

Chief Constables' Council

Please select intended audience: NPCC Coordination Committee

Title: National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) 2 Year Funding 2026-27 and Year 3 Funding 2027–28

Agenda Item: Session 1 - Regional

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Force/Organisation:	National Ballistics Intelligence Service
Date Created:	06/08/2025
Coordination Committee:	Finance Committee
Portfolio:	NPCC Serious & Organised Crime
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When completing the Chief Constables' Council submission template the below 3D model agreed at the December 23 meeting should be reviewed and the paper written against for completion and final submission to the respective Coordination Committee and then onward to the NPCC Business Support team managing Chiefs' Council via CCC ****S31(1)****

Decision	Discussion	Dissemination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the item is for decision, what is/are the decision(s) that are sought from council? • Has it been through the relevant Committee first? Is the decision appropriate for delegation? • Has it been through the Regional process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the item is for discussion, is it for discussion with Chief Constables, all Chief Officers, Heads of Departments, a particular Committee? • If it is for a group other than Chief Constables, use the relevant forum. If it is for Chief Constables, be clear on the points for discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the item is for information only, who is it for? Can it be disseminated via another route than CCC, such as ChiefsNet, email, or an All Chief Officers Day? • If it is purely for Chief Constables, be clear on why it needs to come to CCC for dissemination.

Please indicate what the paper is requesting: Dissemination

1. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

- 1.1. In Spring 2025 it was agreed at Chiefs Constables' Council that National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) funding would be increased by 3% for 2025/26 for this financial year only. This decision was on the understanding that significant efficiencies would follow.
- 1.2. Council further directed that a rapid efficiency review be directly undertaken to deliver a new rationalised structure with a reduced operating cost to all forces in 26/27 and 27/28. This work was to be reported back through NPCC Finance Committee.
- 1.3. This paper sets out how NABIS will achieve a reduced future budget position, a leaner structure and a reduced estate footprint whilst improving its efficiency and effectiveness, maintaining its accreditation and current reporting MOU's.
- 1.4. The headline strategic intent is to operate a re-structured NABIS from one single site and for this to be in its current estate at the WMP Forensics facility in Birmingham. Secondly NABIS would be hosted under the Head of Forensics in West Midlands for accreditation and line management purposes on behalf of the NPCC. It would then remain in a readily transferable position into a new National Centre for Policing should that be determined by Chief Constables.
- 1.5. The relationship with host forces is governed by a historic and complex Section 22a Agreement, that is assessed as no longer fit for purpose in the current policing and financial climate. This paper does not seek to change that immediately as the pressing operational need is to focus upon maintaining operational delivery and transition through 25/26. It will be reviewed subject to legal advice later as it is likely to become obsolete upon future anticipated transition into a national body.

- 1.6. In order to achieve the above transition, realise the efficiencies and maintain operational service, both Chiefs and PCC's will need to agree to the use of reserves in order to cover potential redundancies. The reason for this is that the old s22a technically states that such costs are apportioned according to the funding formula. That is not deemed an efficient, effective or common sense route to take in these circumstances where the modest reserve which has built up can be expeditiously utilised in order to facilitate the efficiency gain which reduces every partner's costs from 26/27 onwards. It also acts as an obvious barrier to change when balanced alongside the impact upon GMP and WMP as employers and as forces who facilitated the collaboration originally from an estate perspective.
- 1.7. NABIS Governance Board meets bi-annually and provides scrutiny of the overall strategic direction, funding requirements and expenditure of NABIS of behalf of Chief Constables' Council. The next Governance Board will also be updated on progress in November 2025.
- 1.8. This paper also provides Chief Constables with an indicative strategic overview of the NABIS budget proposal for Financial Years 26/27 and 27/28 in order to deliver the necessary operating model changes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. NABIS currently operates out of three sites, with Forensic hubs located and supported by host forces GMP, and WMP and a central Birmingham office, with associated costs. This historic model has inbuilt inefficiencies, replicating an identical function in two hub locations requires minimum staffing numbers in each hub for resilience rather than demand.
- 2.2. As NABIS is not an independent legal entity. Accreditation for ISO17025 is owned by the host forces, with NABIS complying with the requirements of two host forces and those specific to NABIS. NABIS have to pay UKAS for accreditation inspections at both locations which is not cost effective. This has resulted in additional costs to NABIS, GMP and WMP in order to achieve compliance.
- 2.3. NABIS has a paper establishment of 51.15 FTE across the three sites with an actual headcount of 39.15 It has been consistently challenged by recruitment into a number of vacancies. Currently a forensic hub & operational support team are hosted by West Midlands Police who employ the staff and Chief Superintendent. A second forensic hub is hosted by Greater Manchester Police who employ the staff who work there. Both forensic hubs sit within existing force forensic estates with the operational support team renting space in a partner building in Birmingham.
- 2.4. NABIS continues to co-ordinate a number of National meetings to support the NPCC Criminal Use of Firearms (CUF) portfolio; which include NPCC CUF meeting, and the National Gun Crime Intelligence Meeting. This will remain unchanged.

