service to the police to see if there was any comment on referring the applicant to the National Referral Mechanism for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.

In light of the Home Office decision, this was a disproportionate action which caused unnecessary delay.

5.84. There is a balance to be struck between ensuring that 'no stone is left unturned' and the proportionality of the work needed to arrive at an evidence-based recommendation. This reinforces the need for a clear case strategy from the outset, properly and clearly recorded in a structured case review.

5.85. In the six cases we saw without a clear case strategy, there were clear examples of delay and inefficiency. As we discuss in chapter 7, a more effective assurance role for group leaders would improve the overall quality of the work done by CRMs and likely improve the efficient and effective use of resources.

5.86. The CCRC has extensive legal guidance to which group leaders and CRMs can refer. There were 10 cases in our file sample in which legal guidance was relevant. Only five had any reference to it being considered.

5.87. Where legal casework guidance is available and applicable, it is good practice for the group leader and/or case review manager to clearly set this out in the case review to show it has been considered and applied (see recommendation 6).

5.88. Should the CCRC decision on the application be challenged, the endorsement will indicate the relevant guidance has been considered. We discuss casework guidance generally in chapter 6.

Progress reviews

5.89. The CCRC requires the CRM to analyse as they go: 'review, reflect, refine'. As tasks are completed or as key deadlines approach, the case plan should be reviewed. Reflection should include consideration of whether:

- they have the information they need
- outstanding tasks are still necessary
- any new tasks need to be added.

5.90. Twenty of the 24 relevant cases (83.3%) in our file sample had a progress review when one was needed. Disappointingly, seven of the 20 cases (35.0%) were not effective in identifying actions to progress the case. In some, they added no value and the entry appeared to be just to remove a task.

5.91. Applications to the CCRC can be very complex, and there will be times during the history of the case where, for justifiable reasons, progress is slow: for example, because a Commissioner has asked for investigations, or it is difficult to obtain material from the applicant's previous legal representative.

5.92. In our file examination, we assessed whether there were periods of two months or more when little or no progress was made in the case. Eleven cases in our file sample came within this category. In nine of the 11 cases (81.8%), we found no justification for the delay.

5.93. The CCRC produces data on cases where there has been no update on the case timeline for 60 days or more. As of 11 March 2026, there were 152 cases in this category, which represents approximately 11% of cases under review at any given time.

5.94. At the time of our inspection, the CCRC was undertaking a casework grip project, looking at cases which had been at the triage stage for more than four months or the review stage for more than 10 months. This is a significant piece of work.

5.95. The CCRC's analysis of the identified cases supports our findings that some cases lack effective scrutiny and exhibit unacceptable drift. The data analysis also identified cases that should have been closed.

5.96. A key CCRC performance indicator is the percentage of cases closed within 12 months.

Performance indicator	Target	12 months to December 2025
Cases closed within 12 months	>85%	75.0%
Review cases closed within 12 months	>70.0%	50.0%
Triage cases closed within 4 months	>80.0%	71.9%

5.97. The CCRC has a target of completing reviews within 36 weeks of allocation. In the year to December 2025, the average time was nearly 49 weeks.

Recommendation 9

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should set an expectation that group leaders undertake an urgent assessment of cases that have not had any activity for 60 days to either progress or close them.

Prioritisation

5.98. The CCRC has criteria for determining when a case should be prioritised. These are detailed and are set out in question 31 in Annex B.

5.99. There were nine cases in our sample that should have been prioritised. Four cases were prioritised appropriately, but five were not. In two of the five, the applicant was in prison. One of those two, and one other case, had been running for more than two years and so, in accordance with the CCRC's current practice, should have been prioritised. According to the CCRC's guidance, the latter should have been overseen by the long-running cases committee (LRCC), but were not. We discuss the LRCC, which is an element of second-line assurance, in detail in chapter 7.

5.100. As of 11 March 2026, the CRCC had 102 long-running cases. CRMs told us it was difficult to prioritise every case which met the requirement. The current caseload of the LRCC is incompatible with its intended purpose. Furthermore, it does not necessarily follow that the length of time a case has been open dictates whether it should be scrutinised by the LRCC.

Recommendation 10

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review the criteria it uses to prioritise senior leadership review, including risk factors other than case duration, to focus scrutiny on sensitive and complex cases.

Nominated decision maker

5.101. In complex cases, a Commissioner may be appointed as a nominated decision maker (NDM). The NDM provides guidance and decisions on aspects of case review, such as further investigative or forensic opportunities and legal issues.

5.102. We were told that the head of casework operations is responsible for appointing NDMs. However, from our evidence, it appeared there was a lack of clarity as to who has the authority to appoint an NDM and at what stage in the process. In our file sample, it usually followed a discussion between the group leader and the CRM, although there appeared to be no formal appointment process, as far as the case files were concerned.

5.103. There are budgetary implications when an NDM is appointed and, if the role is retained, there must be consistency in the application process and a clear audit trail.

Recommendation 11

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should set out a formal process for appointing a nominated decision maker to ensure there is consistency in the application process and a clear audit trail for accounting purposes.

Statement of reasons

5.104. When the CRM submits a recommendation to a Commissioner or committee of Commissioners, a statement of reasons is prepared. This is a key document because, once approved, it will be sent to the applicant.

5.105. While we have significant concerns about the time it takes to reach the point at which a case is ready for a draft statement of reasons, we found the draft recommendations were correct in each of the cases we examined.

5.106. In 52 of the 56 relevant cases (92.9%), the draft statement contained a summary of the relevant history, issues raised and investigation undertaken, and adequately explained the result of the CCRC's review. There were minor deficiencies in 11 of these cases, but not such as to impair the Commissioner's ability to reach a decision on referral.

5.107. This is a high standard and reflects the commitment of the CCRC to its work.

We found the draft recommendations were correct in each of the cases we examined

5.108. Four cases (7.1%) did not meet the required criteria. These included referring to inapplicable case law, omitting relevant facts or misstating a material aspect of the case chronology. In the last example, the CRM had misunderstood this from the outset. We noted that, except for the last example, the

Commissioner identified and rectified the deficiencies in the statement before it was sent to the applicant.

5.109. In seven of the 56 cases (12.5%), the Commissioner (or committee of Commissioners) required further substantive work to be done on the draft statement of reasons before it was sent to the applicant. Minor grammatical errors would be corrected by the Commissioner without any referral back to the CRM. In chapter 7, we discuss our findings regarding the assurance of casework quality.

5.110. When the CRM drafts the statement, they also complete a decision pathway document (except in no appeal cases, where a decision not to refer is made at the CRM triage stage). This document highlights any issue that the CRM particularly wishes to draw to the Commissioner's attention as being potentially difficult or contentious.

5.111. The document contains bespoke recommendations concerning the case, for example, a decision on why something was or was not done. It also summarises the fundamental reasons why the case is now ready for decision.

5.112. The decision pathway document will also provide links to those documents that the CRM considers will assist the Commissioner in coming to their decision. Commissioners also have access to the CCRC's case management system and can look at any material, regardless of whether it is referenced in the decision pathway document.

5.113. In 33 of the 37 relevant cases (89.2%) where there was a decision pathway document, all the relevant criteria were included correctly.

5.114. In the other four cases, we found that the decision pathway was premature in one, the law was stated incorrectly in another, a reference to key material was omitted in another, and a key factual element was incorrectly recorded in the last case.

5.115. Once the statement of reasons is approved by the Commissioner, it is sent to the applicant. This document comprehensively outlines all aspects considered by the CCRC, as well as its perspective on the applicant's submissions.

5.116. In cases where no referral is made, the case review manager and Commissioner will agree whether the statement should be classified as provisional or final. If deemed provisional, the applicant may submit additional material for further review by the CCRC. If designated as final, any subsequent communication from the applicant must be assessed by a CRM who was not involved in the prior review. In one instance in our file sample, it was noted that the reviewing CRM addressed post-closure correspondence, contrary to the guidance.

5.117. There is a practical advantage to the reviewing CRM being involved if the correspondence contains information relating to the case, but not if it is solely a complaint about the decision. After an initial screening by another CRM, the reviewing CRM should consider the new information.

Recommendation 12

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a Case Review Manager triage for post-closure correspondence to determine whether the original Case Review Manager can deal with fresh information related to an application.

5.118. There were cases in our file sample where there was post-closure correspondence, and we saw inconsistencies in how it was dealt with.

5.119. In one case, the CCRC opened a new application based on the information in the correspondence (which was not strong in the context of the issues). In another (where the new information was very strong), the decision was to ask the applicant to formally reapply.

Recommendation 13

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should carry out assurance to ensure that post-closure guidance is being applied consistently and correctly.

Victim notification

5.120. The CCRC has obligations under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime¹⁴ (the Victims' Code). The Victims' Code requires the CCRC to record the reasons for its decisions as to whether a victim should be notified.

5.121. The decision whether to notify the victim of the application at the screening stage can be difficult, particularly if it appears that the application will be unsuccessful, as it would potentially cause unnecessary stress and trauma.

5.122. There were several non-recent sexual assault cases in our file sample where the group leader decided — correctly, given the circumstances of the cases — that it would cause unnecessary stress to notify the victim before a decision was made. Where any further enquiries are requested that might lead the victim to become aware of the CCRC's consideration of an application, the

victim should be notified to avoid them finding out through others.

The CCRC properly considered notification in 35 of the 41 cases involving a victim or family representative

5.123. Whether to notify the victim is considered throughout the review, but markedly again at the decision stage, when the position will be clearer.

5.124. The CCRC properly considered notification in 35 of the 41 cases (85.4%) involving a victim or family representative. In six

cases, there was no evidence in the file that there had been proper consideration of whether to notify the victim, or evidence among the activity seen in the case to show that the victim had been contacted. In seven cases in our file sample, the victim was notified of the decision. In one in particular, the CCRC had put considerable effort into contacting them.

5.125. Where it was done, we saw it being done well, but this was inconsistent. The CCRC will want to ensure that it is fully compliant in all cases with its duties under the Victims' Code.

Recommendation 14

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should undertake a thematic review of its compliance with its obligations under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, including the quality of the recording of the reasons for its decisions as to whether a victim should be notified.

¹⁴ *The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information*; Ministry of Justice; January 2025.
gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime

Applicant care

5.126. The CCRC's policy is to acknowledge an application within 10 working days of receipt. This occurred in 51 of the 60 cases (85.0%) in our file sample.

5.127. Additionally, they should be updated at least once every three months while the case is being reviewed. This occurred in 50 of the 60 cases (83.3%).

5.128. In some cases, there was extensive correspondence with the applicants, including telephone conversations. In others, the updates merely stated there was no progress.

5.129. The statement of reasons can contain detailed explanations of legal concepts such as joint enterprise, which is necessary to show that the CCRC has applied its mind correctly to everything raised. The clarity of explanation given to the applicant in the statement of reasons would have been understandable and accessible to the applicant in 58 of the 60 cases (96.7%), which is a strength.

