



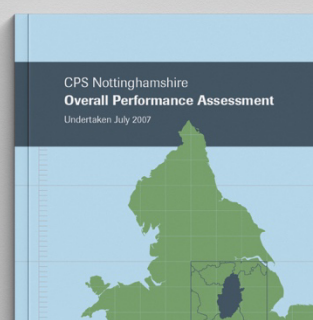
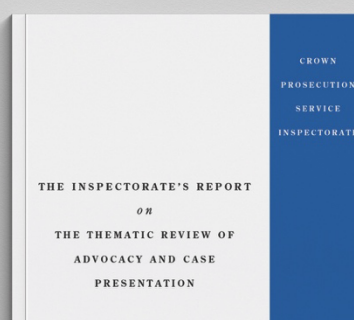
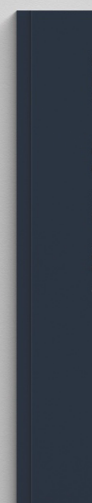
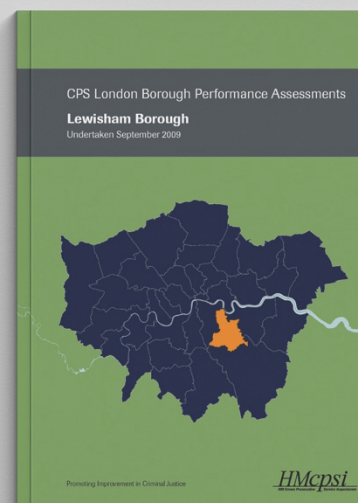
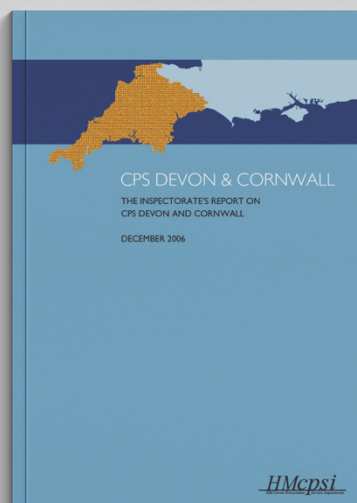
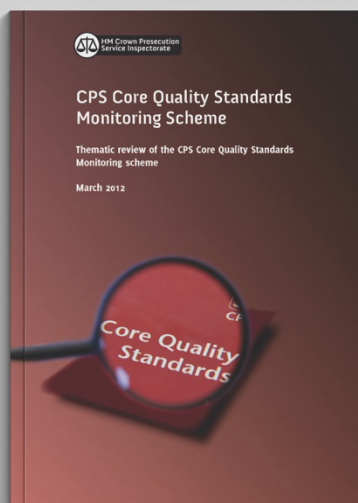
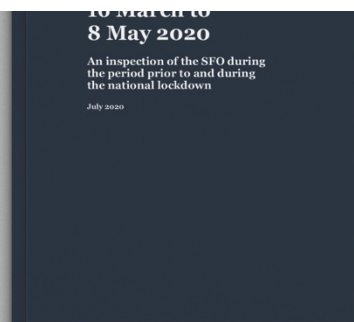
HMCPSSI

HM Crown Prosecution
Service Inspectorate

Annual report 2024–25

HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service

HC 1266



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His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

Annual report 2024-25

From HM Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution
Service to the Attorney General

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 2(2)
of the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
Act 2000 (Chapter 10)

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HM Chief Inspector's letter to the Attorney General

Dear Attorney General,

I am exceptionally pleased to be able to present this Annual Report. It is based on the inspections we carried out between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

I am extremely honoured and proud to have been appointed as permanent Chief Inspector in February 2025, having been interim Chief Inspector since February 2024. For the past 20+ years, I have worked within both the Inspectorate and the criminal justice system and have seen first-hand the work and dedication of public servants who strive to make a real difference. Having the opportunity to lead and shape the Inspectorate and continue the work of the past 25 years is a privilege and I will endeavour to ensure that HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) continues to make a real difference.

HMCPSI has, over the years in our independent external inspection, made recommendations that both the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have acted upon and which have significantly improved both process and quality. The service to the public and to victims are also much improved as a result of the work we carry out. All who work for HMCPSI have a desire to drive change and make things better; as an organisation we work together to deliver inspections that make a real difference. As Chief Inspector, I am incredibly grateful to the Inspectorate staff who, without fail, deliver evidence-based, high-quality inspections that help those whom we inspect improve.

Before I set out findings from our inspections in the past year, I would like to take the opportunity to outline some of the challenges that are facing the criminal justice system and how my vision for the next five years for HMCPSI may play some part in providing solutions.

In the Annual Report last year, I highlighted a concern that victims were being let down given the growing backlog of cases in the Crown Court. I said that I feared that without radical action, the backlog would soon reach 100,000 cases and that justice delayed was justice denied. There was evidence that the number of victims dropping out of cases was increasing, as they wanted to move on with their lives and seek some form of closure. The government inherited a system that was overstretched; tinkering at the edges of what was possible within the constraints and confines of the current systems and resources would not provide an effective solution to the challenges. I was pleased to see Sir Brian Leveson asked to look towards radical solutions to address the crisis that we see in the system. Sir Brian published his report on 9 July which included 45 recommendations¹. If recommendations are implemented there may be some reduction in backlogs and delays. At the time of the CJS being in the state of a ‘national emergency’ the status quo, and long-standing rights being espoused by some legal professionals, will have to be set aside. I was pleased to see Sir Brian had been radical in his thinking, but I fear that most of the changes Sir Brian suggests will take time to implement and as such this will not address the immediate issue as backlogs continue to increase as more cases are received than finalised. Victims need action now if the system is to deliver justice.

It is now not uncommon to see Crown Court trials being listed up to four years in the future. HMCPSP must play its part in working to help find solutions. As part of my five-year strategy, we will focus efforts on identifying what works well and setting out good practice. Inspection takes us to all CPS Areas, and even though there are national operating procedures, we regularly see different ways of working. We have a unique position in being able to look across the whole of the network and also have inspectors who have the knowledge and skills to assess what works well. I have discussed with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) how our identification of good practice can be used to improve the effectiveness of what the CPS delivers.

If inspection is to make a difference, we must consider how the experience of those who come into contact with the criminal justice system influences the services they

¹ [Independent Review of the Criminal Courts: Part 1 - GOV.UK](#)

receive. Historically, HMCPSI has infrequently sought the views of those who come into contact with the system. A core element of what HMCPSI does is to provide evidence-based assessment to allow others, including yourself, to hold those we inspect to account. Listening to those who experience the services provided by those we inspect must form a part of how we develop inspection. This is why I intend to engage with victims and victims' groups as we continue to develop our inspections. By seeking out the views of those on the receiving end of the service, we will be able to test not only the service delivered but also help clarify the obligations of the CPS and SFO and increase public awareness of their role within the criminal justice system.

Turning to the past year, we published six reports related to the CPS and one report related to the SFO.

Our 2024-25 programme of inspection covered a wide variety of subjects. As well as statutory inspection of the CPS and SFO, I also published an inspection of the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) conducted using my assistance powers. Having discussed the benefit of inspection with the Director of SPA (DSPA), I was invited to carry out an inspection to provide assurance to and help identify if SPA could improve its service. The DSPA recognised that our extensive experience of inspecting the quality of legal decision-making in the CPS might help identify aspects that could be improved and shared. I cover in more detail findings from the inspection, but it was pleasing to report that the level of legal decision-making in the SPA was of high-quality. I was also able to set out a number of recommendations based on what we saw worked well in the CPS; sharing of best practice across other prosecuting authorities is something that I aim to do more of over the course of my five-year term.

