Precision is vital - The non-recording mechanism was an element of Talla

Operation Talla must be examined accurately.

The evidence concerning *"guidance to not record"* does not justify describing that guidance as the sole purpose of the national pandemic policing operation. Equally, describing Talla only through its familiar functions - coordination, public order and support for the pandemic response, leaves out the very element now requiring explanation.

An operation can perform necessary work whilst also containing a mechanism whose origin, authority and effects necessarily demand proper independent scrutiny.

Evidence of the former does not answer questions about the latter. The proper question is what happened within Talla, not whether every aspect of Talla deserves the same judgment.

What disclosed correspondence established

On 14 February 2022, an internal email to Owen Weatherill and others stated:

“it would appear that the guidance to not record has been a success as only one additional report has been created.”

The sender’s name is redacted. Weatherill was identified in the chain as National Mobilisation Coordinator and Operation Talla Silver.

This is a contemporaneous policing reference to guidance already understood to be operating at that time.

The same email acknowledged:

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

That qualification does matter. The correspondence cannot establish how many submissions were attempted, what each contained, or whether they were assessed appropriately.

A low number of additional reports does not, by itself, demonstrate sound decisions.

The surrounding discussion concerned reports associated with vaccination-related allegations and enquiries from Full Fact.

The operational meaning of *“not record”* still requires the underlying guidance.

Recording an approach, creating an incident or intelligence entry, recording a crime and commencing an investigation are different activities.

A forensic account must establish which activity the guidance concerned.

Weatherill’s national communication of 18 January 2022 does however provide relevant context.

Addressed to chief constables and force duty Gold officers, it communicated the Met’s position on the December report, acknowledged an ongoing review and made agreed media lines available to other forces. It also described NPoCC’s work with NHS and DHSC vaccine-security teams.

Read together, these records locate the non-recording issue within the national arrangements involving Talla’s Silver commander. They support examining it as an element of Talla

policing. They do not yet identify its author, authorising officer or complete terms.

Connections must be established precisely

The Met correspondence adds a separate, connected strand.

On 15 February 2022, an AW CID detective superintendent reported that someone in the Directorate of Legal Services had approved a *"no crime"* letter.

On 16 February, press lines were submitted for Jane Connors' approval. Connors then forwarded the chain to Weatherill, saying:

"Afternoon FYI this will trigger backlash but it is now complete".

Those records establish legal-services involvement in approving a letter, preparations for public communication and Connors' personal update to Weatherill.

They do not establish that Connors or DLS originated the national guidance. Nor does *"now complete"* identify precisely what had been completed.

The non-recording guidance had already been described as operating before the email reporting DLS approval.

That sequence requires explanation. It must not be compressed into a single decision unless the records demonstrate that it was one.

An assessment of a particular report, a letter to its complainants, a public statement and guidance affecting reports elsewhere may be connected. Their relationship is one of the principal matters to establish.

What accountability requires

The necessary account should identify the guidance itself, including drafts and revisions; who proposed and authorised it; what evidence informed it; how it was circulated; and what officers were expected to do when faced with materially different allegations or evidence.

Distribution records and metadata would help establish when the approach became operational and how far it travelled.

Independent examination must also establish what ethical scrutiny occurred, as the existence of an ethics committee cannot demonstrate scrutiny of guidance the committee was never shown.

Whether this guidance was referred, what material accompanied it and what advice resulted are factual questions for the referral records, papers and minutes.

Its treatment in the NPCC's Covid-19 Inquiry work likewise requires a documented answer.

Weatherill forwarded the relevant February 2022 chains in April 2025 when he was identified as NPCC lead for the COVID 19 Inquiry.

That establishes their circulation at that time - it does not establish any submission of those communications to the Inquiry.

Precision strengthens the public-interest case. It prevents criticism of an identifiable mechanism from being dismissed as a claim about the purpose of the entire operation.

It also prevents a general account of Talla's necessary work from standing in for an answer about the guidance.

The proposition is specific:

The disclosed correspondence places a non-recording mechanism within the Talla-related national policing arrangements. Its precise scope, provenance and measured effects remain unresolved.

Those questions deserve disclosure and independent examination on their own merits.

Ian Clayton

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Source

28 page NPCC FOI disclosure bundle supplied to by NPCC to Ian Clayton in 2025