

Witness Name: Sarah Jones MP

Statement No: WITN0454001

Dated: 19 May 2026

THE NOTTINGHAM INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF SARAH JONES MP

I, Sarah Jones MP, Minister of State for Policing and Crime, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. I am the Minister of State at the Home Office for Policing and Crime. I was appointed on 6 September 2025.
2. I was first elected as a Member of Parliament to represent Croydon Central in 2017. Prior to joining Parliament I worked for Mo Mowlam MP and the Labour Party, for the housing and homelessness organisation Shelter, and within the NHS Confederation. I then worked within the civil service between 2008 and 2012. During that time I worked in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport ("DCMS"). I did not have involvement in areas relevant to this inquiry in DCMS.

Between 2012 -2017 I worked for a range of organisations as a consultant, including in relation to the expansion of Gatwick Airport.

3. After becoming an MP I was shadow Minister for Housing between 2018 and 2020. I was shadow Minister for Policing and Crime between 2020 and 2023.
4. I launched and was Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime which published reports relating to knife crime [HOMF0000148], [HOMF0000149]. I left that group in 2020, as it conflicted with my shadow ministerial role.
5. Within the current administration I was minister for Industry at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and the Department for Business and Trade.
6. This witness statement is made to assist the Nottingham Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 24 April 2026 (the "Request"). This statement has been prepared with the assistance of Counsel and lawyers at the Government Legal Department. Where information is not within my direct knowledge I have been assisted in answering the Inquiry's questions by those in my Department.
7. The Home Secretary has paid tribute to the families of Barnaby Webber, Grace O'Malley-Kumar and Ian Coates, and to Marcin Gawronski, Sharon Miller and Wayne Birkett for what they suffered in the attacks. She identified when setting up this Inquiry that "the bereaved families and survivors of the Nottingham

Attacks, who have suffered so much, deserve to know how these horrific incidents were able to happen". I would like to reiterate those words and offer also my condolences to the victims of the attacks.

WHITE PAPER: 'FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL: A NEW MODEL FOR POLICING'

8. The Inquiry have asked me to address further questions about the White Paper "*From local to national: a new model for policing*" ("the White Paper") **[HOMF0000108]**.

9. The White Paper was presented to Parliament in January 2026 by the Home Secretary. It sets out far reaching and ambitious proposals for modernising policing and improving performance among police forces. In particular it:
 - a. Identifies how there can be better policing for local communities;
 - b. commits to the introduction of a National Police Service (described at paragraph 20 below);
 - c. sets out plans for structural reform of the 43-force model;
 - d. identifies how technology is to be adopted by police forces; and
 - e. restores to Government the role of setting standards and holding forces (including Chief Constables) to account for their performance.

10. These are major and radical reforms. They are necessary: trust in the police has been falling and there is an unacceptable level of variation in standards of police forces around the country; there has been a decline in neighbourhood policing; the policing system is incoherent and fragmented; there is a lack of high-quality

data across forces; and police capabilities are not keeping up with changing threats. The reforms will require hard work both by my department and from policing colleagues in order that they can be as successful as possible in improving the current system and making our country safe.

11. A summary of the reforms is published on the *Gov.uk* website [HOMF0000151].

12. The Inquiry should also be aware of “Protecting Lives, Building Hope”, the Government’s plan to halve knife crime, published in April 2026 [HOMF0000152].

The aim is to fulfil the Government’s ambitious manifesto promise to halve knife crime within a decade, in particular by focusing on preventing knife crime amongst children and young people.

13. I have been asked to address the following specific areas of particular interest to the inquiry: force mergers; the National Police Service; accountability & standards; and AI. I have also been asked about information sharing between forces and the use of the NicheRMS365 and Law Enforcement Data Service systems. I describe first the strengthening of local policing with which the White Paper is also concerned and which provides some context for other reforms.

Strengthening of local policing

14. The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee was announced on 10 April 2025. The Guarantee means that each neighbourhood will have named, contactable officers with guaranteed response times and increased patrols in town centres and other hotspots. This is to be monitored by a neighbourhood policing performance

framework. The White Paper sets out the Government's plans to deliver more neighbourhood policing personnel, design new standards, and increase training. Funding has been announced, to the sum of £200 million in 2025-6 to boost recruitment.

Force Structures

15. The Government wants to ensure we have the right policing in the right places, so that local police can respond to the crimes which affect local communities and national policing can protect us all.

