

Evidence to the
National Crime Agency
Remuneration Review
Body

- 11th Submission -



NCOA

National Crime **Officers** Association
The Trade Union of the NCA

Pay Round August 2025 - July 2026

29th January 2025

Published at www.ncoa.org.uk

Contents

- 1. NCA Pay – Another Frustrating Year of No Reform.**
- 2. NCOA Recommendations 2025-2026.**
- 3. NCOA Pay Proposal Summary.**

1. NCA Pay – Another Frustrating Year of No Reform.

1.1 In its 10th submission to the National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body (NCARRB), on behalf of its members, the NCOA re-iterated the case for urgent reform of NCA pay mechanisms. The NCOA has now spent over 10 years making the case for pay reform, the NCARRB have been calling for reform since 2016.

1.2 With no overt progress being made, and the NCA still not sharing its future pay reform plans with either its Trade Unions or workforce, it should come as no surprise that in this 11th evidence submission, the NCOA again produces a set of recommendations focussed on pay reform rather than simply reacting to year-on-year cost of living pressures.

1.3 If the NCARRB are only able to deal with cost-of-living matters in 2025/26, then the award NCA officers receive must align as a minimum with their policing colleagues. Any pay award below this would result in NCA officers losing any progress made in 2024/25 in bridging the pay gap with their main comparator group. If the NCARRB choose to recommend an award above that of Police Officers (as they did in 2024), this might assist in ensuring that the gap between NCA pay and Police Pay does not widen further.

1.4 NCOA members are no less exempt from the impact of inflation than other public sector employees. NCA wages have not recovered from the impact of recent double-digit inflation. A new government has not changed the thoughts of economists who are predicting a poor economic outlook for 2025, with inflation remaining stubbornly higher than the 2% target.

1.5 The failure to deliver pay progression means that many NCOA members remain trapped at the grade minimum of the standard pay range. This group are less insulated from spiralling inflation in areas such as rent. It is an indictment of the NCA's inability to make progress in securing meaningful pay reform, that it has now embedded in policy an option for officers to claim specific winter fuel salary advances, in addition to the normal salary advance payments, for those facing financial hardship. The Agency have accepted that for some officers, however frugal their lifestyles, basic living costs can outstrip their pay, making them choose between heating or eating. This is a sad dilemma faced by some whose role is to investigate serious and organised crime.

1.6 The Home Secretary's remit letter (dated 30th September 2024), sought that,

'as the NCA advances its 'One NCA ' policy , it is crucial that all staff , both those with and without powers are treated equitably in matters of pay.'

1.7 It is therefore perplexing that neither the NCA nor HM Government can share any update on the supposed 'NCA Pay and Contract reform' proposals that have been in a state of limbo for many months. There is nothing more unequal than the current differentiated pay models, with predominantly powered officers on Spot Rate (SR) pay, retaining an element of progression against predominantly non-powered colleagues, on the NCA standard pay mechanism, with zero pay progression.

1.8 What has become apparent is that hastily reshaped priorities of the NCA to deliver quick and tangible results, against the scourge of Organised Immigration Crime has resulted in our members being expected to deliver *more for less*.

1.9 In 2024, the NCOA raised concerns on the lack of NCA strategy which had delivered an increased number of Senior Leaders and, at the same time, a reduced number of officers at Grade 5. Their own analysis has recognised a trend of a growing volume of more senior officers - with more junior grades remaining stable or reduced. This includes growth in Deputy Director (DD) roles (+40%) and G1s (+50%) over the previous three years.

Table 1:

Split of NCA officers by grade for the period 31st Oct 2023 to 31st October 2024.

| Grade | 31st Oct 23 | 31st Oct 24 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| DD & Above | 0.7% | 0.8% |
| NCA Grade 1 | 2.4% | 2.3% |
| NCA Grade 2 | 6.2% | 7.1% |
| NCA Grade 3 | 16.1% | 16.8% |
| NCA Grade 4 | 29.6% | 30.1% |
| NCA Grade 5 | 41.1% | 39.1% |
| NCA Grade 6 | 3.9% | 3.8% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% |

1.10 In early 2025, the NCA provided an embargoed copy of its proposed NCARRB written pay submission to its Trade Unions. Table 2 of the NCA submission provides workforce by grade data. Whilst the NCA has grown by 277 permanent staff during the 12-month reporting period, the number of Grade 5s has decreased by 77, at a time when numbers in every other Grade have increased. By way of comparison, the NCA now has an additional 73 G2 officers in the same reporting period.

