



**HM CPS**

HM Crown Prosecution  
Service Inspectorate

# **An inspection of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside: Area Inspection Programme Phase 3**

**September 2025**

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## Who we are

HMCPST inspects prosecution services, providing evidence to make the prosecution process better and more accountable.

We have a statutory duty to inspect the work of the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office. By special arrangement, we also share our expertise with other prosecution services in the UK and overseas.

We are independent of the organisations we inspect, and our methods of gathering evidence and reporting are open and transparent. We do not judge or enforce; we inform prosecution services' strategies and activities by presenting evidence of good practice and issues to address. Independent inspections like this help to maintain trust in the prosecution process.

## Our vision

We are part of the solution to improving the Criminal Justice System through high quality inspection.

We have four priorities to enable us to deliver this vision:

- We hold the CPS and SFO to account for what they deliver (we make recommendations that drive improvement)
- Victims will be at the heart of inspection (where we can, we will use victim experience in our inspection)
- Using our 25 years of experience we will help public prosecutors improve (their legal casework)
- Inspection will identify and spread best practice

## Our values

We act with **integrity**, creating a culture of **respect**, drive **innovation**, pursue **ambition**, and commit to **inclusivity** in everything we do.

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# **1. Chief Inspector's foreword**

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has throughout its history assessed the quality of legal decision-making that the geographic Areas of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) deliver. Over the last 25 years, our inspections have reported what we have found, made recommendations for improvement and highlighted aspects of performance that were done well. When we decided to develop the Area Inspection Programme in 2021, I was determined to not only be able to report what we found, but also to develop a programme that would give us the opportunity to determine what influences the quality of casework.

This report is a culmination of the programme for our assessment of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside. Our first report, published in 2022, set the baseline of the quality of legal decision-making: simply put, it asked if prosecutors added value to the cases they were dealing with and if the cases were handled effectively and efficiently to aid progression through the criminal justice process. We also assessed whether legal quality supported victims and witnesses properly.

The baseline assessment set out a score for what we termed ‘added value’ and ‘grip’. We signalled at the time that we would undertake a follow-up inspection to assess if the Area had used our findings to improve its performance when we undertook a second inspection, which took place in 2024.

CPS Yorkshire and Humberside was the geographic Area of the 14 nationwide which showed the most improvement between the baseline and follow-up inspections. This was impressive in itself, but given the context of increased caseloads due to the post-COVID Bar strike and growing backlogs, the results were striking.

This report highlights what the Area did to improve its casework quality. Whilst it is uniquely about what we found in Yorkshire and Humberside, we developed an inspection framework that focused on three core components that experience shows us can determine an Area’s performance: legal leadership and assurance, resource utilisation and management and finally stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

I will not repeat the headlines of the report which are set out in Chapter 3, but it is clear that the Area’s senior management team understood that there were some simple things they could do that would make a major difference. These included focusing on getting the basics right and addressing weak aspects of casework by setting clear actions, with clear accountability for delivery, and checking to see if it worked and made a difference. The Area performance tool, which is unique to the Area, gave managers the ability to understand and target action with accuracy. Working collaboratively with partners was also advantageous.

I am often asked by those who manage and superintend the CPS what can make a difference to quality. This report identifies aspects that I believe answers that question. I would recommend that all Chief Crown Prosecutors and Area Business Managers read the findings of this report and consider if there are any of the actions taken in Yorkshire and Humberside that they may want to adopt.

I will be discussing the findings of this report with the Director of Public Prosecutions and other CPS senior managers as well as with the Law Officers, as I believe for the first time that HMCPSI has been able to identify with some degree of clarity what may sit behind driving casework quality. I thank Yorkshire and Humberside for making the changes between the baseline and follow-up inspection that have allowed us to test our assumptions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Rogers', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Anthony Rogers**  
His Majesty's Chief Inspector

## **2. Context and Background**

## Background

**2.1.** High-quality casework is essential to ensure an effective and efficient Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). HM Crown Prosecution Inspectorate (HMCPSI) is responsible for assessing and reporting on the quality of legal casework produced by the CPS. It is one of the functions HMCPSI carries out on behalf of the public.

**2.2.** Between 2016 and 2019, HMCPSI produced a series of Area inspection reports under the umbrella of the Area Assurance Programme (AAP). As well as assessing the quality of CPS legal decision-making, the AAP provided assurance on the corporate needs of CPS Area organisational governance, such as leadership and financial management.

**2.3.** We found that CPS Areas were generally well-managed, that leadership was strong and that finances and performance were controlled effectively. However, the programme did highlight the need for improvement in key aspects of legal decision-making and case management.

**2.4.** A new Area Inspection Programme (AIP) was developed with a focus on the CPS's delivery of casework quality, which is its core function and one of the five strands of the CPS 2025 strategy.<sup>1</sup> We examined 90 cases from each of the 14 CPS Areas and examined a range of documents requested from the Areas.

**2.5.** The case analysis and document review formed the basis of our findings, judgements and scoring. We assessed the other four strands of CPS 2025 (people, digital capability, strategic partnerships and public confidence) only in so far as they impacted on casework quality.

**2.6.** The first phase of the programme was carried out between 2021 and 2022. It provided detailed assessments of casework quality across magistrates' court, Crown Court and rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) casework in each of the 14 Areas.

**2.7.** We set out our findings in 14 individual Area reports that were published between October 2021 and November 2022. Each report set out our scores for added value and grip in respect of casework across the three casework units; magistrates' courts units, Crown Court units, and cases dealt with in RASSO units.

**2.8.** We defined 'added value' as the difference made by prosecutors applying legal expertise to each case through good, proactive prosecution decision-making. When we assessed 'grip', we considered the effectiveness and efficiency of case

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<sup>1</sup> CPS 2025 has now been superseded by CPS 2030 which is the CPS's next five-year strategy launched on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2025.

progression and management of cases by Area. We looked at whether the Area demonstrated grip by ensuring that cases were effectively progressed at each stage, if the required processes were carried out and whether timescales or deadlines were met.

**2.9.** The Area reports set a clear baseline for performance levels. The Yorkshire and Humberside baseline report can be accessed [here](#)<sup>2</sup>.

**2.10.** Having set the baseline of performance, it was always our intention to follow-up the initial inspections to see if Areas had improved.

**2.11.** The aims of the follow-up AIP were:

- to reassess the casework quality following the baseline assessment
- to compare the casework quality from the follow-up AIP to the baseline and to identify where improvements had been made and/or performance deteriorated, thereby identifying a direction of travel
- to provide sufficient evidence to enable HMCPSI to implement a targeted, risk-based inspection approach to CPS Areas in the future by identifying those CPS Areas where casework quality has been assessed as declining.

**2.12.** To allow us to make direct comparisons, the follow-up AIP assessed casework quality using the same measures as in the baseline.

**2.13.** We analysed the AIP baseline and follow-up data to highlight direction of travel of performance for each of the 14 CPS Areas, then set those findings out in our follow-up report<sup>3</sup>. We used that data to identify the CPS Areas to visit in this, phase 3 (AIP3) of the AIP. We chose where there was significant improvement or decline to examine what drives casework quality in those CPS Areas. We selected CPS Yorkshire and Humberside and CPS Cymru Wales.

**2.14.** Using our 25 years' experience inspecting the CPS, we identified key casework drivers. For this inspection, we concentrated on three main components to assess and evaluate what made a difference to the quality of casework in those Areas.

**2.15.** The three components are: legal leadership and assurance, resource utilisation and management, and stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

**2.16.** The objective of AIP3 was to assess whether and how these factors impacted the CPS Area's results for added value and grip, following data from the baseline AIP. By doing so, we seek to gain insights that can inform improvements in

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<sup>2</sup> [HMCPSI – Area inspection programme, April 2022](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Area-Inspection-Programme-Follow-up.pdf](#)

casework quality and enhance overall operational effectiveness across all CPS Areas.

**2.17.** Yorkshire and Humberside's results for added value and grip improved from the baseline to follow-up across both magistrates' court and Crown Court. The data from AIP highlights that CPS Yorkshire and Humberside had a positive direction of travel, with added value improving by 9.9% and grip improving by 13.2% in the magistrates' court unit from our baseline figures. The Area also had a positive direction of travel with added value improving by 11.2% and grip improving by 1.7% in the Crown Court unit from our baseline figures. Therefore, we selected CPS Yorkshire and Humberside as the first CPS Area to be inspected as part of AIP3.

| Added Value and Grip     |          |           |                     |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Magistrates' Court       |          |           |                     |
| Added value              | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 59.1%    | 69.0%     | ↑                   |
| Crown Court              |          |           |                     |
| Added Value              | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 56.0%    | 67.2%     | ↑                   |
| Magistrates' Court       |          |           |                     |
| Grip                     | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 61.4%    | 74.6%     | ↑                   |
| Crown Court              |          |           |                     |
| Grip                     | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of Travel |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 73.7%    | 75.4%     | ↑                   |

## Context

**2.18.** CPS Yorkshire and Humberside has offices at Hull, Leeds and Sheffield, and is aligned with Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire police forces. It covers 13 magistrates' and seven Crown Court centres.

**2.19.** In the year to March 2025, the Area's overall magistrates' court caseload stood at 40,771, which represented an increase of 4.1% over the previous 12 months. During the same period, the Area's overall Crown Court caseload was 7,582, which was an increase of 3.7% over the previous 12 months.

**2.20.** In the 12 months to March 2025, the Area had the full-time equivalent of 516.1 staff and its budget was £48,820,122.

## Methodology

**2.21.** In conducting this inspection of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside, we sought to answer the inspection question: What drives casework quality in the Area?

**2.22.** During March 2025, the inspection team spent three weeks on-site conducting interviews and focus groups with staff from CPS Yorkshire and Humberside and stakeholders. This period included:

- interviews and focus groups with CPS staff, across all grades, including both legal and operational delivery personnel
- interviews with representatives from Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire police forces
- interviews with local judges from the magistrates' courts and Crown Court centres
- interviews with Victim and Witness Support Services and representatives from local community groups.

**2.23.** We requested and received from the Area key documents relevant to the three key components: legal leadership and assurance, resource utilisation and management, and stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Inspectors reviewed and evaluated these documents in light of the question asked following the inspection.

**2.24.** Inspectors conducted checks on 14 live prosecution cases (eight Crown Court and six magistrates' courts cases) which had active custody time limits, to assess the robustness and consistency of the Area's custody time limit processes.

**2.25.** We examined eight non-advocacy/casework Individual Quality Assessments (IQA)<sup>4</sup> to evaluate the quality of the assessments performed by legal managers and their impact in driving casework quality standards. Each of these cases had also been quality assured by a senior legal manager, so we could assess the impact of the assurance process.

**2.26.** We conducted court observations to assess the effectiveness of case progression and the relationships with stakeholders at different courts. A mixture of magistrates' courts and Crown Courts were attended across Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, York and Bradford.

**2.27.** In advance of the on-site phase of our inspection, we distributed a questionnaire to all staff in CPS Yorkshire and Humberside. Each question addressed a specific aspect: legal leadership and assurance, resource utilisation and management, and stakeholder engagement and collaboration. Responses were considered by inspectors and where appropriate we refer to them in the report.

**2.28.** This inspection was led by legal inspector Andrew Hodgson. He was assisted by senior legal inspector Jeetinder Sarmotta, and legal inspectors Eleanor Reyland, Oriana Frame, Siaf Alam, Dan Richardson and Mark Langan.

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<sup>4</sup> IQA is a system used to evaluate the quality of casework handled by individual prosecutors, focussing on legal decision, evidence and how cases are prepared and presented.

### 3. Headlines

## Headlines

**3.1.** Yorkshire and Humberside Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Area has adopted a strategic “back to basics” ethos, focusing on core priorities and adopting a staged approach rather than attempting to address all issues simultaneously. This targeted strategy has enabled the Area to concentrate efforts where they can deliver the greatest impact. Good governance was in evidence throughout the Area, with strong leadership from the Chief Crown Prosecutor and Area Business Manager central to embedding this approach, particularly in driving improvements in casework management.

**3.2.** A strong, collaborative partnership between operational delivery (OD) and legal teams was in place and this is fundamental to the Area’s success in improving casework quality. Each team plays a distinct yet complementary role in achieving strategic objectives: legal staff concentrate on the integrity and effectiveness of casework, while OD staff ensure efficient and seamless business operations. By working in close alignment, both teams contribute meaningfully to their respective remits and to the overall performance of the Area.

