



Trew's Law

The Case for Automatic Reviews of Imprisoned Police Officers' Files

Policy Report

York Law School
Centre for Applied Human Rights (University of York)
APPEAL

Dr Joanna Gilmore (YLS), Mya Imadojemun (APPEAL/YLS)
and Dr Mattia Pinto (YLS/CAHR)

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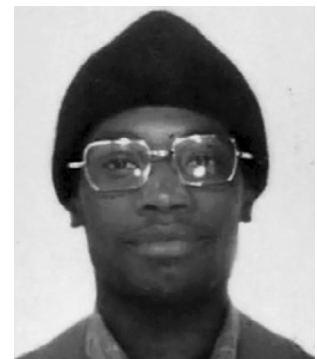
Foreword by Winston Trew

When I left my home in March 1972, it began as an *ordinary* day but, by the end of that evening, something *extraordinary* happened. I was arrested and accused of crimes I did not commit, and by November, I was convicted and sent to prison for two years.

When I was released from prison, there were no existential or political bases for me to accept my wrongful conviction, as it undermined the person I had chosen to be. Thus began my decades of research, writing, and campaigning to clear my name and, at the same time, implicate the system responsible for my criminal status. That moment came 47 years later when, in December 2019, the Court of Appeal quashed my wrongful convictions. However, campaigning against my wrongful conviction did not end in 2019, but was the beginning of a new phase.

In this new phase, I am pleased to be working on APPEAL's campaign, supported by research from the University of York, for legislation which makes it mandatory for any police officer imprisoned for a criminal offence to have their cases reviewed for possible miscarriages of justice. This legislation is called *Trew's Law*, and I am honoured to be associated with this new development in tackling miscarriages of justice.

Trew's Law would guarantee an immediate, independent review of cases linked to imprisoned officers. It would be simple and affordable, because justice shouldn't depend on luck, or on victims fighting for decades.



Above: Winston Trew in 1972. Below: Winston Trew today.



Pictures: Winston Trew

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Executive summary

- Between 2018 and 2025, 13 people had their convictions quashed after spending a combined 623 years wrongfully convicted. They were all victims of Detective Sergeant Derek Ridgewell, a corrupt and racist British Transport Police officer who was himself imprisoned in 1980. Despite his custodial sentence, the state failed to initiate a review of his past cases. The full extent of the Ridgewell scandal only came to light decades later through the persistence of his victims, most notably Winston Trew, who spent nearly 50 years fighting to clear his name.
- The systemic failure that allowed Ridgewell's victims to remain wrongfully convicted for decades has not been addressed in law. **Our research shows that between 2023 and 2026, at least 64 current or former police officers received immediate custodial sentences for offences including serious dishonesty, physical and sexual violence, and abuse of position.** Despite this, no statutory duty exists to mandate an automatic, independent review of the past casework of an imprisoned police officer for potentially unsafe convictions.
- Our Freedom of Information requests revealed a lack of transparency: there is no central system to record when police officers receive custodial sentences, nor is there a central record of when, or if, these officers' cases are reviewed, or what the outcomes might be. Consequently, the burden of discovery rests unfairly on the victim.
- In this report, we apply the transitional justice *guarantees of non-recurrence* to address this gap. The guarantees place a responsibility on the state to move beyond acknowledging historical wrongs and implement institutional reforms to prevent their repetition.
- Trew's Law would be one of the institutional reforms that are needed to ensure non-recurrence: it would introduce a statutory duty to trigger an automatic, independent review of relevant past casework when a serving or former police officer is sentenced to immediate imprisonment. This would place responsibility for identifying potentially unsafe convictions with the state, rather than those affected.

“Between 2018 and 2025, 13 people had their convictions quashed after spending a combined 623 years wrongfully convicted.”



Summary of Recommendations

Parliament should enact a statutory duty requiring an automatic, independent review of relevant casework when a serving or former police officer is sentenced to immediate imprisonment. The framework should incorporate the following mechanisms and principles:

- **A statutory trigger**
Require an automatic review when a serving or former police officer receives an immediate custodial sentence.
- **Identification and triage**
Require police forces and the CPS to identify all finalised cases in which the imprisoned officer played a material role, including giving witness evidence or handling disclosure.
- **Independent oversight**
Establish independent oversight for all decisions regarding risk, disclosure, and notification to mitigate institutional bias.
- **Proactive notification and disclosure**
Require affected individuals to be notified and given disclosure where a material risk to conviction safety is identified, enabling timely access to legal advice.
- **Transparency**
Require annual Home Office reporting on the number of officers imprisoned, cases reviewed, and notifications issued.

