



Criminal Cases Review Commission

## CASEWORK POLICY

Policy Title: **Disclosure by the CCRC**

Reference: **CW-POL-19**

Version: **1.0**

### Contents

Introduction	2
Key Points	2
Definitions	2
1 General Information	3
PART 1 - The statutory framework: Sections 23 to 25	4
2 Overview	4
3 Section 23	4
4 Section 24	4
5 Section 25	8
PART 2 - Disclosure	11
6 The Decision in <i>Hickey &amp; Others</i>	11
7 Requests for further disclosure after referral (or non-referral)	16
8 Expense related to disclosure	16
9 Disclosure to those instructed by the CCRC to carry out inquiries	16
10 Disclosure to persons with information that may assist the CCRC	17
PART 3 - Non-disclosure	18
11 General	18
12 Disclosure of relevant material	18
13 Public Interest Immunity	19
PART 4 - Miscellaneous Disclosure Issues	23
14 Material Provided to the CCRC "in Confidence"	23
15 Material Subject to Legal Professional Privilege	23
16 Waiver of Legal Professional Privilege (LPP)	24
17 Professional Undertakings	25
18 Disclosure of Sexually Explicit Material	25
19 Material Which is Incriminating	27
20 Material Which Indicates Significant Misconduct or Negligence	29
21 Discovery or Identification of a Threat to People or Property	30
22 Requests for Disclosure by the Police or Other Investigative Entity	31
23 Court Transcripts	31
Relevant CCRC Documents	33
Document Control	33

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission

Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>1</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## The CCRC's Quality Statement

The CCRC is committed to achieving high-quality case reviews as quickly as possible. In order to achieve this, we operate under a Quality Management System; please see 'Q-POL-01 CCRC Quality Policy' for further information. Our policy documents are available on our website: [www.ccrcc.gov.uk](http://www.ccrcc.gov.uk).

If you or someone you represent has difficulty accessing the internet then please contact us via 0300 456 2669 (calls charged at local rate) and we will send a hardcopy of the relevant policy free of charge.

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## Introduction

This policy explains what should be disclosed to applicants and third parties as a result of a CCRC review. It does not cover the CCRC's approach to issues of Data Protection or requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which are the subject of separate policies.

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## Key Points

This policy deals with a complex area of law. It is not possible to summarise key points; this document must be read in its entirety to appreciate the context. However, please see [Section 1 General Information](#) (below) for a summary of the main areas covered by each of the four sections of this policy.

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## Definitions

Key Word	Meaning
All ER	All England Law Reports
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
Designated disclosure decision-makers	Legally qualified Commissioners, the Chief Executive, Director of Casework Operations, and Head of Legal
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NHS	National Health Service
NICA	Northern Ireland Court of Appeal
PII	Public Interest Immunity

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OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>2</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## 1 General Information

- 1.1 Sections 23 to 25 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 set out the strict statutory controls on disclosure by the CCRC. Parallel to those statutory controls is the requirement established in *Hickey & Others* [1995] 1 All ER 489 that the CCRC must disclose information acquired in the course of its functions “if it would assist the applicant to make his best possible case”. These two factors create the need for a careful assessment of disclosure during every review. The statutory framework is considered in [Part 1](#) of this policy and the general principles relevant to disclosure are considered in [Part 2](#) of this policy.
- 1.2 As a general rule, disclosure to an applicant and relevant third parties will be made when the CCRC decides whether or not to refer. All such decisions are taken by a Commissioner, or a committee of Commissioners.<sup>1</sup> Disclosure to applicants and third parties will generally be assessed and authorised at the same time. There are some exceptions to this general rule, which are set out in [Part 2](#) of this policy.
- 1.3 All Commissioners take disclosure decisions, but the designated disclosure decision-makers are specifically available to advise upon and decide particular disclosure issues that may arise. The role of Commissioners and staff in the process of disclosure is set out in [Part 2](#) of this policy.
- 1.4 There are instances where the CCRC will decline to make disclosure, these are set out in [Part 3](#) of this policy.
- 1.5 Miscellaneous disclosure issues are set out in [Part 4](#) of this policy.
- 1.6 Unless otherwise stated, all references to ‘sections’ are in relation to the Criminal Appeal Act 1995.

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<sup>1</sup> See ‘CW-POL-04 Case Review Process’ for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>3</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## **PART 1 - The statutory framework: Sections 23 to 25**

### **2 Overview**

- 2.1 Section 23 prohibits any disclosure by the CCRC unless it falls within one of the exceptions in section 24.
- 2.2 Section 25(1) provides that a public body from which information has been obtained under section 17<sup>2</sup> may notify the CCRC that disclosure should not be made without prior consent. Section 25 also applies to material obtained under section 18A.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.3 These provisions are discussed in greater detail below. The Criminal Appeal Act 1995 must be consulted for the full wording.

### **3 Section 23**

- 3.1 No past or present Commissioner, employee or investigating officer may disclose any information obtained by the CCRC in the exercise of its functions, unless it falls within one of the exceptions specified in section 24.
- 3.2 Any person who contravenes this section commits a criminal offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine.

### **4 Section 24**

- 4.1 Section 24 contains a list of exceptions to the general obligation of non-disclosure specified in section 23.
- 4.2 Disclosure to the applicant (or their representative) is generally justified by reference to **section 24(1)(e)** or **(f)**.

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<sup>2</sup> See 'CW-POL-27 Power to Obtain Material from Public Bodies (s.17)' for further information.

<sup>3</sup> See 'CW-POL-28 Power to Obtain Material from Private Bodies and Individuals (s.18A)' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>4</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

4.3 Disclosure to third parties can only be justified by reference to one of the other exceptions in **section 24(1)** or **[section 24\(3\)](#)**. The CCRC has a discretion whether to make disclosure for such purposes; disclosure will not be made simply because a request is received, or because section 24 makes provision for such disclosure. Each request will be considered on its particular facts.