2.5. Current structure and staffing levels

Operating Level	Number of posts
Senior Leadership Team - DCS, Grade 13, 2 x Grade 11	4
Managers - 5 x Grade 8	5
Forensic Staff- 14 x Experts, 4 x SDC (admin), 8 x Technicians, 4 Drivers	30
Non-Forensic Staff - Intelligence x 5, Performance x 1, Support x 3, Governance	12.15
Total	51.15



3. SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL/REQUEST FOR FUNDING

This should also include which stakeholders internal/external have been consulted on and any possible impact assessment (i.e. officer / staff abstraction or local resource required) which may apply.

Objective: Reduce Estate footprint to one single location in Birmingham, rationalise staffing levels and senior Leadership costs by transforming NABIS and not reducing current service levels

By 2027/28 NABIS will have achieved a 47% saving on the NPCC 2024/25 funding settlement amount

****S31(1)****

3.0.1 By March 2027 NABIS will have fully transitioned to **A single Site with an establishment of 12 Experts and Expert Trainees** to meet current demand. (currently 22 FTE)

This will enable succession planning to be supported by a career pathway to maintain Expert provision. Expert Trainee posts will be used to recruit staff who will be employed on a fixed term basis including a contractual requirement to pass their microscopy tests. The niche nature of the Expert role means that direct recruitment from the marketplace has been and continues to be very challenging. This provides an opportunity to introduce Expert Apprenticeships

3.0.2 The range of analytical techniques that can be applied in the NABIS setting is limited, to maximise the benefits from the Intelligence roles in a new era of technology NABIS will benefit from a small Research Team. There is no operational requirement for the current group of analysts.

3.0.3 The previously approved digital uplift programme including Case Management and ****S31(1)**** will help to realise further future efficiencies.

3.0.4 Whilst there remains the need for a senior police officer to lead transition, this role will naturally become redundant by April 2027 and the significant reduction in the size of NABIS will remove the need for a Senior Police Staff Deputy Head. Strategic leadership would sit with the Head of Forensic Services in WMP supported by the existing Grade 11 posts that manage the Forensic and Non-Forensic aspects of NABIS delivery

3.0.5 ****S31(1)**** ****S38(1)**** The new structure will avoid costs of circa £100k.

3.0.6 Closure of the Northern hub will remove rental fees, staffing costs, site travel costs, replacement microscopes, equipment, IBIS machines and warranties/servicing costs.

3.0.7 Moving to a **single firearms focal point under WMP** builds a leaner structure that will be readily able to transition into the intended National Centre for Policing under The Police Reform Programme.