Picture: Jess Hurd



Introduction

When a serving or former police officer is imprisoned for a criminal offence, there is a material risk that their past casework contributed to unsafe convictions. Police officers play a pivotal role across the criminal justice process, including arrest, interview, evidence handling and witness testimony. Most prosecutions rely on the integrity of the officers who have selected and presented the evidence. Therefore, later credibility failures can have implications extending beyond the offence for which they were convicted.

In England and Wales, while existing mechanisms can prevent a convicted officer from returning to policing, there is no corresponding requirement to automatically re-examine the past convictions and casework in which that officer played a material role. The result is a reactive system that places an unjust and almost-impossible burden on wrongly convicted individuals, often from over-policed and marginalised communities, to uncover police wrongdoing and connect it to their own case, sometimes decades later, without either the skills or the funds.

This report and accompanying policy brief propose **Trew's Law**: a statutory duty to trigger an automatic, independent review of an imprisoned police officer's casework, with timely disclosure to affected individuals.

Methodology

This report applies a transitional justice framework to a contemporary democratic context in England and Wales, using the transitional justice guarantees of non-recurrence to analyse a gap in domestic law and policy and suggest institutional reforms to ensure non-repetition. Transitional justice concerns the mechanisms societies use to address legacies of serious wrongdoing to secure accountability, justice and reconciliation (United Nations Security Council, 2004). In this context, guarantees of non-recurrence are deliberate institutional, legal and structural interventions designed to prevent repetition by dismantling the conditions that enabled the original violations (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2015). They are a fundamental element of the reparations required for serious and systematic violations of IHRL, as established by the 2005 UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law. While the reforms mentioned in the UN Basic Principles are generally confined to institutions most closely related to serious human rights violations (including security forces), measures to guarantee non-repetition can and should be used for addressing a wider range of violations and their enabling factors through broader social, cultural, and institutional changes (Roht-Arriaza, 2019).

Within the European human rights framework, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has operationalised these principles when dealing with systemic dysfunctions. The ECtHR has demanded institutional reform measures in cases where a systemic practice gives rise to repetitive violations, including non-enforcement of judicial decisions (*Gerasimov and Others v*

“Guarantees of non-recurrence are deliberate institutional, legal, and structural interventions designed to prevent the repetition of serious human rights violations by dismantling the conditions that enabled them.”



“The question is not only how past injustice is acknowledged, but whether institutional safeguards exist to prevent it from happening again.”



Russia [2014] App Nos 29920/05 et al.), judicial delays (*Gazsó v Hungary* [2015] App No 48322/12), inhuman conditions of detention (*Torreggiani and Others v Italy* [2013] App Nos 43517/09 et al.), and loss of citizenship (*Kurić and Others v Slovenia* [2012] App No 26828/06). This case law is directly relevant to the systemic failures at the heart of this report: the repeated, unchecked reliance on evidence produced by corrupt officers, followed by the lack of an automatic review process when such police officers are imprisoned. The state’s human rights obligations require moving beyond ad hoc, reactive appeals prompted by victims, and implementing proactive, institutional safeguards that identify and rectify these miscarriages of justice automatically.

The Ridgewell scandal is a clear example of the type of systemic failure that these guarantees of non-recurrence are intended to address. The question is not only how past injustice is acknowledged, but whether institutional safeguards exist to prevent it from happening again. Using this lens, the report examines the legal and policy framework governing post-conviction review where a serving or former police officer is sentenced to immediate imprisonment, and assesses whether existing arrangements reliably trigger identification and review of earlier casework that may bear on conviction safety.

We adopted a mixed-method approach combining legal analysis, desk-based empirical research, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, and case study review. First, we conducted a structured review of primary legislation, policy and CPS guidance on appeals, disclosure and post-conviction processes in England and Wales to determine whether any enforceable duty requires automatic review when a serving or former police officer receives an immediate custodial sentence. Second, to assess scale and operational feasibility, we compiled a dataset of serving or former police officers sentenced to immediate imprisonment between January 2023 and January 2026, drawing on CPS and IOPC publications, police force announcements, media reports, and FOI responses. Third, we analysed published appellate judgments linked to DS Ridgewell to assess the consequences of delay and the absence of an automatic trigger.