Last year in my letter, I set out that the SFO disclosure inspection highlighted a concern that the SFO struggled to compete in the open market to secure enough experienced staff to deal with disclosure effectively. In the inspection, we took the unusual step of making a recommendation to government to develop a long-term funding strategy to support the SFO to discharge its disclosure obligation, allowing it to compete in the open market to secure enough experience to deal with its cases. I was pleased to see that as part of the 2024 one-year settlement you secured an uplift in funding for the SFO, which addresses the recommendation I made in the SFO disclosure inspection.

We will follow-up our disclosure inspection recommendations in due course and I will be able to report progress, including an assessment of progress as to whether the increase in funding has helped resolve the challenges of competing in the open market.

Once again this year, our inspections of the CPS highlighted the extent of geographical variation we find when assessing the quality of legal decision-making. Some variation is inevitable given the experience and staffing mix in the geographic Areas of the CPS. However, the degree and extent of variation we report in the Area Inspection report I published in January is outside of what would be expected. I know this is something in which you are very interested and about which you have challenged the DPP. As a result of our findings, I have commissioned inspections of two CPS Areas to identify what might lie behind these differences. I will report our findings from these inspections in the coming year and look forward to sharing with you and others some ideas of what could be done to address this concerning level of local variation.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to colleagues who left HMCPSI during the year. I am immensely grateful to Amanda Gough, who retired after 24 years' service with HMCPSI, for her dedication and service. We also said goodbye to Kris Cottle from our business support team, who left to pursue a career elsewhere, and to James Hart, who took up a role with another inspectorate. Three inspectors – Sarah Lloyd, Marie Olo and Emma Jones – also returned to their home departments at the expiry of their loans, and I wish each of them every success in the future.

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

Anthony Rogers

HM Chief Inspector

Service Prosecuting Authority inspection



An inspection by invitation of the quality of casework in the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) – published 28 November 2024

Background

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) do not have statutory authority to inspect the Service Prosecution Authority (SPA). However, the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate Act 2000 permits HM Chief Inspector to assist other public authorities for the purpose of the exercise by that authority of its functions. HMCPSI was invited by the Director of Service Prosecutions (DSP) to carry out an inspection of the quality of the SPA's casework. The SPA is responsible for the review and prosecution of all offences which come before the Service Courts in respect of the Army, the Navy and the Royal Air Force (RAF).

Inspection

The inspection assessed whether the SPA provides an effective and efficient service delivering high-quality casework.

There were six inspection criteria:

- are jurisdictional issues properly addressed in SPA?
- does the SPA make effective casework decisions?
- does the SPA progress cases effectively and efficiently?
- is the SPA effective in dealing with victim and witness issues?
- is the training delivered to prosecutors effective?
- is there effective assurance of casework quality?

Inspectors examined 40 recently finalised cases which reflected the variety of cases prosecuted by the SPA, including sexual offences, offences against the person and military offences. Inspectors also examined 30 cases where the decision had been to

take no further action pre-charge, 10 cases referred to the Commanding Officer by the SPA² and 10 cases that had been subject to a Victim Right of Review (VRR) to assess the decision-making and quality of the letters to victims.

Interviews and focus groups were held with SPA staff and inspectors attended Court Martial to observe courts.

Findings

Our findings were very positive, with evidence of good quality legal decision-making and effective case progression.

The SPA analysed cases well, had structured reviews and looked to strengthen cases where appropriate. We found there was a clear understanding of jurisdictional issues, as to whether cases should remain in the military system or be heard in the civilian system. Victims' views were given significant weight when decisions were made about where cases were tried. The SPA provides a good service to victims and witnesses.

In addition, we found that the SPA has a quality assurance system in place that generally identifies aspects of casework that are working well and those which require improvement. The SPA invests significantly in training, with a comprehensive and logical training plan regularly kept up-to-date. The training is also responsive to more ad hoc training needs that are identified through the internal assurance as referred to above. The high-quality training is vital to the SPA, as owing to the nature of military assignments it must deal with a high turnover of staff and needs to deploy prosecutors as soon as possible after they are assigned to them.

We found that the SPA had several areas where they were particularly strong. The SPA:

- identified where bad character could be used at an early stage and drafts good quality applications to strengthen cases
- served initial disclosure in a timely way

² The Commanding Officer has responsibility for the discipline of the individuals under their command and can deal with a matter summarily by hearing the evidence in the case and decide on guilt or innocence and, when appropriate, pass sentence.

- routinely carried out Code compliant reviews where a significant event occurs and reflected this in the case analysis and strategy
- dealt with correspondence in an effective and timely manner
- had adopted an Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) process that was highly effective in providing both individual feedback and addressing broader issues
- had a collaborative culture led by senior leaders and prosecutors that supported prosecutors in developing their legal casework capability.
- provided its staff with high-quality training which is responsive to the needs of an organisation with a high turnover of staff.

We also found that there were some aspects where the SPA could improve. These included a disparity in the information provided within formal letters referring cases back to the Commanding Officer, as well as an inconsistent approach to some aspects of the handling of unused material. In addition, whilst the timeliness of charging decisions was dealt with relatively expeditiously in most cases, there were some isolated cases of delay in serious sexual cases. One area requiring real improvement for the SPA is the full and accurate recording of all material, decisions and communications on a case. We found considerable issues with the audit trail in a significant number of the cases we examined.

We made seven recommendations to address these, as set out below.

Conclusions

The SPA adds real value to cases referred to them by the Service Police, by adopting a thinking approach from the outset. Decisions were being made in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors, defendants were facing the correct charges and jurisdictional issues were properly identified and addressed, ensuring cases were being heard and tried in the correct venues. It was clear that the work and time that the DSP and his team have invested into establishing a more structured prosecution approach has been of real benefit.

Overall, the SPA provided a good service to victims and witnesses, including victims of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences. Victims' views are considered and given weight in decisions about jurisdiction. Applications under the VRR scheme were generally dealt with appropriately and there was transparency about decision-making and acknowledgement when mistakes were made.

We examined rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) cases as part of this inspection and found that, in general, the SPA handles these cases well. The SPA has introduced good practice developed by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in the handling of these cases by the appointment of a RASSO and domestic abuse lead. Our findings did not suggest that moving serious sexual offences to the civilian system would provide victims of these offences with a better service or support from prosecutors, and would, at this current time of substantial backlogs in the civilian system, be potentially detrimental to victims of the most serious offences.