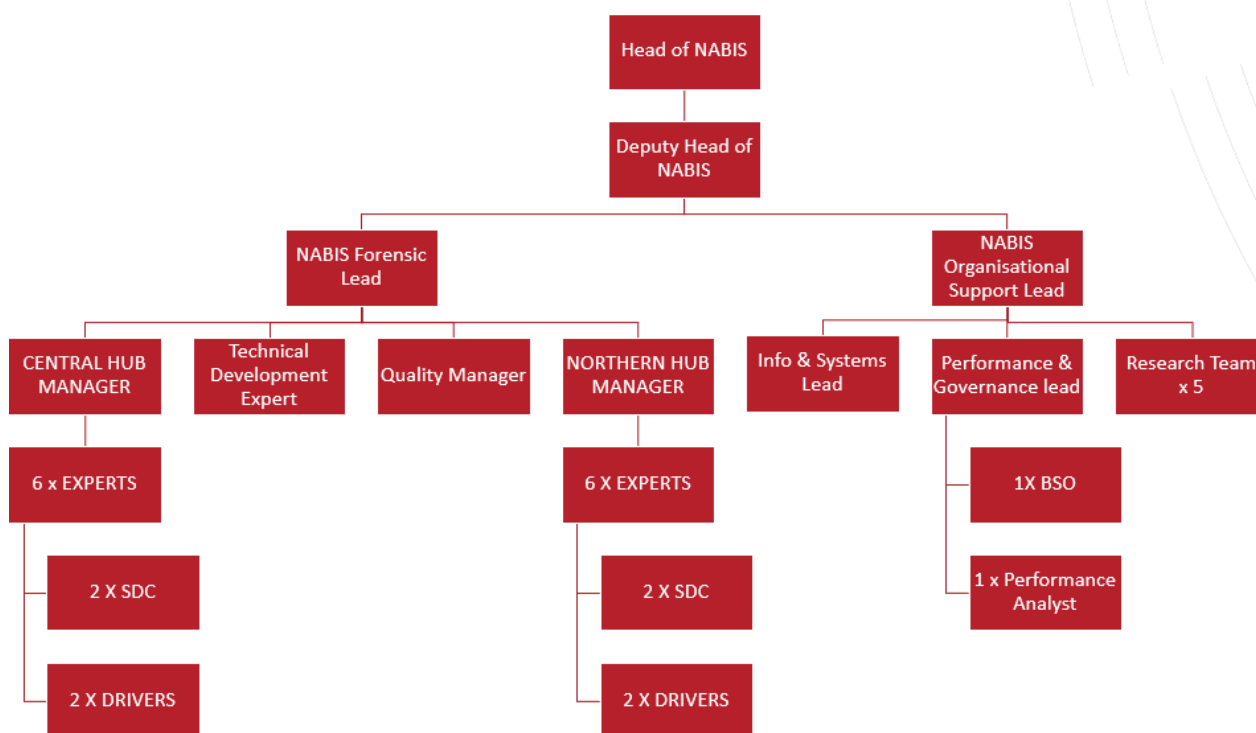
3.0.8 Implementation and transition would require an agreed glide-path of managerial posts in order to ensure business as usual demand and force HR processes are professionally supported during 26/27.