Full details of data sources, inclusion criteria and limitations are set out in Appendix A.

Winston Trew's Story

The statutory duty outlined and proposed in this report is named Trew's Law in recognition of Winston Trew, whose experience illustrates the catastrophic failure of the current system to connect serious police criminality with the safety of past convictions.

1972: Oval Four Wrongfully Convicted

Winston Trew and three other young Black men were arrested at Oval Underground station by a plain-clothes 'anti-mugging' squad led by DS Derek Ridgewell of the British Transport Police (BTP). They were beaten, coerced into signing false confessions, and convicted of theft, attempted theft and assault based on Ridgewell's falsified evidence.

1980: Ridgewell Convicted and Imprisoned

In 1980, Ridgewell and two other BTP officers pleaded guilty to conspiracy to steal from the Bricklayers' Arms goods depot. They were stealing parcels in transit while giving evidence against British Rail workers convicted of the same offence. Ridgewell was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. No review of his past cases followed. He died in prison in 1982, without his victims being notified.

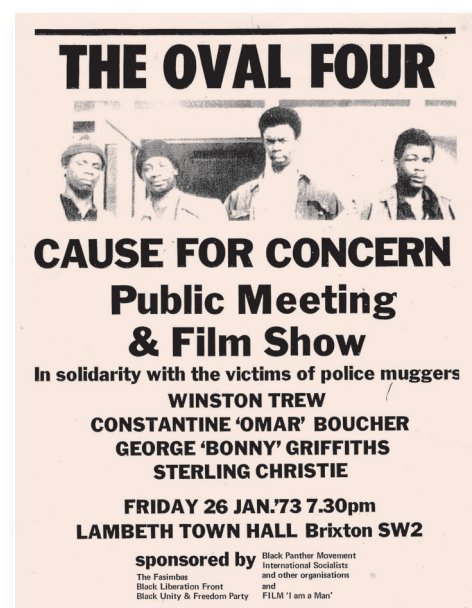
2013: New Evidence Emerges

Another of Ridgewell's victims, Stephen Simmons, was wrongfully convicted in 1976 of theft of parcels. In 2013, following advice given to him on a radio phone-in legal clinic, Simmons searched online for the name of his arresting officer. He came across Ridgewell's criminal past and found a book that Mr Trew (2010) had written about his own story and search for justice. That discovery eventually led to a series of referrals to the Court of Appeal, with the first conviction finally being quashed in 2018.

2019: Oval Four Convictions Quashed

Mr Trew and his co-defendants remained wrongfully convicted for nearly half a century. In 2019, following decades of personal campaigning and research by Mr Trew, the Court of Appeal quashed their convictions. The then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett, expressed the

Oval Four leaflet for public meeting in 1973.



Picture: Jess Hurd



court's "profound regret that it has taken so long for this injustice to be remedied" (*R v Trew, Christie and Griffiths* [2019] EWCA Crim 2474, para 14).

Mr Trew later documented his nearly 50-year struggle for justice, and the racism and corruption of the Ridgewell era, in *Rot at the Core* (Satchwell and Trew, 2021), co-authored with former British Transport Police Detective Superintendent Graham Satchwell.

The Oval Four were not the only victims. **As of May 2026, thirteen convictions linked to DS Ridgewell have been quashed by the Court of Appeal.** These include members of the 'Stockwell Six' and three former British Rail workers at the Bricklayers Arms depot, Saliah Mehmet, Basil Peterkin and Errol Campbell (see Appendix B). **Collectively, these thirteen people spent 623 years wrongfully convicted.**

Several of Ridgewell's victims had their convictions quashed posthumously by the Court of Appeal. They lived for decades with the stigma of criminal convictions that were later found to be unsafe, and died before their names were cleared.

"To date, thirteen convictions linked to DS Ridgewell have been quashed by the Court of Appeal."

“Following [Ridgewell’s] conviction in the 1980s, a review of his previous investigations should have immediately taken place. The fact that this was not done is simply inexcusable.”
(Chief Constable Lucy D’Orsi, BTP)



‘Simply Inexcusable’

In January 2024, forty-four years after DS Ridgewell was imprisoned, Chief Constable Lucy D’Orsi of the BTP issued a public apology for failing to identify the miscarriage of justice cases at the time:

“Following his conviction in the 1980s, a review of his previous investigations should have immediately taken place. The fact that this was not done is simply inexcusable... We are now carrying out a review of all available records and documentation to identify whether there are any other victims” (British Transport Police, 2024).