**3.3.** Inter-team partnership working enables both sides of the organisation to understand the issues and challenges facing each other. Managers described how this is the culture in the Area and how it has improved decision-making and promoted stronger team cohesion. We found a real appetite for collaboration and it appears to be an approach which is embedded.

**3.4.** A strong team ethos is evident across the Area. Anchor days are used to encourage office attendance and strengthen team relationships. Communication is effective and well-managed with a good flow of consistent information and messaging from senior leadership setting clear priorities. There is a regular and effective mechanism of feedback up to the senior team from operational levels providing assurance of the implementation and impact of actions. While we were told by staff that office attendance varies across the Area’s offices, staff relationships remain positive and collaborative.

**3.5.** Learning and development is a priority for senior management and opportunities are sought to embed knowledge in the casework teams. In addition to mandated training, the Area has implemented some local initiatives such as the extensive use of Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) as a learning and development tool, embracing the use of case conversations to drive casework quality. Senior legal managers are heavily involved in LCMPs and use them to impart knowledge and develop the legal skills of both legal managers and prosecutors and to gauge skill levels and training needs. Managers and prosecutors across the Area reported how useful and helpful the LCMPs are and the consensus was that they helped to improve quality of casework.

**3.6.** LCMPs along with the Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) process are also used by managers to assure themselves of casework quality and to address issues in a constructive manner. We conducted a reality check in the Area and examined eight cases which had been subject to IQAs. We found that Senior District Crown Prosecutors, when dip sampling, provided constructive feedback that would be of value in driving casework quality. However, we found that conversations with staff were not always being held as they should. The Area has used LCMPs to plug the gap where casework conversations are the focus.

**3.7.** Following the baseline Area Inspection Programme (AIP) report, the Area has made tangible progress by addressing key recommendations. Notable improvements have been seen in areas such as Victim Communication and Liaison Scheme (VCLS) letters and significant event reviews. A forensic, structured approach to improvement has been adopted, with actions that are clearly defined, responsibilities assigned and accountability enforced, with assurance mechanisms in place to evaluate outcomes and impact and adapt where necessary.

**3.8.** Performance management has significantly improved, with the Area making effective use of real-time data through a bespoke performance tool which was developed by the Area Performance Manager. This performance tool enables legal managers to quickly identify trends and take corrective action without waiting on quarterly Area Performance Review (APR) data. The tool is intuitive, user-friendly and, as a result, managers can focus more on improving the quality of legal decisions and spend less time analysing and interpreting data.

**3.9.** Operational grip is evident in initiatives such as internal Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) management by Crown Advocates and magistrates' court clinics, which have contributed to reduced trial backlogs and lower vacated and ineffective trial rates.

**3.10.** Partnerships with police and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) have matured into meaningful operational improvements. High acceptance rates by all local police forces of Director's Guidance Assessment (DGA) feedback demonstrate strong collaboration and mutual respect. CPS prosecutors are actively engaging with DGA feedback, recognising its value in contributing to improvement in the quality of police file submissions. The Area is open to innovation and has successfully trialled new approaches, supported by strong stakeholder relationships. A notable example of a new approach to working practices is the Area's willingness to engage in joint training and learning with local police forces, which has helped strengthen mutual trust and build shared expertise.

**3.11.** Despite facing similar challenges to other CPS Areas, with constraints on budget and the highest volume of custody time limit cases, Yorkshire and Humberside manages its resources effectively. The Area uses its budget creatively to address shortfalls and regularly reviews resource allocation to ensure it remains responsive and efficient. Absence rates are low, even though casework volumes including cases involving defendants in custody remain high, reflecting strong workforce management. The Area benefits from experienced and respected individuals in key roles in their business management cadre.

## 4. Summary

## Summary

**4.1.** Inspectors found that the Area has established a robust governance framework to support continuous improvement in casework quality. A suite of dedicated boards, including the Casework Quality Board (CQB) and Disclosure Board, provide oversight and assurance across key operational areas. These structures are aligned with national priorities and demonstrate a clear commitment to performance monitoring and strategic development.

**4.2.** Internal communications were found to be comprehensive and well-structured, with multiple channels used to disseminate key messages. Staff engagement was generally positive, although some challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to communications for court-based staff. The use of a key messages log and regular team meetings were highlighted as effective tools in promoting consistency and transparency.

**4.3.** Training and development initiatives were found to be proactive, with localised programmes complementing national provision. While perceptions of training quality varied, particularly among new starters, evidence suggests that targeted interventions, such as training on significant event reviews, have contributed to improvements in casework quality. The Area's investment in bespoke development programmes and succession planning was viewed positively.

**4.4.** We found a strong culture of collaboration between legal and operational delivery teams. Mechanisms such as Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) and the Legal Leadership Forum (LLF) were praised for their role in capturing learning and enhancing legal capability. The Area's approach to staff development, including the use of Individual Learning Accounts, was found to be innovative and well-promoted.

**4.5.** The Area's response to findings from the Area Inspection Programme – Phase 1 (AIP1) was particularly commendable. A formal action plan, led by senior managers and supported by measurable indicators, drove improvements across casework units. The CQB played a central role in maintaining focus and ensuring progress against recommendations.

**4.6.** We found that the Area has made digital capability a strategic priority, with senior managers actively contributing to national forums. This emphasis has enabled the Area to pilot national digital initiatives and develop bespoke tools to enhance performance monitoring. A notable example is the Power BI performance dashboard, which is updated daily providing real-time data and has been credited with improving casework quality and productivity.

**4.7.** The performance tool has supported targeted interventions, such as improvements in victim communication letters and sentence uplifts in hate crime cases. While the tool is locally developed, its success suggests potential for wider adoption across the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

**4.8.** Recruitment processes have been adapted to better allocate new Senior Crown Prosecutors, using CVs to inform placement decisions. Overtime is used strategically to manage workloads and maintain performance, with clear approval mechanisms in place.

**4.9.** The Area has also demonstrated innovation in its collaboration with HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). Initiatives such as CPS-led casework clinics at magistrates' courts and dedicated Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) courts in some Crown court centres have improved trial readiness and outcomes for victims and witnesses. These efforts reflect a proactive and flexible approach to improving efficiency and casework quality.

**4.10.** Additionally, we noted productive relationships with the judiciary and court managers, supported by clear escalation policies and regular meetings. Notable initiatives included the implementation of a protocol at Sheffield Crown Court to streamline custody time limit applications and the establishment of dedicated PTPH courts to support early resolution.

**4.11.** We also found that the Area maintains strong and constructive relationships with the four police forces in Yorkshire and Humberside. Senior police officers praised the accessibility of CPS managers and their responsiveness to complex issues. Regular engagement through forums such as the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) and Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) has promoted a culture of shared learning and accountability. Initiatives like workshops to reduce action plans and joint dip sampling exercises were highlighted as effective tools for improving casework quality.

**4.12.** While CPS participation in Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) meetings was consistent, we found limited evidence of measurable impact on casework quality from these forums. Nonetheless, strategic engagement has built trust and laid the groundwork for future improvements.

**4.13.** Community engagement was another area of strength. The Area operates scrutiny panels focused on sensitive casework such as hate crime and domestic abuse. These panels, attended by stakeholders and occasionally victims, contribute to learning and improvements in practice. Feedback from these panels has led to enhancements in Victim Communication Letters (VCLs) and informed national template revisions. We also found evidence of active engagement with local community groups, reinforcing public confidence in CPS work.

**4.14.** We found that the Area employs a data-driven approach to workforce planning, supplemented by a locally developed performance tool. This enables real-time monitoring of live staff in post and operational needs. Monthly resourcing meetings chaired by senior managers provide strategic oversight and inform decisions on workforce deployment.

**4.15.** Despite these measures, the Area faces significant resourcing challenges. Both Crown Court and magistrates' court teams are under-resourced, with prosecutors managing high caseloads. Staffing shortfalls have led to increased reliance on overtime and redeployment of Crown Advocates, impacting court coverage and case progression. Recruitment delays and limited experience among new staff have placed additional pressure on managers. The Area has responded by using budget underspend to fund additional overtime, although this is not viewed as a sustainable solution.

**4.16.** Financial management was found to be robust. The Area demonstrates strong oversight through strategic meetings, budget forecasting and assurance processes. Use of the National Resourcing Model and localised fee tracking supports informed decision-making. CPS Headquarters has recognised the Area's financial practices as a model of good practice.

**4.17.** The Area also makes use of agents to support trial advocacy in magistrates' courts, allowing internal prosecutors to focus on early resolution opportunities. While this limits trial exposure for some staff, it ensures that trials are prosecuted by experienced advocates.

**4.18.** We found that the Area has embedded a range of mechanisms to facilitate feedback and resolve disputes with police partners. Monthly JOIMs provide a structured forum for discussing performance issues, including compliance with Directors Guidance Assessments (DGA). These meetings are data-led, promote transparency and ensure accountability through action tracking.

**4.19.** The quality of CPS feedback to police on file quality has improved significantly since the first phase of the AIP. Inspectors noted a collaborative approach to improving standards, with police forces responding positively to CPS feedback and implementing case progression teams and digital tools to enhance file submissions.

**4.20.** The Area maintains high standards in managing priority casework, with well-maintained High-Risk and Attorney General's Consent Case Logs. LCMPs are used to provide strategic oversight and support for complex or sensitive cases.

**4.21.** Custody Time Limits (CTLs) are overseen by a dedicated CTL Board, with additional assurance mechanisms such as monthly checkpoint meetings and biannual audits. While staff demonstrated a clear understanding of CTL

procedures, inspectors found inconsistencies in the use and quality of progression logs. A sample review revealed that while most cases met expectations, some lacked evidence of timely reviews or complete documentation.

**4.22.** The Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) process is used to evaluate casework quality and support individual development alongside other mechanisms mentioned above. Inspectors found that IQA assessments were generally of good quality and aligned with CPS guidance. However, there was limited evidence of follow-up discussions between managers and prosecutors. Feedback on the IQA process was mixed, with some staff finding it valuable and others viewing it as overly procedural or demotivating.

**4.23.** CPS Yorkshire and Humberside has demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement across multiple dimensions which has a positive impact on the quality of its casework. Its strategic governance, proactive training initiatives, and collaborative culture have contributed to enhanced casework quality and operational effectiveness. Innovative use of digital tools, robust financial planning, and constructive partnerships with Criminal Justice Service (CJS) stakeholders further underscore the Area's dedication to improving their casework. While challenges remain in staffing and an increase in caseloads, the Area's structured approach and responsiveness to feedback position it well for sustained progress.

**4.24.** We identified a number of aspects of good practice in the Area. They are listed below:

| Good Practice   |
|---|
| Cross-functional collaboration between operational delivery and legal across all levels is instrumental in cultivating a unified and collaborative workplace culture.   |
| Relationships with external stakeholders are well-developed and contribute meaningfully to service improvement.   |
| Governance across the Area is robust, supported by strong leadership and a clear focus on improvement. A structured approach is used to identify issues, set actions, hold owners accountable, and assess impact.   |
| Communication is effective and two-way, enabling transparency and engagement across teams.  |
| The increased use of Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) in volume casework is harnessing the value of casework conversations to support the development of prosecutors and first-line legal managers, with proactive involvement from senior legal staff. |
| Performance data is used consistently at all levels to proactively identify areas for improvement and drive targeted interventions.   |

## **5. Legal Leadership and Area Culture**

## Legal Leadership and Area Culture

### Governance of Casework Quality

**5.1.** The Area has established a clear governance structure to support the continuous improvement of casework quality. Oversight is provided through a series of dedicated boards, each with a defined remit aligned to national priorities. The Casework Quality Board (CQB) leads on improving case preparation, advocacy, and progression, ensuring compliance with Custody Time Limits (CTLs) and effective handling of complex cases such as modern slavery. It also monitors progress against the HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) action plan<sup>5</sup> using data from internal quality assurance and other performance tools with action owners held to account for implementation and assurance of impact.

**5.2.** Supporting this, the Disclosure Board oversees the implementation of recommendations from the Joint Inspection Report on Disclosure, addressing local disclosure issues and promoting good practice. The Legal Leadership Forum (LLF) enhances legal capability through leadership, mentoring and the dissemination of good practice. The Area Training Board ensures training is aligned with business needs, monitoring Individual Learning Account (ILA) usage and supporting the legal trainee programme.

**5.3.** The CTL Board provides assurance on CTL performance, identifying risks and sharing learning from both good practice and failures. The Charging Board focuses on improving charging decisions and managing pre-charge workloads, offering assurance to the Area Strategic Board on performance in this critical area. Collectively, these boards form a robust framework that underpins the Area's commitment to high-quality casework and continuous improvement. The approach in each board is to set clear actions and hold owners to account for delivery, followed up by assurance work to assess impact.