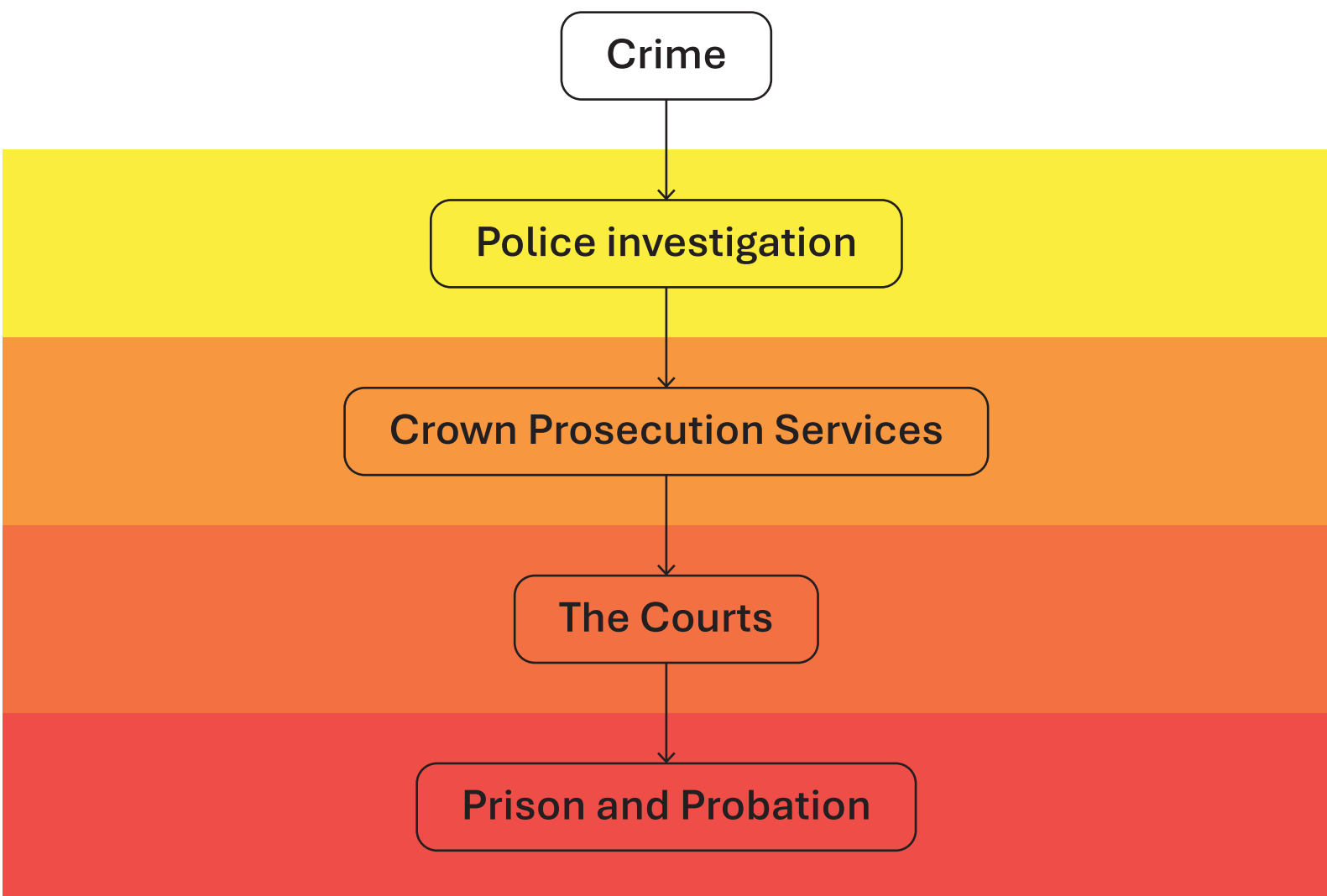
The strong collaborative culture in the SPA, led by the senior leaders and prosecutors, encouraged reflection, development and improvement, and this culture was reflected in the quality of the casework. Leadership within the SPA was strong and the openness, by inviting inspection to identify improvement, indicates how seriously committed the DSP and his senior team were to delivering high-quality legal casework

Recommendations

By 31 March 2025 the SPA should:

1. Amend the template Commanding Officer referral letter to align with the guidance set out in the Manual for Service Prosecutors.
2. Embed a process for ensuring that post-charge decisions are recorded in the case analysis. By the same date, to ensure that post-charge decisions are subject to a second lawyer check, which should also be recorded in the case analysis so there is a full record of decision-making and assurance.
3. Mandate the completion of disclosure management documents (DMDs) in all Court Martial casework for schedule 2 offences or cases investigated by the defence serious crime unit.

4. Provide training to all prosecutors and ensure that all prosecutors joining are effectively trained on the following aspects of disclosure:
 - a. the approach to dealing with defence statements
 - b. the importance of scheduling all unused material on the relevant schedules
 - c. the drafting of meaningful DMDs
 - d. the consideration and appropriate endorsement of the schedule 6C relating to non-sensitive unused material, and schedule 6D relating to sensitive unused material.
5. Ensure that prosecutors record in their case analysis their considered view on the applicability of special measures and any other ancillary matters intended to support victims and witnesses.
6. Mandate the sending of a letter to the complainant(s) in all cases where a charge has either been dropped or substantially altered providing an explanation for the decision.
7. Ensure that all casework decisions, case materials and the handling, receipt and service of those materials are consistently and fully recorded in the appropriate place on the SPA's case management system.



Follow-up inspections 2024

Follow-up inspections were added to the HMCPSI inspection strategy in 2024. The recommendations from these follow-up inspections assess progress, whether they have been implemented, and whether improvement has resulted. This change in inspection strategy has been accompanied with a change in how recommendations are written. Recommendations should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound. There were two follow-up inspections published in 2024.

A list of current open recommendations for both the Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office (SFO) is in Annex A.

A follow-up inspection of the recommendations made in the 2023 report: Inspection of the Crown Prosecution Service policy and guidance for the handling of cases involving the National Referral Mechanism - published 13 February 2025

Background

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) published an inspection report in July 2023 into the effectiveness of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) policy and guidance for the handling of cases involving the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The NRM is a framework for the identification and assessment of potential victims of modern slavery, who are often targeted by urban gangs to sell drugs in more rural areas. These are often referred to as 'County lines' operations.

The inspection framework assessed the effectiveness and accessibility of the CPS policy, as well as determining whether prosecutors had a clear understanding of the policy and how to apply it.

The July 2023 inspection found that there was a genuine commitment at all levels to deal with such cases carefully and increase prosecutors' awareness and understanding, with a proactive approach taken and policies updated and developed. The CPS often took the lead across agencies across the criminal justice system to develop the law in this area.

The July 2023 report made four recommendations, listed below, to address the issues we found.

Follow-up inspection

The CPS confirmed that they had acted on the recommendations we made and that accordingly they had been closed as completed.

We decided it was appropriate to conduct a short follow-up inspection to ascertain how successfully the recommendations made in 2023 had been implemented and to assess whether action taken resulted in improvement.

We examined progress and impact against each of the four recommendations. For each recommendation, we made a judgement whether in our view the recommendation had been achieved or not achieved. We visited an Area from the original inspection and another Area not included in the 2023 inspection. This allowed us to assess whether change had been made in Areas other than those that were subject to the original inspection.

Findings

Of the four recommendations made in 2023, we assessed three as achieved and one as not achieved.

1. By 30 September 2023, the CPS should remove any outdated and inaccurate content from the internal CPS hub. **ACHIEVED**
2. By 31 October 2023, the CPS should include a link to the guidance on the section 45 defence and the non-punishment principles in the 'Children as suspects and defendants' guidance, thereby ensuring that operational support is available across all casework type. **ACHIEVED**
3. By 31 December 2023, the CPS should revise, restructure and retitle the current guidance to make it more accessible to volume crime units. **ACHIEVED**
4. By 31 December 2023, the CPS should develop a system of assurance that can prove that CPS Areas are taking a consistent approach in the prosecution of cases involving the section 45 defence³ and the application of the non-punishment principles. **NOT ACHIEVED**

³ Section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 provides suspects who are determined to be victims of modern slavery with a statutory defence. If there is clear evidence of such a defence, then the case should not be charged or should be discontinued on evidential grounds.