The Court of Appeal also found “considerable force” in the argument that all of Ridgewell’s cases should have been reviewed immediately upon his 1980 conviction (*R v Peterkin and Mehmet* [2024] EWCA Crim 309, para 23). In quashing the conviction of the late Errol Campbell in 2025, the Court detailed the devastating human cost of this delay, describing the “awful consequences” of a forty-year wait and noting that Mr Campbell “regarded himself, with justification, as a victim of racism” (*R v Campbell* [2025] EWCA Crim 1146, para 16). Mr Campbell maintained his innocence for the rest of his life, but the burden of the wrongful conviction led him to leave the country and struggle with alcoholism. His family described him as a “ruined man.”

The Scale of the Problem

It would be easy to assume that DS Ridgewell’s racism and corruption belonged to another era of policing, and that today’s safeguards would prevent similar injustices from going unchecked. However, serious criminality and discriminatory misconduct are persistent features of contemporary policing. Home Office statistics for the year ending 31 March 2025 recorded 395 allegations of breaches of the Equality and Diversity standard of professional conduct by police officers (Home Office, 2026). Baroness Casey’s 2023 review concluded that the Metropolitan Police Service remains institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic, a finding reinforced by the Independent Scrutiny & Oversight Board (ISOB), which concluded in its 2026 report that racism within policing remains “structural and systemic” (Casey, 2023; Independent Scrutiny & Oversight Board, 2026; see also Macpherson, 1999; Lammy, 2017). Indeed, the failure to hold Ridgewell and his colleagues to account in the 1970s helped foster the institutional conditions that have allowed these discriminatory practices to persist (Satchwell and Trew, 2021).

Beyond these systemic cultural failings, a rising volume of criminal proceedings against police officers reveals a parallel crisis of individual misconduct. Data from the Home Office for the year

ending 31 March 2024 records 227 criminal proceedings relating to 133 officers, a 42% increase on the previous year; 159 proceedings (70%) resulted in a guilty plea or finding (Home Office, 2025). Separate CPS data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act suggests a wider pattern of criminal convictions linked to persons serving with the police, recording 1,319 convictions between 2022 and 2025 on case files carrying the CPS “police complaints monitoring” flag. That dataset is not directly comparable with the Home Office figures, however, because the flag is applied at the case level and covers not only police officers, but also police staff, PCSOs, and contracted escort and detention officers. Even so, it suggests that the underlying problem is not confined to a small number of isolated cases and includes offence categories with clear relevance to police integrity, such as theft, fraud, forgery, perjury and perverting the course of justice (CPS FOI 13987).

Despite these indicators of serious criminal offending, transparency around sentencing remains limited. The CPS and the Home Office have confirmed that they do not collect data on how many police officers receive immediate custodial sentences each year (CPS FOI 13927; HO FOI 2026/00314). Although the IOPC records sentencing outcomes in cases arising from its own investigations, this provides only a partial national picture. In 2023/24, criminal proceedings concluded against 24 police officers or staff following IOPC independent investigations; nine people received prison sentences. Beyond those cases, there is no central record of officers sentenced through other criminal proceedings (Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2025). Furthermore, it is impossible to determine whether the imprisonment of these nine officers triggered any review of their prior casework. In response to a subsequent FOI request, the IOPC confirmed that providing such information would unavoidably involve the disclosure of criminal offence data restricted under UK GDPR, and that checking case files to see if broader reviews were conducted would exceed FOI cost limits (IOPC FOI 5026181). This further demonstrates the impenetrable opacity of the current framework.

These data gaps are even more pronounced at the force level. In response to our FOI request, the BTP stated that it could not readily determine how many of its officers had been imprisoned over the past decade because its internal systems do not reliably record whether misconduct cases led to criminal prosecution. In 3,479 of 4,673 records on its case management system, the field used to identify a case as “criminal” had been left blank. As a result, in around three-quarters (74%) of cases, the system does not provide a reliable and searchable means of identifying cases involving criminal proceedings (BTP 01/FOI/26/3990).