1.11 The NCA now has 50 Senior Civil Servants (SCS). By way of comparison, according to their website, Sussex Police who have approximately 5000 staff, have a command team made up of both police officers and police staff of 10 employees who are able to work together to ensure the effective and efficient running of that force.

1.12 Whilst it might not be the NCARRB’s remit to question the strategy behind the apparent inverted recruitment strategy being adopted by the NCA, the Home Secretary has requested information on the affordability of any pay proposals. In our engagement with NCOA members, many have questioned the logic of employing more senior, and therefore more costly, officers at time of obvious budgetary constraints.

1.13 The NCA has not provided an updated assessment of the costs of contingent labour beyond the £11.53m figure included in its submission to the 2024/25 process. The NCA now has 120 commercial contractors (Contingent Labour), this is an increase of 25% in the last 12 months. This eye-watering expenditure on contingent labour is more than twice the £4.93m, which the NCA has calculated to be the cost of a potential 2.9% NCA Pay Award in 2025/26.

1.14 At this time, the results of the 2024 NCA Staff Survey have not been released for publication. It is hoped that the NCOA will be able to provide more information on the results during its oral evidence session. Notably there is a worrying trend of reduced confidence in the NCA Executive Leadership following yet another year of failing to deliver on their ‘wait and see’ pledges of pay reform.

2. NCOA Recommendations 2025/26.

2.1 Those who read the NCA submission and examine the associated data, will no doubt recognise the inherent unfairness in the NCA's differentiated pay mechanisms. The Trade Unions have not been provided with the 'Pay and Contract Reform' business case which, we have been advised, has been submitted to HM Government.

2.2 It is inconceivable that anyone who reads the information available and understands the important work undertaken by NCA officers will come to anything but the obvious conclusion that the Agency urgently needs to reform its pay mechanisms. In contrast to the NCA NCARRB submission which offers no solutions, the NCOA provides a set of recommendations which would immediately tackle the damaging failings within NCA pay.

2.3 Circumstances previously reported to the NCARRB, over what is now several years, remain current. It is the case that the majority of NCA officers are on the standard pay mechanism with no pay progression, and of these, over 2/3rds are at pay range minimum.

2.4 The NCA continues to promote its plan to recruit from currently serving Police Officers and yet its pay ranges, both Standard and Spot Rate, are significantly below those in policing, with a gap which increases year on year. In addition, the working week for NCA officers, especially those on SR pay is longer. The NCA continues to successfully recruit from a pool of retired police officers who are often in the fortunate position of supplementing their Police pensions with their NCA pay. This has a negative impact on its Gender Pay Gap and is likely to have the same negative impact on the yet to be released Ethnicity Pay Gap.

2.5 The rate of attrition from the NCA remains highest at Grade 6 - the current rate of 13.3% is twice that of Grade 2. It is not sustainable for the most junior officers (by grade) to be paid less than those in the hospitality and retail sectors, especially given the expectations on all NCA officers, no matter their grade, to achieve and maintain heightened levels of vetting.

2.6 The NCA's geographical allowances for the London and South East remain disjointed and misaligned with the NCA's estates strategy. An opportunity to coordinate a review of these allowances with the now imminent closure of the Spring Gardens H/Q has been missed.

2.7 There has also been no review of the Non-Consolidated Budget. In 2024, the NCA chose to ignore the outcome of its own Recruitment and Retention Allowance (RRA) consideration process by simply renewing the payments to those who received it in 2023. This resulted in more payments being made than had been recommended by the internal 2024 process and resulted in fiscal pressures on the non-consolidated budget.