### Internal Communications

**5.4.** Inspectors found that the Area has developed a comprehensive internal communications strategy and demonstrates a clear commitment to staff engagement. A range of systems is in place to enable managers to share operational and performance-related information effectively with their teams.

**5.5.** A variety of communication channels are used to disseminate key messages. These include:

- a weekly all-staff call attended by senior management

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<sup>5</sup> The action plan was developed by the Area in order to address the issues identified in HMCPSI's baseline inspection report.

- a monthly managers' call
- a dedicated Teams channel for staff queries and feedback
- email updates for important announcements
- a weekly Area newsletter.

**5.6.** The Head of Business Centre reported that the weekly all-staff call, led by the senior management team, was a key part of the Area's communication strategy, designed to promote consistency in messaging and enhance the visibility of leadership. Engagement with the call is monitored and high attendance levels suggest that it is an effective method of communication.

**5.7.** To maximise accessibility, the Area schedules meetings during lunchtime, records calls for later viewing, circulates meeting minutes and issues follow-up emails containing key updates. These measures are intended to ensure that staff remain informed, even if they are unable to attend live sessions due to absence or business need.

**5.8.** Despite these efforts some staff, particularly those regularly attending court, reported difficulties in accessing meetings and information. While the availability of meeting notes helps to mitigate this issue, the Area needs to consider whether there is more they can do to engage all staff across all roles.

### **Key Messages**

**5.9.** Inspectors found that the Area has taken steps to enhance the effectiveness of internal communications by using a key messages log used by senior managers to coordinate the information shared by District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) during team meetings. This approach was reported to support consistency in the delivery of important updates.

**5.10.** In focus groups, staff across all grades, including legal and operational delivery roles, confirmed that managers regularly engage with them and communicate key operational and strategic information. Data is also shared. Staff generally viewed the Area's communications strategy positively. Local team meetings were identified as having the greatest impact on day-to-day work.

**5.11.** Some concerns were raised by some frontline staff regarding the quality of communications, particularly the volume of information shared via email. A minority of staff reported that lengthy or dense emails were difficult to digest.

**5.12.** The Area has implemented a broad internal communications strategy that is well understood by staff. We found that the internal communications strategy is contributing to a positive workplace culture. It promotes openness, collaboration and good levels of staff engagement and by doing so helps drive improvements in performance.

## Training and Support

**5.13.** Inspectors found that perceptions of the availability and quality of training varied across different staff groups. Managers generally considered the training provision to be sufficient. However, delivering appropriate training to a workforce with a wide range of experience levels was identified as a key challenge.

**5.14.** Concerns about the adequacy of training were most commonly raised in relation to new staff to the role, whether this be for new starters to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) or for staff transitioning into new roles or units. Resourcing constraints were reported to have exacerbated these challenges, with several staff stating that they had to "hit the ground running."

**5.15.** Our staff survey results highlighted these differing perspectives. While 51.7% of all respondents stated that the training they received had led to some or significant improvements in casework quality, 92.9% of managers responded positively to the same question, demonstrating a level of disconnect<sup>6</sup>.

**5.16.** Focus group feedback reflected mixed views. Some staff reported that good quality training was available and accessible, while others disagreed, citing difficulties in accessing training and concerns about its quality.

**5.17.** In relation to the 10 Casework Strategy Principles training, managers and senior leaders confirmed that it had been delivered. However, prosecutors reported a range of experiences. The majority had completed the training and found it highly useful, while others had attended only selected modules and some said they had not received the training at all, although it was clear that the training had been delivered.

**5.18.** Despite these inconsistencies, inspectors found evidence that the Area had taken proactive steps to implement local training initiatives in addition to national provision. Some of these initiatives were developed in response to findings from HMCPSP's Area Inspection Programme – Phase 1 (AIP1). The publication of HMCPSP's report on disclosure also prompted further training activity.

**5.19.** Local training was reported to have contributed to the development of prosecutors and to improvements in casework quality. Legal managers highlighted training on 'significant event reviews' as particularly effective, with noticeable improvements in quality observed.

**5.20.** File examination findings in our follow-up inspection (AIP2) supported this view. The proportion of Crown Court cases assessed as fully meeting the standard for significant event reviews increased from 30.4% in AIP1 to 37.5% in AIP2.

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<sup>6</sup> HMCPSP received 95 responses to the staff survey which represents 18.4% of total staff in CPS Yorkshire and Humberside.

Therefore, we consider that the Area's investment in training for staff is having a positive impact on the quality of casework.

**5.21.** Senior managers described how mechanisms such as Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs), the Victim's Right to Review Scheme and CTL assurance procedures are used to assess the quality of legal input by DCPs. These mechanisms provide regular opportunities to observe and evaluate performance and are seen as a practical means of driving quality improvement.

### **Induction and Development**

**5.22.** Inspectors found that the Area is committed to supporting the development of new staff. New starters are provided with individual induction plans, which are designed to stage their progression and workload appropriately.

**5.23.** Allocating new Senior Crown Prosecutors (SCPs) to the most suitable teams was reported to be a challenge. To support this process, the Area's Head of Business Services requests the CVs of new recruits from the strategic resourcing team to assist with placement decisions. This allows the Area to forward plan and take advantage of existing skills and experience.

**5.24.** A supportive culture was observed, with staff describing a collaborative environment where colleagues help one another. Staff generally expressed confidence in their line managers and reported feeling supported and able to raise concerns. However, some members of staff said that the level of support varied, particularly where managers were relatively inexperienced or managing high workloads.

**5.25.** Senior leaders in the Area acknowledged that many DCPs were new to post and lacked broader experience. Further work was recognised as necessary to upskill the DCP group to enable more flexible deployment across casework units and to have a greater impact on improving casework quality. The Legal Leadership Forum (LFF), which we discuss at paragraph 5.33 is one of the main tools used to increase knowledge and skills amongst the DCP cadre.

**5.26.** A succession programme is in place for operational delivery (OD) staff at all grades. This is intended to support skills development and prepare staff for promotion opportunities. The Area also has a structured induction and onboarding programme for new administrative officers which is supported by an induction champion and assigned mentors.

**5.27.** To address development needs among legal staff, the Area is in the process of refreshing and relaunching bespoke programmes. These are designed to equip staff with the necessary skills to progress to higher grades and to move efficiently between casework units. We consider that these initiatives are a sensible investment and will build confidence in staff, which in turn will impact positively on casework quality.

**5.28.** Inspectors found that opportunities for temporary promotion were available. In the twelve months prior to the inspection, five SCPs were temporarily promoted to DCP roles, with three subsequently securing permanent appointments.

**5.29.** The Area also seeks expressions of interest from legal managers who wish to move between casework units. This approach is intended to support professional development and enhance the quality of casework delivery.

### **Individual Learning Accounts**

**5.30.** We found that the Area promotes the use of Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) for the purposes of staff development. Usage of ILA is monitored and if it is low staff are reminded of ways in which they can put their ILA to good use. We heard of some innovative ways of using ILA. For example, one manager had arranged a firearms course which prosecutors had pooled their ILA to pay for, and which was described as useful to casework development.

**5.31.** Generally, despite an inconsistent level of uptake of the use of ILA, we found that staff are encouraged to use their ILA. It is pushed at a senior level and there is a learning and development Microsoft Teams channel where ILA is promoted.

**5.32.** We consider that CPS Yorkshire and Humberside takes a proactive approach to the promotion of ILA which serves to enhance an environment of learning and development.

### **Legal Leadership Forum**

**5.33.** Inspectors found that senior managers view the Legal Leadership Forum (LLF) as the principal mechanism for developing the knowledge and skills of DCPs. The LLF is intended to support improvements in casework quality through a focus on legal leadership, including discussions on case strategy and leadership development.

**5.34.** The LLF is regarded as a potentially valuable forum for sharing learning and knowledge among Area managers. However, we heard that not all casework units receive equal attention in discussions, with a greater focus placed on those handling more serious cases. As a result, some managers in units dealing with high-volume magistrates' courts and some Crown Court casework felt that their contributions were undervalued and that they benefit less from these discussions. This is something the senior leaders in the Area will want to address as upskilling DCPs in these units will ultimately assist in improving casework quality and succession planning within the legal management cadre.

## Working Together

**5.35.** Inspectors found that staff across all grades spoke positively about the working relationship between legal and OD teams. Both senior managers and operational staff described a culture of effective collaboration between the two functions. Collaboration is driven by the leadership culture, with senior managers encouraging engagement across teams.

**5.36.** Several interviewees who had previously worked in other CPS Areas and units stated that the working environment in this Area “felt different,” indicating a distinctive and positive organisational culture.

**5.37.** The Area actively encourages teams to work closely together, recognising this as a way of strengthening team identity and supporting improvements in performance. We were told of anchor days encouraging staff to connect within the office environment. The Area’s collaborative approach is a strength, as effective working relationships between OD and legal staff has built trust, allowing colleagues to gain a greater understanding of challenges and issues relevant to both sides of the organisation and to identify effective solutions.

## Local Case Management Panels

**5.38.** Inspectors found that the Area adopts a proactive approach to identifying opportunities for learning and improving the quality of casework. Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) were identified as a key mechanism used to support this objective.

**5.39.** The Area makes extensive use of LCMPs as part of its learning strategy. Between April 2024 and March 2025, the magistrates’ courts unit held 72 LCMPs and the Crown Court unit held 74. The majority of these panels were chaired by a Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor (DCCP).

**5.40.** LCMPs are used by managers to review casework and to engage with prosecutors on case strategy in a constructive and supportive environment through casework conversations. Their use was consistently highlighted during interviews with legal staff at all levels, including both management and non-management grades.

**5.41.** The panels were widely regarded as a valuable learning tool. Legal managers and prosecutors reported that LCMPs contributed positively to the development of staff and to improvements in casework quality. Interviewees praised the quality of LCMPs as a mechanism for imparting knowledge and improving legal skills. One person described LCMPs in the Area as “amazing.” The widespread praise for Area’s constructive use of the panels to encourage learning and development clearly indicates that this approach is a driver of the quality of casework.

## Casework Action Plan

**5.42.** The Area demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement through the evaluation and effective use of performance data. Inspectors were informed of a significant initiative that drew on data provided by HMCPSI and which influenced all casework teams and informed the Area's approach to monitoring and improving casework quality.

**5.43.** Following receipt of the findings and file examination results from the Area's baseline inspection, senior leaders in the Area developed a formal action plan incorporating all the areas for improvement identified in the report. The plan was led by the Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP), Area Business Manager and DCCPs, with input from the change manager who identified methods for measuring progress. These included the use of specific internal quality assurance questions and dip-sampling of selected actions.

**5.44.** Responsibility for the action plan was assigned to the head of the Business Centre. Monthly meetings were held with Senior District Crown Prosecutors (SDCPs) to review progress against actions, and updates were provided to the CQB on a quarterly basis. The Area conducted internal assurance to assess progress and to measure the impact of their actions. This disciplined approach to delivery of change is evidenced in the improvement in the quality of casework evidenced in the follow-up file examination results.

**5.45.** The action plan remained in operation for over a year, concluding in March 2024 following the announcement of the AIP2 inspection. A final update was submitted to the CQB to assess progress against the original baseline report.

**5.46.** The use of measurable indicators within the action plan was reported to have increased ownership among SDCPs and improved engagement from DCPs involved in quality assurance activities. Inspectors were informed that the Area intends to adopt a similar approach for future inspections.

**5.47.** Our data from AIPs identified that CPS Yorkshire and Humberside had a positive direction of travel between AIP1 and AIP2. Added value and grip improved in both the magistrates' court and Crown Court casework units. Based on the data, we therefore conclude that the Area's action plan was highly effective in ensuring improvements in casework quality.

**5.48.** The Area's CQB ensures that a focus is maintained on improvement. The CQB is chaired by the CCP and is attended by the senior management team. The CQB gives active consideration to casework preparation, advocacy and progression. It reviews themes that have been identified by dip sampling in the Area and monitored progress of the Casework Action Plan. We were informed that training has been provided following scrutiny by the CQB. We find that the CQB contributes to driving casework quality in the Area.

## 6. Innovation

## Innovation

### Digital Focus

**6.1.** Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Yorkshire and Humberside identified digital capability as a strategic priority within its 2024–25 business plan and again within its 2025-26 business plan. The Area articulated a clear ambition to strengthen digital skills across its workforce. The Area Performance Manager and Area change manager both hold responsibility as digital training leads and contribute to national CPS forums focused on digital capability.