Conclusions

We found that:

- the CPS had clearly spent a significant amount of time on drafting and updating the key guidance to assist frontline prosecutors. The CPS's current guidance and all linked guidance was up-to-date and included appropriate content
- the CPS had already included a clear link to the guidance on the section 45 defence and the non-punishment principles in the 'Children as suspects and defendants' guidance, ensuring that operational support was easily accessible and available across all casework types
- the CPS had revised, restructured and retitled the current guidance to make it more accessible to volume crime units. Prosecutors we spoke to confirmed that the guidance was more accessible and easier to find and was an improvement on previous versions
- following analysis of data from dip samples of 53 national cases carried out by the CPS's Modern Slavery Network, we found that the CPS had developed a system of assurance, but the initial findings from that assurance demonstrated that consistency remained an issue. Work remains ongoing at both national and local level to achieve greater consistency. Therefore, recommendation four was assessed as not achieved.

Recommendations

To reflect our findings, given our assessment that recommendation four from the 2023 inspection report is not yet achieved, we plan to conduct a further targeted follow-up inspection to reassess progress specifically relating to recommendation four in early 2026.

A follow-up inspection of the recommendations made in the 2023 report: The service from the CPS to victims of domestic abuse – published 6 March 2025

Background

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) published an inspection report in March 2023 into the service from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to victims of domestic abuse. The inspection focused on the magistrates' court casework, which accounts for the majority of domestic abuse casework. It assessed how effective and efficient the CPS was in building strong cases that support and protect victims of domestic abuse.

The 2023 inspection found that the CPS recognised domestic abuse as a priority area of work and that staff were passionate and committed to improving performance, with a strong desire to achieve the best possible outcome for victims. Whilst we found some good quality casework and good service provided to victims, there were also aspects of CPS performance that required improvement. We made six recommendations, listed below, to address the issues we found.

Follow-up inspection

Given the prevalence of domestic abuse, we decided that it was appropriate at this time to conduct a follow-up inspection to ascertain to what extent and how successfully the recommendations made in 2023 had been implemented by the CPS.

At the time of writing of our follow-up report, the CPS continued to act on recommendations one, three, four and five, having closed recommendations two and six.

We examined progress against each of the six recommendation and made a judgement as to whether it had been achieved or not achieved using evidence gathered in the inspection from file examination, documents, interviews and focus groups. We assessed 90 cases, including 18 where a conviction had been secured following a trial

or a Newton hearing and adjourned for sentence. We conducted focus groups and interviews and considered CPS guidance.

Findings

The six previous recommendations are listed below together with the judgement of the follow-up inspection, these being that the CPS:

1. Introduce a system for domestic abuse cases that identify any summary time limit applicable on receipt from the police at pre-charge and ensures that the case is progressed effectively and efficiently within that summary time limit by March 2024. **ACHIEVED**
2. Implement a process where, on a domestic abuse case where the summary time limit is due to expire within eight weeks, all communications with the police including any pre-charge advice or decisions are clearly marked with the relevant summary time limit by July 2023. **NOT ACHIEVED**
3. By December 2023, to have communicated the need for prosecutors to review the risk assessment in all domestic abuse cases before completing the pre-charge decision and that where the risk assessment has been omitted in the file provided, or is referenced simply by level, the full risk assessment is requested. To be embedded by March 2024. **ACHIEVED.**
4. Embed a process by December 2023, to ensure that in all magistrates' courts domestic abuse cases involving a Newton hearing or trial, all up-to-date and relevant information about victims, including information relevant to ancillary orders, is requested in a timely manner for the sentence hearing. **NOT ACHIEVED – NEW RECOMMENDATION MADE**
5. Develop a consistent approach to trauma training across violence against women and girls (VAWG) casework that reflects engagement with specialist VAWG organisations, and which focuses on how understanding trauma can improve casework and the service to victims of domestic abuse by December 2023. **NOT ACHIEVED – NEW RECOMMENDATION MADE**

6. Ensure that a minimum of one Individual Quality Assessment (IQA) per year is conducted on a domestic abuse case for prosecutors dealing with magistrates' courts domestic abuse cases by July 2023. **ACHIEVED**

Conclusions

We found that the CPS had produced clear guidance as to how cases subject to a summary time limit (STL) are to be identified at the pre-charge stage, to ensure that these cases are progressed within the required timescales. However, we found that whilst operational delivery staff were mostly identifying cases subject to an STL on the case management system, the process of communicating the STL to the police, when it was due to expire within eight weeks, was not routinely being followed.

We found that the CPS had reached agreement with the police that the full risk assessments would be provided at police file submission and there was clear communication to CPS Areas that this was to be mandatory from 1 September 2024, with guidance on steps to be taken if the police did not submit the document. The police had significantly improved their compliance with this requirement since the 2023 inspection and where the risk assessment was not provided, the CPS was mostly following the guidance and rejecting the file at triage stage for the police to resubmit with the correct document.

We found that prosecutors conducting trials were mostly asking victims if they wished to apply for a restraining order following the defendant being convicted or, if they had previously indicated that they did want the prosecution to seek such an order, checking that the originally drafted terms were still applicable. However, we found that following conviction, victims were not usually asked if they wished to provide a victim personal statement if they had not done so previously, or if they had, if its contents needed updating.

We found that the CPS had developed trauma-informed training in relation to domestic abuse casework. However, this development has taken longer than initially planned and is due to begin delivery to prosecutors in March 2025.

We found that the CPS has published clear guidance outlining that a minimum of one IQA for each prosecutor undertaking domestic abuse work should be a domestic abuse case. From the data available, we cannot confirm whether the CPS is meeting this target, but evidence gathered in focus groups and interviews confirmed that prosecutors and legal managers are aware of the requirement, indicating compliance with the guidance.

Recommendations

To reflect our findings, we made a new recommendation specifically focused on the CPS seeking relevant information from victims by way of an up-to-date victim personal statement (VPS). This supersedes recommendation four. We also made a new recommendation specifically focused on the delivery of the training that has been developed.

New Recommendation 1

By December 2025, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to ensure that in all magistrates' courts domestic abuse cases involving a Newton hearing or conviction after trial, an updated victim personal statement is requested in a timely manner for the sentence hearing.

New Recommendation 2

By December 2025, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to have delivered the trauma-informed training to all prosecutors dealing with domestic abuse casework.

Given our findings in respect of recommendations two, four and five, and the making of two new recommendations to supersede recommendations four and five, we will carry out further follow-up activity in Spring 2026.

Inspections 2024



An inspection of the handling and management of disclosure in the Serious Fraud Office – published 30 April 2024

Background

The handling of disclosure is core to the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and is essential for maintaining public trust. Poor handling of disclosure undermines the principles of a fair trial. Advances in modern technology have substantially increased digital materials and created significant challenges for investigators, prosecutors and defence practitioners alike, especially in complex cases and fraud investigations. The Serious Fraud Office (SFO), which tackles top-level serious or complex fraud, bribery and corruption, estimate that managing and handling disclosure alone amounts to 25% of its operational budget and takes up 40% of its staff capacity. A number of recent adverse case results have shone a spotlight to the SFO's handling of disclosure.

Inspection

In this inspection, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) assessed if the SFO had the right skills and infrastructure to effectively discharge its disclosure obligations. Inspectors looked at the SFO's handling in two high-profile cases: the successful Balli Group Companies case and the unsuccessful G4S case.

Findings

The majority of SFO cases are successful. However, the two cases examined in the inspection highlighted that there were differing ways in which disclosure was handled. Disclosure decision-making, scheduling of unused material and the engagement with defence saw a contrast in approach. Disclosure caused pressure points and highlighted the need to have an independent check on disclosure before trial. Continuity and retention of case staff, disclosure planning strategy, record-keeping and case management, structural weaknesses, assurance processes, and internal cultural

challenges are some of the challenges experienced by the SFO. All of these can have a serious impact on final outcomes and prosecution success.