4.4 Section 24(1)(a)

4.4.1 This section permits disclosure “for the purposes of any criminal, disciplinary or civil proceedings”. There are several situations which could fall within this subsection, for example:

- I. Information about a witness which could be of assistance to the prosecution or defence in separate criminal proceedings.
- II. Disclosure of material relevant to disciplinary proceedings brought by a professional regulatory body, such as the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC); the Solicitors’ Regulation Authority (for solicitors), the Bar Standards Board (for barristers); the General Medical Council (for doctors); or the regulatory tribunals of the Royal Colleges.<sup>4</sup>
- III. Requests by an applicant to provide information relevant to a civil action for damages against their legal representative and/or against the police.

4.4.2 The variety of situations which could arise is such that specific guidance in relation to potential categories would have little value, but the following factors will generally be considered:

- a. The reason why disclosure is sought and by whom.
- b. Where appropriate, the view of the person who provided the information.
- c. The basis on which the information was received (e.g. whether there was any discussion or undertaking about confidentiality).

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<sup>4</sup> This list is not exhaustive.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>5</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- d. The consequences of disclosure for those persons who have a legitimate interest in the CCRC's decision.
- e. Whether it is necessary and appropriate to seek the view of the applicant or their legal representative.
- f. Whether the material falls within any category of information requiring special consideration (e.g. public interest immunity, sensitive or restricted information).
- g. Whether disclosure is in the public interest.
- h. The fact that, if the CCRC declines to disclose, the person or body making the request still has the option of applying for a court order.

4.4.3 The intention behind section 24(1)(a) is that the disclosure is authorised for the purposes of existing criminal, disciplinary or civil proceedings, and not for the purposes of bringing such proceedings into existence.

4.5 Section 24(1)(b)

This section permits disclosure in order to assist in dealing with an application made to the Secretary of State or the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland for compensation for a miscarriage of justice. In the absence of any countervailing reason, the CCRC will make disclosure for this purpose, normally by providing a copy of the Statement of Reasons.

4.6 Section 24(1)(c)

This section permits (a) disclosure between Commissioners and CCRC employees; or (b) to an "investigating officer" i.e. an investigating officer appointed under section 19.<sup>5</sup>

4.7 Section 24(1)(d)

This section permits disclosure by an investigating officer appointed under section 19 to a Commissioner or to a CCRC employee.

<sup>5</sup> See 'CW-POL-29 Power to Appoint an Investigating Officer (s.19)' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>6</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

4.8 Section 24(1)(e)

This section permits disclosure “in any statement or report required by this Act”. This will generally be the Statement of Reasons which the CCRC is required to provide in all referral and non-referral cases. It would include a report provided by the CCRC to the Court of Appeal pursuant to a direction under section 15;<sup>6</sup> or to the Secretary of State in connection with the prerogative of mercy under section 16.

4.9 Section 24(1)(f)

This section permits disclosure “in or in connection with the exercise of any function under this Act.” For example, the CCRC may need to show material obtained in the exercise of its functions to an applicant, or to a professional or lay witness, or to legal representatives involved in the original trial.

4.10 Section 24(1)(g)

This section authorises disclosure “in any circumstances in which the disclosure of information is permitted by an Order made by the Secretary of State”. Section 24(5) goes on to provide that any such Order will be made by statutory instrument. This means that the statutory categories of disclosure to third parties could be expanded if necessary, but to date no such Order has been made.

4.11 Section 24(2)

This section provides that a CCRC employee or an investigating officer may disclose information if it is authorised by a Commissioner. This may give the impression that there is no limitation on what disclosure a Commissioner may authorise, but this is not the case; section 23(3) provides that a Commissioner can only authorise a disclosure where that disclosure is permitted under section 24. Section 24(2) does not therefore extend in any way the information that can be disclosed. Its purpose is that a Commissioner formally places on record the fact that s/he takes responsibility for the disclosure.

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<sup>6</sup> See ‘CW-POL-25 Investigations for the Court of Appeal (s.15)’ for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>7</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

#### 4.12 Section 24(3)

This section permits (but does not require) disclosure for the purposes of

- a) Investigating an offence, or
- b) Deciding whether to prosecute a person for an offence.

The CCRC must not disclose information pursuant to section 24(3) if it would normally be prevented from disclosure by “an obligation of secrecy or other limitation on disclosure (including any such obligation or limitation imposed by or by virtue of an enactment)”. This would prevent the CCRC [for the purposes of section 24(3)] from disclosing without a court order information or material which attracts public interest immunity, and any information which it agreed to receive in confidence.

#### 4.13 Section 24(4)

This section provides that where the disclosure of information is excepted from section 23,<sup>7</sup> onward disclosure by the CCRC is not prevented by restrictions in statute or by virtue of any obligation of secrecy or other limitation on disclosure. This is qualified by the operation of section 25 (see below) and by a number of practical measures deployed by the CCRC to ensure that only appropriate onward disclosure is made.

### 5 **Section 25**

- 5.1 This section applies when the public / private body or individual who provided material under section 17 or 18A notifies the CCRC that all or part of the information is not to be disclosed without prior consent.
- 5.2 Occasionally, a public / private body or individual will provide material of a sensitive nature without relying on section 25. In any such situation, the CCRC will approach its consideration of whether the information should be disclosed on the basis that section 25 has in fact been raised.
- 5.3 Consent may only be withheld by the public / private body or individual if the two conditions in section **25(2)(a) and (b)** are both satisfied:

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<sup>7</sup> By subsections 24(1) or 24(2).

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>8</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- a) Disclosure would normally have been prevented by an obligation of secrecy or other limitation on disclosure (in other words the only reason the information has been provided to the CCRC is because of its powers under section 17 or 18A); and
- b) It is reasonable for consent to be withheld.