**6.2.** This strategic emphasis has enabled the Area to act as a pilot site for national digital initiatives, facilitating early engagement with emerging innovations.

**6.3.** At the senior management level, performance data is routinely utilised to monitor and assure the quality of casework. Managers reported that data interrogation provides a comprehensive view of performance across individual casework units and the Area overall, allowing for the timely identification of areas requiring improvement. The Area's focus on performance ensures that issues are effectively resolved and overall performance improves.

#### Power BI Performance Tool

**6.4.** The Area Performance Manager has developed a bespoke performance tool utilising Power BI. The tool draws data from multiple sources and incorporates key performance indicators (KPIs). Senior leaders directed inspectors to review the tool early in the inspection process, citing its perceived impact on Area performance.

**6.5.** The tool provides managers with access to a clear and user-friendly dashboard, capable of being easily interrogated to identify casework issues and good performance, which subsequently enables early identification of performance issues. This functionality supports improvements in casework quality by facilitating a targeted and data-driven approach. All managers reported that the availability of real-time data allows for frequent monitoring and timely intervention in comparison to data produced by CPS Headquarters, which is provided at quarterly intervals. The dashboard is refreshed daily and allows managers to drill down to identify individual cases quickly and easily.

**6.6.** During interviews and focus groups, managers consistently highlighted the tool's value. All had been trained to use the tool. They commented that it replaced a previously time-consuming and resource-intensive process, allowing them to easily identify aspects requiring improvement and also allowing them to focus on taking actions to address issues and improve performance. Managers also reported that the tool contributed to their increased productivity.

**6.7.** Several examples were provided to demonstrate the tool's effectiveness. In one instance, it was used to identify underperformance in sentence uplifts in hate crime cases, prompting action that led to improved outcomes. In another, the tool highlighted concerns regarding Victim Communication Letters (VCLs). In response, the Area took a number of actions to address this which included lawyers being rostered to attend a VCL panel to better understand victims' communication needs. Following this intervention, the Area recorded a marked improvement in the quality and timeliness of VCLs.

**6.8.** HMCPSP's file examination confirmed this improvement. In the first Area Inspection Programme (AIP1), no magistrates' courts VCLs were assessed as fully meeting the expected standard. In the second Area Inspection Programme (AIP2), 50% fully met the standard. In the Crown Court sample, the proportion of VCLs rated as fully meeting the standard increased from 9.1% in AIP1 to 75% in AIP2.

**6.9.** The Area has made good use of the performance tool which has contributed to improvements in casework quality. However, it remains a locally developed and used resource and is not currently recognised across the CPS nationally. If the tool continues to demonstrate value and associated risks can be managed, there may be opportunities for wider learning and adoption. We understand that a national system is in development as part of the CPS's wider digital strategy; the CPS will want to ensure that the benefits of CPS Yorkshire and Humberside's tool are incorporated into any national approach.

**6.10.** The use of data by Area managers was identified as a strength. The Area Business Manager reported that managers routinely engage with performance data and demonstrate a clear understanding of its application. This readiness enables informed discussions around resource allocation and performance, contributing to improvements in casework quality.

**6.11.** Managers reported that performance data is shared with teams, although the information provided is often selective. Positive data is typically highlighted to reinforce success and support continuous improvement. Managers acknowledged that staff have limited capacity to engage with large volumes of data and therefore prioritise sharing headline figures that are relevant and accessible. These summaries are intended to help staff understand how their unit is performing.

**6.12.** Feedback from legal and operational delivery (OD) focus groups indicated mixed views on the usefulness of performance data. Some staff reported receiving an appropriate amount of information and found it helpful. Others expressed limited interest in data they felt unable to influence, while a number of staff stated they did not receive any performance data.

**6.13.** Overall, most staff viewed data as a useful indicator of unit performance. However, there was limited evidence that staff linked performance data to their day-to-day work. However, sharing relevant data is a further example of the Area

making an effort to take practical steps to engage staff and by doing so improve the quality of work.

## **Recruitment**

**6.14.** While induction and development are discussed in an earlier chapter, inspectors found that the Area has adopted a practical approach to ensuring casework teams are adequately resourced.

**6.15.** A key challenge identified was the allocation of newly appointed Senior Crown Prosecutors (SCPs) to appropriate casework teams. The Area must balance the need to resource teams effectively with the requirement to provide SCPs with opportunities for development and experience.

**6.16.** As SCP recruitment is managed nationally, the Area is not always provided with detailed information regarding the skills and experience of new starters. To address this, the head of the Business Centre has implemented a process within onboarding and induction to gather additional information from newly recruited SCPs via the strategic resourcing team, including working patterns and CVs.

**6.17.** This information is used alongside the performance tool to assess data of live staff in-post, working patterns and other relevant factors. The process enables the Area to allocate new staff in a logical and informed manner, supporting both operational needs and individual development.

## **Utilisation of Overtime**

**6.18.** Overtime is made available to both legal and operational delivery staff. Inspectors found that overtime is routinely offered at weekends to support charging work, with pre-charge decisions completed during these periods across both Crown Court and magistrates' court casework units.

**6.19.** The Area uses overtime primarily to maintain performance levels and manage the high volume of charging requests received from the police. We were told that it is not used to create surplus capacity or to get ahead of incoming work.

**6.20.** Overtime requests must be approved at a senior level following the submission of a business case by the relevant team manager. This process is intended to ensure that overtime is used appropriately, fairly and that resources are deployed effectively.

**6.21.** Where teams are carrying vacancies, the Area utilises budget underspend to fund additional overtime in order to support those teams to continue to maintain performance. The Area is actively working with the National Strategic Recruitment Team to accelerate recruitment and strengthen team capacity.

**6.22.** The approach to overtime is structured and appears to provide the Area with flexibility to respond to fluctuations in workload and staffing levels. We consider this a good use of resources, and the Area ensures proper measures are in place to flex budget when appropriate.

**6.23.** To support case progression, the Area has worked with a Crown Court centre to establish a dedicated Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) court, prosecuted by an in-house Crown Advocate who is able to make immediate decisions on cases. The Area reported that the dedicated court is more effective and increase the likelihood of early resolution. The Area plans to expand the number of dedicated PTPH lists based on this positive experience.

## 7. Joint Improvement

## Engagement with Criminal Justice Service Partners

### Relationship with the Police

**7.1.** Inspectors found that stakeholders across the Criminal Justice System (CJS) expressed positive views regarding their relationship with the Area's managers. At a senior level, strong and well-established relationships exist between the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the four police forces<sup>7</sup> in Yorkshire and Humberside. These relationships have been developed through regular and effective communication, particularly in relation to performance and casework quality.

**7.2.** Senior police officers reported that they are able to contact Area managers directly to resolve complex issues when necessary. This level of access was viewed positively and was seen to reinforce collaborative working between the police and CPS.

**7.3.** Police criminal justice leads described the working relationship with CPS as constructive. Managers at various levels within the police service stated that CPS staff are generally receptive to challenge and open to feedback.

### Strategic relationships

**7.4.** Inspectors found that the Area engages regularly with CJS partners through a range of forums and meetings. The Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) is attended quarterly by members of the CPS senior management team, including the Chief Crown Prosecutor (CCP), the Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutors, the Area Business Manager, the Senior Operational Business Manager and senior police representatives. The SOG is key to maintaining strong collaboration between the Area and police partners. It provides a forum for strategic discussions, performance monitoring, data sharing and addressing challenges such as victim support. The SOG provides a platform for shared learning and collaborative efforts to improve casework quality. It oversees several sub-groups focused on specific operational issues and holds them to account for performance.

**7.5.** The Collaboration Group is one of three sub-groups of the SOG which aims to enhance communication between prosecutors and police officers. This initiative was ongoing at the time of our inspection and its effectiveness had yet to be evaluated. Increased joint learning across police and CPS together with better communication at operational level about the progression of cases were key issues highlighted as needing improvement in our joint inspection with HM

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<sup>7</sup> The four forces that are covered by CPS Yorkshire and Humberside are Humberside Police, North Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Police and West Yorkshire Police.

Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) on case building by the police and CPS in July 2025<sup>8</sup>. That these aspects are already being proactively addressed in CPS Yorkshire and Humberside is encouraging.

**7.6.** Monthly Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) are held with each of the four police forces. These meetings focus on joint performance improvement and include regular agenda items such as Director's Guidance Assessments (DGA) compliance<sup>9</sup> (discussed further in Chapter 8), casework challenges, custody time limits (CTLs), and the implementation of a Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan. Inspectors were informed that JOIMs are generally effective in driving casework quality, with candid and open discussions, with actions monitored through data-led discussions. Positive feedback and successes are acknowledged, and accountability is maintained when issues arise with progress of actions allocated to individuals being assessed at subsequent JOIM.

### **Operational collaboration**

**7.7.** Inspectors found evidence of joint working between the CPS and local police forces aimed at improving casework quality. In late 2024, the Area delivered a series of workshops focused on reducing the volume of action plans. These workshops, which originated from SOG discussions, were attended by CPS prosecutors and police officers. One of the primary objectives was to improve file quality and reduce the need for action plans. The effectiveness of the workshops was under evaluation at the time of inspection.

**7.8.** The Area has also supported police training initiatives. When North Yorkshire Police established a case progression team, CPS staff provided training on case building and disclosure. In addition, the CPS has delivered training to police officers on key topics including domestic abuse and CTLs.

**7.9.** Inspectors were also informed of joint dip sampling exercises conducted between the CPS and police to facilitate shared learning and improve case quality. Police representatives we spoke to reported that CPS staff were responsive and willing to provide assistance and that the support offered was valued.

**7.10.** There is a good working relationship between the CPS and the police forces in the Area. This includes a clear escalation process, providing staff with appropriate points of contact which allows for the amicable resolution of issues relating to casework.

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<sup>8</sup> [Joint case building by the police and Crown Prosecution Service – Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates](#)

<sup>9</sup> Director's Guidance is issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to charging decisions. It sets out for the police and CPS how to prepare a file so that it is ready for charging, who can make the charging decision and what factors influence the decision. When a case is reviewed at the charging stage, a CPS prosecutor will assess whether the police have provided the material that they should have under the guidance.

## Collaboration with the Courts

**7.11.** CPS Yorkshire and Humberside operates across seven Crown Court centres and 13 magistrates' courts. Inspectors found that the Area maintains constructive working relationships with the judiciary and HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

**7.12.** Effective lines of communication have been established with HMCTS, enabling managers to address casework issues as they arise. Escalation policies are in place and are used effectively, providing staff with a clear framework and appropriate contact points to support case progression.

**7.13.** The CCP and other senior managers meet regularly with members of the judiciary. Legal and operational delivery managers also attend court user groups and work collaboratively with court managers to support the progression of cases.

**7.14.** The Area highlighted examples of effective joint working that have contributed to performance improvements. At Sheffield Crown Court, a concern was raised regarding the first trial listing of cases subject to CTLs beyond the CTL expiry date, which required the CPS to submit written applications for extensions. This practice increased the CPS's workload and contributed to delays. In response, the CPS worked with the Recorder of Sheffield to implement a new protocol. The protocol allows for oral applications to extend CTLs where a trial cannot be listed within the time limit, thereby streamlining the process.

**7.15.** To support case progression, the Area has worked with a Crown Court centre to establish a dedicated Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) court, prosecuted by an in-house Crown Advocate who is able to make immediate decisions on cases. The Area reported that the dedicated court is more effective and increase the likelihood of early resolution. The Area plans to expand the number of dedicated PTPH lists based on this positive experience.

**7.16.** Another initiative that was highlighted was the introduction of CPS-led casework drop-in clinics, which originated in North Yorkshire magistrates' courts. The clinics involve a CPS legal manager attending court to review upcoming trial cases, typically listed for the following month, alongside a court legal adviser. The purpose is to identify issues in dispute and any factors that may render a trial ineffective. Where appropriate, the legal manager and legal adviser explore potential resolutions and engage with defence representatives to progress matters.

**7.17.** Managers reported that the clinics have been effective in resolving a significant number of issues in a single session. Inspectors noted that this proactive, collaborative approach has not only improved trial readiness but also created a culture of shared responsibility and accountability. The ability to resolve multiple issues in one informal sitting has significantly reduced the administrative burden on courts and agencies, while also improving outcomes for victims and

witnesses. Given the positive impact, the initiative is now being extended to other courts across the Area. The Area will continue to monitor its implementation to assess consistency, sustainability, and the potential for wider rollout.

