



Brochure  
Dragon Professional

# Giving our justice a voice

How speech recognition fits into  
the digital future of justice

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# The justice system's digital future

With the government's ongoing commitment to digitising and streamlining the UK's justice system, digital transformation is starting to make a difference within policing, courts, and the prison and probation service.

In this paper, we'll look at the progress different branches of the justice system are making with modernisation, and explore how different technologies—including speech recognition—are supporting those efforts.

### The new school of digital policing

As Deloitte notes, policing is still reliant on “old-school infrastructure and processes: extensive networks of police stations, manual processing of intelligence, face-to-face briefings, [and] paper-based case files.”<sup>1</sup> That means there’s huge scope for digital improvement, from automated documentation and digitised files to remote briefings.

The National Policing Digital Strategy for 2020 to 2030 prioritises enabling officers and staff with digital tools, and improving collaboration with other public services to tackle complex issues.<sup>2</sup> For most forces, that will mean embracing a major infrastructure change, and deepening their commitment to a digital-first mindset.

Digital transformation projects for the police have been a long time coming, but pilots are showing already showing potential. For example, in 2020 a Police Scotland pilot saw 11,000 officers in various roles given a mobile device to help them complete common tasks and access daily briefings on the go. Officers embraced the new technology, working more efficiently and concentrating more of their time on crime prevention.<sup>3</sup>

Pilots like this point to a more productive future, in which police offices are empowered to complete more tasks, at the ideal moment, wherever they are.

<sup>1</sup> [deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-ps-digital-police-force.pdf](https://deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-ps-digital-police-force.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [apccs.police.uk/media/4886/national-policing-digital-strategy-2020-2030.pdf](https://apccs.police.uk/media/4886/national-policing-digital-strategy-2020-2030.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2020/december/positive-impact-for-police-officers-equipped-with-mobile-devices](https://scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2020/december/positive-impact-for-police-officers-equipped-with-mobile-devices)

## Bringing courts into the 21st century

UK courts could also benefit hugely from digital transformation, with decades-old technologies in place and entire systems built on paper documents and forms. The government is already working on digitising the UK's court system, with a recent reaffirmation to “modernise the delivery of criminal justice and encourage greater use of technology” in the 2021 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

So what does that modernisation look like? At different levels of the system there are different pilots underway. For example, the new Common Platform case management system is designed to cut manual document handling and reduce the amount of paper documents produced by and for criminal courts.

It was introduced by the HM Courts and Tribunals Service in late 2020, and consolidates five legacy systems and all their data into a single platform, “improving the way criminal cases are accessed, managed and processed.” The platform offers all the tools required to prepare, share, and present case information with lawyers, court staff, and judges, giving everyone more visibility into how cases are progressing. It's currently in use in more than 25 crown and magistrate's courts in England and Wales, with a rapid rollout planned for the rest.

With courts facing an ever-growing case backlog, digitisation could be the solution that helps work through cases faster—without putting extra strain on personnel and processes. It's key for futureproofing against disruption, too. Courts that had already reached digital maturity coped best with the change in demands and circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

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The 2021 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill aims to “modernise the delivery of criminal justice and encourage greater use of technology”.

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<sup>4</sup> [counselmagazine.co.uk/articles/opinion-is-digital-transformation-the-answer-to-combatting-the-increasing-court-backlog](https://counselmagazine.co.uk/articles/opinion-is-digital-transformation-the-answer-to-combatting-the-increasing-court-backlog)

## Democratising technology access in prisons

Introducing new technologies into prisons could help dramatically reduce pressure throughout the justice system, right down to frontline policing, by making rehabilitation efforts more effective.

Reoffending is responsible for a huge proportion of the justice system's costs every year. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice estimated the annual social and economic cost of reoffending at over £18bn in England and Wales.<sup>5</sup> Bringing down reoffending rates relies on so many different factors, but many official bodies and advocacy groups are confident that increased access to technology in prisons will help.

The right technologies could support prisoners on two fronts: helping them maintain all-important family relationships during their sentences, and then giving them the skills to transition into employment on release. Personal connections and reliable jobs are both proven to reduce reoffending, by giving prisoners the stability they need as they step back out into the world.

Since 2017, HM Prison and Probation Service has been trialling in-cell phones and digital self-service kiosks for prisoners, and introducing mobile devices for prison staff. The self-service kiosks give prisoners the ability to choose their meals in advance, book visits with their families, and apply for educational programmes, without needing to follow lengthy procedures that use paper forms.

<sup>5</sup> [gov.uk/government/news/justice-secretary-urges-evidence-led-approach-to-cut-crime](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/justice-secretary-urges-evidence-led-approach-to-cut-crime)

## Modernising criminal justice and its processes

However, at the moment, only two out of 117 prisons in England and Wales provide frequent access to a computer—as part of that pilot—and most don't have internet access at all.

The lack of access is having a knock-on effect on prisoners' lives after they finish their sentences. According to the Centre for Social Justice, "prisoners are often among the most digitally excluded in our society, yet nearly all jobs—from supermarket assistants to construction workers—require digital literacy of at least a basic level."<sup>6</sup> Even most application processes are now digital, creating an extra barrier.

