

**Email and Notice sent to The Criminal Justice Joint
Inspectorate and it's Inspectorate members**

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: Notice Dated 7 March 2026 - Constitutional Oversight
Questions Concerning Operation Talla and CJSSC**

Please find attached a Notice dated 7 March 2026 concerning matters of constitutional oversight arising from the operation of Operation Talla and the associated Criminal Justice System Strategic Command (CJSSC) framework during the Covid-19 period.

The Notice is provided in the public interest and addresses questions relating to the role of criminal justice inspectorates in relation to nationally coordinated policing and criminal justice arrangements operating during that period.

As explained within the document, the matters addressed are currently the subject of an ongoing evidential review. The Notice may also form part of the disclosure record in legal proceedings presently under consideration, involving third parties.

I would be grateful if this correspondence, together with the attached Notice, could be brought to the attention of the appropriate senior office within your organisation for consideration.

Yours faithfully

Ian Clayton

Lead Investigator - Ethical Approach UK

Att: Notice (PDF)

NOTICE

TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSPECTORATES

Concerning Constitutional Oversight Questions Arising from
Operation Talla and the Criminal Justice System Strategic
Command Structure

Date: 7 March 2026

From:

Ian Clayton

Lead Investigator

Ethical Approach UK

1. Purpose of this Notice

This Notice is issued in the public interest and is directed to the criminal justice inspectorates operating within England and Wales, including those participating in the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection framework.

Its purpose is to seek clarification concerning matters of constitutional importance arising from the operation of nationally coordinated criminal justice structures during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

The issues identified relate specifically to:

- nationally coordinated policing activity under Operation Talla;
- cross-system criminal justice coordination through the Criminal Justice System Strategic Command (CJSSC); and
- the role of inspectorates responsible for providing independent scrutiny of policing and justice institutions.

The matters addressed in this Notice concern questions of institutional integrity, constitutional governance and public confidence in the independence of inspection arrangements.

2. Notice Concerning Potential Legal Proceedings

For the avoidance of doubt, this Notice is issued as part of an ongoing evidential review concerning nationally coordinated criminal justice arrangements during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The issues addressed in this document are currently being examined in the context of potential legal proceedings involving third parties, which are presently under active consideration.

Accordingly, this Notice may form part of the evidential disclosure record in any such proceedings.

The purpose of the Notice is therefore twofold:

1. to ensure that the relevant inspectorates are aware of the matters identified; and
2. to ensure that the public and evidential record accurately reflects the position of the inspectorates in relation to the issues raised.

This Notice is therefore issued in the interests of accuracy, transparency and procedural fairness.

3. The Constitutional Role of Inspectorates

The criminal justice inspectorates exist to provide independent scrutiny of the institutions responsible for administering justice.

Those inspectorates include:

- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- HM Inspectorate of Probation

Through the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection framework, these bodies are able to undertake coordinated inspection activity where issues affect multiple components of the criminal justice system.

The independence of inspectorates is fundamental to maintaining public confidence that criminal justice institutions remain accountable and operate in accordance with the law.

Where nationally coordinated operational frameworks are established, it is therefore of constitutional importance that independent scrutiny mechanisms remain clearly identifiable and functionally independent.

4. Operation Talla

During the Covid-19 pandemic period, UK policing operated under the national coordination framework known as Operation Talla.

Operation Talla functioned as the central mechanism through which policing responses to pandemic-related legislation and public order issues were coordinated across forces.

Its structure involved national command coordination and the dissemination of operational guidance to policing bodies throughout the United Kingdom.

Where nationally coordinated policing arrangements operate, questions of legality, proportionality and governance fall naturally within the sphere of legitimate independent scrutiny.

5. Evidence Concerning Recording of Public Complaints

Disclosure material originating from policing bodies has revealed internal communications relating to the handling of reports made by members of the public concerning alleged offences associated with a number of Covid-19 policies, including the associated vaccination programme.

An email communication dated 14 February 2022 contains the following statement:

“We have not been formally recording numbers of attempts to follow this process across the country.

Our latest assessment shows that it is still occurring, it would appear that the guidance to not record has been a success as only one additional report has been created.”

This communication appears to describe the existence of guidance relating to the non-recording of certain reports submitted by members of the public.

If implemented on a national basis, such guidance raises questions concerning statutory obligations relating to the recording of crime.