2.8 These pressures caused the NCA to pause the payment of honorariums for the remainder of the 2024/25 financial year. The collateral impact of the differentiated pay mechanisms is such that RRAs remain a means of compensating some of those on

Standard Pay Range, although invariably not at G6 where the data clearly shows retention pressures exist.

2.9 There has been no change in NCA shift pay system in the last 12 months. The current rate of allowance is paid to groups which includes those who work scheduled nights, as well as those who do not. Plans to recruit enough Targeted Intercept Officers so that a night shift can be staffed have not come to fruition.

2.10 The use of on-call payments remains confusing and inconsistent. There are several legal challenges mounted by officers who feel exploited by an NCA requirement to retain operational responsibilities when off duty without being appropriately recompensed. Moreover, the value of the NCA on-call payment remains the same as in 2013, despite on-call allowances in the Police service having been increased following recent reviews.

2.11 No review of International Liaison Officer (ILO) allowances has taken place although the NCA has moved to extended 10-year contracts for those selected to work overseas. The NCOA thank the NCARRB for arranging its own informal evidence session for this group.

2.13 This *smorgasbord* of missed opportunities to review the auxiliary allowance payments available to NCA officers is perplexing, especially as the NCOA has received no firm commitment that they are included in plans for pay and contract reform. Even when the NCA internal Remuneration Committee considered the scrapping of SR pay for Grade 3, they chose to retain it. The overwhelming evidence is that with only 17 of over 1,000 G3 officers on Spot Rate, it is clearly an unattractive choice and a failed experiment in its current guise.

2.14 The Agency was previously encouraged to focus on this Spot Rate anomaly (SR's have been successfully introduced at all other operational grades). Despite the critical responsibilities held by many G3's with a direct Policing comparator, the Agency has abandoned this group and failed to redesign a more attractive package akin to that which has been offered to all other SR Grades.

2.15 A similar failed experiment is the *Expert* Spot Rate which is still only paid to a niche group of predominantly male firearms officers. Once again, the NCOA has encouraged the Agency to define experts and deliver additional pay progression opportunities across all SR roles as indicated when they first introduced. The Agency has failed to do so.

2.16 The NCOA note the decision of the NCA not to pursue a payment of Environmental Allowance to all its officers based in Northern Ireland. Having been provided with some NCA review papers, we consider this decision incorrect. In line with the NCA position we look forward to providing oral evidence to the NCARRB on this matter.

3. NCOA Pay & Allowance Proposals 2025-2026

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Revaluate NCA pay ranges and working hours at Grades 1-5 in line with equivalent Police officer ranks: Chief Superintendent – Police Constable following 2025 PRRB process. |
| 2 | Revaluate NCA Grade 6 pay with a minimum starting salary of £28,000 and then assimilate officers at the appropriate point in the updated range. |
| 3 | Introduce a contractual pay progression mechanism across Grades 1-6 and assimilate officers onto the pay range at the appropriate point. |
| 4 | Increase NCA On-call Allowance to £35 per 12hr period – and for this to be available to all officers at Grades 1-6 undertaking such duties. |
| 5 | Award NCA officers based in Belfast a geographical allowance aligned to, (and thereafter, tracking) the NITA received by PSNI officers. |
| 6 | Redesign the Non-Consolidated Pay Budget so that payments are targeted at the NCA’s hard-to-fill roles. |
| 7 | Replace the current NCA London Weighting Allowance and NCA South East Allowance with the NCOA Zonal model for payment of Geographical Allowances in London and South East England, as outlined in the NCOA’s 8 th , 9 th , and 10 th written pay submissions. |
| 8 | Conduct a comprehensive review of NCA International Liaison Officer allowances. |
| 9 | Redesign the NCA shift pay system and adopt a building blocks approach of between 10-30% consolidated pay, dependent on the level of inconvenience and disruption linked to the role. |

National Crime Officers Association
1 Dundonald Avenue
Stockton Heath
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6JT
www.ncoa.org.uk