The SFO had identified some of the challenges and started to act. For example, there have been efforts to incentivise staff to take on the role of disclosure officer, changes have been introduced to the Operational Handbook, assurance processes are more robust and the SFO has introduced a new document review platform with greater functionality.

The inspection makes six recommendations aimed to reinforce the SFO's disclosure practices and provide greater reassurance to the public that justice is being delivered fairly in the top tier of cases involving fraud, bribery and corruption. The report also recommended that the SFO must be supported by more government funding, because they struggle to compete in the open market to deal with disclosure effectively. We suggest that the SFO consider structural changes to strengthen their disclosure handling.

Recommendations

1. By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to update the Operational Handbook with guidance in relation to the handling of a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) and its related material on prosecutions of individuals in which a DPA has been entered into with the corporate entity.
2. By October 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to revisit the guidance provided in the Disclosure Management Document (DMD) template to ensure that it guides the case teams to fully explain the disclosure process employed and safeguard their position should their disclosure handling be challenged.
3. By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should introduce a disclosure review process, equivalent to a peer review, to be conducted on every case post-charge by an individual who is independent of the case team.
4. By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should consider ways in which staff may be incentivised to take on the roles of disclosure officer and

deputy disclosure officer, to increase the pool of able and experienced candidates and improve staff retention in those roles.

5. By October 2024, the government, through its economic and finance ministry, must develop a long-term funding strategy to support the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to discharge its disclosure obligation, to allow it to compete in the open market to secure enough experience to deal with its cases.
6. By October 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should review the current model for the management of Legal Professional Privilege (LPP) material. Consideration should be given to whether, due to the risks associated with the delivery of the core business by the eDiscovery team, a different system for the management and control of LPP material should be implemented. The SFO should engage with others who have similar requirements to consider how it might manage and control LPP material.

An inspection of how the Crown Prosecution Service uses Individual Quality Assessments to monitor and improve casework quality – published 27 February 2025

Background

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has used Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) to assess the quality of casework for the past ten years. It is the primary tool for managers to assess casework and determine to what extent it is undertaken in accordance with the CPS's standards and values. The aim is to use the findings to support and develop prosecutors to deliver high-quality casework, identifying themes so that action can be taken to bring about improvement.

Legal managers are required to analyse live cases that allow meaningful assessment. The number of assessments carried out per year and per member of the team varies according to the type of unit. The assessment is measured in accordance with national guidance. There is a requirement to assess the prosecutor's work on domestic abuse and rape cases at least once a year and 10% of those assessments should be quality assured by senior managers.

Inspection

Inspectors examined casework IQAs for each of the 14 geographical CPS Areas in volume Magistrates' and Crown Court cases. Each IQA examined was also one that had been quality assured by a senior legal manager, to assess the impact of the assurance process. Four CPS Areas were visited and focus groups and interviews held with prosecutors, legal managers and senior legal managers. We also spoke to relevant staff at CPS headquarters, including the Director of Operational Change and Delivery, the Deputy Director of Operational Performance, and staff in the Legal Assurance team.

Findings

We found that whilst the IQA process can be effective in supporting the aims of continuous improvement and delivering high-quality casework, the evidence from our inspection showed that this was often not the case. There was a lack of compliance with the guidance and significant inconsistencies in the marking of assessments and whether and how feedback was given, as well as a lack of rigour in how assurance was carried out.

Themes identified in the inspection included:

- cases being selected for IQA when they were not live or had not been sufficiently progressed
- cases where the individual prosecutor being assessed had carried out little casework on the file, which rendered the assessment meaningless
- IQA guidance not being applied consistently. For example, managers within the same Area marking differently for the same error or omission
- whilst the IQA guidance is generally helpful, it could be improved, particularly in relation to the disclosure questions and the differentiation between pre-charge and post-charge questions
- legal managers not being robust in their assessments, meaning that key issues were often left unchallenged
- meaningful conversations between legal managers and prosecutors routinely not taking place, following the undertaking of an IQA
- the 10% senior manager dip-check assurance process added little value in most of the cases we examined. Quality assurers commented on the work of the prosecutor rather than the quality of the legal manager's assessment; they often agreed with the legal manager's assessment when it was incorrect or missed key issues and they failed to identify where legal managers had not held conversations with prosecutors.

Our findings were that both legal managers and prosecutors considered IQAs to be a useful tool to identify casework issues. We found that, ideally, they would like to conduct more

assessments, but that they did not have the time due to competing priorities and commitments. Most legal managers interviewed cited capacity as an impediment to completing effective IQAs.

If managers invested time in the short-term to identify issues and provide detailed feedback to prosecutors both consistently and more often, this may lead to an improvement in casework quality and reduce work for managers in the long-term.

Conclusions

We found that, when done well, IQAs can lead to improvement on an individual basis. We saw examples of the IQA guidance being properly and robustly applied with meaningful conversations taking place which then led to improvement. Where conversations were taking place, they were well-received by the prosecutors to whom we spoke. However, post-IQA conversations were not taking place in over half of the IQAs we examined.

The overarching aim of an IQA is to assess the quality of the CPS's casework and to assist in making improvements at prosecutor, team, Area and national level. We could not establish a link between IQAs and such improvements on a systemic level. The guidance stresses the importance of IQAs to identify learning and actions for the CPS Area as a whole and not solely individual prosecutors.

At present, the need to carry out a certain number of assessments per quarter and to record this on the IQA application appears to drive the process and, at times, has become a 'tick-box' exercise.

Legal managers do not use a collaborative or coaching approach towards prosecutors when selecting cases for IQA; they complete them and have resulting conversations with prosecutors about casework quality.

We concluded that the findings of this inspection highlight how the CPS needs to reconsider its approach to monitoring and measuring casework quality. In our view, the evidence from our inspections suggests that the CPS needs to fundamentally change the way it assesses and improves casework quality. At the frontline this should include:

- putting case conversations at the heart of any casework assessment, to facilitate a coaching approach to supervision that allows for learning and development of both prosecutors and legal managers
- focusing assessments on cases, with feedback going to prosecutors who have contributed to the overall legal decision-making and management of the case, so more value is added through each case assessed
- ensuring that there are intuitive digital tools to support any process, but that these do not drive the process
- completing assurance that adds value and supports development of prosecutors and legal managers
- ensuring that case strategy principles form a key component in line with CPS priorities.

A crucial aspect of any new approach will be strong leadership and management, ensuring accountability at the first line assurance level as a means to drive the initiative forward.

Recommendations

We made one recommendation:

1. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should use the findings from this inspection of Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) to consider, develop and implement a new approach to how it assesses casework quality. A crucial aspect of any new approach will be strong leadership and management, ensuring accountability at the first line assurance level to drive the initiative forward. By 31 July 2025 to have designed and planned a new approach and by 31 March 2026 to have implemented the new approach to first line assurance of its casework quality.

Given the importance of high-quality casework, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) will carry out a follow-up inspection early in its 2026-2027 business plan cycle.

An examination of cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service included in the review of the cases that featured in the London Stalking Review 2024 – published 19 December 2024

Background

Stalking is an offence that has a significant, deep and long-lasting impact on victims. It can lead to violence or to victims fearing violence, causing them to feel unsafe in their own home and in public. It is crucial to public confidence that cases are considered carefully and thoroughly to ensure that stalking offences are charged where the evidence supports this.