16. Local policing, that is responsive to local community issues, is at the heart of the reforms we will make to the model of policing in England and Wales to ensure it is fit for the modern world. This includes establishing Local Policing Areas (LPAs) within each force, led by a Local Policing Area commander and with policing teams focused on tackling issues that matter to local communities. Local Policing Areas will deliver the policing services the public are most likely to call upon, including emergency response, local crime investigation and neighbourhood policing, to a consistent standard. Local Policing Areas will form the foundation of fewer, larger police forces, that have the resilience to manage complex investigations and deliver specialist services that protect the public.

Police Mergers

17. The White Paper commits to reducing the number of police forces across England and Wales by the end of next Parliament. The current 43-force model is outdated and inefficient and is no longer fit for purpose. Some forces are too

small to handle complex investigations or major incidents and duplication of support functions draws money away from neighbourhood policing.

18. The Government appointed Lord Bernard Hogan Howe to chair an Independent Review of Police Force Structures, which was launched on 17 March 2026 and is to report back in the summer [HOMF0000153]. The Review has been tasked with making evidence-based recommendations on the optimum number and configuration of forces. It will consider cost, governance and accountability arrangements, as well as how reforms should be implemented. Local policing considerations will remain at the heart of any changes to police force structures. The review will consider how a move to fewer, larger forces can best deliver a responsive policing service to local communities through the establishment of Local Policing Areas.

The National Police Service

19. The national tier of policing needs reform. The fact that there are multiple national policing organisations creates confusion and duplication. Delivery of large programmes is often contingent upon voluntary agreements. The response to serious, cross-border and technology enabled crime also requires a more joined up response.
20. The government announced in the White Paper that a new national police force—the National Police Service (NPS)— would be established to:

- Strengthen our ability to tackle terrorism and serious organised crime by bringing together the National Crime Agency, Counter Terrorism Policing and Regional Organised Crime Units;
- Provide a single source of strategic leadership for the police service in areas such as data, technology and training;
- Set stronger national standards to ensure a more consistent service for the public across the country;
- Provide local policing with better support services. At a minimum, this will include responsibility for national IT, commercial, National Police Air Service and forensics;

21. A national police commissioner will be appointed to lead the force and will serve as the most senior police officer in the country.

22. As one force, it will be better equipped to share technology, intelligence and resources, and to stop the growing threat from crime that has become increasingly complex, digital, online and with no respect for constabulary borders.

23. As an example, the White Paper identifies that “the current, fragmented system where each of the 43 forces decide how to deliver and fund forensics individually means efficiencies of scale are lost, administrative costs are higher than they need be and it is slower than it should be to identify and drive adoption of promising new techniques.” Demand for specialist digital forensics means there are 20,000 devices awaiting analysis at any time. The service will address these

backlogs and enable the police to keep up with the ever-increasing pace of change in technology.

24. The Government is supporting forces to deliver £354 million of efficiency savings by the end of this parliament - scrapping outdated approaches to procurement and improving the use of technology and AI - to reinvest in frontline policing.

Accountability and Standards

25. The White Paper identifies that between 2010 and 2024 the government stopped setting clear national standards and lost focus on holding the police to account for delivery.
26. The Government will set out a single set of 'National Strategic Policing Priorities' (NSPP) issued by the Home Secretary, to unite policing around a single vision for improvement and reduce unacceptable variation in standards. There will be a duty to comply with the NSPP and a new Police Performance Framework will assist in measuring how well those outcomes are met. Better use of data will allow the Government to spot trends and identify poor performance by forces. We have established a new Home Office Police Performance Improvement Unit to use this data in order to improve performance.
27. The Government is also fundamentally reforming the Policing Protocol (a statutory document which currently sets out how, in the Home Secretary's view, Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables, Police and Crime Panels

and the Secretary of State should exercise their functions and how they should work together) in order to articulate the roles and responsibilities of all policing leaders within the system. It will clarify the appropriate use of the Home Secretary's powers to intervene to support improvement within policing where necessary.