3.0.9 ****S31(1)**** ****S38(1)****

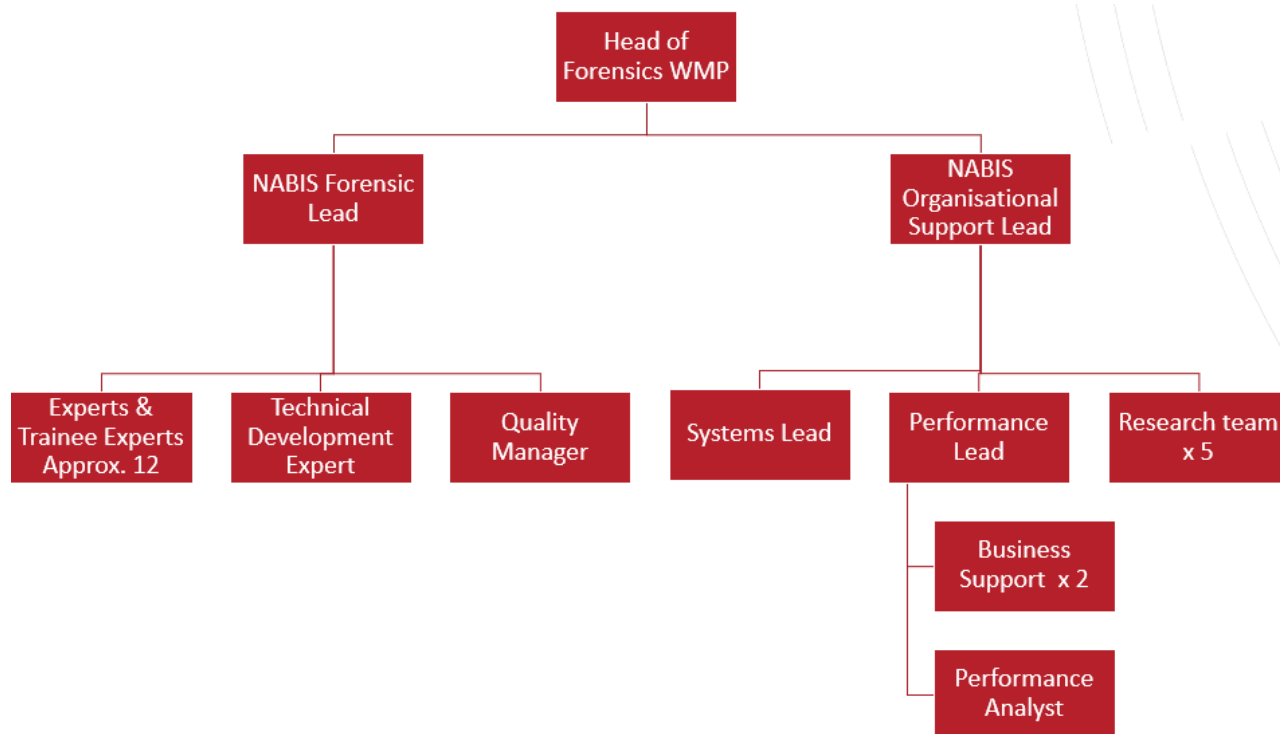
3.1 There are further potential efficiencies with Transport and Courier Services which are being explored with WMP and will be updated later this year.

3.2 ****S31(1)**** ****S38(1)****

Interim Structure as @ 31 March 2026 (Establishment 35.15 FTE)



Structure as @ 31March 2027 (Establishment 25.15 FTE)



This should include a statement of which NPCC Coordination Committee is submitting this paper and when it was approved.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

3 STATEMENT/DETAILS OF COST OR RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (All papers which have a funding request or implication (i.e. resource abstraction) will need to be reviewed by the NPCC Finance Coordination Committee before submission to the NPCC central office) – Finance Committee Coordinator will provide financial contribution per force / partner organisations.

Funding and Financial Implications (NPCC/Forces):

Is there a financial implication for Police Forces and/or policing bodies? **Yes**

Why? NABIS is primarily funded by the 43 forces of England and Wales, through the application of a funding formula, this ensures that NABIS is then free at the point of use and forces can submit everything that meets the MOU without consideration to force or departmental budgets. The actual amounts due per force cannot be calculated in advance as the funding formula relies on the ONS data

If there is a financial implication, has this been costed? **No**

Who has verified these financial implications/figures?

Name: ****S40(2)****
 Organisation: **West Midlands Police**
 Title/Role: **Finance Business Partner**

<u>Funding Required</u>	2025/26 (£)	2026/27 (£)	2027/28 (£)	Total
<i>Revenue Expenditure</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
<i>Capital Expenditure</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
<i>% Efficiency Saving</i>	-3%	18%	29%	47%
Total	£3,807,947	£3,134,005	£2,224,815	£5,358,820

<u>Benefits</u>	2025/26 (£)	2026/27 (£)	2027/28 (£)	Total
<i>Revenue Benefits</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
<i>Capital Benefits</i>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Total	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

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As an Appendix, please provide a breakdown of your funding request e.g. Pay Budget broken down by Officer Pay, Staff Pay, Overtime etc and Non-Pay Budget broken down by Travel Expense, ICT, Rent/Rates, etc

Please provide details of financial liability, alternative funding streams, Home Office, Reserves etc relevant to the above:

****S23(1)****, SPA and PSNI contribute towards the use of the NABIS database, access to forensic support and NABIS Intelligence and infrastructure.