Findings

5.130. Our findings indicate that the CCRC makes appropriate recommendations to Commissioners.

5.131. However, systemic delays inherent in current procedures significantly prolong the time required to reach these outcomes. The process of obtaining information from third parties takes too long, and the escalation process needs reassessment to enhance efficiency, ultimately reducing the caseload for CRMs.

5.132. The practice of waiting at least three months before allocating cases is unwarranted. When group leaders conduct thorough screenings, expedited recommendations are possible, eliminating the need for cases to queue before CRM allocation and subsequent identical recommendations.

5.133. Additionally, certain processes restrict managerial oversight, thereby impeding efforts to improve operational efficiency. Performance data concerning no appeal and reapplication triage lacks sufficient detail to enable managers to identify and address sources of delay.

5.134. Lines of enquiry can be embarked upon which are not always necessary or proportionate. As described in chapters 7 and 8, group leaders lack the authority to effectively direct reviews and ensure they remain focused.

5.135. Victim and applicant care is good, but improvements can still be made, particularly in evidencing that the Commission discharges its duties under the Victims' Code.

6. Learning and development

6.1. A training programme is provided for trainees and new case review managers (CRMs). They are also paired with mentors, who are more experienced CRMs. We observed evidence of mentor involvement in several cases from our case file sample.

6.2. Although the training is thorough, we share the view expressed by some of the CRMs we interviewed, who indicated it could be structured more effectively and that some modules would be advantageous if delivered earlier in the induction process, so that new CRMs are familiarised with the overarching role from an early stage.

Continual professional development is ad hoc

6.3. Casework staff we spoke to across the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) told us that there had never been a skills gap analysis. Outside of induction, very few training sessions are compulsory. The delivery of some training is reactive and only provided when an issue has been identified. This is the primary driver of learning and development, resulting in continual professional development being ad hoc rather than part of a structured, proactive programme.

6.4. The CCRC's internal SharePoint site has a digital library of talks and training which have been delivered, although there appeared to be limited awareness and use of this facility. The content was helpful and should be used more.

6.5. The CCRC needs to adopt a more structured approach to training. This should be at the strategic and individual levels.

6.6. The CCRC should identify what skills and experience it requires to deliver an effective service across its casework functions. Following this, it should carry out a robust organisational casework skills gap analysis to assess where training, skills and experience are required.

6.7. This should be mirrored by individual gap analyses against each individual's role expectations. This will inform the content of a structured, proactive organisational training approach, as well as individual training needs, enabling the CCRC to effectively deliver its service.

6.8. Core compulsory training should be identified. We were provided with a comprehensive draft CRM competency framework document that outlined the standards expected of a CRM. However, we heard it is yet to be put to purposeful effect to help shape training and development for CRMs.

6.9. We found no assessment of the impact of training or how it influenced casework quality initiatives. This is a weakness and reflects the lack of a mature programme for casework risk and quality analysis.

Recommendation 15

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should conduct a training needs and development assessment for its casework function at an organisational and individual level to identify training needs and inform a structured training programme.

6.10. There is a casework administration team (CAT) manual, which is described as a training document. This provides an overview of the CCRC's operations and the role of administrators, with numerous hyperlinks to other documents.

6.11. It does not, however, provide guidance on how to perform CAT functions in the Dynamics case management system. We were told that this led administrators to develop their own solutions to the issues they identified, resulting in inconsistencies.

Recommendation 16

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop a casework administration team operations manual that clearly sets out how tasks are to be undertaken in the Dynamics case management system.

Casework guidance

6.12. The CCRC is developing an extensive knowledge platform. At the time of our inspection, this was still under construction, so we were unable to evaluate it. Given what we were told, once completed, it should be an expansive casework resource.

6.13. Casework guidance can come from several sources, including:

- formal casework guidance notes
- casework policy documents
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- specialist CRMs
- updates from the legal team
- case-specific research requested from the intern team
- a discussion board.

6.14. At the time of our inspection, many of the subject-specific casework guidance notes were under review or had been archived with a warning that they may not be up to date. Senior management will want to ensure that this review is completed and quality-assured quickly.

6.15. The other casework guidance notes, policy documents and SOP we examined covered every aspect of the CCRC casework process in detail. They were well maintained with rigorous version control, although not all were included in the quality management system, which we discuss in chapter 7.

Specialist case review managers

6.16. The CCRC has eight designated specialist CRMs. They are not necessarily allocated cases related to their specialism¹⁵, but are available as a resource for colleagues. The specialisms are either due to the CRM's background before joining the CCRC or to skills and experience developed during their time at the CCRC.

6.17. There were several cases in our file sample where the allocated CRM had sought the advice of a specialist CRM. There was a lack of clarity regarding how the specialist CRM's advice should be recorded in the case narrative.

6.18. In one case, the specialist CRM had endorsed the case narrative with their view, but in others, the allocated CRM updated the case narrative. The details recorded varied.

6.19. To ensure consistency and accuracy, we believe the best practice would be for the specialist CRM to endorse the case narrative.

Recommendation 17

When a specialist case review manager is consulted, they should be responsible for endorsing the case narrative with the guidance provided to the allocated case review manager.

6.20. The legal team provides informative monthly legal updates as well as delivering subject-specific training. Additionally, CRMs can ask the interns on the legal team to conduct specific research on an aspect of a case. This is a useful resource, as not all CRMs have a legal background. However, the research produced by the interns at the time of the inspection was not quality-assured. We discuss quality assurance in chapter 7.

6.21. There is a database of the research papers compiled by the interns, but this is not currently easily accessible from the knowledge platform, and many CRMs were unaware of its existence.

6.22. Although the platform is under development, we were still able to examine the database. We found that some of the topics are broadly applicable and could be of wider benefit. As the platform develops, the CCRC should make sure such material is easily accessible by caseworkers.

6.23. The knowledge platform also contains a discussion board, which enables CRMs to raise specific queries. This is used frequently, and there is a good level of engagement between the CRMs. However, some of the queries raised and

¹⁵ The exception is the specialist in Post Office cases who will triage any application in this category.

the responses, provided showed a lack of knowledge of key aspects of criminal procedure. There is no management oversight of the discussions on the board unless a group leader happens to dip into a conversation.

6.24. The CCRC should monitor this to ensure response accuracy and to identify learning needs that can be incorporated into the training plan.

Learning from experience

6.25. The CCRC has a Learning from Experience forum, which is chaired by the casework operations manager. Its role is to identify failings in casework quality and near misses arising from the quality assurance programme and to share lessons learned across the CCRC. This is to support continuous improvement and prevent a recurrence of issues.

6.26. As we examine in chapter 7, the value of this forum is limited to specific issues or cases, rather than to the more comprehensive learning that would be possible with a more structured approach to assessing casework quality.

6.27. The CCRC does not currently carry out thematic analysis of casework quality. This reduces the opportunity to identify what is working well and where weaknesses lie, meaning recurrent issues are not always identified. Furthermore, the opportunity for training or guidance can be missed.

6.28. Additional learning is drawn from judicial reviews, complaints, lessons learned reviews and the forensic opportunities program. These methods offer a reactive approach to identifying training gaps and initiating improvements. Again, a more systematic approach to developing this learning would be helpful.

Findings

6.29. When training is delivered, it is delivered well. However, a comprehensive and structured organisational approach is required, beginning with a thorough training and development needs analysis. This process would enable the CCRC to pinpoint areas for improvement and systematically address them through a strategic training programme.

6.30. Furthermore, sessions identified via gap analysis should be made mandatory to ensure consistent implementation across the organisation.

7. Quality assurance

7.1. The quality assurance programme (QAP) details the assurance framework operating within the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). The programme provides a framework for the oversight of casework quality throughout the life of a case, from triage and screening through to decision-making and post-decision activity.

7.2. The QAP lists nine safeguards:

- scrutiny during the review
- further submissions
- post closure correspondence
- complaints process
- judicial review
- dip sampling
- lessons learned reviews
- Learning from Experience forum
- quality management system.

Compliance assurance

Quality management team

7.3. The quality management team (QMT) is led at a senior level by the head of business planning and performance. The team consists of a senior quality manager, a quality officer and a quality coordinator.

7.4. The QMT are the gatekeepers of the quality management system (QMS), which is described as the formal system for managing the quality of casework.

7.5. Alongside overseeing the QMS, the QMT is responsible for managing central procedures and the quality manual, controlling documents, conducting closed case dip sample reviews, organising investigations and responses to non-conformance, leading internal audits and providing support for staff.

7.6. Within the QMT, there was substantial experience in quality assuring compliance with processes, but not the expertise or knowledge to assess the quality of the casework. QMS internal audit checks and closed case dip samples

conducted by the QMT do not get to the heart of assuring the quality of casework strategy, analysis, and actions, which we consider later in this chapter.

7.7. Staff in the QMT recognised their limitations in terms of assuring casework quality but had clear ideas for improving quality management and how this could benefit the organisation.

Quality management system

7.8. A QMS is a clearly defined set of procedures, policies and processes designed to help organisations achieve their quality objectives. The CCRC uses the ISO 9001:2015 international quality standard¹⁶ and relevant government functional standards¹⁷.

7.9. Feedback from QMT members indicates that the QMS is structured primarily as a process compliance tool, rather than one that ensures qualitative assurance or evaluates the accuracy and quality of case reviews and decision-making. Staff responsible for managing QMS procedures lack the legal or casework expertise necessary to assess casework quality.

7.10. Since the QMS is frequently equated with quality assurance, it was evident that many casework directorate staff did not clearly distinguish between the two concepts. Unsurprisingly, given the focus on process rather than casework quality, case review managers (CRMs) and group leaders said that they did not view the QMS as offering substantive qualitative benefits.

7.11. The QMS is not intuitive. It requires staff to generate quality assurance forms in the case management system, use separate spreadsheets to track progress and actions, and manage document version control manually.

Audits

Government internal audits

7.12. A list of Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) reports was provided. From that list, we examined the casework quality audit dated 8 September 2023.

7.13. The purpose of a GIAA audit is to assess whether an organisation's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements are designed appropriately and operating effectively.

¹⁶ *ISO 9001:2015 quality management systems*; ISO; 2021. [iso.org/standard/62085.html](https://www.iso.org/standard/62085.html)

¹⁷ *Functional standards*; Cabinet Office; October 2021. [gov.uk/government/collections/functional-standards](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-standards)

7.14. The GIAA considered the design of the case review quality framework. The audit found “the quality assurance framework is appropriately defined and effectively documented within the QAP”.

7.15. However, it also ascertained there was “scope to extend the coverage of assurance contained within the QAP to include a second line assurance review over the first line managerial reviews carried out by group leaders of the CRM case review processes to ensure they are of high-quality, such as pursuing timely and appropriate lines of enquiry and investigations”.

CCRC internal audits

7.16. Having obtained independent assurance from the GIAA, the CCRC undertook further internal audits.

7.17. The QMT’s internal audit process assesses the CCRC’s compliance with its documented QMS procedures and controls. Findings from internal audits can identify both non-compliance and best practices, which should be used as a tool to continually improve work practices.