**7.18.** Inspectors also found that the senior leadership team in the Area has developed a productive relationship with senior leaders at HMCTS. This has facilitated effective senior-level communication and contributed to the early resolution of operational issues.

**7.19.** Members of the judiciary provided positive feedback on the performance of CPS advocates, noting that they were generally well prepared and demonstrated a willingness to progress matters effectively in court.

**7.20.** In magistrates' courts, inspectors observed that prosecutors worked collaboratively with criminal justice partners to progress cases. Prosecutors were proactive in making appropriate decisions to resolve matters justly or, where resolution was not possible, to narrow the issues for trial. Observations indicated that CPS prosecutors maintained constructive working relationships with other agencies, including the defence.

**7.21.** In Crown Court PTPH hearings, inspectors observed a mix of Crown Advocates and external counsel. Prosecuting advocates were generally well prepared and focused on progressing cases. While judges did not routinely question pre-hearing engagement, the progress made during hearings suggested that adequate engagement had taken place. In a small number of hearings, limited progress was observed; however, these instances were attributed to a range of factors and were not typically the result of poor CPS preparation. Court staff also reported that CPS prosecutors were usually adequately prepared.

## **Local Criminal Justice Board**

**7.22.** The CPS also participates in Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) meetings aligned with the four police force areas. These forums provide additional opportunities for collaboration with CJS partners. While working relationships were described as constructive, the Area could not point to any evidence that LCJB meetings had led to measurable improvements in casework quality.

**7.23.** CPS Yorkshire and Humberside has built and maintains strong relationships with stakeholders in the CJS as is evidenced by its participation in a range of external meetings. At the strategic level, this has clearly built a good level of trust which will help the agencies to work collaboratively to improve performance. There is still some work to be done with partners at the LCJB level for measurable impact on the Area's casework quality.

### **Engagement with local community**

**7.24.** Inspectors found that the Area operates several scrutiny panels to review high-risk and sensitive casework. These include panels focused on hate crime, domestic abuse and disability hate crime, which have been in place for several years. Panels are attended by members of the senior management team, the inclusion and community engagement manager and external stakeholders.

**7.25.** The panels are designed to identify learning and provide feedback to both CPS and wider CJS partners on areas of good practice and those requiring improvement. Findings from the panels are reported quarterly to the Area's Casework Quality Board (CQB). Where common themes or concerns are identified, appropriate actions are agreed and implemented.

**7.26.** Feedback from the panels led the Area to introduce measures to improve the quality of Victim Communication Letters (VCLs) written by prosecutors. The Area also provided feedback to CPS Headquarters, which contributed to improvements in the standard VCL templates. Oversight of the scrutiny panels is maintained by the Area's legal lead to ensure a consistent approach.

**7.27.** Inspectors reviewed community engagement logs and found evidence that the Area engages with a wide range of community groups. Key Area staff have built links with local groups and are able to provide reassurance with respect to CPS work. Members of community groups attend local scrutiny panels and provide feedback which, as mentioned above, has resulted in improvements in quality of work. This commitment to external engagement is also contributing to building public confidence.

## 8. Resources

## Resources

### Staffing

**8.1.** The Area makes use of the Power BI performance tool to monitor staffing levels. We were told that this tool, as referenced earlier in the report, provides real-time data on live staff in-post, incorporating variables such as leave, training, new starters and leavers. Managers can assess resourcing needs on a daily basis and identify where additional support is required. Managers reported that the live and accurate nature of the data supports timely and informed decision-making.

**8.2.** A monthly resourcing meeting, chaired by the Area Business Manager (ABM) and attended by Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutors (DCCPs) and senior business managers, provides a forum for strategic oversight of staffing. Ahead of each meeting, the ABM produces a resourcing overview report, highlighting vacancies and enabling informed discussion on workforce planning. Casework quality and related operational issues are also considered.

**8.3.** The Area faces significant resourcing challenges. Both the Crown Court and magistrates' courts teams are under-resourced, with prosecutors managing high caseloads. In focus groups and interviews, inspectors were told that Crown Court prosecutors hold a high number of cases, with approximately a quarter of those cases subject to custody time limits (CTLs). Paralegal Officers in the Crown Court team also carry substantial workloads.

**8.4.** In the Crown Court unit, Crown Advocates have been redeployed to spend some of their time to undertake review work in the office due to existing backlogs. This has limited their availability to attend court, where they are able to make decisions directly, unlike instructed counsel who must seek instructions from Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutors.

**8.5.** In some units, staffing shortfalls have led to a reliance on overtime to meet operational demands. Documentation reviewed by inspectors confirmed that the casework teams are significantly understaffed. In 2023, the Crown Court unit had 64 Senior Crown Prosecutors (SCPs); at the time of inspection, this had reduced to 54, representing a shortfall of 10. The magistrates' courts units were also operating with a deficit of seven operational delivery members of staff.

### Caseloads

**8.6.** These staffing pressures are compounded by increasing workloads. Receipts into the magistrates' courts unit rose from 11,746 in Q4 2023/24 to 12,491 in Q4 2024/25. Crown Court receipts remained broadly stable, increasing slightly from 10,782 to 10,907 over the same period. This has resulted in the Area being required to deliver the same or greater volume of work with fewer resources.

**8.7.** Inspectors were told that the volume of work reduces the time available for reviewing lawyers to dedicate to individual cases. This was reported to have a negative impact on the quality of casework.

**8.8.** Our staff survey responses reflected concerns about resourcing. Only 27.4% of respondents believed that resourcing of casework units was resulting in some or significant improvements on casework quality. Among legal managers, 35.7% reported that resourcing had either made no difference or had led to deterioration in the quality of casework.

**8.9.** There were frustrations raised about the legal recruitment process. Inspectors were told that candidates with strong non-CPS criminal law experience were often unsuccessful in their applications to join the CPS due to difficulties navigating the civil service application process. Additionally, it was reported that Crown Prosecutors were frequently promoted to SCP roles early in their careers, before acquiring sufficient experience. While these individuals were described as enthusiastic, the additional support they required placed pressure on managers and experienced colleagues.

**8.10.** The national recruitment process was described as lengthy, with vacancies in the prosecutor cadre typically taking six months to fill. To mitigate staffing gaps, the Area has used underspend from vacant posts to fund overtime, particularly to address the volume of pre-charge decision (PCD) work. This reflects a proactive approach which mitigates some of the issues with staff shortages but would be challenging as a long-term solution.

**8.11.** Despite a high number of vacant roles with additional pressure on existing staff, sickness absence is not a significant issue in the Area. In Q3 2024/25, CPS Yorkshire and Humberside recorded the lowest average working days lost (6.6 days compared to the national average of 9.4). This increased slightly in Q4 to 7.3 days (national average: 9.5) but remained the second lowest across the CPS. Long-term sickness accounted for 50% of absences, below the national average of 60%. This reflects positive and appropriate action in dealing with sickness from Area managers.

**8.12.** However, the Area has a high number of occupational health referrals and reasonable adjustments in place. While necessary, these arrangements can limit flexibility in resource deployment and impact productivity. Inspectors were informed that a review of adjustments and associated learning is planned to ensure consistency in implementation throughout the manager cadre.

### **Levels of Experience**

**8.13.** Inspectors were informed that both the magistrates' courts and Crown Court casework teams include a significant number of newly-appointed and inexperienced prosecutors and legal managers. Managers reported that some

SCPs had been allocated to the Crown Court team without prior experience of prosecuting in court or a background in criminal law. This lack of experience requires additional support until prosecutors have developed sufficient knowledge and skill. This places further pressure on legal managers, who are already managing staff with high workloads.

**8.14.** Within the magistrates' courts team, it is recognised that high staff turnover and limited experience are ongoing challenges, as the unit is often the entry point for new starters. Experienced SCPs are responsible for delivering peer-to-peer mentoring and support, which reduces the time available for their core duties. SCPs expressed concern that this adversely affects their performance and the quality of their casework. A further consequence, we were told, is reduced capacity to engage effectively with police and defence representatives.

**8.15.** The Area is also facing a potential loss of experience due to a high number of anticipated retirements, a risk that has been recognised at senior management level. The ABM has requested demographic data to identify staff approaching retirement age. This imbalance between a growing number of new staff and a reduction in experienced personnel presents a future resourcing risk which the Area is anticipating and seeking to address as much as possible through proactive succession planning.

**8.16.** As noted earlier in the report, there is considerable variation in the experience levels of legal managers. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to address this skills gap, and action has been taken. Current mechanisms in place to develop skills include the Legal Leadership Forum and the succession planning programme.

## **Use of Counsel and Agents**

**8.17.** The Area makes use of agents to prosecute trials in the magistrates' courts. This is regarded as an effective deployment of resources, enabling CPS prosecutors to focus on case review and advocacy in guilty anticipated plea (GAP), not guilty anticipated plea (NGAP), and remand courts. These courts provide real opportunities for prosecutors to resolve cases at an early stage, thereby avoiding unnecessary trials.

**8.18.** However, inspectors were informed that the use of agents limits prosecutors' exposure to trial advocacy. This was reported to have a potential impact on their ability to develop effective trial strategies within their casework. Despite this disadvantage, with the use of experienced barristers acting as CPS agents, the Area is able to ensure that trials are prosecuted by advocates with the appropriate level of expertise.

**8.19.** The use of agents, alongside overtime, is a standing item at the monthly resourcing meetings. These meetings provide senior managers with the opportunity

to assess operational needs and determine how best to allocate budget and staffing resources.

## Budget

**8.20.** The Area uses the National Resourcing Model to determine staffing levels. Each year, Area teams work closely with CPS Headquarters, finance business partners and relevant stakeholders to assess operational needs and agree on resource requirements. This process includes consultation meetings, joint reviews, and iterative discussions to ensure that budget allocations reflect both national priorities and local demands. The outcome is a shared understanding of workforce capacity that supports effective service delivery across the Area.

**8.21.** Inspectors reviewed the interim budget spreadsheet for the 2025-26 financial year. This document is populated using a series of codes to identify issues. An 'error' code is applied where the Area considers that a miscalculation has been made by CPS Headquarters. An 'omission' code is used where a cost appears to have been overlooked entirely. The Area also highlights risks where local factors may affect the adequacy of the current budget allocation.

**8.22.** Senior business managers review the interim budget and apply the relevant codes where appropriate. Inspectors found evidence of a detailed and methodical approach to financial planning. Where discrepancies are identified, these are referred back to CPS Headquarters. However, inspectors were informed that this process has had limited impact on the final budget allocation. Risks flagged by the Area remain recorded on the spreadsheet to inform future discussions with Headquarters.

**8.23.** The Area Finance Manager (AFM) is responsible for overseeing the budget and ensuring that expenditure remains within 1% of the allocated amount. This target has been met consistently since the current AFM took up post. The budget is centrally managed by the ABM through the AFM and operational managers, with no devolution to individual units.

**8.24.** The interim budget is compiled using Anaplan, a software platform that the CPS uses to help with financial and human resource planning and budgeting. However, this platform relies on accurate data<sup>10</sup> input by the Area Performance Manager and the AFM who are both accountable for ensuring the accuracy and consistency of this data.

**8.25.** Inspectors found that the Area demonstrates a strong level of oversight in its financial planning. This contributes to effective use of available resources and

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<sup>10</sup> Anaplan has five main data types: text, number, Boolean, date and list.

supports informed engagement with CPS Headquarters when budgetary issues arise.

### **Financial Planning**

**8.26.** At strategic level, there is regular communication and coordination between the Area's senior business managers. At operational level, operational delivery (OD) managers hold routine financial meetings, with key outcomes feeding into strategic discussions. Inspectors found that the Area demonstrates a strong understanding of financial and resourcing issues, enabling informed decision-making.

**8.27.** Regular finance and resourcing meetings inform the Area Strategy Board, which receives updates on financial performance. Where potential overspends are identified, monitoring and audit activity is planned. The High Value Fees Monitoring Logs are documents used to track expenditure and these are regularly monitored. Monthly assurance is then supplied by the operational business managers to the Senior Operational Business Manager.

**8.28.** While CPS Headquarters provides a national forecasting system for fees, the Area has developed its own local approach. The AFM prepares an average fee spend profile for each unit to support financial planning. Paralegal managers conduct checks to verify the accuracy of fees, and each unit's operational business manager submits a monthly fees assurance report to the Senior Operational Business Manager, Head of Business Centre and the AFM.