5.4 Factors relevant to reasonableness will include (this list is not exhaustive):

- I. The purpose for which the CCRC wishes to disclose the information. If it provides the main reason or a significant reason for referral or non-referral, that will generally raise a strong argument in favour of disclosure.
- II. The reason why the body or individual wishes to prevent disclosure to another person or body. Examples might include sensitive, protected, or personal information, or information provided in confidence. Each time such a reason is put forward to the CCRC, it will be considered on its own facts.
- III. The extent to which withholding consent to disclosure would prevent the CCRC from complying with the requirements of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 and/or the common law principle in *Hickey & Others* [1995] 1 All ER 489.
- IV. Whether the information falls within a class of information traditionally recognised by the courts as subject to public interest immunity (e.g. police reports, informant information, and social services documents).

5.5 **Section 25(3)** provides a special rule where an obligation of secrecy or other limitation on disclosure arises only where disclosure is not authorised by another person. An example is the general obligation of patient confidentiality on the National Health Service (NHS) in relation to a patient's medical records, which may be disclosed to the CCRC pursuant to section 17. If the patient authorises disclosure, then the obligation of confidence does not arise.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>9</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

5.6 In such circumstances the first question which arises is set out in section **25(3)(a)**: whether “reasonable steps have been taken [by the body / individual] to obtain authorisation”. In the NHS example this would involve ascertaining whether any attempt was made to contact the patient to obtain authorisation.

5.6.1 If the answer is “yes”, the body / individual may decide to withhold consent to disclosure provided the reasonableness criterion is satisfied.

5.6.2 If the answer is “no”, the next question is set out in section **25(3)(b)**: whether “such authorisation could not reasonably be expected to be obtained.” In the NHS example, this could arise if the patient were very ill, or had died, or could not be contacted and was therefore unable to give consent.

#### 5.7 Disputes about section 25

5.7.1 There is nothing in the wording of section 25 to suggest that the CCRC would be prevented from disclosing material where it considers that the withholding of consent is not reasonable.

5.7.2 In the event that a dispute with a public / private body or individual cannot be resolved, however, the CCRC will not make disclosure without first giving the body or individual a reasonable period of warning of its intention to do so. Generally, this period will be 14 days, although this may be extended by agreement. This would provide the body or individual with an opportunity to consider appropriate court action.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>10</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## **PART 2 - Disclosure**

### **6 The Decision in *Hickey & Others***

6.1 Although the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 makes provision for the CCRC to disclose information, it does not specify what should be disclosed. However, there is guidance in case law. The starting point is *Hickey & Others*<sup>8</sup> which established a general principle about the level of disclosure to be provided:

“The guiding principle should always be that sufficient disclosure should be given to enable the petitioner properly to present his best case. That can only be done if he adequately appreciates the nature and extent of the evidence elicited by the [CCRC’s] inquiries.” (Emphasis added)

6.2 In relation to the level of disclosure required, the Court referred to:

“... the altogether more difficult question of the precise requirements of just disclosure in this area of decision-making. ... Does fairness demand that experts’ reports, police statements, further statements from central witnesses and so forth be disclosed verbatim or will the gist do? What does the gist, the substance, really consist of? Should disclosure be made only of adverse material or is it necessary to disclose favourable fresh evidence too?”

### **6.3 Redaction, summaries, and “the gist”**

6.3.1 The CCRC will approach each exercise of disclosure on the facts of the particular case, and for that reason it would be extremely difficult to lay down anything other than general guidelines. As a general rule, all material which supports the decision for referral or non-referral together with any further information that may assist the applicant in making his best case will be disclosed.

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<sup>8</sup> *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department ex parte Hickey & Others* (No.2) [1995] 1 All ER 489.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>11</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

6.3.2 Redaction, summarising, or disclosure of the gist of a document may be undertaken for the practical purpose of simplifying the material to be disclosed. All key points will normally remain, and no information relevant to the applicant's case will be excluded. Such material may appear in summary form within the Statement of Reasons, or in its amended form within a separate document, depending on which method will best assist full understanding of the reasons for the CCRC's decision and the material to be disclosed.

6.3.3 The CCRC may decide to not include material which might assist the applicant's case, but which clearly should not be disclosed on public interest immunity principles: for example, information relating to the identity of a police informant, if to do so would lead to a risk to the informant's safety. This type of situation is examined further in [Part 3](#), which considers the circumstances in which disclosure may be withheld.

6.4 When should disclosure be made?

The CCRC acknowledges that the need for disclosure may arise at any stage of the review, but in particular:

I. **When an initial decision not to refer is issued.**

*Hickey* addresses the issue of when disclosure is required relevant to where there is material that the CCRC has obtained in its review that the applicant ought to have an opportunity to comment on: fairness requires that the applicant has an opportunity to make submissions "before any final adverse decision is made".<sup>9</sup>

II. **When a second 'provisional' decision for non-referral is issued.**

The CCRC may receive submissions in response to an initial decision which lead to further investigations taking place. If any new material is revealed by those further investigations, then the issue of *Hickey* disclosure will be considered afresh. If any significant further information falls to be disclosed, the CCRC may issue a second 'provisional' decision document or make disclosure in another format, as appropriate, to enable the applicant to make an informed response.

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<sup>9</sup> It is not necessary for further submissions to be invited if the CCRC has not carried out any investigations at all before coming to its decision or it has not based its decision on any information that is 'new' to the applicant.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>12</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

III. **When a decision to refer is contemplated.**

If it is thought that the applicant or his advisers may have something further to contribute to such a decision.

IV. **When a decision to refer has been made.**

The principle established by *Hickey* is only directly applicable to non-referral cases. In practice, however, the extent of disclosure is likely to be similar in referral cases, and case committees will go through a corresponding disclosure exercise.