NABIS does not receive funding from the Home Office or any other income stream.

Reserve commitments

The in-year spend reflects the previous paper (2025-26)

Purchase	In Year Spend	26/27	27/28
Microscopes	-1,100,000.00		
Microscope computers (x6)	-15,000.00		
Vehicles	-127,023.00		
fume cupboard repairs and maintenance	-5,000.00		
Logitech (audio visual equip SH)	-4,725.59		
Transfer of data from GMP	-1,700.00		
UKAS Costs	-28,000.00	-14,000.00	-14,000.00
Extension to scope (CMS & IBIS)	-19,000.00		
CMS phase 1-2-	-110,000.00	-100,000.00	-37,000.00
Back record conversion	-40,000.00		
CMS P2 support & maintenance	-93,200.00	-118,200.00	-135,700.00
Cataloguing	-12,000.00		
Redundancies yr 2 March 2026		-288,289	
Review of 22a		-40,000.00	
legal fees		-20,000.00	
Contribution to funding from Reserves to manage redundancies and salary (6 months)	-173,021.00		
contribution to funding to meet target 3% (2025/26)	-63,141.00		
Project Manager & Business Analyst for change programme	-50,000	-100,000	-100,000
Building works at Central Hub		-500,000	
Yearly totals	-1,841,810.59	-1,180,489.00	-286,700.00
		Current Reserves	£3,280,770
In Year	-1,841,811	Planned spend	-3,309,000
		TOTAL C/F uncommitted Reserves	-£28,230
26/27	-1,180,489		
27/28	-286,700		
TOTAL from reserves	-3,309,000		

The redundancy payments for Year 2 @March 2026 can be absorbed by NABIS reserves. However, the redundancy payments needed for Year 3 @ March 2027 will need to come from the year 3 anticipated savings. The benefits of these Year 3 staffing reductions will not be felt by NPCC forces until Year 4 (2028/2029)

To note, any minor dilapidation works in GMP and WMP estates will be covered from reserves.

Finance Coordination Committee Commentary:

The funding provided by police forces for NABIS sits outside of the NPCC Operating Budget and this should continue to do so for the foreseeable future pending future Police Reform. The NPCC Finance Committee support the funding requested by NABIS for 2026-27 as this is a £673,942 reduction from 2025-26 and funding requested for 2027-28 is a further reduction of £909,190 from 2026-27 funding requirement. NABIS will be required to submit quarterly finance outturn reports into the NPCC Finance Committee going forward. The usage of reserves held by NABIS and any future investment decisions made by NABIS must come into NPCC Finance Committee to review and into Chiefs Constables Council for support and approval.

Signed off by the Finance Committee Chair?	Yes
Date:	08/08/2025

Proposed NPCC Programme/Function End Date	N/A
Is there a closure/exit plan in place?	No
Is there a financial liability to the NPCC at the end of the programme of work? E.g. Redundancy / Pension Strain Costs	No

4 STRATEGY, DELIVERY AND BUSINESS PLANNING - Please provide details of the function/programme’s most recent and/or proposed strategy (copy of finalised plan or detailed outline), business plan (including capability, resource etc) and delivery plan (specific deliverables including timeline and actions, for the lifecycle of the funding request. Indicate if these plans are in draft, proposed or agreed/signed off.

4.1 Strategy

NABIS Strategy for 2025 -2030 has been developed and published (Attached at APPENDIX A).

NABIS Vision: To be a leading authority in Forensic Ballistic Intelligence. Supporting the reduction in the threat to the UK from the criminal use of firearms, through cutting edge technology

Mission Statement: To deliver unparalleled forensic ballistic services supporting Law Enforcement Agencies in solving gun related crimes, and reducing firearms offences, through data driven intelligence and strategic collaboration.

Introduction: The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) plays a crucial role in the fight against gun crime in the United Kingdom, acting as the backbone of intelligence and forensic expertise within law enforcement agencies.