**8.29.** This process provides assurance that all fees exceeding £10,000 are recorded on the Graduated Fees Scheme Log and that all relevant cases are included on the VHCC Log. It ensures that costs are accurately recorded and that senior managers maintain oversight of high-cost cases. Although time-consuming, these processes support the Area in remaining within budget and anticipating potential overspends.

**8.30.** Inspectors were informed that the Area's approach to financial management has received positive feedback from CPS Headquarters. Financial analysts have been deployed to the Area to observe and learn from its budget management practices.

**8.31.** Overall, we found that CPS Yorkshire and Humberside works efficiently with a strong grip on its budget and has effective financial systems in place. The Area provides value for money in terms of the cost per prosecution and strong budgetary oversight allows managers to make sound financial decisions and allocate resource where most needed to drive performance and casework quality.

## 9. Assurance

## Assuring casework quality

### Police File Quality

**9.1.** Inspectors found that the Area has embedded a range of mechanisms to facilitate feedback and resolve disputes between the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the police. These mechanisms were assessed as effective in enabling constructive dialogue and resolution of issues.

**9.2.** The principal forum for raising and discussing operational matters is the monthly Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs). Four JOIMs are held across the Area, each corresponding to one of the four local police forces.

**9.3.** JOIMs are attended by representatives from both the police and CPS at appropriate levels. This includes CPS managers from legal and operational delivery functions, ensuring that performance issues across all domains can be addressed.

**9.4.** A standing item on the JOIM agenda is compliance with the Director's Guidance Assessments (DGA). Inspectors observed that the CPS routinely presents data on DGA compliance to support informed discussion.

**9.5.** The meetings provide a platform to explore reasons for non-compliance and to review cases where police have successfully challenged CPS assessments. This promotes transparency and accountability.

**9.6.** Any actions that are agreed at JOIMs are logged and the person responsible for the action is required to provide an update on progress and any issues that have arisen at subsequent meetings. This accountability ensures there is ownership of actions and that matters are progressed effectively.

**9.7.** Inspectors found that the Area is receptive to challenge from the police and actively encourages constructive feedback. This approach supports mutual respect and learning and enables both organisations to disseminate key insights to their respective staff.

**9.8.** The quality of CPS feedback to the police regarding file quality improved markedly between the first Area Inspection Programme (AIP1) and the second Area Inspection Programme (AIP2). In AIP1, feedback in Crown Court casework was assessed as fully meeting the expected standard in 22.2% of cases, and in magistrates' court casework in 20%. In AIP2, these figures increased to 53.8% and 45.5% respectively. Although there is more to be done, it is clear that the actions the Area has taken are effective in driving improvement.

**9.9.** Both CPS and police representatives spoke positively about discussions on casework quality. One police force reported that the CPS actively encouraged

feedback where DGA assessments were considered inaccurate. Inspectors concluded that a collaborative approach is being taken to improve casework standards.

**9.10.** Other topics regularly discussed at JOIMs include custody time limits (CTLs). Inspectors saw evidence of the CPS bringing specific cases for discussion, including a late submission of a telephone for analysis which resulted in a 'near miss' and was used as a learning opportunity.

**9.11.** In addition to JOIMs, the CPS utilises other feedback channels. Operational delivery (OD) teams hold weekly workstream meetings with local Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) counterparts. Issues unresolved at this level are escalated to senior managers for consideration at JOIMs.

**9.12.** The Area also employs a dedicated Microsoft form, used by OD staff to record observations on police file quality. This is a bespoke form developed by the Area due to numerous issues with police staff incorrectly labelling material submitted. The information is collated which allows data from the forms to be shared monthly with the police and has informed staff training initiatives. This is an effective system for providing feedback on issues to the police and other CPS Areas may wish to consider its use.

**9.13.** Inspectors were informed that, in response to CPS feedback and discussions on file quality, North Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Police Forces have introduced case progression teams to ensure files meet required standards prior to submission.

**9.14.** With technological advances, one police force has implemented an automation tool which they described as a robotic digital worker to conduct compliance checks on file submissions. Qualitative checks are subsequently carried out by the case progression team.

**9.15.** The Area has implemented an escalation process with the police for outstanding issues. Staff across the Area demonstrated awareness of the escalation process and used it for unresolved issues. Prosecutors typically use action plans, while OD staff rely on emails or phone calls. Where initial efforts do not resolve the issue, it is escalated to a line manager. When staff do have to escalate, this generally resolves matters satisfactorily.

**9.16.** Overall, we found that CPS Yorkshire and Humberside has clear and established lines of communication with its partner agencies which allows for the mutual resolution of daily issues as and when they arise. These procedures enhance the quality of work by improving efficiency in addressing issues, fixing problems and progressing casework.

## Priority Casework

**9.17.** Inspectors found that the Area maintains its High-Risk Case Log and Attorney General's Consent Case Log to a consistently high standard. Both are live documents, updated regularly and structured in a way that provides clarity, transparency and assurance to senior managers.

**9.18.** The logs are well-organised and detailed, enabling users to quickly ascertain the status of individual cases. Risks are clearly identifiable and appropriate actions can be determined without requiring prior involvement in the case. Inspectors considered this level of clarity to be good practice.

**9.19.** Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs) are routinely used to provide assurance and strategic oversight in priority casework. Panels may be convened by senior managers based on information from sources such as the charging report or the High-Risk Case Log. Prosecutors may also request an LCMP via their line manager where they consider additional scrutiny or support is required. We explored the Area's approach to LCMPs more in chapter five.

## Custody Time Limits

**9.20.** The Area has established a Custody Time Limit (CTL) Board, chaired by a Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor. The Board includes representatives from both OD and Legal teams, providing cross-functional oversight and strategic direction. The Area holds a CTL leads meeting which is a sub group of the CTL Board and is a local initiative which was established to ensure that specific focus is maintained on cases with CTLs. Assurance is provided by monitoring CTL performance across the Area and identifying risks and areas for improvement.

**9.21.** The Board focuses on the effective management of CTLs and has worked collaboratively with local Crown Courts to address the issue of cases being listed for trial beyond the expiry of the CTL.

**9.22.** Inspectors found that staff across the Area demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of proactively monitoring custody time limit cases and taking timely action to prevent many failures.

**9.23.** Additional assurance mechanisms are in place. These include a monthly fees assurance report submitted to the senior OD manager. Where high-risk cases are identified, they are discussed at a monthly checkpoint meeting and appropriate actions are agreed. The Area also conducts a twice-yearly fees audit. Where cases are found not to have followed the correct monitoring process, individual feedback is provided to the relevant staff.

**9.24.** Inspectors conducted a reality check to assess how CTL cases are managed in practice. A sample of 14 cases was examined, comprising a mix of Crown Court and magistrates' courts case files.

**9.25.** The digital diary, which serves as a backup system, accurately recorded CTL expiry dates and 28-day review dates. However, not all required checks were consistently noted. In some cases, key actions such as applications for extensions and the granting of those extensions were not recorded in the diary.

**9.26.** Use of the CTL progression log was found to be inconsistent. Although a log was present in every case reviewed, there was significant variation in the quality and completeness of entries. Some logs contained detailed records of reviews and actions, while others lacked evidence of management checks or input from the reviewing lawyer.

**9.27.** Inspectors found that OD managers demonstrated better compliance with CTL procedures. Their entries in the progression logs routinely evidenced appropriate checks and oversight.

**9.28.** Of the 14 cases reviewed, the progression log was assessed as fully meeting expectations in five cases, partially meeting expectations in six cases, and not meeting expectations in the remaining three cases.

**9.29.** Cases subject to a CTL should be reviewed in advance of the expiry date to ensure readiness for trial and to determine whether an extension application is necessary. This review should take place within two weeks of the expiry date in magistrates' court cases and within four weeks in Crown Court cases.

**9.30.** This requirement for a review was an appropriate consideration in ten of the 14 cases reviewed. In seven of those cases, a review had been conducted and correctly recorded. In the remaining three cases, there was no evidence that a review had taken place.

## **Evaluating the quality of casework**

**9.31.** The Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) system is the CPS's primary mechanism for evaluating the quality of casework and improving the standard of service provided to the public. Legal managers are responsible for selecting cases and assessing the work of individual prosecutors in accordance with the guidance available on the CPS intranet.

**9.32.** The IQA process is designed to support improvement in two interconnected ways. First, through direct feedback between the legal manager and the prosecutor. Second, through the analysis of data from IQA assessments at both national and Area level. This data helps to identify common themes, assess overall standards and determine whether further quality assurance, updated guidance, or additional training is required.

**9.33.** Inspectors found that District Crown Prosecutors (DCPs) conduct IQA assessments regularly and that Senior District Crown Prosecutors (SDCPs) carry out dip sampling in line with the requirements of the scheme.

**9.34.** Senior leaders, including SDCPs and above, expressed confidence in the quality of IQA assessments completed by line managers. They considered that DCPs use the IQA process to support improvements in casework standards. IQA outcomes are discussed monthly at the Casework Quality Board (CQB) as part of the Area's efforts to drive continuous improvement.

**9.35.** Inspectors examined a selection of prosecution files that had been subject to IQA assessment to determine whether the process was being applied consistently and in accordance with CPS guidance.

**9.36.** The reality check involved a review of eight live cases, comprising four Crown Court and four magistrates' courts files. All had been selected at random and had been dip sampled by an SDCP for internal quality assurance purposes.

**9.37.** Inspectors found that IQA assessments were being completed to a good standard by Area managers. Assessments conducted by DCPs were considered reasonable and generally focused on identifying positive aspects of casework.

**9.38.** Inspectors were informed that managers often structure their IQA assessments around specific casework themes in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

**9.39.** One example reviewed involved a case where disclosure was the central focus of the assessment. This demonstrated that IQA is being used in the Area as a tool to drive improvements across various aspects of casework.

**9.40.** All dip samples conducted by SDCPs were assessed as fair and constructive. The feedback provided was of good quality and offered meaningful opportunities for learning and development for both prosecutors and DCPs.

**9.41.** However, there remains scope for improvement. In only one of the eight cases reviewed were inspectors able to confirm that a discussion had taken place between the DCP and the prosecutor. This was due to the summary of discussion section not clearly indicating whether a conversation had occurred.

**9.42.** Interviews and focus groups revealed mixed views on the effectiveness and value of the IQA process. Some line managers expressed concern that the process was overly focused on procedural compliance rather than substantive quality. Others questioned whether IQA results accurately reflected a lawyer's overall performance.

**9.43.** Prosecutors also expressed a range of views. Some valued the feedback as a useful measure of their progress, while others found the process demotivating

and stressful. Many prosecutors indicated that feedback delivered in person was more helpful than feedback received via email.

**9.44.** HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) carried out a thematic inspection of the CPS's use of the IQA system published in February 2025.<sup>11</sup> We made a single recommendation for the CPS to use the findings from our inspection to develop and implement a new approach to how it assesses casework quality. Some of the issues we have set out above were common in our IQA inspection findings and consequently are ones any new approach should address.

**9.45.** As noted earlier, the Area employs a range of additional methods to assure casework quality. These include monthly one-to-one meetings, CTL checks, LCMPs, dip sampling and court observations. Managers generally considered these methods to provide a more accurate reflection of an individual lawyer's casework quality than the IQA process alone.

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<sup>11</sup> [Individual Quality Assessment \(IQA\)- an inspection of how the CPS uses IQA to monitor and improve casework quality – HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

# **Annex A**

## **Inspection framework**

## Area Inspection Programme - Phase 3 Inspection Framework

### Introduction

The first phase of the Area Inspection Programme was carried out between 2021 and 2022. It provided detailed baseline assessments of casework quality across magistrates' court, Crown Court and rape and serious sexual offences casework in each of the 14 CPS Areas. Each report set out an assessment for added value and grip in respect of the casework in three separate units.

A follow up Area Inspection Programme (Phase 2) took place in 2024 and continued with assessing casework quality on adding value to the prosecution through good, proactive prosecution decision-making and gripping case management. The AIP baseline and follow up data have been considered to highlight direction of travel of performance for both added value and grip. This has identified some CPS Areas that will be selected for our targeted risk-based inspection approach for Phase 3 – Area Inspection Programme.

This framework is organised into three sections: legal leadership and assurance, resources, and stakeholders. Each section outlines criteria for gathering evidence. Sub-criteria have also been identified for each section to guide the assessment of performance.