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) also lacks a centralised dataset or single system for tracking whether serving or former officers have been convicted and received an immediate custodial sentence. In response to our FOI request, the MPS stated that identifying such cases

“Serious criminality and discriminatory misconduct are persistent features of contemporary policing.”

would require manual cross-referencing across fragmented records, including HR, professional standards, and the Police National Computer, and noted that sentencing data is held by HM Courts & Tribunals Service rather than by the force itself (MPS 01/FOI/26/050777). This suggests that even England and Wales' largest police force cannot readily determine how many of its own officers have been sent to prison.

In the absence of official data, we compiled our own dataset of serving or former police officers sentenced to immediate imprisonment between January 2023 and January 2026 (see Appendix A). Drawing on CPS, IOPC and police force press releases, as well as verified media reports, we identified 64 officers who received immediate custodial sentences during this period – an average of around 21 per year. These cases were spread across 23 police forces and agencies. Sexual offences formed the largest offence category (24 cases), followed by corruption and dishonesty (22), theft and burglary (12), violence and domestic abuse (5), and driving offences (1). Sentences ranged from 12 weeks to 19 years' imprisonment, including two life sentences.

A striking feature of many of these cases is the use of police powers, office or access to facilitate serious offending. Examples include:

- a National Crime Agency officer convicted of theft after stealing evidence worth £4.4 million during a criminal investigation;
- a detective constable from Greater Manchester Police convicted of theft and corruption offences after stealing 4kg of cocaine from a police evidence store, conspiring to sell it, and unlawfully searching police computer systems for local drug dealers;
- a police constable from the Metropolitan Police Service convicted of coercive and controlling behaviour for intimidating and controlling his wife over several years, reportedly telling her that “no one will believe you because I am a police officer”;
- a police sergeant from South Wales Police convicted of burglary, attempted burglary, theft, misuse of police computer systems and corruption after attending a call involving a vulnerable victim, stealing their front door key, and later attempting to burgle their home;
- a police constable from Devon and Cornwall Police convicted of eight counts of fraud by false representation against an 81-year-old, highly vulnerable widow whom he had encountered during a welfare check while on duty; and
- a police constable from the Metropolitan Police who stole £115 from the wallet of a man who had collapsed and died, after the wallet had been seized and logged as evidence in the sudden-death investigation.

Sexual offences formed the largest offence category. In many of those cases, the victims were vulnerable suspects, defendants, or victims of crime. Similar dynamics were also evident in many misconduct in public office cases, including sexual relationships with vulnerable witnesses, defendants, or others over whom officers exercised power and authority by virtue of their position.

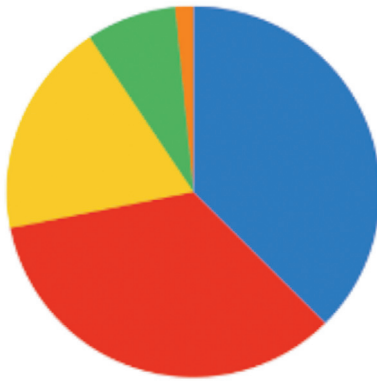
Table 1: Imprisoned Police Officers by Police Force (2023–2026)

Police Force / Agency	Number of Imprisoned Officers	Police Force / Agency	Number of Imprisoned Officers
Metropolitan Police Service	18	Lancashire Constabulary	2
Greater Manchester Police	8	Leicestershire Police	2
Thames Valley Police	4	Merseyside Police	2
West Mercia Police	4	South Wales Police	2
West Yorkshire Police	4	South Yorkshire Police	2
Bedfordshire Police	3	Other Forces (1 each)*	11
Devon & Cornwall Police	2	Total Identified	64

*Includes: Cheshire, City of London, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Gwent, Humberside, Kent, Lincolnshire, NCA, Sussex, and West Midlands.

Table 2: Imprisoned Police Officers by Offence Category (2023–2026)

Offence Category	Number of Officers
Sexual Offences	24
Corruption & Dishonesty	22
Theft & Burglary	12
Violence & Domestic Abuse	5
Driving Offences	1
Total Identified	64



The scale of the problem outlined above exposes a fundamental weakness in the current post-conviction framework. Longstanding research recognises that serious police misconduct is an institutional risk requiring structural safeguards rather than reliance on individual discipline alone (Newburn, 1999). Wrongful-conviction claims frequently involve allegations that police investigations fell below the requisite standard, whether deliberately or inadvertently, and the central post-conviction question is often whether such misconduct or irregularity rendered the conviction unsafe (Hoyle, 2023). Nor should it be assumed that the procedural safeguards introduced in the post-PACE era have consigned such risks to the past. Recent scandals, including the wrongful conviction of Andrew Malkinson and major disclosure failures exposed in cases such as Liam Allan, demonstrate that serious policing failures remain capable of distorting criminal outcomes despite the formal safeguards now in place.