28. The Government proposes to take a more active leadership role within policing, to improve performance across forces. To understand how well a force is performing and build public confidence, we are designing a new policing performance system in close collaboration with forces, the CoP, the NPCC and other partners connected to the structure of policing. We will also establish new Local Policing Guarantees that set out the minimum levels of service the public should expect to receive from their police force, backed up by measurable targets for policing. Building on the HMICFRS Scan/Engage process, the policing performance system has been developed with four performance levels including a new Level 4 'special measures' for the most poorly performing forces. Where performance has deteriorated and more focused improvement activity is needed, "turnaround teams" will be introduced.
29. There will be new powers for HMICFRS in order to ensure that recommendations from reports are implemented. In the case of severe failures in performance, there will be new powers for the Home Secretary to appoint intervention leads to turn around a failing force (as happens in other sectors) and to dismiss Chief Constables on performance grounds.

30. As set out in the White Paper, all of those involved in policing must be held to the highest standards. The Paper specifically states “All communities rightly expect the highest standards from the police officers tasked with keeping them safe. Everyday our police officers embody qualities such as courage, teamwork and a commitment to public service. This should be recognised and celebrated. However, high-profile incidents of police misconduct and criminality have brought to light evidence of persistent negative behaviour in policing. Many cases have highlighted discriminatory attitudes and behaviours such as misogyny, racism and homophobia. Multiple reports have pointed to systemic issues in police culture which enable such behaviours. While some of these reports have been force specific, national reviews have found a culture of apathy and/or intolerance in some areas, including behaviours like misogyny”.

31. To raise standards of performance and conduct, the government will take focused action to (i) improve the culture of policing, and (ii) reform the police vetting and misconduct systems, enabling forces to tackle unethical and discriminatory behaviour. The government has already introduced reforms to police misconduct procedures, including: (i) a statutory requirement for officers to hold and maintain vetting (Police Vetting Regulations 2025, [HOMF0000154]), and (ii) a presumption of dismissal where gross misconduct is proven, presumption of fast track hearings for former officers, and streamlining of the system for underperforming officers (Police (Conduct, Performance and Complaints and Misconduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2025, [HOMF0000155]) . We intend to go further by strengthening vetting standards and suspension arrangements.

32. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is in the process of implementing a transformation programme to increase its effectiveness, governance and efficiency. The Home Office is working closely with the IOPC to enhance accountability, scrutiny and transparency in the police complaints and misconduct system.

AI

33. We need to ensure that use of AI and automation technologies by the police is responsible and commands the consent of the public. We will provide £115m to policing over the next three years to:

- roll out the use of Live Facial Recognition (LFR) technologies, including 40 new LFR vans to be deployed in town centres across England and Wales;
- Create a bespoke legal framework for the use of technologies like facial recognition, to enable safer, more efficient and consistent use of transformative technologies;
- Launch a National Centre for AI in Policing (Police AI). Police AI will use AI to help speed up investigations, improve the experience of victims and witnesses and make the police more productive. It will also ensure that Chiefs have the evidence they need to use AI responsibly, backed by robust scientific evidence, to maximise accuracy, whilst minimising bias. It will transition into the NPS when ready; and
- Create a public register of the AI being used by Police forces, in order to enhance transparency.

34. Increasing the use of AI is intended to free up 6 million officer hours per year by 2028/29.

FURTHER ISSUES

Information sharing

35. I have been asked whether information sharing within and between police forces, and between other agencies and police forces, has been considered as part of these proposed reforms. I have been asked how these proposals are expected to affect such information sharing.
36. Information sharing is a significant part of these proposed reforms. The White Paper states that "in policing, getting the right information into the right hands at the right time can mean the difference between life and death. Information is the currency of good policing, and it must be fully utilised to keep the public safe." In the White Paper, we announced measures to:
- a. deploy new technology to integrate data both locally and nationally through the National Data Integration and Exploitation Service ("NDIES"). At the moment it takes too long to search for data manually when it is requested by other police forces, other parts of the Criminal Justice System, or government departments. This is because data is currently siloed within individual force systems. NDIES will issue guidance to forces, support them in procuring data systems and procure systems itself which will allow for better sharing of data.
 - b. create a framework for mandating clear national data standards, in order to improve and standardise the collection, storage and use of data in

England and Wales - as well as keeping it secure and maintaining public confidence.

- c. create a single policing decision-maker with authority over key national datasets. They will make data sharing across government and the criminal justice system quicker, easier, more efficient and consistent.
- d. facilitate data sharing. The White Paper also notes that "following from the improvements that this government introduced through the Data (Use And Access) Act 2025, we are working with police to remove all unnecessary barriers to sharing data. This includes ensuring that police have the confidence and can identify an appropriate legal basis to share data with other partners where this is in the public interest, and simplifying the internal processes for reaching such decisions. We will also require all police forces to share data into designated national datasets to reflect their vital importance in ensuring that all police forces have the information they need to carry out their functions".