6. Statutory Duties Concerning the Recording of Crime

Police forces in England and Wales are subject to established statutory duties relating to the recording of crime and complaints.

These duties arise through:

- the Police Act 1996
- the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- nationally mandated Home Office Crime Recording Standards

These frameworks exist to ensure that reports of criminal conduct made by members of the public are recorded, assessed and investigated in accordance with law.

The recording of crime is not a discretionary matter.

It is an essential element of accountability, transparency and access to justice.

7. The Rule of Law in Emergency Situations

The United Kingdom's constitutional framework recognises that even in circumstances of national emergency, statutory obligations remain binding upon public authorities.

This principle has been repeatedly affirmed in judicial authority.

In *R (Miller) v Prime Minister* (2019) UKSC 41, the Supreme Court emphasised that the fundamental principle of the constitution is that all public authorities remain subject to the law.

Similarly, in *Liversidge v Anderson* (1942) AC 206, Lord Atkin's well-known dissent articulated the enduring constitutional principle that emergency powers cannot displace the rule of law.

These principles reflect the longstanding constitutional maxim:

fiat justitia ruat caelum - let justice be done though the heavens fall.

Accordingly, the existence of an emergency situation does not operate to suspend statutory duties imposed by law.

8. Evidence of Cross-System Criminal Justice Coordination

Evidence provided to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry by Gregor McGill, Director of Legal Services at the Crown Prosecution Service, describes the establishment and role of the Criminal Justice System Strategic Command (CJSSC).

According to that evidence:

- the CJSSC was established by the Ministry of Justice Departmental Operations Centre;
- its role was to take overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of an incident or crisis;

- it established a common strategic framework across criminal justice institutions;
- it reported to the General Public Services Committee, chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

This evidence indicates that the criminal justice response to the pandemic operated within a coordinated multi-agency governance framework extending beyond policing alone.

9. Evidence of Inspectorate Participation in the Operational Response

Official materials associated with the national policing response include the Operation Talla Awards Programme, which recognises individuals contributing to that response.

Within that programme, an entry appears for John Crossley, identified as HMICFRS Legislation Lead, stating:

“John volunteered to support the national policing response to the pandemic and quickly translated new legislation into a workable policy for policing.”

This description indicates that personnel associated with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services participated in supporting aspects of the operational policing response.

Where an inspectorate is responsible for independently assessing policing effectiveness and legality, the existence of such participation naturally raises questions concerning how inspection independence was preserved.

10. Disclosure Obligations

Public authorities operating within the criminal justice system are subject to statutory disclosure duties.

The Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 establishes obligations relating to the retention and disclosure of material relevant to criminal investigations.

Where nationally coordinated operational arrangements affect the recording or handling of complaints submitted by members of the public, those arrangements may have implications for the proper operation of disclosure obligations within the criminal justice system.

11. Resulting Constitutional Question

The combined effect of the evidence described above gives rise to a legitimate constitutional question.

Specifically:

- nationally coordinated policing occurred through Operation Talla;
- cross-agency coordination occurred through the CJSSC;
- internal communications indicate guidance affecting the recording of reports;
- personnel associated with an inspectorate appear to have participated in aspects of the operational response.

In these circumstances, clarification is sought as to:

which inspectorate or joint inspection mechanism examined the governance, legality and accountability implications of these arrangements.

12. Matters for Clarification

The following matters would benefit from clarification:

1. Whether any inspectorate undertook examination of governance issues arising from Operation Talla.
2. Whether the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection framework examined cross-system coordination arrangements under the CJSSC.
3. Whether guidance affecting the recording of reports submitted by members of the public was considered within any inspectorate review.
4. How independence of inspection was preserved where inspectorate personnel participated in aspects of the operational policing response.

13. Public Interest

The questions raised in this Notice concern the constitutional integrity of institutions responsible for administering justice.

Maintaining public confidence in those institutions requires that oversight mechanisms are both effective and demonstrably independent.

This Notice is therefore issued for the purpose of ensuring that the public and evidential record accurately reflects the role of inspectorates in relation to nationally coordinated criminal justice arrangements during the pandemic period.

14. Publication

This Notice and any responses received may be retained as part of the contemporaneous public record and may be published in the public interest alongside relevant documentary material.

Ian Clayton

Lead Investigator

Ethical Approach UK