V. **After a decision to refer has been made.**

This will be relatively rare, but matters may come to light, or material may be requested, after referral. The CCRC will have regard to the procedure and principles set out at [paragraph 6.8.4](#) and [paragraph 7.1](#).

6.5 Interim disclosure

6.5.1 Disclosure will not be made prior to a ‘provisional’ decision not to refer, or on a piecemeal basis throughout the review, unless the CCRC considers that to do so would assist in the exercise of its functions or is required in the interests of fairness to the applicant.

6.5.2 Interim disclosure can have a detrimental effect on the progress of a review. It may generate correspondence, requests for further disclosure or submissions on the items disclosed which can detract from the timetable set for the review and lead to delays. The CCRC’s general approach to the timing of disclosure is designed to ensure that the applicant’s best interests are served, and that the review is conducted and completed as expeditiously as possible.

6.5.3 The CCRC acknowledges that expert evidence can be complex, and it can take a considerable length of time to obtain and instruct an appropriate expert. An applicant may wish to obtain a further expert opinion in response to the opinion of an expert relied upon by the CCRC. In any such case the need for interim disclosure will be considered and kept under review, or a longer period of time in which to make further submissions will be granted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See ‘CW-POL-08 Extensions for Further Submissions’ for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>13</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

6.5.4 Any request for interim disclosure by the CCRC will be considered on its particular facts and merits. The reasons for any decision not to make interim disclosure will be communicated to the applicant or their representative in writing.

6.6 Who will make or authorise disclosure?

6.6.1 It is clear from the wording of sections 23 and 24 that both Commissioners and CCRC employees can make disclosure. Material which falls to be considered for disclosure by the CCRC may be highly sensitive. The CCRC has developed strict procedural requirements to ensure that a high level of scrutiny is directed to each instance of disclosure of any information obtained in the exercise of its functions.

6.6.2 Disclosure at the point of referral or non-referral will always be authorised by the decision-making Commissioner or committee of Commissioners.

6.6.3 Full or significant interim disclosure will always be authorised by the Decision-making Commissioner (where one is appointed to the case) or, in any other case, a designated disclosure decision-maker.

6.6.4 Often it will be necessary for case reviewers to disclose some basic information about a case during the investigative stage of the review: for example, providing information to a potential witness, or instructions to an expert. Any proposed disclosure of this type will be raised with the relevant Group Leader. Advice will be sought, if appropriate, from the Head of Legal, Head of Investigations, and/or the Decision-making Commissioner or designated disclosure decision-maker. All relevant advice and the details of the disclosure decision will be recorded in the case record.

6.7 Expert evidence

Expert reports will generally be disclosed in full. It will be acceptable for the CCRC to disclose a summary or the gist of an expert's report if doing so satisfies the interests of fairness.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>14</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## 6.8 To whom should disclosure be made?

- 6.8.1 Disclosure will normally be made to the applicant or their legal representative or both. Much will depend on how the relationship between the CCRC, the applicant and/or their legal representative has developed during the course of the review.<sup>11</sup>
- 6.8.2 The CCRC must be satisfied that any person requesting disclosure is authorised by the applicant to act on their behalf. If disclosure is to be made to anyone other than the applicant or their nominated legal representative, the written authority of the applicant will be obtained.
- 6.8.3 On referral, the CCRC will make disclosure to:
- I. The relevant appeal court; and
  - II. The Crown, e.g. the Crown Prosecution Service (in England and Wales); the Director of Public Prosecutions (in Northern Ireland); or any other relevant prosecuting authority; and
  - III. The applicant (and/or legal representative, if relevant).
- 6.8.4 As a general rule, the same information will be provided to all parties. The exception to this rule arises when sensitive information falls to be disclosed. It may be necessary and appropriate for sensitive material to be provided to the appeal court and Crown only (or, in exceptional cases, only to the appeal court), in a confidential annexe. The court will subsequently decide the issue of disclosure to the applicant (and, if relevant, the Crown). For Northern Ireland cases, the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal (NICA) have set out directions for confidential material in *R v Devine* [2021] NICA 7 at paragraphs 88-89.
- 6.9 Disclosure of material obtained under section 17 or 18A  
Public / Private bodies or individuals providing information to the CCRC under section 17 or 18A are advised that the material may subsequently be disclosed. This does not enable them to refuse to provide the necessary information, but it will alert them to the procedure in section 25 (see [Part 1](#) for further detail).

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<sup>11</sup> See 'CW-POL-03 Communicating with Applicants' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>15</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## 7 Requests for further disclosure after referral (or non-referral)

### 7.1 After referral

On the rare occasions that it is necessary for further disclosure to be made after a referral, even-handed disclosure will be made to both parties to the appeal and to the court. The CCRC will compile a bundle of material for further disclosure, which will be forwarded to the court, the Crown and the applicant and/or their legal representative<sup>12</sup> at the same time. This will be accompanied by a letter explaining the reason for the further disclosure.

### 7.2 After non-referral

Requests for further disclosure after a non-referral will be dealt with as post-closure correspondence.<sup>13</sup>

## 8 Expense related to disclosure

8.1 Where disclosure of material is necessary in order to enable the applicant to make their best case in response to an initial decision, or to understand the basis for a referral, the CCRC will provide copies free of charge.

8.2 The provision of copies of material outside that category, and which are available to an applicant through other sources, will be at the discretion of the CCRC. The reasonable costs of photocopying and postage of such material may be requested in advance.

## 9 Disclosure to those instructed by the CCRC to carry out inquiries

9.1 Experts and those instructed by the CCRC to carry out any inquiry or investigation will be given such information as is necessary to enable them to discharge their duties.

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<sup>12</sup> Subject to section 25 considerations. If full disclosure cannot be made to one or more party because of the application of section 25, then the party/parties not receiving full disclosure will normally be informed that some additional disclosure has been made to the Court (and any other party to which the disclosure has been made).