7.18. We were told by those in the QMT that internal audits are designed to assess adherence and compliance with the documents in their QMS. It is therefore a system to ensure compliance with a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) rather than assess whether the SOP itself is fit for purpose and supports high-quality outcomes.

7.19. The internal audit documents we reviewed demonstrated this point. They showed that existing audits are narrow in scope, heavily process-driven, and often based on small samples, limiting their usefulness in reliably demonstrating organisational consistency or driving meaningful improvements in casework quality. We also found limited evidence that audit findings are systematically analysed to identify themes or risks at an organisational level.

Recommendation 18

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should strengthen its internal audit assurance programme by increasing the size and representativeness of samples for audit testing, ensuring that internal assurance assess casework quality as well as procedural compliance, distinguishing between the two.

Closed case dip samples

7.20. The quality and decision coordinator within the QMT is responsible for dip sampling 10% of closed cases. The cases are randomly selected from cases closed in the previous month. On average, 13 closed cases per month are subject to the dip sample.

7.21. The dip sample includes a variety of case types, but only non-referral decisions made by a single decision-maker. The sample therefore excludes decisions to refer and non-referral decisions made by a committee of Commissioners.

7.22. The dip sampling of closed cases considers (as appropriate) the:

- efficiency of the (pre-) allocation process
- efficiency of the screening process
- overall level of case management
- clarity of language in the case narrative and case records
- clarity of language used in the analysis throughout the review: whether what is written can be understood, but importantly, not whether it is correct
- accessibility of the language used for the applicant in the statement of reasons (SoR)
- effectiveness of any delegation and/or assistance
- decision-making process.

7.23. Once completed, the closed case dip check form is emailed to the decision-maker Commissioner, case review manager, group leader, and quality manager for comment on any findings. It is for the quality manager to analyse the data from the sample findings and report to the director of casework operations. The checks aim to outline positive actions, such as best practices and areas for improvement.

7.24. The quality manager also carries out 'non-conformance' investigations resulting from dip samples or internal quality audits when necessary.

7.25. Non-conformance is a term used by the CCRC. It is more accurate to say these investigations assess non-compliance.

7.26. Examples of non-conformance with policies and SOPs identified by closed case dip checks include:

- failure to send update letters to applicants
- failure to complete case updates
- sending documents without signing
- group leaders failing to carry out quality assurance checks.

Strength

The Criminal Cases Review Commission has established effective procedures for determining whether tasks have been completed. The quality management system, internal audits, and closed case dip samples provide a level of organisational assurance and are effective at identifying procedural non-compliance and inconsistencies in documentation.

7.27. The dip sampling of closed cases primarily assures process compliance, with the QMT measuring adherence to SOPs or casework operational performance indicators related to efficiency. Importantly, closed case dip sampling does not evaluate the quality of the underlying review or the proportionality of investigative activity.

7.28. CRMs, group leaders and Commissioners have indicated that dip sampling of closed cases provides minimal value in assessing overall quality.

7.29. The closed case dip sampling process should address the quality of the draft statement of reasons in terms of its substance and presentation. However, the statements on closed cases are the final versions sent to the applicant and therefore incorporate any amendments made by Commissioners to the initial drafts. This severely limits its effectiveness in assessing CRM performance.

Casework assurance

7.30. Chapter 5 addressed the life cycle of a casework review. The QAP outlines several opportunities during the review where casework assurance is conducted.

During the review

Monthly one-to-ones

7.31. Group leaders meet regularly with CRMs. The CCRC's *Eight principles of high-quality case management* says CRMs should regularly review their entire portfolio at least monthly in preparation for these one-to-ones.

7.32. This document is targeted at how CRMs should approach one-to-ones. There is no equivalent guidance for group leaders on how they should prepare for and conduct one-to-ones.

7.33. As a result, the structure, purpose and content of one-to-ones vary significantly between group leaders. Some meetings are largely CRM-led, with individuals invited to raise cases they wish to discuss, whereas other group leaders attempt to review all cases on a CRM's list.

7.34. This inconsistency creates a risk that some cases receive little or no scrutiny, while others are reviewed superficially, particularly given the volume of cases typically handled by CRMs: which, on average, fluctuates between 28 and 36 per full-time equivalent CRM.

7.35. Given the size of CRMs' portfolios and the length and frequency of these meetings, the one-to-one process is not an effective method for active case management and assuring casework quality.

7.36. Group leaders themselves recognised these limitations and spoke positively of one-to-one meetings with the head of casework, which were less focused on individual cases and more on broader performance, professional development and wellbeing.

7.37. A best practice note we saw in our document examination directs that an entry should be added to the case narrative, recording any casework conversation at one-to-ones. In our case file sample, we saw few instances of this, indicating that these key casework conversations were not being recorded on individual cases.

7.38. The CCRC needs to develop a more structured approach to casework conversations and quality assurance. This is likely to require a different model from one-to-ones, which should be regular monthly management touch points.

Recommendation 19

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement an alternative mechanism to provide effective oversight of active case management, ensuring that one-to-one meetings are used appropriately to support performance, professional development and wellbeing rather than as a vehicle for casework quality assurance.

Six-week case MOT

7.39. Group leaders should dip sample a selection of cases that have been under review for more than six weeks to scrutinise the quality of the case plan. They should do two dip samples per month, with each CRM having a case plan dip sampled every six months.

7.40. In our file examination, only three of the 29 eligible cases (10.3%) had one of these MOTs. Interviews mirrored this picture, with group leaders and CRMs explaining that MOTs were not a priority, resulting in very few being completed.

7.41. In our case file sample, in the three cases where they were completed, MOTs offered limited value. Case plans tended to be task lists rather than substantive plans, so we saw no evidence that the MOTs provided the assurance for which they were designed.

7.42. With only a handful of MOTs completed every month, they were insufficient to make any notable organisational improvements through the assessment of casework quality to identify trends or measure impact.

Ten-month scrutiny

7.43. The group leader will initiate scrutiny of a case when it has been under review for ten months since the date of allocation. Allocation can take at least three months, so a case will have been open for over a year before this process is engaged.

7.44. In our file sample, 18 cases were eligible for a ten-month scrutiny. Seven cases (38.9%) did not receive scrutiny when they should have. Of the eleven cases where a review was completed, eight (72.7%) were ineffective at progressing the case. Therefore, in 15 cases, the ten-month scrutiny was either not conducted or not effective.

7.45. The group leader has discretion not to conduct scrutiny in certain circumstances. In our file examination, we found that the group leader had exercised that discretion inappropriately in five (29.4%) of the 17 eligible cases.

7.46. For example, in one case, the group leader delayed the ten-month scrutiny because of the previous CRM's departure and the need to reallocate the case, combined with uncertainty about a test the Crown Court would apply to appeals following guilty pleas in summary jurisdictions. In our view, those are both reasons to undertake the 10-month scrutiny, as the case was clearly at risk of delay.

7.47. We also saw examples where the group leader said the case was nearly ready for a decision, when it clearly was not.

7.48. When a ten-month scrutiny has occurred, the case progress report and action plan should be updated at least every four months thereafter to ensure oversight and progression of these cases and to reduce delay. In our file sample, there were ten cases in which a ten-month scrutiny had taken place and where the case progressed for over four months thereafter, so it should have had updates recorded. We found evidence of updates in only one of those cases (10.0%).

7.49. While the ten-month scrutiny process is designed to maintain focus on longer-running cases, the process does not often generate meaningful action and is often perceived as a 'tick box' exercise by group leaders and CRMs, with varying methods and compliance. We heard that some group leaders complete the form themselves and use it to independently assess and track progress, while others ask their CRMs to complete the form, which, in our view, diminishes its effectiveness as a check and challenge on the case.

7.50. The ten-month scrutiny process was presented as a key assurance method in the CCRC's QAP, but we found that it is of limited value, given these inconsistencies. The process lacked impact on the quality of casework or compliance with the expected process, and provided limited evidence that cases were progressed as a result, when weighed against how resource-intensive completing the forms is.

7.51. We saw evidence that the QAT audited whether ten-month scrutiny was taking place. It was evident their findings had been reported to senior management, who were seeking to address non-compliance issues. However, there has been no thematic internal evaluation of the qualitative value scrutiny adds.

7.52. A more structured first-line assurance mechanism for assessing and monitoring casework should be implemented to drive consistency and quality — and inform learning needs, for individual CRMs and across the teams. The CCRC may want to consider adopting an approach similar to the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) case strategy assessment, which was developed

following our individual quality assessment inspection¹⁸. It would give management information on quality rather than process.

7.53. Second level assurance is currently conducted by the QMT in the form of dip samples of the ten-month scrutiny. The QMT fully accept they are not legally or casework-trained and their roles focus on quality in terms of compliance with the process. They are not in a position to drive qualitative improvement.

7.54. While compliance with first-line assurance is important, second-line assurance should also be qualitative. The CCRC may want to adopt a similar approach to that used in the CPS, where the second-line legal manager assures the quality of the first-line manager to ensure they are improving casework quality.

7.55. In the CCRC, the Head of Casework dip samples the group leaders' case review assessments for consistency and rigour. This would provide a valuable mechanism for management of the group leaders, identifying any learning needs or performance issues.

Recommendation 20

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review its first-line assurance mechanisms with a view to developing and implementing a new approach to assessing casework quality. This should include:

- considering the purpose, necessity and frequency of six-week case plan MOTs
- reviewing how ten-month scrutiny reviews are conducted
- implementing a second-level assurance process to assess the quality of the 10-month scrutiny decision-making.

Long-running cases committee

7.56. At the two-year point of a review, cases are examined by the long-running cases committee (LRCC). This process is intended to introduce fresh perspectives and additional support.

7.57. The LRCC meets monthly. The process involves the case review manager and group leader submitting a report to the LRCC, which is then reviewed by the head of casework and the director of casework.

¹⁸ *Individual quality assessment: an inspection of how the CPS uses IQA to monitor and improve casework quality*; HMCPSI; February 2025. hmcpsi.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/report/individual-quality-assessment-iqa-an-inspection-of-how-the-cps-uses-iqa-to-monitor-and-improve-casework-quality/

7.58. In March 2026, there were more than 100 cases on the LRCC list. Although the LRCC do not have time to go through all cases, we were told by all those involved that preparing for meetings could take several days.

7.59. The committee:

- assesses whether the report is accurate
- determines if tasks have been completed
- identifies potential factors causing delays.

7.60. It does not evaluate whether the assigned tasks are necessary or proportionate to the review.

7.61. Group leaders and CRMs consistently told us the LRCC provides very little by way of qualitative scrutiny. Our file examination supports this. Of the six cases we considered in which a review should have taken place, four (66.7%) showed evidence that the LRCC had reviewed the case. Only one of those four demonstrated the LRCC set clear actions to progress the case.