Against this background, a police officer's later imprisonment takes on particular significance. Because police officers occupy a central position in the criminal justice process, shaping arrest decisions, evidence handling and witness testimony, proven serious wrongdoing can cast doubt on the integrity of investigations in which they played a material role. A police officer's imprisonment is therefore not merely a disciplinary but also a credibility event with potential implications for conviction safety. That loss of credibility should, in turn, trigger the state's responsibility to identify affected cases, activate appropriate review mechanisms, and ensure that the principles of disclosure, notification and independent scrutiny are given practical effect.

Yet, post-conviction safeguards in England and Wales are largely reactive. The primary mechanism for addressing risk in past cases is CPS guidance, *Reviewing Finalised Cases* (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019). It recognises that a review may be required where a witness, including a police officer, is later "discredited". However, this is guidance, not law: there is no enforceable duty requiring an automatic review merely because an officer has been imprisoned, and prosecutors retain wide discretion over whether and how to review cases. Nor are they required to notify the convicted person or disclose findings unless a further discretionary decision is made. In practice, this means concerns can be considered internally without the affected individual being informed, leaving them unable to seek legal advice or challenge their conviction.

These weaknesses are compounded by the lack of routinely recorded or published basic information. Freedom of Information responses from the CPS confirm the absence of a central record of "Reviewing Finalised Cases" activity. Specifically, the CPS's central system does not hold data on:

- notifications indicating a potential review requirement;
- decisions on whether to conduct a review;
- the outcomes of completed reviews.

Any information is instead likely to be held locally within individual CPS Areas, and compiling a national aggregation would exceed the cost limits stipulated by the FOIA (CPS FOI 13887). The CPS also does not centrally maintain searchable data identifying whether defendants were current or former police officers, or whether they received immediate custodial sentences (CPS FOI 13927). Consequently, there is limited internal or external visibility into whether reviews are initiated consistently or what outcomes they produce.

This absence of targeted post-conviction safeguards is mirrored at the investigative level. The IOPC has confirmed in response to an FOI request that it possesses no specific policy, guidance, or protocol on reviewing a police officer's past casework when they receive an immediate custodial sentence. While a police officer's conduct may be reviewed if fresh evidence comes to light to prompt a re-referral, the procedure relies entirely on general referral criteria rather than an automatic trigger tied to the police officer's imprisonment (IOPC FOI 5026181).

Wider accountability and disclosure limits

The police accountability framework primarily focuses on whether an officer is fit to remain in or return to policing. While individual accountability is important, this emphasis on individual professional sanctions leaves a significant structural gap that undermines the state's duty to provide guarantees of non-recurrence: there is no requirement for any retrospective review of concluded cases in which the officer played a material role. For example, while the College of Policing's *Barred List* (College of Policing, n.d.) can prevent officers with serious criminal convictions from re-entering policing, it does not automatically trigger any review of convictions linked to their previous conduct (MPS 01/FOI/26/050777).

The lack of an adequate statutory disclosure framework further entrenches this problem. Although the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 governs disclosure during active proceedings, it creates no general obligation to disclose an officer's subsequent imprisonment once a case has concluded. Consequently, absent exceptional litigation, concluded cases are unlikely to be reviewed, placing the burden of exposing police misconduct on those who have been wrongfully convicted. This represents a fundamental failure to guarantee non-repetition, as international human rights standards require the state, not the victims, to proactively identify and dismantle the conditions that enable recurring miscarriages of justice.

Overall, the current framework is discretionary, opaque and contingent. It can respond when wrongdoing is identified and escalated but does not proactively identify the cases that warrant attention or ensure that affected individuals are informed of an officer's conviction and its possible relevance to their case. Without a clear statutory trigger, independent oversight or transparent reporting, the system depends on institutional discretion and chance discovery to correct unsafe convictions. A post-conviction framework left to discretion alone is inherently unreliable where conviction safety is at stake, falling far short of the deliberate, institutional interventions required to prevent repetition of wrongdoings.