<sup>13</sup> See 'CW-POL-03 Communicating with Applicants' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>16</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

9.2 It may be appropriate to obtain formal undertakings from experts that material will not be disclosed by them. The CCRC's standard contract with experts contains conditions in respect of disclosure by the expert.<sup>14</sup>

## **10 Disclosure to persons with information that may assist the CCRC**

10.1 The CCRC may be approached by persons who state that they have information to assist the review of a case. If such a person requests any form of disclosure, the CCRC must first satisfy itself that disclosure is indeed necessary.

10.2 Requests made during an on-going review will be considered by the Decision-making Commissioner. If such a request is made outside the scope of an on-going review, or in a review where a Decision-making Commissioner has not been appointed to the case, disclosure will be considered by a designated disclosure decision-maker.

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<sup>14</sup> See 'CW-POL-20 Selection and Instruction of Experts' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>17</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## **PART 3 - Non-disclosure**

### **11 General**

- 11.1 *Hickey* confirms that information may be withheld where the public interest requires it. The decision to withhold any information which is *Hickey* disclosable will always be made by a Commissioner or a committee of Commissioners.
- 11.2 Such a decision will be made clear to the applicant unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. Decision-making Commissioners will record their reasons for not making disclosure to the applicant.

### **12 Disclosure of relevant material**

- 12.1 If the information being considered for disclosure would not assist the applicant to make their best possible case, then there is no duty on the CCRC to disclose. This may apply, for example, to a line of enquiry which the CCRC decides to pursue on its own initiative, but which proves to be a "cold trail", or information which has no bearing whatsoever on the issues in the case or the decision made. Every such situation will be assessed on its own particular facts, but fairness to the applicant will be the general guiding principle.
- 12.2 The applicant will be alerted to any material that may assist their case, but which does not form any part of the CCRC's reasons for referral. An applicant may, for example, wish to apply for leave to add another ground to their appeal.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Section 315 Criminal Justice Act 2003 came into force on 4 April 2005, amending s.14 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995. In respect of all appeals to the Court of Appeal resulting from referrals made after 4 April 2005, the appeal may not be on any ground which is not related to any reason given by the CCRC for making the reference unless leave is obtained from the Court to put forward further (unrelated) grounds of appeal.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>18</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## 13 Public Interest Immunity

13.1 It is in the public interest that the courts should have full access to all relevant material in a criminal trial. Where the public interest in disclosure is outweighed by the public interest in non-disclosure, however, material can be withheld from court proceedings on the basis that it attracts “Public Interest Immunity” (PII).

13.2 In *D v NSPCC* [1978] AC 171 HL at paragraph 230, Lord Hailsham observed that “the categories of public interest are not closed and must alter from time to time whether by restriction or extension as social conditions and social legislation develop”. The CCRC’s approach to the usual categories of PII material is below at paragraphs 13.3 to 13.7.

### 13.3 The identity of informants

13.3.1 The rationale behind protecting the anonymity of persons who aid the police without wishing their identity to be known, lies in the public interest of such sources of information and co-operation continuing.

13.3.2 If the CCRC has been made aware of the identity of an informant, and it would endanger the informant’s safety if they were to be named, the usual duty of disclosure will be overridden by the principles of PII.

13.3.3 Even confirmation of the fact that there was an informant could put an informant’s safety at risk. In such cases particular care will be exercised to ensure that nothing is disclosed by the CCRC that might lead indirectly to the conclusion that there was an informant, or to their identity.

### 13.4 Police reports, manuals, and methods

13.4.1 The reports of investigating officers into complaints against the police are generally withheld in litigation. The rationale is that disclosure would have an “undesirably inhibiting” effect on investigating officers’ reports.

13.4.2 Details of police observation posts will generally be withheld. The rationale is that this may identify a person who has allowed their premises to be used for surveillance, creating a risk to their safety; and if the location is compromised it cannot be used again.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>19</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

13.4.3 Details of police investigative or surveillance methods will generally be withheld on the basis that it would be contrary to the public interest for such information to go into the public domain. If such information became known, counter measures could be developed.

13.5 Files held by Social Services departments in childcare proceedings  
It is well established that various categories of documents and records maintained by Social Services and organisations such as the NSPCC in relation to children are subject to PII. This is justified on the basis that those who record in such files may be inhibited if disclosure were to be routinely made, and this could have an adverse effect on child welfare.

13.6 PII information created in the exercise of the CCRC's functions  
The CCRC may withhold disclosure of its own material on the basis of PII. Requests are sometimes made of the CCRC for items such as the full reports of investigating officers, case committee minutes, internal memoranda and case records which may contain sensitive material. Each situation will be considered individually, and the CCRC's consideration will include application of the following principles:

- I. The public interest in full disclosure will be weighed against the public interest in non-disclosure
- II. The CCRC will only claim PII very sparingly
- III. PII will not be claimed solely on the basis of any potential embarrassment to the CCRC.

13.7 Further examples of PII material  
Information pertaining to national security, diplomatic relations, and international comity; and communications to and from ministers and high-level government officials regarding the formulation of government policy.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>20</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

### 13.8 When can PII material be disclosed by the CCRC?

13.8.1 The fact that information may be protected from disclosure by PII by a Court or another authority does not mean that it cannot be disclosed by the CCRC. Firstly, PII material might assist an applicant in making their best case, in which case disclosure must be considered. Secondly, relevant PII material may need to be disclosed on referral. However, extreme caution will be exercised in any situation where PII material may need to be disclosed, as in these two particular situations:

- I. Information or material already certified as PII by a Court.
- II. Information or material obtained in the course of a CCRC review which is sufficiently sensitive to justify withholding disclosure on a PII basis.