Over the next five years, NABIS will strengthen its position as a national leader in ballistics intelligence, ensuring that our methods and practices evolve in response to the ever-changing landscape of firearms related crime. This strategy outlines our commitment to innovation, collaboration, and capacity building, ensuring that NABIS remains agile, data-driven, and at the forefront of efforts to reduce gun crime and enhance public safety across the UK.

The key to our strategy is a robust framework that not only strengthens our core forensic and intelligence functions but also embraces technological advancements and partnerships.

We will deepen our collaboration with police forces, criminal justice agencies, national and international partners to stay ahead of emerging threats. By investing in our people, processes, and partnerships, this five-year plan will equip NABIS to respond effectively to the challenges ahead while staying true to our mission.

NABIS objectives for 2025-2030

Strategic Objectives	Outcomes
<i>Employ advanced technologies to improve the accuracy and speed of ballistics reporting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a new NABIS National Database • Introduction of an electronic Forensic Case Management System • Back Record conversion and archiving of all case files since 2008
<i>Increase our understanding of the threat to the UK from the global Criminal Use of Firearms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of a NABIS knowledge Hub to provide access to research material & provide an archive for NABIS products • Extend the reach of our Open source research
<i>Foster robust relationships with national and international law enforcement agencies, academic institutions, and private sector partners.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish formal partnerships with key stakeholders for information sharing and joint operations. • Participate in international forums and conferences to exchange best practices. • Collaborate with universities and research institutions on projects aimed at advancing forensic ballistic examination
<i>Enhance our position in the forensic marketplace to achieve greater consistency in the approach to firearms examinations.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish regular forums with Technical and Quality leads across all Forensic Ballistic Hubs to share information and Best Practice • Enhance our influence with the forensic marketplace through improved engagement and opportunities for innovation.

4.2 Business Plan

Click or tap here to enter text. : The key elements of the NABIS Business Plan are as follows; Introduce new technology within a costed 3-year development and implementation programme, costed against existing reserves to transform the way that forces submit MG21s, how forensic examinations are documented and quality managed, and statements prepared and disseminated to SIOs. Alongside this is the implementation of an AI powered knowledge platform that will enable controlled access to information, records and documents by NABIS & ****23(1)****, with a plan in year 4 to create a portal that will allow access to forces. DLRP are exploring the development of a new National database to replace the existing VISOR platform. This is hinged on the successful implementation of the NABIS Case Management System to enable the database to be a 'plug and play' module of this build, at a significantly lower cost than the original Home Office spending review sponsored discovery at an anticipated circa £10m. As Technology increases, opportunities to rationalise structures are expected to present themselves and NABIS SLT have already begun a review of all vacancies against the Strategy to ensure only roles that add value are retained, any that are not essential for the Strategy delivery have been disestablished and new roles created. As Senior and management roles become vacant, these have been disestablished in favour of more practitioners to ensure that NABIS can meet the SLAs.

4.3 Delivery Plan

There is a draft delivery plan in place to implement the changes over the next two financial years, in line with year 2 and year3 of the budget settlement.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISK – What are the strategic, operational and/or tactical opportunities, benefits and risks associated with the funding request and the proposed strategy/deliverables outlined above?

5.1 Opportunities

Introduction of CMS:

- Mitigation of existing risks (see 6.3)
- Future efficiency savings through automation of management information, performance - management, information collation and more efficient forensic reporting.
- Additional support to front line officers and SIOs.
- Increased recovery of ballistic material from scenes
- Offer a National case management system to SPA and MPS
- Potential cost saving on new Database as a module of CMS (replacing BEAMS concept)

Single Firearms Focal Point:

- Consistency of service nationally
- Reduction in submission delays
- cost efficiencies

5.2 Benefits

The continued provision of a forensic ballistic service, free at point of use, regular updates of current and emerging threats. Linking of firearms and ballistic material scene to scene. The introduction of new technology will build capacity to provide a more strategic overview of threat and risk to Policing and the UK communities.