7.62. In one example, a case had not been subject to ten-month scrutiny by a group leader, nor was it apparent from the case narrative whether the case had been scrutinised by the LRCC, despite being two years old. Had the LRCC properly examined the case, it would have been apparent that the case could have been referred to a Commissioner significantly sooner.

In its current form, the LRCC is resource-intensive for the organisation and provides limited added value

7.63. In its current form, the LRCC is resource-intensive for the organisation and provides limited added value. Referrals are triggered solely by the duration of the case, rather than by case complexity, sensitivity, profile or the requirement for senior-level discussions with stakeholders. The sheer volume of cases within the LRCC's remit is too great, hindering any meaningful oversight.

7.64. The CCRC may wish to consider moving to a tool similar to case management panels (CMPs) to drive casework quality. We found in our recent inspection of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside¹⁹ that CMPs can work extremely

¹⁹ *Area inspection programme phase 3: CPS Yorkshire and Humberside*; HMCPSI; September 2025.

hmcpsi.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/report/an-inspection-of-cps-yorkshire-and-humberside-area-inspection-programme-phase-3/

well. They are a useful learning and development tool, providing senior managers with the opportunity to impart their knowledge and develop the legal skills of legal managers and lawyers, while gauging their training needs.

Recommendation 21

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review the effectiveness of the long-running cases committee to ensure the process is founded on a targeted, structured, manageable, risk-based model. This should include:

- a methodology for identifying key cases
- conducting a deeper level of scrutiny on a smaller number of cases
- proactive management of longer-running cases by group leaders.

Critical friend

7.65. The CCRC has an established SOP for the critical friend process (CFP): a peer review mechanism to assess analysis, conclusions and reasoning.

7.66. We found minimal application of the CFP, with only one instance highlighted to us from several years ago, in which the recommended approach was not adopted. No evidence of CFP utilisation was found within our file sample.

7.67. Although informal engagement with the process is encouraged and casework discussions among CRMs were apparent, there was no indication that the results of these conversations were recorded in the case narrative, nor of the impact they had on the case.

7.68. Furthermore, the QAP specifically references the CFP as a means of formal scrutiny, yet we saw no direct evidence of its use or impact during our inspection.

Recommendation 22

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should review and formalise when the critical friend process is required and how it is operated.

Outside the quality assurance programme

Group leader screening

7.69. A key role of the group leader is screening (see chapter 5). Throughout our file examination, we observed inconsistencies in the quality of these screenings.

7.70. A SOP details how a screening should be approached, but because there is no process in place to quality-assure the group leader's screening, a group leader will not necessarily know whether their approach is appropriate.

7.71. We found examples of cases where it was clear from the group leader's early screening that a recommendation could be made to a Commissioner at a much earlier stage. In our view, high-quality screening reviews identifying cases lacking merit could be referred directly to a Commissioner without further review by a CRM. This would reduce the volume of CRMs' work, allowing the deployment of resources to more complex cases. Group leaders can also give a firm direction for initial enquiries and the preservation of material.

7.72. When done properly, the group leader screening is an opportunity for the organisation to set a case review on the right track and ensure it is managed efficiently.

7.73. The dip sampling of group leaders' case review assessments we recommend in paragraph 8.50 should be extended to include screening reviews. There is currently no mechanism to assess the quality of these reviews, and such assurance is necessary to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and experience to positively impact the quality of the casework of the CRMs they line-manage. Such assurance would also drive consistency and compliance.

Recommendation 23

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop an effective first-line assurance mechanism to assure the quality of group leader screening and casework decision-making.

No appeals and reapplications

7.74. There are some categories of cases which the QAP does not touch.

7.75. No appeals and reapplications go through casework administration team (CAT) triage and are then allocated by the CAT directly to a CRM for triage. In the event there is nothing new (for reapplications) or no exceptional circumstances, the CRM drafts a statement of reasons and refers the case to a Commissioner.

7.76. The only view a group leader has over this cohort of cases is from their team's dashboard, which will show the volumes of these cases per CRM. The current process affords them no oversight of the nature or issues in these cases, and there is no quality assurance beyond any feedback from the Commissioners.

7.77. Given the importance of the group leader role to assurance and quality, this lack of oversight of work going directly to Commissioners is a clear gap.

Recommendation 24

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should implement a quality assurance process for the draft statements of reasons in no appeal and reapplication cases.

Statements of reasons

7.78. The CCRC's current process is for CRMs to draft statements of reasons and pass them directly to the Commissioners for decisions, without any oversight from the group leader unless the CRM is on probation. There is no policy or process built into the QAP that requires the group leader to scrutinise the draft statement. The only assurance is by the Commissioners.

7.79. Commissioners review and, if necessary, amend draft statements of reasons. Where Commissioners require further work, they contact the CRM directly. There is no formal process for the matter to have group leader oversight. Instead, the process relies on individual CRMs' judgement to escalate issues to their group leader.

7.80. Commissioners' feedback on the quality of draft statements is inconsistent because it is not a requirement of their role.

7.81. Where Commissioners suggest changes to statements of reasons, these should be tracked in the document itself to enable the QAP to take account of the draft and final versions of the statement. This does not always happen and, in our file sample, we found it difficult to establish what was drafted by the CRM before Commissioner review and what was the final version²⁰.

7.82. The Quality and Decision Coordinator reviews SoRs as part of closed case dip samples. However, those we spoke to across the QAT and casework teams accepted that this level of assurance serves as a compliance check and considers only the final statement, which may have been edited by the

²⁰ There were several instances during our file examination in which the draft statement of reasons did not contain tracked changes. In those cases, we compared document versions edited by the CRM vis-à-vis the commissioner through SharePoint.

Commissioner in any event. The process offers no assurance of the CRM's work.

7.83. The only exceptions are statements recommending referral to the Court of Appeal, which are reviewed by the director of casework.

7.84. In our file examination, we found that 15 of the 56 cases (26.8%) did not meet the standards expected, with four (7.1%) having major flaws. The group leaders we spoke with thought that they should have a role in quality assuring draft statements of reasons before they reached Commissioners, but current procedures did not call for them to undertake such assurance.

7.85. In our view, CRMs should send draft statements of reasons to their group leaders for review and approval before sending them to Commissioners. This would provide quality assurance at this critical stage in the CCRC's casework, provide a mechanism for feedback to individuals, and promote consistency across the casework teams.

Recommendation 25

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should strengthen its quality assurance arrangements for draft statements of reasons by introducing a clear and proportionate process for group leader oversight of statements before submission to Commissioners. This should include:

- defined expectations for when group leader scrutiny is required
- mechanisms for recording and tracking amendments made at each stage of the decision-making process
- a method to provide second-line quality assurance of the statement
- a mechanism for thematic issues to be considered by senior leadership.

Legal team

7.86. Not all CRMs or group leaders had a criminal law background before joining the CCRC. It is possible for cases to be managed by both a CRM and group leader without direct criminal trial experience.

7.87. In many instances, reviews do not involve complex legal issues, and this arrangement poses no challenges. However, certain matters may require specialised legal expertise to assist the CRM (and group leader). In such situations, the CCRC has access to a dedicated legal resource, consisting of four interns and a lawyer, overseen by in-house counsel.

7.88. Requests or tasks are sent to a central email inbox where an intern will allocate them to colleagues. Responses are sent directly to the requester.

7.89. We heard that interns' work is not reviewed, which has resulted in varying quality of legal research.

7.90. Legal work should be subject to appropriate oversight by qualified lawyers, with mechanisms to promote consistency, quality and learning, particularly in cases involving complex or specialist legal issues or where CRMs and group leaders do not have criminal litigation experience.

Recommendation 26

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should incorporate assurance of internal legal advice into the quality assurance programme. This should include clear processes for the allocation, supervision and review of legal work undertaken by interns and legal staff, proportionate to the complexity and risk of the advice provided.

Findings

7.91. The QMS, internal audits and closed case dip samples provide a level of organisational assurance and are effective in identifying procedural non-compliance and inconsistencies in documentation.

7.92. However, audit activity is often limited in scope and sample size. As currently designed, much of the assurance effort is weighted towards process compliance rather than the quality of casework.

7.93. The CCRC has established effective procedures for determining whether tasks have been completed. However, there is a need for improved assurance of the quality of reviews that add real value to the CCRC's casework. A clear definition of ownership for casework quality assurance at each process stage is essential. The group leader is pivotal to this responsibility.

7.94. Strengthening and integrating assurance so that it tests both process and substance is essential to improving grip, learning and continuous improvement in casework quality.

Recommendation 27

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop and implement an action plan to strengthen and integrate its quality assurance arrangements, so that they assess the quality of casework reasoning and decisions. This should be underpinned by a forensic, three-stage 'plan-do-review' cycle ensuring assessment of impact, with clear ownership for assurance of casework quality at each stage of the process.

8. Governance

Organisational structure and culture

8.1. Staff members, from administrators to the senior leadership team, consistently demonstrate enthusiasm and dedication in their roles at the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), striving to achieve excellence. Every person we spoke to was committed to doing the best they could with a demonstrable understanding of the impact their work could have on the lives of applicants and victims.

8.2. Staff in all roles are clearly committed to the aims of the CCRC, and that is evident through the notable tenure of many individuals, with several having served since the organisation's establishment. While this stability offers certain advantages, it may also pose challenges.

8.3. As outlined in chapter 3, the CCRC transitioned from a flat organisational structure to a hierarchical model by implementing wider leadership roles. Its employee engagement score in the Civil Service People Survey 2025 was 54%, down from 64% in 2024.

8.4. Despite the introduction of positions within the wider leadership team, the legacy of the former flat structure persists. The move away from full-time Commissioners, as identified by the Westminster Commission, removed a layer of assurance, flattening the hierarchy. The group leader role is intended to address this shortcoming, but our evidence indicates little control or a systemic approach to the quality of the work undertaken by case review managers (CRMs).

Despite the introduction of positions within the wider leadership team, the legacy of the former flat structure persists

8.5. We found that externally appointed staff in different roles were able to identify gaps, inefficiencies and alternatives to existing arrangements more readily than those who had been in post for many years. We were told that the senior leadership team was not maximising these fresh perspectives to their full potential. This was leading to frustration with the cause, rooted in legacy issues stemming from the CCRC's previous flat structure.

Senior leadership team

8.6. The head of casework operations and casework operations manager roles were created after the Westminster Commission. Some of the previous responsibilities of the director of casework operations were redistributed, with an attempt to distinguish between strategic and operational responsibilities for casework.

8.7. However, tasks are still not always being carried out at the most appropriate level.

8.8. For example, the involvement of the director of casework operations in the casework training group is unnecessary. The casework operations manager was taking on a caseload to help alleviate pressure in the casework administration team, which had hindered the time available for managerial and supervisory tasks. The head of casework operations should undertake thematic analysis of casework quality, but has been unable to make significant progress in this area due to other commitments.

Legal team

8.9. The legal team's remit has expanded beyond traditional in-house counsel functions. Presently, it consists of two lawyers: one dedicated to internal advisory work and another focused on external matters, including judicial review processes. In addition, there is a legal and information officer and counsel.