13.8.2 In the event of a **referral**, the CCRC will disclose PII material to the appeal court in a confidential annexe. It then becomes a matter for the court as to how the material is handled. In this situation it will not generally be necessary to seek the view or consent of the “owner” of the material or the judge who made the original PII order.

13.8.3 In the event of a **non-referral**, the situation becomes more complex due to the need to put the applicant in a position where they can make their best case in response to a provisional decision not to refer.

13.8.4 Strictly speaking, a PII ruling applies to the proceedings in which it is made, and only binds the parties to those proceedings. As time goes by the factors which made it contrary to the public interest for particular evidence to be disclosed might change. If the body which originally asserted PII no longer wishes to assert it, and if the public interest is not in jeopardy, it may not be necessary to revert to the judge who originally made the order.

13.8.5 An initial approach will need to be made to the “owner” of the material to ascertain whether the material is still regarded as sensitive. This will generally remove the need to approach the judge who made the original order, although the question of whether the judge should be approached (or notified as a matter of courtesy) will always be considered.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>21</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- 13.8.6 Where it is clear that the material is still sensitive, or consent from the “owner” is not forthcoming, it may be necessary and appropriate to make an approach to the court which made the original order before PII material can be disclosed.
- 13.8.7 Where the CCRC considers that disclosure should not take place but nonetheless concludes that the material supports an argument that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the CCRC may decide to seek the advice of the Court of Appeal under section 14(3).
- 13.8.8 If the CCRC obtains sensitive information in the course of its review other than from a public body, for example from a witness or from a private body providing information on a voluntary basis, public interest considerations still apply. A witness may assert that another person has acted (formally or informally) as an informant to the police. Such allegations may be made anonymously. Such information may be true or it may be untrue, but particular consideration will be given to the effect the information might have if it were to be disclosed. It may be appropriate to discuss the matter with the person who has provided the information, but it is the public interest and not the desire of the provider which prevails.
- 13.9 Statutory restrictions on disclosure  
If a statute provides that material should not be disclosed, the CCRC is bound to have regard to those restrictions.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>22</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## **PART 4 - Miscellaneous Disclosure Issues**

### **14 Material Provided to the CCRC “in Confidence”**

- 14.1 A person may state that they are only willing to provide information if an assurance is given that the CCRC will not forward the information to anyone else or rely on the information in any document which might become available to persons outside the organisation.
- 14.2 The CCRC will not give undertakings that might inhibit it from exercising its statutory powers and duties freely and properly. It will generally be impossible for the CCRC to say in advance that information will not be disclosed. Case reviewers are unable to give such assurances during the course of a review. Any such request will generally be referred to the Head of Investigations and Head of Legal in the first instance.
- 14.3 Requests for confidentiality from persons who provide information to the CCRC will always be considered. However, if disclosure is required in order to enable the applicant to respond effectively to an initial decision not to refer, or to enable them to present their appeal properly after referral, then this will generally outweigh the interest in confidentiality in the absence of compelling countervailing reasons.

### **15 Material Subject to Legal Professional Privilege**

- 15.1 Legal professional privilege attaches to written and oral communications between a professional legal adviser and their client. Communications between:
- I. A client and a legal adviser made for the purpose of the obtaining and giving of legal advice; and
  - II. A client or their legal adviser and third parties, the dominant purpose of which was preparation for contemplated or pending litigation (for example expert reports)

are privileged from compulsory disclosure in legal proceedings, subject to certain limited exceptions. The professional rules governing solicitors and barristers also impose on them a duty of confidentiality to their clients.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>23</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

15.2 Some material provided to the CCRC under section 17 or 18A will be protected by legal professional privilege. Sections 17 and 18A entitle disclosure to the CCRC notwithstanding that a document is covered by legal professional privilege. The CCRC will consider the reasonableness of the public / private body's or individual's stance if consent to onward disclosure is subsequently withheld under section 25.

## **16 Waiver of Legal Professional Privilege (LPP)**

16.1 Communications and documents between lawyer and client are "once privileged, always privileged" and the principle that a client should be free to consult their legal advisers without fear of disclosure is a fundamental one.

16.2 If the CCRC wishes to obtain documents or discuss the way in which the applicant's case was prepared or conducted at trial with the applicant's legal advisers, a specific waiver of legal professional privilege will first be obtained from the applicant. A request for a waiver of privilege will only be sought when it is necessary, and not on a general or speculative basis.

16.3 The CCRC's standard form of waiver will be used.<sup>16</sup> This contains a reminder that an applicant may wish to seek legal advice before waiving privilege. The applicant's signature on an application form is **not** sufficient for this purpose.

16.4 As a general rule privilege is either waived completely or it is not waived at all. Applicants may seek to place limitations on a waiver of privilege, either by confining the waiver to specific information or indicating that material must not be disclosed outside the CCRC.

16.5 If the CCRC can be specific about the information it wishes to examine, for example an expert's report, a proof of evidence or an unused defence witness statement, then rather than seeking a full waiver of privilege it may be appropriate to obtain the applicant's permission to obtain that single piece of information.

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<sup>16</sup> 'CW-F-100 Legal Waiver' or 'CW-F-101 Legal Waiver with Letter'.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>24</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

16.6 The CCRC may wish to obtain information from the legal representative of someone other than the applicant (for example a co-defendant). The person from whom authorisation is sought will be informed that, while due regard will be paid to any wish they express that the information be treated as confidential, the material may be disclosed if it is necessary in the exercise of the CCRC's functions.

## **17 Professional Undertakings**

- 17.1 In some circumstances the CCRC may need to consider obtaining an undertaking from a legal representative to prevent onward disclosure. Legal representatives may be prevented by their professional rules from giving such undertakings.
- 17.2 Breach of a professional undertaking by a solicitor or barrister will be investigated by the Solicitor's Regulation Authority or Bar Standards Board as a potential disciplinary offence.
- 17.3 The CCRC will not accept undertakings from private individuals, as there is no formal mechanism to ensure that they are honoured.