The costs of these structural failures fall disproportionately on those already most affected by over-policing. In practice, it shifts the burden of uncovering police misconduct onto victims, particularly those from Black and racially minoritised communities, compounding the original harm and deepening systemic mistrust. By leaving those most affected by over-policing to investigate their own cases, the state creates a significant barrier to justice and reinforces the very inequalities it should be dismantling. Establishing an automatic, statutory review process is therefore a necessary guarantee of non-recurrence to address systemic inequalities and protect targeted communities from repeated harm.

“Without a clear statutory trigger, independent oversight or transparent reporting, the system depends on institutional discretion and chance discovery to correct unsafe convictions.”

The Proposed Statutory Framework: Trew's Law

Trew's Law replaces discretionary practice with a statutory duty. When a serving or former police officer is sentenced to immediate imprisonment, an independent process is automatically triggered to identify relevant past casework, assess risk to conviction safety, and provide notification and disclosure to affected individuals.

In doing so, the proposal gives practical effect to guarantees of non-recurrence. The discovery of serious police criminality, followed by imprisonment, becomes a defined legal trigger for review rather than a matter left to institutional discretion or victim-led discovery. The framework is built around five core components.

1. The Statutory Trigger

The duty is activated upon the passing of an immediate custodial sentence on a serving or former police officer for any criminal offence. Imprisonment provides an objective threshold and avoids the uncertainty of determining when an officer is sufficiently "discredited" to justify review. The trigger ensures that serious officer criminality is met with a structured and timely assessment of past casework.

2. Identification and Triage

Once triggered, the relevant police force and the CPS must identify all finalised cases in which the imprisoned officer played a material role. Materiality includes providing witness evidence, preparing key investigative documents, or handling exhibits and disclosure. The triage process focuses the review on cases where the officer's integrity was central to the conviction, while excluding purely administrative or peripheral involvement.

"The discovery of serious police criminality, followed by imprisonment, becomes a defined legal trigger for review rather than a matter left to institutional discretion or victim-led discovery."



3. Independent Oversight

To mitigate institutional bias, the review process must include independent scrutiny. This prevents the organisation that secured the original conviction from having sole authority over whether it is re-examined.

4. Proactive Notification and Disclosure

Where triage identifies a material risk to conviction safety, there is a duty to notify the convicted individual or their legal representatives. Notification must be accompanied by appropriate disclosure of the officer's conviction and their role in the original case. This places affected individuals in a position to obtain legal advice and determine whether to pursue an appeal.

5. Transparency and Reporting

To address the current absence of national data, the legislation would require the Home Office to publish an annual report on the operation of the duty. The report should record the number of officers whose imprisonment triggered review, the number of cases identified and assessed, and the number of notifications issued. This ensures public accountability and allows the scale and impact of officer criminality to be properly understood.

Conclusion

The Ridgewell scandal demonstrates the human cost of a justice system that fails to connect a police officer's serious criminality with the safety of earlier convictions. Although Derek Ridgewell was imprisoned in 1980, no automatic review of his past casework followed. Individuals lived and died with the stigma of convictions later found to be unsafe, and families bore the consequences of decades-long delay. Trew's Law would introduce a clear and practical guarantee of non-recurrence. It would ensure that, when a serving or former police officer is sentenced to immediate imprisonment, the system responds in a predictable and transparent way by identifying relevant past cases, conducting independent triage, and providing affected individuals with appropriate notification and disclosure. The aim is to prevent future injustices from persisting for decades by addressing a clear gap in the current framework.

The administrative demands of Trew's Law are proportionate to the gravity of the risks posed by serious police criminality. Our research identifies an average of 21 officers imprisoned each year. Even allowing for some undercounting, the resulting review caseload would remain very small when set against the approximately 400,000 annual prosecutions handled by the CPS. Implementing this reform would mark a decisive shift from a culture of retrospective apology to one of proactive accountability. By ensuring that serious criminal wrongdoing by police officers, once proven and punished by imprisonment, automatically triggers a structured and independent review of their past casework, the state can help ensure that unsafe convictions are identified and addressed without decades of delay.