## A – Legal leadership and assurance

### Does legal leadership and assurance impact casework quality?

#### Criteria

1. How does legal leadership and assurance mechanisms at all levels influence casework quality standards?
  - 1.1. How do Area managers convey the CPS's direction regarding casework aspirations?
  - 1.2. How is key performance data utilised to assure the quality of casework in the Area, and what effects has this had on overall casework quality?
  - 1.3. How do Area managers inspire, motivate and develop their teams to achieve casework standards?
  - 1.4. How do Area managers at all levels assess the skills and experience of staff and impact this has on casework quality?
  - 1.5. How do Area senior managers ensure that all Area managers possess the necessary skills and experience to effectively oversee casework?

- 1.6. Does the Area have a system in place for identifying and dealing with priority casework, and how does this contribute to casework quality?
- 1.7. How do Area managers ensure that the performance of counsel is at the right level?

**Sub criteria**

- In what ways does the engagement of Area managers with staff on both strategic and operational matters affect the quality of casework?
- How does the Area communicate quality assurance and performance monitoring measures to staff, and what impact does this communication have on casework quality?
- How has the Area's approach to training affect casework quality?
- To what extent does the Area management team utilise performance data and other relevant information, and how has this influenced the quality of casework?
- How do team and individual accountability for casework contribute to the overall quality of that casework?
- In what ways do Individual Quality Assessments (IQA) influence casework quality?
- What additional mechanisms, beyond IQA, does the Area employ to assure the quality of casework, and have these mechanisms affected casework quality?
- How does the Area connect casework to staff objectives, and what impact has this had on casework quality?
- How do Area managers motivate staff, build effective teams, within casework units, and what impact does this have on casework quality?
- How does the Area ensure that its managers possess the necessary skills and experience to effectively provide casework assurance?
- Are Area managers skilled in handling both good and poor performance?
- How does the management and monitoring of custody time limits influence the quality of casework?
- Are high-risk case logs in the Area contributing to the standards of casework quality?
- How does the Area assure the quality of external counsel in both the magistrates' court and Crown Court?

## B – Resources

### Does resource utilisation and management impact on casework quality?

#### Criteria

2. **How does the handling of Area resources impact on casework quality?**
  - 2.1 Does Area budgetary management have an impact on the quality of casework?
  - 2.2 In what ways do the Area's budgetary allocation and planning influence the overall quality of casework?
  - 2.3 How does the Area determine its staffing structure, and how does this structure affect the quality of casework delivered?
  - 2.4 How does the Area assess the required experience levels of staff and managers within its casework units, and in what ways does this evaluation impact decision-making and the overall quality of casework?
  - 2.5 What role does the Area's digitisation strategy play in shaping casework quality?
  - 2.6 In what ways does the Area leverage external resources and overtime, and how has this strategy contributed to the quality of casework?

#### Sub criteria

- How does the Area negotiate financial matters with headquarters and partners, and what impact does this have on the resources available to manage its caseloads?
- How does the Area ensure that it operates within its allocated budget, and how does this adherence affect the quality of casework?
- How are Area casework units resourced in terms of staff and managers, and how does this allocation of resources impact the quality of casework?
- In what ways does the digital infrastructure in the Area influence the quality of casework?
- How does the use of Resource Efficiency Measures data in the Area affect casework quality?
- How does the Area's recruitment strategy and management of vacancy rates influence the quality of casework?
- In what ways does the Area handle the induction and training of new staff, and how does this affect the quality of casework standards?
- Is succession planning integrated into the Area's business strategy, and how does it affect the quality of casework?
- Does the Area utilise remote teams, and what influence does this have on casework quality?
- How do the Area managers address sickness absence and what impact does this have on the quality of casework?
- How does the Area manage staff performance issues, and how has this affected casework quality?
- In what ways does the Area utilise external resources and overtime, and what is the impact on casework quality?

## C – Stakeholders

### Does stakeholder engagement and collaboration impact on casework quality?

#### Criteria

3. **How does the Area relationship with criminal justice partners affect the quality of casework?**
  - 3.1 What is the Area relationship with criminal justice colleagues?
  - 3.2 Is there a clear understanding of shared aims and objectives between Area and partners?
  - 3.3 How does joint performance management with criminal justice partners impact casework quality?
  - 3.4 Are there shared quality assurance processes for matters that impact casework?
  - 3.5 Is relevant performance information, areas for improvement and good practice shared between criminal justice partners and used to identify strengths and weaknesses?
  - 3.6 Have joint improvement strategies been implemented and resulted in improvements?

#### Sub criteria

##### Relationship with the police

- What is the Area approach for collaborating with police counterparts to facilitate data sharing, identify strengths and weaknesses, and drive improvements in casework quality?
- How does the Area provide feedback to the police regarding the quality of police files, and what improvements have resulted from this feedback?
- How effective are the communication channels between the police and the CPS Area in advancing casework, and does this lead to enhanced quality of case files?
- How are disputes regarding casework between the Area and the police addressed, and what lessons are drawn from these experiences?
- In what ways does the Area collaborate with the police to effectively manage pre-charge cases and address any existing backlogs?
- Are there any joint training programmes in place with the police aimed at enhancing the quality of casework?
- How does the Area work alongside the police to enhance casework quality by improving the experiences of victims and witnesses?

##### Relationship with HMCTS, witness service, the judiciary and the defence

- How does the Area collaborate with HMCTS counterparts to implement joint improvement strategies, and what impact does this collaboration have on casework outcomes?
- What communication channels exist between the CPS Area and HMCTS for addressing day-to-day enquiries related to casework quality issues?

- In what ways does the Area work with HMCTS to address court delays and monitor cracked, ineffective, and vacated trials?
- How does the Area engage with the witness service, and what improvements have been observed in the experiences of witnesses at court as a result?
- How do Area managers interact with the judiciary, and in what ways does this engagement contribute to enhancing casework quality?
- Does the Area engage with the local defence community, and how has this interaction influenced casework quality?

**Relationship with community groups**

- What is the nature of relationships with local community groups?
- Do Area managers actively engage with community groups, and how does this influence Area strategies and casework?

How does the Area prioritise its engagement with specific community groups, and can it demonstrate improvements in service delivery, engagement, or community confidence as a result of these interaction

# **Annex B**

## **File examination data**

## Crown Prosecution Service Yorkshire and Humberside

Data from Area Inspection Programme 1 (AIP1) (baseline) to Area Inspection Programme 2 (AIP2) (follow-up)

Added value

|                     |       |       |           |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Magistrates' courts | 59.1% | 69.0% | ▲ +9.9pp  |
| Crown Court         | 56.0% | 67.2% | ▲ +11.2pp |

Grip

|                     |       |       |           |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Magistrates' courts | 61.4% | 74.6% | ▲ +13.2pp |
| Crown Court         | 73.7% | 75.4% | ▲ +1.7pp  |

## National Crown Prosecution Service scores

Data from AIP1 (baseline) to AIP2 (follow-up)

|                     | Baseline | Follow-up | Direction of travel |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Magistrates' courts |          |           |                     |
| Added value         | 63.3%    | 65.5%     | ▲                   |
| Grip                | 65.9%    | 68.8%     | ▲                   |
| Crown Court         |          |           |                     |
| Added value         | 63.5%    | 66.2%     | ▲                   |
| Grip                | 75.6%    | 73.3%     | ▼                   |

## Crown Prosecution Service Yorkshire and Humberside - Themes

Data from AIP1 (baseline) to AIP2 (follow-up)

| Theme   | Magistrates’ courts |       |     |         | Crown Court |       |   |         |
|---|---------------------|-------|-----|---------|-------------|-------|---|---------|
| Pre-charge  |                     |       |     |         |             |       |   |         |
| Code compliance                                       | 87.5%               | 97.2% | ▲   | +9.7pp  | 97.1%       | 97.2% | ▶ | +0.1pp  |
| Charge selection                                      | 90.9%               | 90.4% | ▶   | -0.5pp  | 84.8%       | 90.0% | ▲ | +5.2pp  |
| Case analysis   | 38.9%               | 53.8% | ▲   | +14.9pp | 32.7%       | 44.1% | ▲ | +11.4pp |
| Post-charge   |                     |       |     |         |             |       |   |         |
| Code compliance                                       | 90.0%               | 96.6% | ▲   | +6.6pp  | 95.0%       | 93.3% | ▼ | -1.7pp  |
| Case analysis   | 58.6%               | 58.1% | ▶   | -0.5pp  | 45.4%       | 58.6% | ▲ | +13.2pp |
| Victims and Witnesses                                 |                     |       |     |         |             |       |   |         |
| Victim and Witness issues                             | 62.8%               | 72.6% | ▲   | +9.8pp  | 63.1%       | 72.7% | ▲ | +9.6pp  |
| Other aspects   |                     |       |     |         |             |       |   |         |
| Disclosure compliance                                 | 47.1%               | 68.2% | ▲   | +21.1pp | 61.5%       | 76.4% | ▲ | +14.9pp |
| Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) preparation | n/a                 | n/a   | n/a | n/a     | 61.2%       | 63.5% | ▲ | +2.3pp  |

# Annex C

## Glossary

## **Area**

The Crown Prosecution Service is divided into 14 geographical Areas across England and Wales. Each Area is led by a Chief Crown Prosecutor, supported by an Area Business Manager.

## **Agent**

A lawyer from outside the CPS who is employed when required to prosecute cases at court on behalf of the CPS. They cannot make decisions about cases under the Code for Crown Prosecutors and must take instructions from the CPS.

## **Anaplan**

A cloud-based software platform that the CPS uses to help with financial and human resource planning and budgeting.

## **Area Business Manager**

The most senior non-legal manager at CPS Area level. They are responsible for the business aspects in an Area, such as managing the budget, and work with the Chief Crown Prosecutor to run the Area effectively and efficiently.

## **Area Champion**

CPS lawyer with specialist knowledge or expertise in a legal area, such as disclosure. They act as a source of information and support for colleagues and deliver training.

## **Associate Prosecutor (AP)**

A non-lawyer employed by the CPS who conducts uncontested (guilty plea) cases at the magistrates' courts on behalf of the prosecution. With additional training, APs can also conduct contested (not guilty) hearings.

## **Attorney General (AG)**

The main legal advisor to the Government. Also superintends the CPS.

## **Barrister/Counsel**

A lawyer with the necessary qualifications to appear in the Crown Court and other criminal courts, who is paid by the CPS to prosecute cases at court, or by the representative of someone accused of a crime to defend them.

### **Better Case Management (BCM)**

The national process for case management in the Crown Court to improve the way cases are processed through the system, for the benefit of all concerned in the criminal justice system.

### **Case Management System (CMS)**

An IT system for case management used by the CPS, which records most of the details of cases and provides management information and data. Through links with police systems, the case management system receives electronic case material that has replaced paper files.

### **Case Strategy Principles**

The CPS's ten case strategy principles that outline the responsibilities of a prosecutor in developing a case strategy to build strong cases, consistently applying the Code for Crown Prosecutors, and recording their decision-making.

### **Casework Quality Standards (CQS)**

Issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, these standards set out the benchmarks of quality that the CPS strives to deliver when prosecuting crime on behalf of the public. They include the CPS's responsibilities to victims, witnesses and communities, legal decision-making and the preparation and presentation of cases.

### **Charging Decision**

A decision by the CPS (or the police in certain circumstances) whether there is sufficient evidence, and whether it is in the public interest, to charge a suspect with a particular offence. The process is governed by the Director's Guidance on Charging, 6th edition, which came into effect in December 2020.

### **Chief Crown Prosecutor**

Each of the 14 CPS Areas has a CCP who runs the Area with the Area Business Manager. The CCP is the most senior legal manager at CPS Area level and is responsible for the legal aspects in the Area, such as quality of legal decision-making, case progression, and working with stakeholders, communities, and the public to deliver quality casework.

### **Code for Crown Prosecutors (the Code)**

A public document, issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, that sets out the framework for prosecution decision-making. Cases should proceed to charge only if there is sufficient evidence against a suspect to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and it is in the public interest to prosecute.

### **Contested Case**

Where a defendant pleads not guilty or declines to enter any plea at all, and the case proceeds to trial.

### **Cracked Trial**

A case which ends on the day of trial either because of a guilty plea by the defendant or because the prosecution decides to stop the case.

### **Criminal Procedure Rules (CPR)**

Rules which give criminal courts powers to manage criminal cases waiting to be heard effectively. The main aim of the CPR is to progress cases fairly and quickly.

### **Crown Advocate (CA)**

A lawyer employed by the CPS who is qualified to appear in the Crown Court.