8.10. A recent paper submitted to the board proposed establishing a distinct casework team consisting of paralegals and trainees to handle no appeal cases. Although we have not seen this paper, we reached a similar conclusion from our file examination: that cases lacking exceptional circumstances may be efficiently managed by paralegals. This is subject to ensuring that paralegals are trained to spot outliers and that a process is put in place for marginal cases to be triaged by a CRM or group leader.

8.11. This is a good example of ensuring the right tasks are undertaken at the right level. This would also release CRMs to focus on review cases, addressing some of the issues causing delays.

8.12. Given the significant volume of complex legal issues managed by the organisation, it is notable that only one lawyer directly oversees casework. The responsibility of supervising four interns while responding to challenging legal enquiries introduces operational risk.

8.13. We acknowledge that not all CRMs and group leaders require legal qualifications. However, it is imperative that the in-house legal provision remains

suitable and sufficient. The effective use of interns reflects resourceful deployment, but law graduates' work should always be supervised by a qualified lawyer.

8.14. Referral to the legal team was mixed, with some CRMs reporting that there can be significant delays for a response, so they forgo requesting advice altogether. This presents a gap and a risk to the quality of casework. The CCRC will want to ensure that legal advice is properly sought in appropriate cases as part of the overarching assurance of case review quality.

Commissioners

8.15. When the CCRC was established, Commissioners were directly employed by the organisation, which supported the development of mentoring and advisory relationships within the organisational structure.

8.16. The move to the current model, under which Commissioners are appointed on a fee-paid basis, has changed how such relationships can operate in practice.

8.17. We found inconsistencies within the senior leadership team regarding the standards and expectations of the function and responsibilities of Commissioners. Some described a role that included mentoring and supporting CRMs, alongside collaborative engagement in case decision making outside the nominated decision maker role. Others understood the Commissioner's role to be limited to formal decision-making responsibilities.

8.18. Any correction, amendment, or request for further work by Commissioners needs a formal route into the management of casework.

Recommendation 28

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should develop a system whereby any change(s) to the statement of reasons, either made by or at the request of a Commissioner, are notified to the group leader who line manages the relevant case review manager.

Recommendation 29

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should clearly articulate how Commissioners' responsibilities for the quality assurance of casework align with and differ from the functions of group leaders.

8.19. The nominated decision maker (NDM) role operates alongside group leaders' line management of the CRMs. During the investigative phase, the NDM provides direction to the CRM.

8.20. We were told that it can cause confusion when there is a group leader and an NDM. The group leader may not remain cognisant of the case's progress, and there may be a lack of clarity as to who was responsible for providing feedback to the CRM. The NDM can also be the final decision-maker if the recommendation is not to refer, which could blur the separation between investigation and decision-making.

Recommendation 30

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should consider whether the functions currently undertaken by the nominated decision maker would be more appropriately carried out by group leaders or senior case review managers. Should the nominated decision maker role be retained, arrangements should be clarified so that feedback on a case review manager's performance is provided by the nominated decision maker to the group leader with line management responsibility.

Casework administration team

8.21. The casework administration team (CAT) had historically trained each other on how to deliver tasks, and there was very little formalised guidance in their part of the casework process. The team were confident in their roles and the delineation of responsibilities and spoke positively of the peer support, particularly the support and expertise provided by long-serving members of the team.

8.22. However, there was recognition that peer-to-peer induction without reference documents or formalised standards risked variation and inconsistency in practice, and that best practice was not always universally shared.

8.23. This was something the wider leadership team were aware of and seeking to address. We were told that a 'CAT manual', a kind of operational handbook, was under development by the casework operations manager. The casework administrators were aware of this and had contributed directly to the development of the manual.

8.24. They told us they believed the launch of this manual may have stalled due to competing priorities.

Recommendation 31

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should produce an operational manual for the casework administration team that provides guidance on allocation categories and processes.

Case review managers

8.25. Casework reviews are central to the CCRC's work and are undertaken by CRMs, alongside the more recently introduced senior CRMs and specialist CRMs.

8.26. We were told that CRMs manage high caseloads while also undertaking duties such as staffing the freephone helpline. This was described as contributing to pressure on casework delivery.

8.27. Given that CRMs already have regular contact with applicants through their casework, this work is at a level that may not represent the most proportionate use of resources, and could be handled by people other than CRMs.

We were told that CRMs manage high caseloads while also undertaking duties such as staffing the freephone helpline

8.28. We noted that steps have been taken to recruit additional CRMs to address case volumes. However, less consideration appears to have been given to expanding the group leader cadre, which may indicate how the organisation currently views the role and function of group leaders within the casework process.

8.29. Some CRMs described a culture emphasising individual case autonomy in decision-making and told us they saw limited value in the group leader screening process. They viewed case ownership and decision-making as residing exclusively with the CRM.

8.30. This perspective reflects the CCRC's previous operating model, before the introduction of group leaders, when cases were allocated directly to individual CRMs.

8.31. Senior CRMs could be utilised more effectively, for example, by acting as critical friends or by being deployed on more complex cases where additional expertise and challenge could add value.

Recommendation 32

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should define and implement a clearer, more strategic role for senior case review managers, setting out when and how they should be engaged in the casework process. This should include the use of senior case review managers to provide structured challenge and support in more complex or sensitive cases, thereby contributing to consistency in casework quality.

Group leaders

8.32. The CCRC has lots of guidance in relation to various aspects of the group leader's role: for example, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all of the case review stages and a dedicated SOP for screening. There was also a reference document, *Eight principles of effective 1:1s*. These documents set out the expectations for the role.

8.33. However, we found that group leaders received very little practical support, tools or training in terms of quality assurance of casework. This was particularly the case in actually delivering on some of these expectations, such as "supervising the portfolios of individual case reviewers" and "maintaining the quality and timeliness of review work in the group, including formal scrutiny and dip sampling".

8.34. We found consistent and structured performance management of casework quality and casework roles at CRM and group leader levels to be limited.

8.35. The assurance of casework is predicated on the six-month MOTs, 10-month scrutiny reviews and one-to-ones. We found inconsistent compliance with the delivery of the six-month MOTs and the ten-month scrutiny reviews during our file examination, which was acknowledged when we tested this in focus groups and interviews.

8.36. Some expressed the view that these were unnecessary for managing casework effectively on a day-to-day basis and that they were bureaucratic and added little value. We heard that there was a renewed focus on achieving process compliance, but we found no evidence of any impact review to assess whether these processes added value to casework.

8.37. There is no formal process for structured assurance of group leaders' role in casework. The lack of meaningful assurance and feedback, and a culture in which performance management appears to have been largely informal, has resulted in inconsistencies of practice and standards. Our recommendations around second-level assurance in chapter 7 will help strengthen consistency and improve standards.

8.38. The group leader role is central to supporting the delivery of high-quality casework. The CCRC should review the current scope and operation of the group leader role to make sure it is configured to maximise its contribution to:

- consistency
- adherence to standards and expectations
- development of CRMs
- improvement of casework quality.

8.39. This includes ensuring that group leaders are equipped with the appropriate authority to discharge these responsibilities effectively with CRMs.

8.40. In practice, the group leader role would benefit from greater clarity and consistency of focus. This should include a stronger emphasis on developing and supporting CRMs, proactively identifying delays or blockages within portfolios rather than relying solely on escalation and driving timely resolution. The role should also place greater weight on qualitative assurance, including case strategy, proportionality, lines of enquiry and readiness for decision-making, alongside existing expectations around timeliness and compliance.

8.41. Group leader screening remains an important function, but clearer expectations would support greater consistency.

8.42. We also identified scope for group leaders to undertake a proportionate level of assurance of draft statements of reasons, particularly in more complex cases.

Recommendation 33

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should redefine the group leader role as the primary first-line assurance function for casework quality, case progression and the development of case review managers. This should include clear accountability for assessing training and development needs, early case direction, active portfolio oversight, and proportionate quality assurance of key casework products, supported by appropriate management information and an agreed oversight framework.

Dynamics

8.43. The CCRC's SOPs require staff to ensure that the CCRC's Dynamics case management system is accurate, up to date and accessible, including the case narrative and all associated records. This is intended to provide colleagues and decision-makers with a clear and reliable account of case progress and decision-making.

8.44. The SOPs also state that significant case activity should be recorded promptly in the appropriate case record, with the case narrative acting as the central, continuous record of actions, analysis and decisions, thereby supporting a clear and robust audit trail.

8.45. These policies establish an expectation that portfolio oversight and the formal case record are maintained within Dynamics, rather than through personal email or calendar tools, to make sure information remains accessible to others.

8.46. However, we found that some staff rely on Outlook and individual Excel spreadsheets for task management or reminders, such as tracking the receipt of requested material, rather than using Dynamics consistently. This contributes to inconsistency, reduced organisational visibility, duplication of activity, and gaps in the quality and completeness of case records.

Recommendation 34

The Criminal Cases Review Commission should restate and reinforce expectations for using Dynamics and the case narrative as the primary shared case record and portfolio-management tools. This should be supported by targeted refresher training and routine assurance activity to promote consistent use across teams.

Remote working

8.47. Remote working, introduced by previous management, has led to a geographical spread of staff. This has been made to work well through purposeful team structures, scheduled opportunities for teams to come together, and examples of staff proactively seeking opportunities for collaboration.

8.48. However, we heard concerns about the isolation experienced by caseworkers dealing with potentially traumatic casework.

8.49. CCRC leadership is establishing a series of hubs in government buildings to give staff the option to work, at times of their choosing, with other CCRC staff from the same geographical area. There are currently the Birmingham HQ and a hub in Manchester, with at least three more to follow this summer.

Findings

8.50. The essence of the CCRC's former flat structure pervades throughout the organisation.

8.51. Managerial roles created have not been embedded or have been introduced without the necessary remit or authority to address quality assurance. Senior leaders need to ensure managers are supported in training, decision-making, and the assurance of their work, where there is currently a total absence.

8.52. The legal team are underutilised due to historical trust issues stemming from a failure to assure advice. As we saw in our file read, identifying legal issues at an early stage can prevent unnecessary and lengthy lines of enquiry, saving valuable time and resources and, more importantly, enabling prompt decision-making for applicants.

8.53. The relationship between the senior leadership team and Commissioners is confused. There were varying expectations regarding the Commissioner's role in quality assurance, which ran throughout the organisation.

8.54. Where NDMs are appointed, it is unclear where the group leader role fits into supervision and assurance. This can undermine the role of the group leader or leave the organisation exposed to casework that has not been properly quality-assured.

8.55. The group leader's role is a pivotal one in the organisation. The standards and expectations for all roles in casework need to be clearly defined, with structured and proportionate first- and second-line assurance of casework quality. This should feed into the organisational and individual training and development needs. Along with targeted senior leader oversight of the complex, sensitive, and high-profile cases, this will strengthen the quality of CCRC's casework delivery.