## **18 Disclosure of Sexually Explicit Material**

- 18.1 The detail of sexual offences will not generally be repeated in a decision document unless it is necessary to do so in order to answer the applicant's submissions.
- 18.2 In most cases the applicant will have been aware of such material at the time of conviction, but in a few cases, there may be sexually explicit material obtained during the course of the review which the applicant has not previously seen. Potential sources (this is not an exhaustive list) include medical records, medical reports, Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority applications, and Social Services material.
- 18.3 Material relating to sexual matters may raise issues of public interest immunity, for example where the material has been disclosed to the CCRC

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>25</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

by Social Services departments or where the disclosure of the material by the CCRC could involve the risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

- 18.4 Great care will be taken when deciding how such information should be disclosed and made available to the applicant or their legal representative.
- 18.5 The Sexual Offences (Protected Material) Act 1997 has never been brought into force, but the CCRC has based this aspect of its policy on its contents. It was aimed at preventing the underground circulation of sexually explicit material generated during criminal cases. It includes a specific provision setting out how the CCRC should disclose “protected material” during the course of its reviews.<sup>17</sup>
- 18.6 In relation to proceedings for a sexual offence, “Protected material” is widely defined as a copy (in whatever form) of any of the following:
- I. A statement relating to that, or any other sexual offence, made by any victim of the offence (whether in writing or in any other form).
  - II. A photograph or pseudo-photograph of the victim.
  - III. A report of a medical examination of the physical condition of any such victim.
- 18.7 The CCRC will only disclose such material to an applicant via solicitors or prison governors under a strict regime of control. If the applicant has no solicitor and is not in prison, they will only be allowed to view the material at the CCRC’s premises or at a local police station. Anyone else to whom such material is disclosed (experts or investigators) will be required to give an undertaking to keep it secure.
- 18.8 The CCRC may decide to disclose material to the applicant's legal representative, and to obtain a professional undertaking as follows:
- I. To inform the applicant (or any relevant third party) that they can only inspect the material under supervision, and that it may be an offence for the applicant to have such material in their possession otherwise than while inspecting it, or to reveal its contents or transmit a copy to a third party.

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<sup>17</sup> Section 7 of the Sexual Offences (Protected Material) Act 1997.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>26</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- II. To ensure that protected material is shown to the applicant in circumstances where it is possible to exercise adequate supervision to ensure that the applicant cannot retain the material or make a copy.
- III. That the material will not be shown to anyone other than the applicant unless it is necessary for the purposes of the inquiry, or for the purposes of assessing the applicant for the purposes of a formal report.
- IV. To inform the CCRC should they cease to be the applicant's legal representative, and if the CCRC informs them that the applicant has a new legal representative to transmit the material to that legal representative.
- V. To inform the new legal representative that the material is protected material and to inform them of the extent to which the material has been shown to, or copies provided to, any person other than the applicant.

18.9 The CCRC will advise these authorities that they should take all reasonable steps to ensure the preservation of confidentiality, and that they should not allow the applicant to remove material or take photocopies.

## 19 Material Which is Incriminating

19.1 In the course of its review of a case the CCRC may receive information or material which incriminates the person who provides it in a criminal offence.<sup>18</sup>

19.2 Public and private bodies cannot refuse to provide documents to the CCRC on the basis that the contents might incriminate any member of staff.

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<sup>18</sup> At common law there is a privilege against self-incrimination which permits a witness to refuse to answer questions or provide documents, the answers to which (or the contents of which), tend to incriminate the witness by exposing the witness to subsequent proceedings for an offence. The scope and meaning of the privilege at common law is complex and there are various statutory provisions which limit its scope.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>27</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

19.3 In relation to private individuals, the CCRC will:

- I. Consider whether disclosure of the material is necessary to assist the applicant to make their best possible case.
- II. Consider whether it is necessary to disclose personal details such as the name and address of the provider to the applicant.
- III. Consider whether there is any risk of prejudice to the person who has provided information either because of a risk to their personal safety (in which case considerations of public interest immunity arise) or because of the risk that they may be prosecuted.
- IV. Consider whether a matter should be reported to the police. The principles applied by the CCRC when deciding what action should be taken in this respect are:
  - a. There should be some evidence or good reason to believe a crime had been committed.
  - b. Where a reference to the crime is contained in a referral Statement of Reasons, the police will normally be informed of the crime when the Statement of Reasons has been issued.
  - c. The CCRC will consider the age and seriousness of the crime and may also have regard to the Code for Crown Prosecutors.
  - d. The CCRC will not generally report matters already known to a court, the police, or other appropriate investigating authority.
  - e. The CCRC will not usually report witness intimidation against the wishes of the witness.
  - f. Where a police officer or other person involved in an official capacity in the prosecution process admits perjury or an act amounting to perverting or attempting to pervert the course of justice the matter will be reported.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>28</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- g. Where an ordinary citizen admits an act amounting to perverting or attempting to pervert the course of justice the matter will normally be reported.
- h. The CCRC will not generally report cases where a witness admits perjury but their account is not considered credible.
- i. Where a person admits to the CCRC that they committed the crime for which the applicant was convicted, and the CCRC believes the admission may be credible, the matter will be reported.
- j. Where a crime is discovered by a police officer acting on behalf of the CCRC under Section 19 or Section 21 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995, the crime will be regarded as 'known to police' and no action need be considered by the CCRC. The police have an absolute duty to take appropriate action in respect of all crimes reported to them or discovered by them.
- k. Similarly, where the knowledge of a crime leads to a Section 19 requirement for the appointment of an Investigating Officer, there will be no need for the CCRC to consider taking any action.
- l. Where there is a real risk of harm to an individual, group of individuals or general public at large, the presumption will be in favour of reporting.