In 2022, the London Victims' Commissioner (LVC) called for the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to conduct research into the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) response to stalking victims in London. MOPAC conducted a review of a sample of cases involving stalking offences. This was published in 2024 as *'The London Stalking Review 2024 – MOPAC Research'*,⁴ the findings of which were used by the LVC in *'The London Stalking Review 2024 – Reflections and Recommendations'*⁵.

To complement those reports HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) conducted a review of those cases that had been referred to the CPS by the MPS to assess the quality of CPS decisions.

Forty-one cases within the MOPAC review were submitted by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision⁶. In accordance with the CPS's data deletion policy, many of the cases had been removed from the CPS case management system (CMS) by the time of our inspection and as such we were not able to assess all cases; eleven cases remained on the CPS system for examination.

To assess the quality of the legal decision, we compared police-proposed charges with the charges that the CPS authorised and then considered whether the CPS had made

⁴ [E&I Stalking Deep Dive](#)

⁵ [Victims' Commissioner | London City Hall](#)

⁶ Cases examined by MOPAC were cases dealt with the Metropolitan Police Service 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

decisions that were compliant with the Code for Crown Prosecutors. This included whether prosecutors had selected charges which reflected the seriousness and extent of the offending, giving the court adequate powers to sentence and impose appropriate post-conviction orders, and enabled the case to be presented in a clear and simple way. We also assessed whether the prosecution had sought appropriate orders to protect the victim, witnesses and the public.

It should be noted that our findings are not representative of the position across the CPS in England and Wales, as the cases assessed came only from CPS London North and South.

Findings

Six of the 11 cases were referred for consideration of charging for stalking offences, three for harassment offences, one for a racially aggravated public order offence and one for breach of a restraining order.

In nine of the 11 cases, we agreed with the decision made by the CPS on charge. The CPS authorised charge for stalking offences in seven of the 11 cases, which is one more than requested in the original police referral.

In five of those seven cases, the CPS authorised charge for the more serious section 4A stalking offence. We agreed with those decisions in all but one case, where we concluded the correct charge was a section 2A stalking offence as there was insufficient evidence to prove the additional element required for the more serious offence. In a sixth case, the police referred the case for consideration of the more serious section 4A offence of stalking. The CPS decision was to authorise charge for a section 2A stalking offence. We agreed with that decision.

In the seventh case, the police proposed a racially aggravated public order charge. The CPS authorised charge for a racially aggravated stalking offence which we agreed was the most appropriate on the evidence submitted.

There were two cases where the CPS did not select the most appropriate charge. In one of these, the police proposed a charge of section 4 harassment while the CPS authorised a lesser charge of section 2 harassment. We found that the most appropriate charge should have been a section 4A stalking offence.

We assessed whether the prosecution sought appropriate orders to protect the victim, witnesses and the public. We found that the CPS applied for the appropriate orders in nine of the cases examined.

Although not commented on in detail in the MOPAC report, our assessment of the cases also considered additional victim issues. Our inspection assessed compliance with the victim personal statement (VPS) scheme – in which victims can share the impact of the offending on them at the sentence hearing – and compliance with victim communication and liaison letters (VCL) guidance, which requires timely, good quality letters to be sent to victims when a charge is dropped or substantially altered. Lastly, our inspection assessed compliance with the protocol of speaking to witnesses at court.

The CPS complied, either partially or fully, with its obligations regarding VPS in 100% of cases and fully and partially engaged with victims and witnesses where appropriate in 81% of cases. A timely VCL was not sent in 40% of applicable cases and the VCL was not deemed to be of a high standard in 40% of cases.

Conclusions

We found that not all the 11 cases we assessed had been referred to the CPS by the police for consideration of charging for stalking offences.

We found that the CPS applied the Code properly in all 11 cases and that in most, the charge selection was correct. This means that the right defendants were prosecuted for the right offences.

In most cases there was early consideration at the pre-charge stage of restraining orders, represented by 82% compliance.

Given the importance, priority and impact of stalking offences on victims and the wider public, we intend to carry out a thematic inspection of the CPS's handling of stalking offences in our 2025 inspection programme.

Area Inspection Programme: a follow-up inspection 2025 – published 28 January 2025

Background

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSI) commenced an Area Inspection Programme (AIP) in 2021 designed to have a minimum of two cycles of inspection: a baseline and follow-up. The focus of the AIP was casework quality in all aspects of volume casework, establishing whether the 14 CPS Areas added value to the prosecution through proactive decision-making and gripped the management of their cases.

We defined ‘added value’ as the difference made by prosecutors through good, proactive prosecution decision-making across various stages and themes in the lifecycle of a prosecution. We defined ‘grip’ as the effectiveness and efficiency of case progression or management of cases, asking if the case had been progressed at each relevant stage, if correct processes had been adhered to and timescales met.

During 2021-22, the first cycle of individual baseline reports were published in the 14 individual CPS Areas. We published a composite report in September 2023⁷ and in 2024 we began the second cycle of follow-up inspection, during which we again assessed casework quality and measured against the baseline scores to assess progress.

Follow-up inspection

The aims of the follow-up inspection were:

- to re-assess the casework quality following the baseline assessment
- to compare the casework quality from this inspection to the baseline, identify where improvements have been made and/or performance deteriorated and thereby identify a direction of travel

⁷ [Area inspection programme: Composite report of the baseline assessments of the 14 Crown Prosecution Service Areas in England and Wales. – HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate](#)

- 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 or improving.

Our findings in this follow-up are based on a case file examination of 840 finalised cases taken from all CPS Areas between December 2023 and September 2024. These were all cases commenced in the Areas since publication of their own baseline report.

In addition, to reflect any current improvement in the light of recent focussed activity around case analysis and strategy, we examined a further 300 live cases. We did not report on these cases separately but instead included them in our overall sample to reflect the ongoing work the CPS has put into improving their case analysis and strategy.

The follow-up inspection did not include rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) which were included in the original baseline inspection, as the volume of cases in the Crown Court backlog was such that there were insufficient finalised RASSO cases since the 2021 report to allow meaningful assessment. We have subsequently carried out a thematic RASSO-specific inspection which will be published in 2025.

In January 2025, we published a report covering CPS national performance and that of each of the 14 Areas. In this report, we compared the baseline and follow-up scores for added value and grip, together with casework themes. We indicated the direction of travel showing whether performance had improved or declined. If any performance had improved or reduced by less than one percentage point, then the direction of travel was shown as remaining static.

As part of our methodology, we invited the CPS to provide us with a statement to make clear its view of the context of current issues that may impact the delivery of quality casework. We did not test the CPS statement but replicated it in full within the report.

Findings

Added value and grip

We found marginal improvement in three out of the four key scores we assessed: added value in magistrates' court and Crown Court casework, and grip in magistrates' courts casework. The grip of Crown Court casework had marginally declined. This is perhaps understandable given the continued increase in Crown Court caseloads.

CPS national performance

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

CPS Area performance

Added value			
	Highest-performing Area	Lowest-performing Area	Variance
Magistrates' courts	70.9%	56.5%	14.4pp
Crown Court	75.9%	57.6%	18.3pp

Grip			
Magistrates' courts	83.1%	51.2%	31.9pp
Crown Court	88.7%	60.5%	28.2pp

We found a significant variation between CPS Areas in relation to added value and grip in the magistrates' courts and Crown Court:

- in magistrates' courts casework, the added value scores ranged between 70.9% in the strongest-performing Area to 56.5% in the weakest-performing Area, a difference of 14.4 percentage points. Even though there was a wide variation between the strongest and weakest Areas, we found there had been a slight improvement since the baseline inspection
- in Crown Court casework, it was encouraging to note that 11 out of 14 Areas had improved on their added value scores since the baseline. Again, though, we found a greater degree of variance between CPS Areas in Crown Court casework than in the magistrates' courts casework
- in relation to grip in the magistrates' courts, the 31.9 percentage points range was between 83.1% in the strongest-performing Area to 51.2% in the weakest-performing Area. This is a significant gap between the performance of the Areas, which has slightly widened since the baseline assessment
- in the Crown Court, there was also a significant variation between Areas regarding grip. The scores ranged between 88.7% in the strongest-performing Area to 60.5% in the weakest-performing Area, a difference of 28.2 percentage points. The variation in the follow-up was slightly wider than the range in the baseline inspection. As with grip in the magistrates' courts units, there are one or two Areas where performance is strong, which is impressive given the context of the pressures in the criminal justice system and the pressures of increased caseloads since the baseline.