Annex A: Scope and framework

Scoping document

In July 2022, the government asked the Law Commission to review the law relating to criminal appeals with a view to ensuring that the courts have powers needed to enable the effective, efficient and appropriate resolution of appeals.

In July 2023, the commission published an issues paper which sought views on potential law reform. There were over 150 responses to the issues paper. The scope of the commission's review was extended in 2024 to include compensation and support for the wrongly convicted.

On 27 February 2025, the commission published a consultation paper²¹ as part of its public consultation (which ended on 27 June 2025). The consultation paper included several proposals, one of which was to make the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) subject to an independent inspectorate.

HMCPsi responded to the commission's call for evidence on 16 June 2025. Our response was specific to the issues raised in consultation question 66 and was limited to paragraphs 11.341 to 11.350 of the consultation paper. We said, "The value of external scrutiny is well understood. Having an assurance arrangement that allows for external assessment, carried out by a body that is independent of, but with expertise in the field, which publishes findings, allows for both public scrutiny and provides evidence to hold to account..."

"For 25 years, we have developed expertise in undertaking evidence-based assessment of the quality of legal decision-making. We provide assurance to the public through publishing all our reports ... Independent inspection provides a level of open scrutiny with the intention of improving the service of those inspected, driving improvement and making a difference to those who may rely on the services provided by the inspected body."

We further went on to indicate: "As the consultation document sets out (para 11.349), the chief inspector can inspect other public authorities using the 'assistance powers' in the Act²². More recently, we have carried out an inspection using the 'assistance powers', having published an inspection report on the Service Prosecuting Authority ... and we are currently inspecting the legal services department of the Health and Safety Executive. Any inspection using the 'assistance powers' is by invitation and outside the statutory requirements of HMCPsi.

²¹ *Criminal appeals consultation paper*; Law Commission; February 2025. [lawcom.gov.uk/publication/criminal-appeals-consultation-paper/](https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/publication/criminal-appeals-consultation-paper/)

²² *Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000*; UK Government; 2000. [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/10/contents](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/10/contents)

“Given pressures on resources, there is no guarantee HMCPsi will be able to carry out every ‘by invitation’ inspection we are invited to undertake. However, as set out in the consultation document, HMCPsi would, in principle, consider any request from the CCRC for an inspection positively. Discussion on the scope, scale, remit and funding of any inspection would be necessary.”

Background

In June 2025, the Ministry of Justice announced that Dame Vera Baird DBE KC had been appointed as interim chair (for the period of 18 months) of the CCRC. Dame Vera has set out a programme of review and improvement that she would like to deliver during her tenure in post, with the aim of building confidence internally and externally in the CCRC.

Aware of the advantages of third-level assurance from a professional inspectorate and of the proposal of the Law Commission, Dame Vera approached HMCPsi to assess whether an inspection by invitation would be a welcome request. Including what the possible remit of any inspection might cover and whether, if an inspection were possible, it could be conducted within 4–6 months. An initial meeting with the chief inspector took place on 12 August.

In line with HMCPsi’s inspection strategy, which sets out that HMCPsi will, if resources allow, conduct one inspection per year using its assistance powers, this year we have already conducted one inspection by invitation: an inspection of the legal services division of the Health and Safety Executive. However, given that HMCPsi is likely to receive statutory powers to inspect CCRC (depending on the outcome of the Law Commission review), undertaking an inspection by invitation on a cost-recovery basis would be possible.

This inspection scope has been developed following a discussion between the chief inspector of HMCPsi and the interim chair of the CCRC. To help develop the draft scope, HMCPsi has had sight of the staff structure and the CCRC’s quality assurance programme policy, and has discussed them with a number of senior CCRC staff.

Scope of inspection

The structures and processes for managing casework are within scope for this inspection. This includes any related quality assurance mechanisms in place, carried out within the business planning and performance function.

All corporate functions (finance, communications, HR) are out of scope. Investigation functions are out of scope.

Given the independent nature of Commissioners²³, any inspection of the functions undertaken by Commissioners is out of scope. However, because they make decisions on case files delivered by casework teams, a number of Commissioners will be interviewed as part of the inspection.

The extent of interviews with Commissioners is therefore limited to the quality of the casework, including case reviews, on the cases they have referred to them for decision-making and the mechanisms by which they provide feedback on the quality of the casework in the case files provided.

Inspection question

Is the structure of the CCRC and its assurance processes effective in delivering high-quality case reviews?

Objectives

- To identify and evaluate whether the assurance processes used are implemented consistently and are effective.
- To identify whether structural arrangements are effective in delivering high-quality case reviews.
- To assess if current management assurance processes are effective and drive the right culture of learning and improvement.
- To highlight examples of good practice.

²³ Commissioners are not directly employed by the CCRC but are fee-paid independent practitioners.

Inspection criteria

We will assess the following:

Quality assurance processes

Management and assurance

Are management and assurance processes implemented consistently and effectively?

Inspection objective sub-criteria:

- i. Are the roles of all involved in casework assurance, at all levels (casework operations director through to group leaders), clearly defined and understood?
- ii. Are casework quality mechanisms effective?
- iii. Are casework quality mechanisms complied with?
- iv. Does casework management and assurance result in a high-quality product for the decision-making Commissioner(s) to use?
- v. Are the standards set out in the quality assurance programme policy clearly understood and adhered to?
- vi. Is the quality assurance programme policy fit for purpose?

Casework structures

Do current structural arrangements aid the delivery of high-quality casework?

Inspection objective sub-criteria:

- i. Are the current team and management structures and delineation of roles fit for purpose?
- ii. Are current arrangements for team working and management (remote working – six-team structure) appropriate?
- iii. Do current structures aid the sharing of best practices and cross-discipline learning?

Learning and improvement

Do management assurance processes and structures drive the right culture of learning and improvement?

Inspection objective sub-criteria:

- i. Are mechanisms for induction, training and support effective?
- ii. Does case learning and assurance result in effective sharing of good practice?
- iii. Do lessons learned from assurance and the learning from experience forum drive a culture of improvement?
- iv. Are lessons learned incorporated into policy and guidance? Is there a continuous improvement approach?
- v. How does ongoing professional development and training support CCRC casework quality?

Methodology

This inspection will comprise a review of relevant documents, a limited file examination and on-site attendance to conduct interviews and focus groups with relevant staff.

Document request

We will examine relevant documents relating to systems, processes, standards, expectations, learning and development, and quality assurance.

On-site phase

Interviews will be conducted with key personnel from across the organisation.

Interviews will be used to gather evidence and to identify good practice and, where appropriate, examples of lessons learned. HMCPSI will pick (a random sample of) participants for focus group interviews. To achieve the best evidence, the default will be to hold interviews and focus groups in person.

File examination

In addition, a small, targeted file examination will form part of the evidence base. A minimum of 18 cases, including no fewer than three from each team (6x3), will be randomly requested. Whilst on-site, we will carry out real-time observations of three cases while they sit with case review managers, specialist case review managers, and senior case review managers. Real-time observations and process walk-throughs will also be carried out with casework administrators. If

possible, within the on-site timetable, inspectors will also observe group leader one-to-one review meetings.

Although we are reviewing case files, our report will contain no details of the parties involved in those cases, nor will any parties be identifiable through references to cases or case studies.

Timetable

The inspection will be formally commissioned at the beginning of December 2025, with the evidence-gathering phase commencing in January 2026, and publication of our report late spring/early summer.

Equality impact assessment

A preliminary evaluation of the need for an equality impact assessment (EIA) has been undertaken. I have considered the likely effects of this inspection on disadvantaged groups or individuals with a protected characteristic. In my opinion, given the nature of the inspection and the methodology to be used, there is no indication that any protected groups are likely to be affected by the outcome of the inspection.

As no impacts were identified during screening for this inspection, it is not anticipated that a full EIA will be required. This will, of course, be kept under review throughout the inspection. We will comply with our public service equality duties in respect of all decision-making relating to this inspection.

Annex B: File record sheet

Case information

Inspector:	
Applicant name:	
Case reference:	
CCRC casework group	Argon Krypton Neon Radon Xenon Zircon
Appeal against	Sentence Conviction Both
Original conviction venue	MC CC
Was the case prosecuted by the CPS?	Yes No – Please specify (SPA/DWP/EA/OFSTED/HSE/etc.)

Case type	Review No Appeal Reapplication No Appeal (Reapplication) Ineligible
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Note:

Review = All post-appeal, first applications to the CCRC. Although reapplications and No Appeal cases that require a substantive review will move to the Review pathway, they should be categorised according to their initial triage.

No Appeal = An application in respect of a conviction, verdict, finding or sentence, where the individual has not had an appeal determined, or leave to appeal refused, in respect of that conviction, verdict, finding or sentence. Where the sentence has been appealed but the conviction has not, it is a no appeal case.

Reapplication = An application in respect of a conviction, verdict, finding or sentence, which the CCRC has considered on at least one previous occasion.

No appeal (Reapplication) = A case where the Applicant is reapplying to the CCRC but has still not appealed.

Ineligible = Any case which does not fall within the CCRC's jurisdiction, or which is still within the statutory time period for appeal.

Final case category	Type 0 Type 1 Type 2 Type 3
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Note: All review cases are categorised from type 1 to type 4, depending upon the CCRC's assessment of the case complexity and estimated amount of work for the CCRC to resolve it. This can also change throughout the life of the case. Type 4 cases are out of scope.

Cases excluded at CAT triage, CRM triage or Ineligible are type 0.

Outcome	Ineligible Raising nothing new and no exceptional circumstances (No Appeal cases only) Raising no fresh issues and no exceptional circumstances (Reapplications only) Recommendation to Single Commissioner Recommendation to Committee Withdrawn Closed for non-cooperation
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Note: This is not the final outcome, but the CRM's recommendation.

Date received (DD/MM/YYYY)

Note: This is the start date given under the 'All details' tab with start date described as the date the application is received.