The Prisoners' Education Trust says that "digital technology remains the essential ingredient that would revolutionise prison education. Without this, the digital divide will become a chasm, as prisoner learners miss out on developing digital literacy skills."<sup>7</sup> As the wider justice system modernises, it's vital that prisoners don't get left behind.

## Transforming foundational processes

Major digital transformation is only possible if we tackle the core processes that slow productivity and progress down within the justice system. Manual admin work, like paperwork and digital forms, is one of the main barriers to transformation in institutions like the courts, policing, and prisons.

Speech-to-text technology offers an ideal solution for modernising the justice system's processes. The average person speaks three times faster than they can type, and a robust speech-to-text tool can turn that natural ability into an intuitive way to complete tasks like notetaking and form-filling. With hours taken up every day by typing, it's one of the most effective ways to reclaim time that's better spent working on cases and supporting the community.

<sup>6</sup> [centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CSJJ8671-Digital-In-Prisons-INTS-210114-WEB.pdf](https://centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CSJJ8671-Digital-In-Prisons-INTS-210114-WEB.pdf)  
<sup>7</sup> [prisonerseducation.org.uk/2020/07/lessons-from-lockdown-how-can-prisons-support-education](https://prisonerseducation.org.uk/2020/07/lessons-from-lockdown-how-can-prisons-support-education)



The average person speaks 3x faster than they type—making speech-to-text a powerful tool for accelerating admin tasks.

## Modernising criminal justice and its processes

Our Dragon Professional Anywhere and Dragon Anywhere Mobile speech-to-text solutions are already helping police officers, lawyers, judges, prison officers, probation officers, and support staff to more rapidly complete documentation, dictate notes, and share information between departments and agencies.

It uses our latest Dragon speech recognition engine, which combines years of research with powerful AI and machine learning. That means it's up to 99% accurate out of the box—and it adapts to users' accents, pronunciations and preferences as they work.

With on-premises, cloud, hybrid, and mobile options, Dragon can support professionals and throughout the justice system, whatever their existing IT infrastructure, compliance needs, and average working day. And, crucially, Dragon's AES 256-bit encryption protects sensitive data in transit and at rest, for secure dictating and sharing.

So how can speech-to-text solutions like Dragon support the UK's police forces, courts, and prisons as they work towards a digital future?

## Modernising criminal justice and its processes

### **The police force**

Police officers can spend hours every shift taking notes and filling out forms. It takes up time that should be dedicated to actively protecting the local community—but it's vital work that needs to be completed with accuracy and detail, especially when those documents could be used in court.

Immediately after an incident or an interview, an officer can use Dragon Professional Anywhere on an in-car computer or laptop to dictate timely, detailed notes while information is fresh in their minds. And they can save those notes to the cloud for easy access back at the station, and simple sharing with colleagues and other agencies.

With Dragon Professional Anywhere, officers can also use their voices to enter data directly into record management and computer-aided dispatch systems—and even look up licence plates using voice commands.

And with Dragon Anywhere Mobile, officers can take down information simply by speaking into a smartphone or tablet. Supported by the same robust speech recognition engine as our desktop tools, our fully featured mobile app

### **The courts**

Documentation is everything in the court system—and as it continues to digitise, finding quicker ways to complete case notes and forms will make the transition smoother and more effective.

There are over 100 forms that potentially need to be filled out in line with Criminal Procedure Rules. With Dragon Professional Anywhere, lawyers, clerks and other court personnel can not only fill in details using their voice, but also navigate digital forms using voice commands like “next field”.

### **The prison and probation system**

Speech-to-text has two potential applications for the prison system. It can help prison and probation officers complete their documentation faster, and it can help prisoners with low digital literacy to seize the opportunities available to them.

As prisons continue to digitise services, integrating speech-to-text can help ensure intuitive access for all prisoners, regardless of their level of skill with a keyboard. Equally, it can simplify online enrolment for educational programmes, and the completion of job applications, as prisoners seek employment upon release. Dragon Professional Anywhere, for example, even gives users the option to navigate common apps like email clients and internet browsers using voice commands.

On the personnel side, research has already shown that digitising paper application processes can save up to 91 hours a week per prison, the equivalent of two full-time prison officers.<sup>8</sup> Less time spent on paperwork can reduce stress—and even repetitive strain injuries from typing—helping officers to focus on working safely and productively with prisoners and people on probation.

<sup>8</sup> [reform.uk/research/tools-transforming-lives-using-technology-reduce-reoffending](https://reform.uk/research/tools-transforming-lives-using-technology-reduce-reoffending).



## Modernisation through voice

From frontline policing to court proceedings to probation support, the justice system relies on timely, accurate notes, documents and forms. And using Dragon, everyone who needs to create, edit and share those documents can work with greater speed, accuracy, and freedom.

Speech-to-text could be an integral part of modernisation for the justice system. If you're looking for ways to help your department or team work more effectively as you digitise, consider putting down the keyboards—and using your voices.



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**About Nuance Communications, Inc.**

[Nuance Communications](#) (Nuance) is a technology pioneer with market leadership in conversational AI and ambient intelligence. A full-service partner trusted by 77 percent of U.S. hospitals and 85 percent of the Fortune 100 companies worldwide, Nuance creates intuitive solutions that amplify people's ability to help others.

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DG\_5043\_05\_B, Aug 03, 2021