Casework Themes

In our report we outlined the different casework themes against which we assessed performance. The themes were:

- pre-charge decision-making and review
- the quality of post-charge reviews and decision-making
- preparation for the plea and trial preparation hearing in the Crown Court
- compliance with duties of disclosure of unused material
- victims and witnesses.

CPS national performance - casework themes in magistrates' courts

Measure	Baseline assessment	Follow-up score	Direction of travel	Strongest Area score	Weakest Area score
Pre-charge decision-making code compliance	94.4%	97.3%	▲	100%	94.1%
Selecting the most appropriate charges	88.2%	91.7%	▲	100%	79.5%
Quality of the pre-charge decision including case strategy	47%	48.7%	▲	56.7%	33.1%
Post-charge decision- making code compliance	93.8%	97.1%	▲	100%	90%

Quality of the post-charge decision including analysis and case strategy	58.6%	57.9%	▶	68.8%	46.8%
Quality of the compliance with the duty of disclosure	55.3%	60.8%	▲	73%	47.8%
The appropriate handling of victim and witness issues	70.3%	71.3%	▲	77.3%	56.3%

CPS national performance - casework themes in Crown Court

Measure	Baseline assessment	Follow-up score	Direction of travel	Strongest Area score	Weakest Area score
Pre-charge decision-making code compliance	92.5%	96.5%	▲	100%	89.2%
Selecting the most appropriate charges	85.2%	91.3%	▲	98.1%	79.6%
Quality of the pre-charge decision including analysis and case strategy	45.5%	47.1%	▲	65.0%	37.1%

Post-charge decision-making code compliance	93.0%	95.7%	▲	100%	90.0%
Quality of the post-charge decision including analysis and case strategy	57.0%	59.9%	▲	70.2%	50.0%
Preparation for the Plea and Trial Preparation Hearing (PTPH) hearing Crown Court	65.9%	66.0%	▶	83.8%	47.4%
Quality of the compliance with the duty of disclosure	66.7%	68.2%	▲	77.7%	59.2%
The appropriate handling of victim and witness issues	71.5%	71.2%	▶	80.9%	55.8%

Conclusions

We found that compliance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors was a strength at both pre- and post-charge stages across all casework types. Selection of charges was also good, proving that the CPS is continuing to prosecute the right person for the right offence(s).

The service to support victims and witnesses remained good. We found evidence of appropriate special measures being applied to support victims and witnesses to give their best evidence at trial and the right orders being sought at the conclusion of cases to protect them. However, there was poorer performance when complying with their obligations in relation to Victim Personal Statements and the quality of letters sent to victims when a decision is made to either drop or substantially alter a charge.

Areas for improvement

We made no recommendations in this report. However, in assessing the rest of the casework quality findings in this follow-up phase, we identified two clear themes:

1. Case analysis and strategy still require considerable improvement for Areas to meet the CPS's own standards.

After the findings highlighted in the baseline reports, the CPS developed a programme of training and awareness, raising focus on improving the skills and capability of legal staff to improve case analysis and strategy. In July 2023 the CPS launched 'a year of case strategy', a 12-month programme incorporating ten case strategy principles. This programme outlined the responsibilities of a prosecutor in creating a case strategy to improve the quality of reviews and build strong cases.

The findings between the baseline assessment and this follow-up show that there has been some marginal improvement. As the results of our assessment show, more still needs to be done, but given the context of substantial increases in caseloads in the Crown Court units, to see any degree of improvement is heartening.

2. There is considerable geographical variation in performance across different aspects of casework.

The CPS is an organisation covering England and Wales, with standard operating practices and a single set of legal guidance and policies that provides a consistent framework for legal decision-making and case management. Defendants, victims and witnesses, as well as those working within the criminal justice system and the wider public, rightly expect the CPS to deliver consistent and high-quality casework to the same standard for cases wherever they occur. It is therefore concerning that our findings for this follow-up inspection once again highlight the wide geographical variation in performance and thus standards. In the report, we suggested that the CPS may want to consider whether there are any aspects of performance in those better-performing Areas that can be used to drive up national performance, addressing issues leading to such disparity.

To help identify the drivers of improvement, HMCPSI will also use the findings from this follow-up inspection to undertake a targeted, risk-based approach to inspection of two CPS geographical Areas to identify good practice, aspects for improvement and to assist those who superintend the CPS in 2025.

Inside HMCPSI

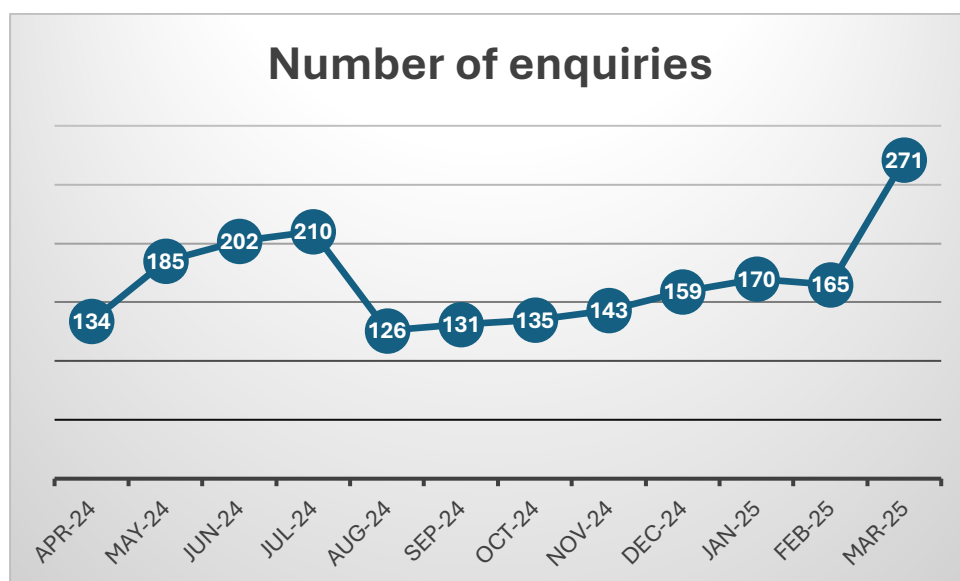


As an independent department, HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPsi) has the same statutory obligations as all other departments when it comes to responding to queries and requests for information.

We have a public website where all our reports are published and where the consultation for the business plan is also published. Our statutory remit is to inspect the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and other prosecuting bodies by invitation.

The public can contact HMCPsi via our info@hmcpsi.gov.uk public-facing email address. Over the reporting period, we received more than 2,000 enquiries. In instances where a response was required, we responded within the statutory time frame to 100% of those enquiries.