Date first allocated to CRM

Date passed for decision

Questions

Questions	Answer options	Detail
Administration and CAT triage		
1. Has the Application been acknowledged within 10 working days from receipt at CCRC?	Yes/No	
2. Is the application eligible?	Yes/No	
3. Has the eligibility criteria been correctly applied?	Yes/No	
4. If the case is eligible, has it been assigned to the right pathway?	Yes/No/Ineligible	
5. Were section 17 powers used to secure additional evidence at the triage stage?	Yes/No – appropriate not to use/No – Inappropriate not to use/Ineligible	
Reapplication		
6. Did the CRM assessment identify any new issues raised by the Applicant which have not been considered by the CCRC previously?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
7. Has the CRM considered whether there might have been any relevant scientific, medical, legal, or other developments and issues which require further investigation and could lead the CCRC to look again at some aspect of the case?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
8. Has the CRM reasonably assessed whether there are new issues and/or developments?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
No appeal		
9. Did the CRM find there were potential exceptional circumstances why the applicant cannot now appeal?	Yes/No/NA/Ineligible	

Questions	Answer options	Detail
10. The CRM made a reasonable recommendation?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
11. Was the CRM's triage recommendation made within 30 working days of receipt of the application?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Group leader screening		
12. If the case was a no appeal case with potential exceptional circumstances, or a reapplication with new issues, does the group leader agree with the CRM?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
13. Has the group leader: a) Prepared a short summary of the case and application; b) Offered thoughts as to how the review may proceed; c) Established what material needs to be preserved; d) Decided the case type (1, 2, 3 or 4); e) Considered the need for victim notification; f) Considered whether there is anything to suggest a risk assessment is required?	Yes/Partially/No/N/A/Ineligible	
14. Has the group leader considered and addressed all the core submissions made?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
15. Has the group leader considered other lines of enquiry which arise which could give rise to a real possibility that the appeal court would not uphold the conviction/sentence?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	

Questions	Answer options	Detail
16. Were any lines of enquiry commenced reasonable at this stage?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
17. Were any reasonable lines of enquiry missed at this stage?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Review		
18. Has the case been allocated by the end of the third month following the month in which the application was received?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
19. Has the allocated CRM changed between initial allocation for review and case conclusion?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
20. If the CRM has changed during the case review, has it caused any undue delay?	Yes – delay/Yes – delay due to new approach/No/N/A/Ineligible	
21. Is there evidence the CRM has properly planned the review?	Yes/Mostly/Partially/No/N/A/Ineligible	
22. Did the CRM identify further reasonable enquiries to be conducted in addition to the group leader screen actions?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
23. If yes, was there a real prospect the lines of enquiry might produce evidence or arguments capable of affecting the safety of the conviction or sentence?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
24. Was material that was available but not used/adduced in the proceedings, adequately considered and evaluated by the CRM?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	

Questions	Answer options	Detail
25. Was the significance of any fresh material generated as a result of actions properly considered and evaluated by the CRM?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
26. Were developments in the law considered?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
27. Was any internal legal CGN guidance referenced or was it apparent that it had been applied?	Yes/No/No – but there was no relevant guidance/N/A/Ineligible	
28. Is there evidence of a progress review?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
29. Was the progress review effective?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
30. Has there been a period of 2 months or more where little to no progress has been made on the case?	Yes – with justification/Yes – no justification/No/N/A/Ineligible	
31. Was there evidence the case was prioritised ²⁴ (at any point in its life), and if so, was the decision to prioritise appropriate?	Yes – prioritised and appropriate / Yes – prioritised but inappropriate/No – not prioritised and appropriate/No – not prioritised but inappropriate/N/A/Ineligible	
Magistrates' court appeal only		
32. Was the correct test applied?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	

²⁴ Cases are generally allocated in date order of receipt. However, cases are given higher priority if: a) the Court of Appeal has referred the case; b) the applicant has applied for a review of sentence only and has less than two years to serve in prison; c) the applicant is in prison for the relevant offence (as opposed to being at liberty); d) the duration of the review is 2 years or longer; e) there are exceptional circumstances that justify priority attention – taking account of the following factors: 1) the old age (75 years or older) and/or ill health of the applicant where there is concern that the applicant may die before the case is dealt with; 2) evidence that the applicant's serious ill health (or that of any close family member of the applicant) is directly and significantly aggravated by any delay; 3) the youth of the applicant where, having regard to the nature of the offence, the sentence imposed and the applicant's personal circumstances, the conviction has an exceptionally adverse impact on their welfare and/or educational and career prospects; 4) the risk of being unable to secure or obtain relevant evidence, or of relevant evidence deteriorating, for whatever reason (priority being relevant to the point at which the evidence is secured); 5) our assessment of the likelihood of the conviction or sentence being referred to the appeal court; 6) the impact of delay on the criminal justice system.

Questions	Answer options	Detail
33. Did the CRM apply their mind correctly to the inclusion of new evidence?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Draft statement of reasons (SoR)		
34. Type of draft SoR	Decision Notice/Letter/Report/Ineligible	
35. Was the communication of the decision to the Applicant accessible?	Yes/No	
36. Does the draft SoR contain a summary of the relevant history, issues raised, investigation undertaken and does it adequately explain the result of the CCRC's review? Guidance on the appropriate format – Drafting Handbook.	Yes/Mostly/Partially/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Decision pathway		
37. Was there a decision pathway?	Yes/No/No appeal triage case/Ineligible	
38. Did the decision pathway refer to all relevant documents and ask all relevant question for the Commissioner(s) to make a sound decision?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
39. What was the recommendation?	Refer/Not to refer/No recommendation/Exercise discretion/Ineligible	
40. Did the Commissioner require further work to be completed before making a decision?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Case narrative		
41. Was there a clear audit trail of key events, decisions, and actions recorded on the case narrative?	Yes/No	

Questions	Answer options	Detail
42. Is there reference/evidence of advice being sought or internal cross-discipline collaboration?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Assurance		
43. Was there a 6-week Case Plan 'MOT' on the case?	Yes/No/ N/A/Ineligible	
44. If yes, was it fully completed?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
45. Was there a 10-month scrutiny review on the case?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
46. If yes, was it effective in progressing the case?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
47. Did the group leader use their discretion to not conduct a 10-month scrutiny review where one would otherwise have been due?	Yes – it was used appropriately/Yes – but used inappropriately/No/N/A/Ineligible	
48. If a 10-month scrutiny has been undertaken, has the Case Progress Report and Action Plan been updated at least every four months?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
49. If the case has been under review for more than 2 years, is there evidence it has been scrutinised by the long running case committee?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
50. If yes, did the LRCC set clear actions to progress the case?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
51. Did the report to the LRCC accurately capture the relevant issues?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
52. Has the case been subject to formal dip sample or Quality Assurance assessment?	Yes - 10-month scrutiny review dip sample/Yes - QA Review Dip Sample/Yes – Both/No/Ineligible	

Questions	Answer options	Detail
53. If there was a formal DIP/QA recorded, did it set appropriate actions and/or areas for improvement?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
Applicant and victim care		
54. Has correspondence from the Applicant been acknowledged?	Yes/No/N/A	
55. Has the Applicant been updated as to the status of their case within four months of receiving the application, and then kept updated every three months thereafter?	Yes/No	
56. Was the victim notified of the application?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	
57. Was the decision to notify the victim or not properly considered?	Yes/No/N/A/Ineligible	

Annex C:

File examination data

Case information	Number	%
CCRC casework group		
Argon	8	13.3%
Krypton	16	26.7%
Neon	8	13.3%
Radon	9	15.0%
Xenon	9	15.0%
Zircon	10	16.7%
Appeal against		
Sentence	9	15.0%
Conviction	12	20.0%
Both	39	65.0%
Original conviction venue		
Magistrates' court	10	16.7%
Crown Court	50	83.3%
Was the case prosecuted by the CPS?		
Yes	57	95.0%
No	3	5.0%
Case category²⁵		
Review	19	31.7%
No Appeal	25	41.7%
Reapplication	8	13.3%
No Appeal (Reapplication)	4	6.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
Final case type		
Type 0	31	51.7%
Type 1	12	20.0%
Type 2	11	18.3%
Type 3	6	10.0%
Outcome		
Ineligible	4	6.7%

²⁵ Our file selection used the final case category or type. Therefore, the numbers do not correspond directly to the those found in chapter 4. For example, a case may be classified as a 'No appeal' case but subsequently move to the review pathway if there are exceptional circumstances.

Case information	Number	%
No exceptional circumstances (No Appeal)	17	28.3%
Nothing new/changed (Reapplications)	8	13.3%
Recommendation to Single Commissioner	24	40.0%
Recommendation to Committee	7	11.7%

Administration and CAT triage

1. Has the Application been acknowledged within ten working days from receipt at CCRC?

Yes	51	85.0%
No	9	15.0%

2. Is the application eligible?

Yes	56	93.3%
No	4	6.7%

3. Has the eligibility criteria been correctly applied?

Yes	60	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

4. If the case is eligible, has it been assigned to the right pathway?

Yes	54	90.0%
No	2	3.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

5. Were section 17 powers used to secure additional evidence at the triage stage?

Yes	15	25.0%
No – appropriate not to use	39	65.0%
No – Inappropriate not to use	2	3.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Reapplication

6. Did the CRM assessment identify any new issues raised by the Applicant which have not been considered by the CCRC previously?

Yes	3	5.0%
No	9	15.0%
NA	44	73.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Reapplication

7. Has the CRM considered whether there might have been any relevant scientific, medical, legal, or other developments and issues which require further investigation and could lead the CCRC to look again at some aspect of the case?

Yes	8	13.3%
No	4	6.7%
NA	44	73.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

8. Has the CRM reasonably assessed whether there are new issues and/or developments?

Yes	11	18.3%
No	1	1.7%
NA	44	73.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

No appeal

9. Did the CRM find there were potential exceptional circumstances why the applicant cannot now appeal?

Yes	7	11.7%
No	20	33.3%
NA	29	48.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

10. Did the CRM make a reasonable recommendation?

Yes	26	43.3%
No	1	1.7%
NA	29	48.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

11. Was the CRM's triage recommendation made within 30 working days of receipt of the application?

Yes	15	25.0%
No	12	20.0%
NA	29	48.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Group leader screening

12. If the case was a no appeal case with potential exceptional circumstances, or a reapplication with new issues, does the group leader agree with the CRM?

Yes	9	15.0%
No	0	0.0%
NA	47	78.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

13. Has the group leader:

- a) Prepared a short summary of the case and application;
- b) Offered thoughts as to how the review may proceed;
- c) Established what material needs to be preserved;
- d) Decided the case type (1, 2, 3 or 4);
- e) Considered the need for victim notification;
- f) Considered whether there is anything to suggest a risk assessment is required?

Yes	22	36.7%
Partially	1	1.7%
No	6	10.0%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

14. Has the group leader considered and addressed all the core submissions made?

Yes	26	43.3%
No	3	5.0%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

15. Has the group leader considered other lines of enquiry which arise which could give rise to a real possibility that the appeal court would not uphold the conviction/sentence?²⁶

Yes	19	31.7%
No	1	1.7%
NA	36	60.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

²⁶ Aside from the grounds set out in the application and submissions, this question considers whether there are other lines of enquiry, and if they have been considered.

Group leader screening		
16. Were any lines of enquiry commenced reasonable at this stage?²⁷		
Yes	15	25.0%
No	1	1.7%
NA	40	66.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
17. Were any reasonable lines of enquiry missed at this stage?²⁸		
Yes	6	10.0%
No	23	38.3%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
Review		
18. Has the case been allocated by the end of the third month following the month in which the application was received?		
Yes	22	36.7%
No	7	11.7%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
19. Has the allocated CRM changed between initial allocation for review and case conclusion?		
Yes	5	8.3%
No	24	40.0%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
20. If the CRM has changed during the case review, has it caused any undue delay?		
Yes – delay	4	6.7%
Yes – delay due to new approach	0	0.0%
No	1	1.7%
NA	51	85.0%

²⁷ This is our qualitative assessment of whether enquiries commenced were appropriate (capable of having a bearing on whether there is a real possibility that the Court of Appeal would quash the conviction or vary the sentence).