Consolidating all NABIS laboratory activity into the West Midlands offers significant long-term benefits in operational efficiency, quality assurance, and strategic alignment. However, these advantages are offset by considerable transitional cost and operational risks — particularly concerning ISO 17025 compliance and SLAs. Mitigation will require meticulous planning, stakeholder engagement, and continued focus on service continuity.

see benefits of consolidation section below

5.3 Risks

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: Introduction of a Digital Case Management System

MITIGATION: Back record conversion of Paper Case Files

MITIGATION: National Forensic Cataloguing & Archiving of paper case files

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: Introduction of the CMS Intelligence and Linking module

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: Introduction of CMS to enable a database module/ interface with the new National system, however this remains with the Home Office

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: Introduction of CMS, digital Ballistic Advice and NABIS Guidance module (BANG) to provide information and guidance for front line officers and SIOs.

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: CMS introduction, Digital Knowledge Hub module for the storage of Strategic & Tactical documents linked to forensic investigations and horizon scanning

****S31(1)** **S24(1)****

MITIGATION: Single Firearms focal point work and the Forensic Marketplace Strategic Programme (end to end forensic provision)

6.0 Option

Reduce Estate footprint to one location, close Northern Hub, rationalise staffing levels and senior Leadership costs by; transforming NABIS into a single National Firearms Focal Point achieving significant savings whilst producing efficiencies and not reducing current service levels

Year 2 costs £3,134,005

Year 3 costs £2,224,815

Benefits of Consolidation

1.1 Operational Efficiency

- **Resource Centralisation:** Pooling expertise, instrumentation, and support services increases operational flexibility and efficiency.
- **Standardisation:** Greater consistency in quality management systems, processes, and decision-making through unified SOPs.
- **Improved Utilisation:** Better use of specialist equipment and facilities (e.g., IBIS, comparison microscopes, firearms reference collection and ammunition).

1.2 Financial and Strategic Value

- **Cost Savings:** Reduced overheads (e.g. rent, building maintenance, utilities, security, IT infrastructure duplication transportation).
- **Capital Investment Focus:** Easier to prioritise and justify investment in a single site (e.g., digital transformation, equipment upgrades).
- **Workforce Development:** Easier to train and develop staff with cross-discipline exposure and mentoring under one roof.

1.3 Enhanced Collaboration

- **Cross-functional Synergy:** Closer proximity to national NABIS governance, policy teams, and digital support.
- **Stakeholder Access:** Easier for national stakeholders (e.g. Home Office, NPCC) to engage with a centralised site for inspections or reviews.

2. Risks and Challenges

S31(1) **S24(1)**

3. Strategic and Workforce Implications

- **Workforce Morale and Retention:** Risk of losing experienced northern staff unwilling to relocate. Early HR consultation, redeployment options, and remote/flexible roles should be explored.
- **Business Continuity:** Must be supported by a comprehensive continuity plan including contingencies for power outages, building issues, or staff shortages at the West Midlands site.
- **Site Capacity:** Ensure West Midlands site has sufficient infrastructure and capacity to absorb increased workload, including workspace, lab benches, evidence storage, and digital systems bandwidth.

4. Recommendations

1. Conduct Full Impact Assessment: Including ISO 17025 compliance, staff consultation, facility readiness, and service level modelling.

2. Engage Early with UKAS: To plan changes and ensure continued accreditation throughout the transition.
3. Develop SLA Transition Strategy: Include temporary service agreements with Northern forces, updated turnaround time projections, and escalation processes.
4. Build Stakeholder Communications Plan: Clear, proactive engagement with police partners, regional forces, and national bodies.
5. Establish Dual-Running Period: Maintain limited Northern capability during early stages of consolidation to buffer operational risk.

7.0 CONCLUSION (incl DECISIONS REQUIRED)

Chief Constable’s Council are asked to consider and approve the funding contribution from **NPCC Forces of £3,134,1005 for 2026/27 and £2,224,815 for 2027/28**. Chief Constable’s Council are also asked to approve the retention of the current committed reserves held by NABIS, and uncommitted reserves to be held as a contingency

Name:	DCS Peter Henrick
Title:	SRO NABIS
Committee:	National Crime
Lead Area:	Criminal Use of Firearms