37. These measures are all designed to reduce friction and facilitate data sharing within and between forces and with other public sector authorities, both internally within policing and externally.

38. More consistent standards in the use of data and consolidated decision-making will improve the ease of using and sharing information and make it more cost-effective. To complement this, the National Data Integration and Exploitation Service will enable the practical join-up of information, while targeted non-

legislative reforms will also build confidence in sharing relevant information across agencies.

Common IT systems

39. I have been asked what the Home Office's view is on the merits of a common IT system such as the NicheRMS365 system, across all police forces and whether the Home Office has undertaken any work to consider this.

40. The decision on what IT systems to procure is currently an individual decision for each force. Notwithstanding this, the Home Office has considered the merits of moving forces onto a single system as well as the benefits of ensuring that there is a healthy competitive marketplace. A competitive marketplace ensures that suppliers are incentivised to provide the best service to policing. The Home Office recognises how important it is for the data to be shared between forces and with other agencies. As set out above, in the White Paper the Home Office announced a National Data Integration and Exploitation Service which aims to integrate data across systems. The service has issued guidance to policing on what requirements they should build into all data platform procurements to ensure interoperability.

41. When Lord Hogan Howe's Independent Review of Police Force Structures publishes its report, the department will consider any recommendations with regard to integrating IT services.

The PNC and LEADS

42. Plans are well advanced to replace the Police National Computer (PNC) with a new system, known as the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) system. A Code of Practice for the use of the PNC and LEDS has been issued by the College of Policing and updated in February 2023, with the approval of the Secretary of State, under section 39A of the Police Act 1996. The Police National Database (PND) has a separate Code of Practice, which was issued in 2010 by the Home Secretary. I have been asked about work carried out to simplify and standardise the Codes of Practice for these and other police data systems, and about how the reforms will impact upon guidance relating to the use and sharing of data.
43. There are material differences between the systems which the Inquiry has asked me about: for example, PNC and LEDS largely support the processing of recorded information, while PND is primarily an intelligence system. In practical terms, simplifying and standardising the Codes of Practice across LEDS, the PNC, the PND and other national police data systems will be about making expectations on lawful use, accountability, and sharing data more consistent across systems, without losing any guidance that needs to be system specific.
44. The PNC and LEDS Code is already framed in a way that can apply across national systems or components because it focuses on principles, behaviours and controller responsibilities. System specific operational detail is set out in supporting guidance, assurance, training and the tools that make up the IT capabilities used to run and oversee the system. This means operational detail

can be updated more quickly as practice, technology and risks change, without needing to rewrite the Code each time.

45. The next review cycle for the PNC/LEDS Code is due to start during the period in which LEDS becomes fully operational and the PNC is decommissioned, providing an opportunity to update and consolidate approaches alongside PND and other national systems.

CONCLUSION

46. In summary, my evidence describes the objectives of the Home Office in its plan to deliver reforms to policing. The reforms seek to ensure greater consistency, accountability and greater efficiency and effectiveness in how the police operate.
47. I acknowledge the profound and lasting impact the incident in Nottingham will have on the bereaved and the victims. I would like to, again, extend my deepest condolences to them.
48. The Government remains fully committed to ensuring that lessons are learnt, and that changes can be made to prevent such future tragedies. The Home Office will carefully consider the Inquiry's final recommendations, and it remains committed to enabling and embedding long term system change across policing and its partners.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

GRO-B

Dated: 19 May 2026

Index to the First Witness Statement of Sarah Jones MP

Exhibit No.	Inquiry URN	Document Description
1	HOMF0000148	APPG on Knife crime - Young people's perspective August 2019
2	HOMF0000149	APPG on Knife crime - Young people's perspective August 2019
3	HOMF0000108	White Paper - from Local to National A new model for policing - January 2026.
4	HOMF0000151	Summary of White Paper reforms
5	HOMF0000152	A Plan to Halve Knife Crime - April 2026
6	HOMF0000153	Independent review of police force structures: terms of reference - 17 March 2026.
7	HOMF0000154	Police Vetting Regulations 2025
8	HOMF0000155	Police (Conduct, Performance and Complaints and Misconduct) (Amendments) Regulations 2025