²⁸ This question highlights whether we felt there were other lines of enquiry that were not identified but should have been, and that should have been progressed.

Review		
Ineligible	4	6.7%
21. Is there evidence the CRM has properly planned the review?		
Yes	16	26.7%
Mostly ²⁹	7	11.7%
Partially	6	10.0%
No	0	0.0%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
22. Did the CRM identify further reasonable enquiries to be conducted in addition to the group leader screen actions?		
Yes	13	21.7%
No	6	10.0%
NA	37	61.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
23. If yes, was there a real prospect the lines of enquiry might produce evidence or arguments capable of affecting the safety of the conviction or sentence?		
Yes	13	21.7%
No	0	0.0%
NA	43	71.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
24. Was material that was available but not used/adduced in the proceedings, adequately considered and evaluated by the CRM?³⁰		
Yes	12	20.0%
No	0	0.0%
NA	44	73.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
25. Was the significance of any fresh material generated as a result of actions properly considered and evaluated by the CRM?		
Yes	12	20.0%

²⁹ There are six elements of a high-quality case plan, four of which are considered in this question: familiarisation, issue identification, analysis, and actions and milestones. To achieve 'Mostly', there were no missing issues and only minor deficiencies. To achieve 'Partial,' a review was conducted, but some enquiries may not have been identified.

³⁰ This question assessed whether the CRM had assessed material that was already in existence and is separate to any fresh material that may be generated by CCRC enquiries.

Review		
No	2	3.3%
NA	42	70.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
26. Were developments in the law considered?		
Yes	5	8.3%
No	1	1.7%
NA	50	83.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
27. Was any internal legal CGN guidance referenced or was it apparent that it had been applied?		
Yes	5	8.3%
No - there is relevant guidance, and it has not been considered	5	8.3%
No - but there was no relevant guidance	18	30.0%
NA	28	46.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
28. Is there evidence of a progress review?		
Yes	20	33.3%
No	4	6.7%
NA	32	53.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
29. Was the progress review effective?		
Yes	13	21.7%
No	7	11.7%
NA	36	60.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
30. Has there been a period of 2 months or more where little to no progress has been made on the case?		
Yes – with justification ³¹	2	3.3%
Yes – no justification	9	15.0%
No	16	26.7%
NA	29	48.3%

³¹ There was good reason why there has been no progress and this was evidenced on the file.

Review		
Ineligible	4	6.7%
31. Was there evidence the case was prioritised (at any point in its life), and if so, was the decision to prioritise appropriate?		
Yes - prioritised and appropriate	4	6.7%
Yes - prioritised but inappropriate	0	0.0%
No - not prioritised and appropriate	19	31.7%
No - not prioritised but inappropriate	5	8.3%
NA	28	46.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Magistrates' court appeal only ³²		
32. Was the correct test applied?		
Yes	7	11.7%
No	1	1.7%
NA	48	80.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
33. Did the CRM apply their mind correctly to the inclusion of new evidence?³³		
Yes	3	5.0%
No	0	0.0%
NA	53	88.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Draft statement of reasons		
34. Type of draft SoR		
Decision Notice	38	63.3%
Letter	10	16.7%
Report	8	13.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
35. Was the communication of the decision to the Applicant accessible?		
Yes	58	96.7%
No	2	3.3%

³² Eight magistrates' court appeal cases were examined.

³³ Only three of the eight cases had new evidence.

Draft statement of reasons

36. Does the draft SoR contain a summary of the relevant history, issues raised, investigation undertaken and does it adequately explain the result of the CCRC's review?

Yes	41	68.3%
Mostly	5	8.3%
Partially	6	10.0%
No	4	6.7%
NA	0	0.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Decision pathway

37. Was there a decision pathway?

Yes	37	61.7%
No	0	0.0%
No appeal triage case	19	31.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

38. Did the decision pathway refer to all relevant documents and ask all relevant question for the Commissioner(s) to make a sound decision?

Yes	33	55.0%
No	4	6.7%
NA	19	31.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

39. What was the recommendation?

Refer	7	11.7%
Not to refer	49	81.7%
No recommendation	0	0.0%
Exercise discretion	0	0.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

40. Did the Commissioner require further work to be completed before making a decision?

Yes	7	11.7%
No	49	81.7%
NA	0	0.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Case narrative

41. Was there a clear audit trail of key events, decisions, and actions recorded on the case narrative?

Yes	57	95.0%
No	3	5.0%

42. Is there reference/evidence of advice being sought or internal cross-discipline collaboration?

Yes	23	38.3%
No	4	6.7%
NA	29	48.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Assurance

43. Was there a 6-week Case Plan 'MOT' on the case?

Yes	3	5.0%
No	26	43.3%
NA	27	45.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

44. If yes, was it fully completed?

Yes	3	5.0%
No	0	0.0%
NA	53	88.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

45. Was there a 10-month scrutiny review on the case?

Yes	11	18.3%
No	7	11.7%
NA	38	63.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

46. If yes, was it effective in progressing the case?

Yes	3	5.0%
No	8	13.3%
NA	45	75.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Assurance		
47. Did the group leader use their discretion to not conduct a 10-month scrutiny review where one would otherwise have been due?³⁴		
Yes – it was used appropriately	2	3.3%
Yes – but used inappropriately	5	8.3%
No	10	16.7%
NA	39	65.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
48. If a 10-month scrutiny has been undertaken, has the Case Progress Report and Action Plan been updated at least every four months?		
Yes	1	1.7%
No	9	15.0%
NA	46	76.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
49. If the case has been under review for more than 2 years, is there evidence it has been scrutinised by the long-running case committee?		
Yes	4	6.7%
No	2	3.3%
NA	50	83.3%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
50. If yes, did the LRCC set clear actions to progress the case?		
Yes	1	1.7%
No	3	5.0%
NA	52	86.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
51. Did the report to the LRCC accurately capture the relevant issues?		
Yes	3	5.0%
No	1	1.7%
NA	52	86.7%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
52. The case been subject to formal dip sample or Quality Assurance assessment?		
Yes - 10-month scrutiny review dip sample	4	6.7%

³⁴ In our file sample, 17 cases required a ten-month scrutiny. In five of those cases, the group leader exercised their discretion not to conduct a scrutiny without good reason.

Assurance		
Yes - QA Review Dip Sample	4	6.7%
Yes - Both	0	0.0%
No	48	80.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
53. If there was a formal DIP/QA recorded, did it set appropriate actions and/or areas for improvement?		
Yes	4	6.7%
No	4	6.7%
NA	52	86.7%

Applicant and victim care		
54. Has correspondence from the Applicant been acknowledged?		
Yes	53	88.3%
No	1	1.7%
NA	6	10.0%
55. Has the Applicant been updated as to the status of their case within four months of receiving the application, and then kept updated every three months thereafter?		
Yes	50	83.3%
No	10	16.7%
56. Was the victim notified of the application?		
Yes	7	11.7%
No	34	56.7%
NA	15	25.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%
57. Was the decision to notify the victim or not properly considered?		
Yes	35	58.3%
No	6	10.0%
N/A	15	25.0%
Ineligible	4	6.7%

Annex D: Glossary

Case management panel

A structured forum to review case progress, challenge decisions, and support learning.

Case narrative

The central record in Dynamics intended to capture actions, analysis and decisions throughout the life of a case.

Case review manager (CRM)

The caseworker responsible for conducting reviews of applications, including analysis, lines of enquiry, and preparing recommendations.

Casework administration team (CAT)

The administrative team responsible for initial triage, case set-up and supporting casework throughout the life of an application.

Casework guidance note

A formal document providing guidance on casework practice or specific subject areas.

Compliance assurance

Activity focused on whether required processes, policies and standards are followed (for example, completion of tasks, timeliness markers and document control), rather than the substantive quality of casework decisions.

Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (CAA 1995)

The legislation that established the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC)

An independent body that reviews alleged miscarriages of justice and may refer cases to the appeal courts.

Critical friend process (CFP)

A peer review mechanism intended to provide challenge and scrutiny of analysis, reasoning and conclusions.

Dip sample

A quality check based on reviewing a selected subset of cases, rather than all cases.

Dynamics

The Criminal Cases Review Commission's case management system.

Group leader

A manager responsible for leading a casework group and overseeing screening, allocation, and casework assurance within the team.

Ineligible

A case category used at triage where an application cannot be progressed (for example, because it is outside jurisdiction or otherwise not eligible for Criminal Cases Review Commission review).

ISO 9001:2015

An international standard setting out requirements for quality management systems.

Long-running cases committee (LRCC)

A committee intended to review cases that have been under review for an extended period (for example, two years).

MOT

A check intended to scrutinise the quality of the case plan for a case that has been under review for more than six weeks.

Nominated decision maker (NDM)

A Commissioner appointed in some complex cases to provide direction during the review and/or take decisions.

Non-executive director (NED)

An independent member of the governance framework who provides scrutiny and oversight but does not undertake casework decision-making.

Operational performance indicator

A metric used to monitor performance (for example, timeliness or process completion).

Post-closure correspondence

Communication received after a case has been closed, which may require triage to determine whether it contains fresh information or should be treated as a complaint or reapplication.

Qualitative assurance

Activity focused on the quality of casework reasoning, proportionality of lines of enquiry and decision-making, rather than solely whether required processes have been followed.

Quality assurance programme (QAP)

The Criminal Cases Review Commission policy describing the assurance framework and safeguards intended to oversee casework quality and compliance.

Quality management system (QMS)

The formal system of procedures, policies, and controls intended to support quality management (including ISO 9001:2015 alignment).

Quality management team (QMT)

The team responsible for managing and maintaining the quality management system and related compliance assurance activity.

Real possibility test

The statutory test used by the Criminal Cases Review Commission when deciding whether to refer a case: whether there is a real possibility that the conviction or sentence would not be upheld.

Reapplication

A case category in which the applicant has previously submitted an application to the Criminal Cases Review Commission regarding the same conviction or sentence and a final determination has been issued, but now raises new matters or developments.

Screening

The group leader's assessment of a review case, intended to summarise the application, determine case type, identify material to preserve, and set an initial strategy.

Senior leadership team

The executive leadership group responsible for day-to-day organisational management and delivery of strategic objectives.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

A document setting out how a process should be carried out.

Statement of reasons (SoR)

The written document prepared for applicants explaining the outcome of the Criminal Cases Review Commission's review and the reasons for that decision.

Triage

The initial handling of an application to determine eligibility, category and the next steps (including allocation pathway).

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code)

Sets out duties on criminal justice agencies (including the Criminal Cases Review Commission) in relation to victims.

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

London Office

7th Floor, Tower
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9GL
Tel. 020 4574 3218

York Office

Foss House, Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York, North Yorkshire, YO1 7PX
Tel. 01904 54 5490

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