### **Crown Court**

The court which deals with graver allegations of criminal offences, such as murder, rape, and serious assaults. Some allegations can be heard at either the Crown Court or the magistrates' courts (see Either-way offence).

### **Crown Prosecutor (CP)**

A lawyer employed by the CPS whose role includes reviewing and preparing cases for court and prosecuting cases at the magistrates' courts. CPs can progress to become senior crown prosecutors.

### **Custody Time Limit (CTL)**

The length of time that a defendant can be kept in custody awaiting trial. It can be extended by the court in certain circumstances.

### **Custody Time Limit Case Progression Log**

A document used by the CPS to track the progress of cases where a defendant is held in custody before trial. The log helps ensure that cases are progressed

efficiently and that defendants are not held in custody longer than legally permitted. The CPS is expected to maintain these logs and update them regularly with case details, actions taken, and review dates.

### **Custody Time Limit Failure**

When the court refuses to extend a CTL on the grounds that the prosecution has not acted with the necessary due diligence and expedition, or when no valid application is made to extend the CTL before its expiry date.

### **Defendant**

Someone accused of and charged with or convicted of a criminal offence.

### **Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor (DCCP)**

Second-in-command to the Chief Crown Prosecutor (see above) for legal aspects of managing a CPS Area.

### **Director's Guidance on Charging/DG6**

Guidance issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to charging decisions. It sets out guidance for the police and CPS about how to prepare a file so that it is ready for charging, who can make the charging decision, and what factors influence the decision. The latest edition (the sixth, also called "DG6") came into effect on 31 December 2020.

### **Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)**

Senior Civil Servant who is the head of the CPS.

### **Disclosure/unused material**

The police have a duty to record, retain and review material collected during an investigation which is relevant but is not being used as prosecution evidence, and to reveal it to the prosecutor. The prosecutor has a duty to provide the defence with copies of, or access to, all material that is capable of undermining the prosecution case and/or assisting the defendant's case. There are various regimes, and the type of case determines which one applies.

### **Discontinuance**

Where the prosecution stops the case because there is insufficient evidence to carry on, or it is not in the public interest to do so.

### **District Crown Prosecutor (DCP)**

A lawyer who leads and manages the day-to-day activities of prosecutors and advocates.

### **Domestic abuse**

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional”.

### **Effective Trial**

Where a case proceeds to a full trial on the date that it is meant to.

### **Either-way offence**

An offence that can be prosecuted in the magistrates’ courts or the Crown Court. The prosecution makes representations to the court on where the case should be heard. The magistrates or a District Judge (who sits alone in the magistrates’ court) can decide the allegation is serious enough that it must go to the Crown Court. If they decide it can be heard in the magistrates’ court, the defendant can choose to have the case sent to the Crown Court, where it will be heard by a jury. If the defendant agrees. The trial will be heard in the magistrates’ court.

### **Full Code test**

A method by which a prosecutor decides whether or not to bring a prosecution, based on the Code for Crown Prosecutors. A prosecution must only start or continue when the case has passed both stages of the full Code test: the evidential stage, followed by the public interest stage. The full Code test should be applied when all outstanding reasonable lines of inquiry have been pursued – or before the investigation being completed, if the prosecutor is satisfied that any further evidence or material is unlikely to affect the application of the full Code test, whether in favour of or against a prosecution.

### **Gatekeeper**

Someone in a police force who checks the documents prepared by the case officer and makes sure they are all there and meet the standard required for them to be submitted to the CPS. Not all police forces have gatekeepers.

### **Graduated Fee Scheme**

The scheme by which lawyers are paid for Crown Court cases. For Counsel appearing on behalf of defendants who qualify for assistance (or legal aid), the GFS is set and managed by the Legal Aid Agency. For Counsel appearing for the prosecution, the rates are determined by the CPS GFS, and the CPS pays Counsel.

### **Guilty Anticipated Plea (GAP)**

Where the defendant is expected to admit the offence at court, based on an assessment of the available evidence and any admissions made during interview.

### **Hate Crime**

Any offence where the defendant has been motivated by or demonstrated hostility towards the victim based on what the defendant thinks is their race, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation. Targeting older people is not (at the time of writing) recognised in law as a hate crime, but the CPS monitors crimes against older people in a similar way.

### **Hearing Record Sheet**

A CPS electronic record of what has happened in the case during the course of a court hearing, and any actions that need to be carried out afterwards.

### **His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)**

An organisation responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales.

### **Inclusion and Community Engagement Strategy**

Sets out the CPS's commitment to promoting fairness, equality, diversity and inclusion across the criminal justice system by engaging with community groups and those at risk of exclusion.

### **Indictable-only offence**

An offence triable only in the Crown Court.

### **Indictment**

This is the document that contains the formal charge or charges (known as count or counts), against a defendant facing a trial in the Crown Court.

### **Individual Learning Account (ILA)**

An allowance of £350 per person, per year, which CPS employees can access for professional development.

### **Individual quality assessment (IQA)**

An assessment of a piece of work done by a CPS member of staff, usually a prosecutor. The assessment will be carried out by a manager, and feedback on the assessment given to the member of staff. Areas also use IQAs to identify areas for improvement and training needs across a team or the whole Area.

### **Ineffective trial**

A case that does not proceed to trial on the date that it is meant to. This can be owing to a variety of possible reasons, including non-attendance of witnesses, non-compliance with a court order by the prosecution or defence, or lack of court time.

### **Local Case Management Panels (LCMPs)**

A forum within a CPS Area that has a key role in overseeing complex, high risk or sensitive cases. It ensures consistent decision making, supports prosecutors and manages referrals to specialist units.

### **Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs)**

Groups made up of representatives of the CPS, police, HMCTS and others, whose purpose is to work in partnership to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and to improve the experience of the victims and witnesses. LCJBs were originally set up in all 43 police force areas by central government and received central funding. They now operate as voluntary partnerships in most counties in England.

### **Local Scrutiny Involvement Panels (LSIPs)**

Groups made up of representatives of the local community and voluntary sector, especially those representing minority, marginalised or at-risk groups. They meet regularly with their local CPS Area to discuss issues of local concern and provide feedback on the service the Area provides, with a view to improving the delivery of justice at a local level and to better supporting victims and witnesses.

### **Manual of Guidance Form 3 (MG3)**

One of a number of template forms contained in a manual of guidance for the police and CPS on putting together prosecution files. The MG3 is where the police summarise the evidence and other information when asking the CPS to decide whether a suspect should be charged with a criminal offence, and the CPS then records its decision.

### **National File Standard (NFS)**

A national system that sets out how the police should prepare criminal case files. It allows investigators to build only as much of the file as is needed at any given stage

– whether that is for advice from the CPS, the first appearance at court or the trial. The latest version was published in December 2020.

### **No Further Action (NFA)**

When a criminal allegation has been reported to the police, the police may decide at any stage during an investigation that there is insufficient evidence to proceed, so they will take no further action. Alternatively, they may refer a case to the CPS who may advise the police that no further action should be taken, either because there is not enough evidence or because a prosecution is not in the public interest.

### **Not Guilty Anticipated Plea (NGAP)**

Where the defendant is expected to plead not guilty at court, based on an assessment of the available evidence and any defence(s) put forward during interview.

### **Offer no evidence (ONE)**

Where the prosecution stops the case, after the defendant has pleaded not guilty, by offering no evidence. A finding of not guilty is then recorded by the court.

### **Paralegal officer**

A CPS employee who provides support and casework assistance to CPS lawyers and attends court to take notes of hearings and assist advocates.

### **Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH)**

The first hearing at the Crown Court after the case has been sent from the magistrates' courts. The defendant is expected to enter a plea to the offence(s) with which they have been charged. If the defendant pleads guilty, the court may be able to sentence them immediately, but if not, or if the defendant has pleaded not guilty, the court will set the next hearing date and, for trials, will also set out a timetable for management of the case.

### **Pre-charge decision (PCD)**

The process by which the police and CPS decide whether there is sufficient evidence for a suspect to be prosecuted. The process is governed by the Director's Guidance on Charging.

### **Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)**

Allegations of rape and other serious sexual offences perpetrated against men, women or children. In the CPS, the prosecution of RASSO cases is undertaken separately from other cases, in RASSO units or teams.

## **Restraining Order**

Restraining orders may be made by the court on conviction or acquittal of a defendant for any criminal offence. They are intended to be preventative and protective. The guiding principle is that there must be a need for the order to protect a person or persons from conduct amounting to harassment or fear of violence.

## **Review**

The process whereby a CPS prosecutor determines that a case received from the police satisfies, or continues to satisfy, the legal test for prosecution in the Code for Crown Prosecutors. This is one of the most important functions of the CPS.

## **Senior Crown Prosecutor (SCP)**

A lawyer employed by the CPS with the necessary skills and experience to progress to a more senior legal role, which includes the functions of a crown prosecutor but also includes advising the police on charge. It is not a role that includes managing staff.

## **Senior District Crown Prosecutor (SDCP)**

A lawyer employed by the CPS who holds a senior legal role with responsibility for managing staff. A Senior District Crown Prosecutor will often have responsibility for a casework unit.

## **Service level agreement (SLA)**

A formal, written document outlining the level of service a provider will provide.

## **Speaking to witnesses at court (STWAC)**

An initiative stating that prosecutors should speak to witnesses at or before court to make sure they are properly assisted and know what to expect before they give their evidence.

## **Special measures**

The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 provides for a range of special measures to enable vulnerable or intimidated witnesses in a criminal trial to give their most accurate and complete account of what happened. Measures include giving evidence via a live TV link to the court, giving evidence from behind screens in the courtroom and using intermediaries. A special measures application is made to the court within set time limits and can be made by the prosecution or defence.

### **Standard operating practice (SOP)**

The CPS has a range of standard operating practices which set out how to complete a particular task or action and cover legal and business aspects of the running of the CPS. They are standard across the organisation and seek to apply consistency to business practices and key steps needed in all prosecutions.

### **Suspect**

Someone accused of or believed to have committed a criminal offence but not charged or convicted of an offence.

### **Triage**

In the context of this report, triage is a check carried out by a member of CPS staff, either an administrator or legal manager, to make sure that what the police have sent to the CPS includes the right documents and other items. If an administrator triage, then the check is normally for the presence of the required material, not the quality of their contents. If a triage by a legal manager, this will often check both the presence of required material and the quality of its contents.

### **Unsuccessful outcome**

A prosecution which does not result in a conviction is recorded in CPS data as an unsuccessful outcome. If the outcome is unsuccessful because the prosecution has been dropped (discontinued, withdrawn or no evidence offered) or the court has ordered that it cannot proceed, it is also known as an adverse outcome. Acquittals are not adverse outcomes.

### **Unused material**

Material collected by the police during an investigation, but which is not being used as evidence in any prosecution. The prosecutor must consider whether to disclose it to the defendant. See also disclosure.

### **Victims' Code**

Sets out a victim's rights and the minimum standards of service that organisations must provide to victims of crime. Its aim is to improve victims' experience of the criminal justice system by providing them with the support and information they need. It was published in October 2013 and last updated on 29 January 2025.

### **Victim Communication Letter (VCL)**

A victim in a case should be informed by the CPS of any decision not to prosecute, to stop a case or substantially alter a charge. In the main, victims are informed by letter, and vulnerable or intimidated victims must be notified of a decision within one working day.

### **Victim Liaison Unit (VLU)**

The team of CPS staff in an Area responsible for communicating with victims under the Victim Communication and Liaison scheme and the Victims' Right to Review, and for responding to complaints and overseeing the service to bereaved families.

### **Victim Personal Statement (VPS)**

When a victim explains to the court how a crime has affected them. If a defendant is found guilty, the court will take the VPS into account, along with all the other evidence, when deciding on an appropriate sentence.

### **Victims' Right to Review scheme (VRR)**

This scheme provides victims of crime with a specifically designed process to exercise their right to review certain CPS decisions not to start a prosecution, or to stop a prosecution. If a new decision is required, it may be appropriate to institute or reinstitute criminal proceedings. The right to request a review of a decision not to prosecute under the VRR scheme applies to decisions that have the effect of being final made by any crown prosecutor, regardless of their grade or position in the organisation. It is important to note that the "right" referred to in the context of the VRR scheme is the right to request a review of a final decision. It is not a guarantee that proceedings will be instituted or reinstituted.

### **Vulnerable and/or intimidated witnesses**

Those witnesses who require particular help to give evidence in court, such as children, victims of sexual offences and the most serious crimes, persistently targeted victims, and those with communication difficulties.

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