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 <https://appeal.org.uk/trews-law>



APPENDIX A: Methodology

Legal and Policy Analysis

We conducted a structured review of primary legislation governing criminal appeals and disclosure in England and Wales, including the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996, alongside relevant policing legislation and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance (including Reviewing Finalised Cases) (2019).

The purpose was to determine whether any statutory duty currently requires automatic review of convictions when a serving or former police officer is sentenced to imprisonment. The analysis focused on enforceable legal duties rather than discretionary practice.

Empirical Dataset: Imprisoned Officers (2023–2026)

To assess scale, we compiled a database of serving and former police officers in England and Wales sentenced to immediate custody between 1 January 2023 and 1 January 2026.

Cases were included where:

- the individual was a sworn serving or former officer;
- a court imposed an immediate custodial sentence;
- the sentencing occurred within the defined period; and
- the case was verifiable through reliable public sources.

Data were drawn from CPS press releases, IOPC publications, police force announcements, and reputable media reporting. Where possible, cases were cross-verified across multiple sources. For each case, we recorded force, offence type, reported facts, and sentence length. Offences were grouped into categories including dishonesty/corruption, sexual offences, violence, and theft and related offences.

In the absence of a central publicly accessible database of imprisoned police officers, the dataset is necessarily derived from publicly available sources. Although cases of police imprisonment are generally newsworthy and therefore likely to be publicly reported, some undercounting is still possible. The dataset should therefore be understood as a robust but conservative estimate rather than an exhaustive total.

Freedom of Information Requests

FOI requests were submitted to the CPS, Home Office, IOPC, the Metropolitan Police Service, and the British Transport Police to determine whether:

- National data on imprisoned officers is centrally recorded;
- The 'Reviewing Finalised Cases' process is centrally tracked;
- Criminal justice databases identify defendants by their status as police officers.

Responses confirmed the absence of a centrally searchable national dataset and indicated that the monitoring of post-conviction reviews is fragmented.

Case Study Review

We analysed published appellate judgments involving convictions linked to officers later imprisoned following a criminal conviction to assess systemic delay and judicial commentary on review failures.

This mixed-method approach provides a legally grounded and empirically informed assessment of existing structural gaps and the feasibility of a targeted statutory review mechanism.

APPENDIX B: Ridgewell-linked convictions quashed (as of May 2026)

Group / case	Individual	Conviction year	Year quashed	Years wrongfully convicted	Case citation
Simmons & Others	Stephen Simmons	1976	2018	43	<i>R v Simmons</i> [2018] EWCA Crim 114
Oval Four	Winston Trew	1972	2019	47	<i>R v Trew, Christie and Griffiths</i> [2019] EWCA Crim 2474
Oval Four	Sterling Christie	1972	2019	47	<i>R v Trew, Christie and Griffiths</i> [2019] EWCA Crim 2474
Oval Four	George Griffiths	1972	2019	47	<i>R v Trew, Christie and Griffiths</i> [2019] EWCA Crim 2474
Oval Four	Constantine Boucher	1972	2020	48	<i>R v Boucher</i> [2020] EWCA Crim 629
Stockwell Six	Paul Green	1972	2021	49	<i>R v Green, Harriot and Davidson</i> [2021] EWCA Crim 1026
Stockwell Six	Courtney Harriot	1972	2021	49	<i>R v Green, Harriot and Davidson</i> [2021] EWCA Crim 1026
Stockwell Six	Cleveland Davidson	1972	2021	49	<i>R v Green, Harriot and Davidson</i> [2021] EWCA Crim 1026
Stockwell Six	Texo Johnson	1972	2021	49	<i>R v Green, Harriot and Davidson</i> [2021] EWCA Crim 1026; and <i>R v Johnson</i> [2021] EWCA Crim 1837
Stockwell Six	Ronald De Souza	1972	2025	53	<i>R v De Souza</i> [2025] EWCA Crim 1145
Bricklayers Arms depot workers	Saliah Mehmet	1977	2024	47	<i>R v Peterkin and Mehmet</i> [2024] EWCA Crim 309
Bricklayers Arms depot workers	Basil Peterkin	1977	2024	47	<i>R v Peterkin and Mehmet</i> [2024] EWCA Crim 309
Bricklayers Arms depot workers	Errol Campbell	1977	2025	48	<i>R v Campbell</i> [2025] EWCA Crim 1146
Total years wrongfully convicted (13 quashed convictions): 623 years.					

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