## **20 Material Which Indicates Significant Misconduct or Negligence**

20.1 There may be occasions where the CCRC discovers evidence of significant misconduct or negligence by a police officer, or an officer or other person employed by an investigatory authority, or by any other person working in the Criminal Justice System. Careful consideration will be given as to whether disclosure can and should be made to an appropriate person / body.

20.2 In respect of misconduct or negligence by expert witnesses, see 'CW-POL-20 Selection and Instruction of Experts' for further information.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>29</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

## 21 Discovery or Identification of a Threat to People or Property

21.1 There may be occasions where the CCRC discovers or receives a threat or identifies a risk to people or property. The CCRC has a responsibility to consider reporting such information to the police to enable an appropriate police response. Failure to do so properly may not necessarily lead to a loss of life or serious injury, but could undermine public confidence in the CCRC and its ability to manage serious issues.

21.2 Examples of threat or risk may include (not an exhaustive list):

- I. A direct threat to members of the public or property.
- II. A direct threat made to the CCRC or its staff.
- III. Risk placed upon individuals as a result of their engagement with the CCRC.
- IV. Risk placed upon individuals as a result of the activities of the CCRC.
- V. Threats of self-harm.

21.3 The response to threats and risks to individuals will be in line with Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the principles of *Osman v The United Kingdom* (87/1997/871/1083). The dictum of *Osman* requires public agencies; in consideration of threat and in light of available resources and against competing demands, to consider the threat carefully and to undertake reasonable action to remove or minimise the threat.

21.4 The basic principle is that if there is a 'real' and 'immediate' threat to the life of a named individual then that person will be informed of the threat unless there is a justifiable reason for not doing so, which involves serious risk to life or serious injury to a third party or parties. Threats to life include threats to cause serious harm, injury, rape, and other serious sexual assaults.

21.5 The principle is readily extended to serious risks to property.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>30</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- 21.6 The police are experienced in the requisite risk assessment and this better suits with them.
- 21.7 In almost all cases such matters will involve information that would assist the police or other investigating authority in the investigation of an offence or deciding whether to prosecute a person for an offence. The CCRC is permitted to disclose any such information by Section 24(3). If a person is threatening to immediately self-harm themselves, there would be a moral and ethical responsibility on the CCRC to report such information.

## **22 Requests for Disclosure by the Police or Other Investigative Entity**

- 22.1 On occasions, the police or another investigating authority believes that the CCRC has information which might assist them in the investigation of an offence or deciding whether to prosecute a person for an offence. The CCRC is permitted to disclose any such information by Section 24(3).
- 22.2 There may also be occasions where the police or another investigating authority believe that the CCRC has discovered information which might assist them in connection with any criminal, disciplinary or civil proceedings. The CCRC is permitted to disclose any such information by Section 24(1)(a).
- 22.3 Similar requests are sometimes received from other organisations / entities (e.g. CPS and Inquiries). Each request will be considered on its own merits.
- 22.4 In deciding whether to disclose information, careful regard will be had, by the CCRC, to any application of section 25.

## **23 Court Transcripts**

- 23.1 The CCRC obtains transcripts of court proceedings from a number of sources including the Crown Court, the Court of Appeal, original court reporters, applicants, and their representatives.

OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>31</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

- 23.2 The original material (shorthand notes, tape recordings, etc.) of any Crown Court trial belong to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). It is created and held by one of several Court Transcribing firms who are contracted by the MOJ. Anyone is entitled to apply to them for a transcript (for which the reporting firm makes a commercial charge) provided they have obtained permission from the court concerned.
- 23.3 The copyright in all transcripts remains with the Crown. The Crown gives blanket permission for copying and distribution of transcripts for any legitimate criminal justice function.
- 23.4 The CCRC may decide to provide copies of any transcripts it has obtained in the course of the review to courts, to other agencies in the criminal justice system, and to the parties to the relevant proceedings, generally without charge.
- 23.5 Exceptionally, where the CCRC has the only remaining copy of a transcript (e.g. in some very old cases), the CCRC will supply a copy upon request if the person seeking the copy transcript has obtained the consent of the court. The CCRC reserves the right to charge a reasonable sum for photocopying and postage charges.
- 23.6 The CCRC does not provide access to transcripts of proceedings in chambers or where the public were excluded from the courtroom. The CCRC will direct any such inquiries to the relevant court and transcribing firm.
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## Appendices

None

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OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>32</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>

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## Relevant CCRC Documents

Q-MAN-01	CCRC Quality Manual
Q-POL-01	CCRC Quality Policy
CW-POL-03	Communicating with Applicants
CW-POL-04	Case Review Process
CW-POL-08	Extensions for Further Submissions
CW-POL-20	Selection and Instruction of Experts
CW-POL-25	Investigations for the Court of Appeal (s.15)
CW-POL-27	Power to Obtain Material from Public Bodies (s.17)
CW-POL-28	Power to Obtain Material from Private Bodies and Individuals (s.18A)
CW-POL-29	Power to Appoint an Investigating Officer (s.19)
CW-F-100	Legal Waiver
CW-F-101	Legal Waiver with Letter

## Legal Documents (available for free from [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk))

Criminal Appeal Act 1995  
Criminal Justice Act 2003  
Human Rights Act 1998  
Sexual Offences (Protected Material) Act 1997

## Case Law

*D v NSPCC* [1978] AC 171 HL  
*Osman v The United Kingdom* (87/1997/871/1083)  
*R v Devine* [2021] NICA 7  
*R v Secretary of State for the Home Department ex parte Hickey & Others* (No.2) [1995] 1 All ER 489

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OFFICIAL - Criminal Cases Review Commission		
Document Ref: <b>CW-POL-19</b>	<b>Disclosure by the CCRC</b>	Date Issued: <b>15/07/2021</b>
Page <b>33</b> of <b>33</b>	Uncontrolled When Printed	Version: <b>1.0</b>