This graph shows a breakdown of the number of requests received per month:

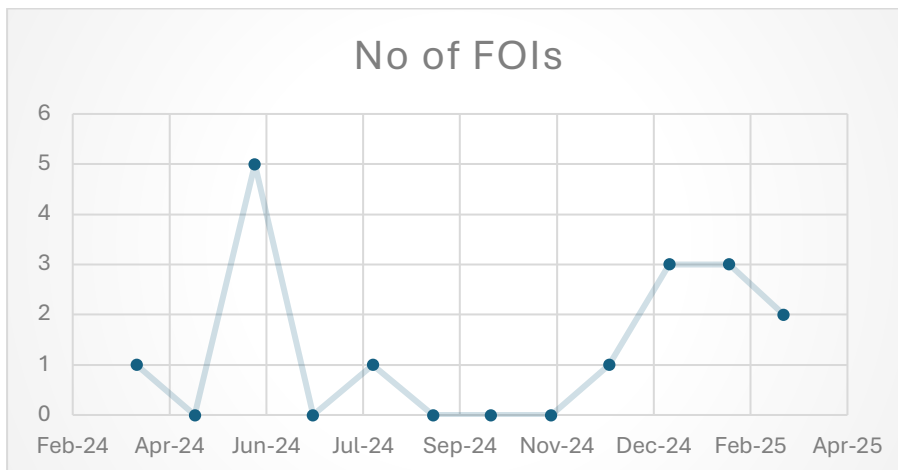


During the reporting period, we received 16 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, all of which were responded to within the statutory time frame. These requests for information covered a variety of subjects such as:

- spend
- questions about recruitment
- estates strategy
- ICT strategy

- apprentices
- data on convictions and charges
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) roles
- drones and aerospace
- dealings with the tobacco industry
- relationships with film companies.

This graph shows a breakdown of the number of FOI requests received:

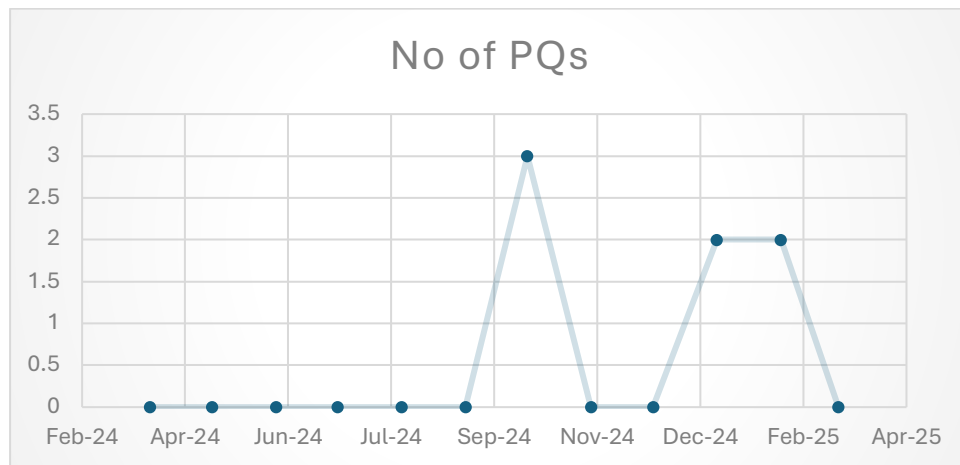


As a Law Officer Department, along with our colleagues in Attorney General's Office (AGO), Government Legal Department (GLD), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Serious Fraud Office (SFO), we are required to submit responses to parliamentary questions (PQs) submitted to the Attorney and Solicitor General. We responded to seven such requests over the year.

These questions related to a variety of subjects including:

- appointments terminated
- building occupation and desk allocations and bookings
- employment disputes
- specific contracts
- spend.

This graph shows a breakdown of the number of PQs over this reporting period:



External Engagement

HMCPsI has representation on the Whitehall Prosecutor's Group (WPG) and our Chief Inspectors sits on the Victims' Commissioner's Advisory Group (VCAG).

We will have a number of meetings with those we inspect over the course of the year and have regular stakeholder meetings with the AGO.

HMCPsI are active members of the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP). During the year, two inspectors attended the IAP Annual Conference in Baku. This is a very useful forum for HMCPsI to discuss the work that we do with other jurisdictions.

We have also engaged alongside Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and delivered presentations to prosecutors from other countries. During the year we engaged with prosecution services and the Office of Director Public Prosecutors of Kenya, Albania and Malaysia.

ANNEX A

Recommendations – progress by the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office

Tables of Crown Prosecution Service recommendations

Table of open recommendations as at 31 March 2025

Inspection	Report published	
Evidence-led domestic abuse prosecutions	Jan-20	At review stage, prosecutors should, in all appropriate domestic abuse cases, clearly outline a strategy for proceeding with an evidence-led prosecution.
Victim Communication Liaison (VCL) scheme: letters to victims	Oct-20	By March 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to introduce a system for domestic abuse cases that identifies any summary time limit applicable on receipt from the police at pre-charge and ensures that the case is progressed effectively and efficiently within the summary time limit.
The service from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to victims of domestic abuse	Mar-23	By July 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to implement a process where, on a domestic abuse case where the summary time limit is due to expire within eight weeks, all communications with the police, including any pre-charge advice or decisions, are clearly marked with the relevant summary time limit. <i>This was closed by the CPS but reopened following an assessment of 'not achieved' in the domestic abuse follow-up report published in March 2025.</i>

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) handling of complaints	Aug-23	By March 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will develop and deliver training to ensure all staff (it is relevant to) are using the Contact app consistently and complying with the requirement to fully utilise its functionality.
		By December 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will have improved the quality of complaint response letters showing a substantial improvement in the number of letters rated as adequate.
		By January 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will clarify what the complaints coordinator role entails and what is expected of them in terms of quality assurance processes for complaint letters.
Meeting the needs of victims in the criminal justice system	Dec-23	By 30 September 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should agree minimum standards and consistent processes for how witness care units or functions communicate with the police, the CPS and victims to help effective, agile and timely information-sharing so that victims' needs are met.
FOLLOW-UP: Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) policy and guidance for the handling of cases involving the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)	Jul-23	By 31 December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to develop a system of assurance that can prove that CPS Areas are taking a consistent approach in the prosecution of cases involving the section 45 defence and the application of the non-punishment principles. <i>This was closed by CPS but re-opened following an assessment of 'not achieved' in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) follow-up report published in February 2025.</i>

Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs)	Feb-25	The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should use the findings from this inspection of Individual Quality Assessments (IQAs) to consider, develop and implement a new approach to how it assesses casework quality. A crucial aspect of any new approach will be strong leadership and management, ensuring accountability at the first line assurance level as a means to drive the initiative forward. By 31 July 2025, to have designed and planned a new approach. By 31 March 2026, to have implemented the new approach to first line assurance of its casework quality.
FOLLOW-UP: The service from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to victims of domestic abuse	Mar-25	By December 2025, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to ensure that in all magistrates' courts domestic abuse cases involving a Newton hearing or conviction after trial, an updated victim personal statement is requested in a timely manner for the sentence hearing.
		By December 2025, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to have delivered the trauma-informed training to all prosecutors dealing with domestic abuse casework.

Eight recommendations closed by the Crown Prosecution Service in 2024-25

Inspection	Report published		Closed
The service from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to victims of domestic abuse	Mar-23	By July 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to implement a process where, on a domestic abuse case where the summary time limit is due to expire within eight weeks, all communications with the police, including any pre-charge advice or decisions are clearly marked with the relevant summary time limit. <i>This was closed by the CPS but re-opened following an assessment of 'not achieved' in the domestic abuse follow-up report published March 2025.</i>	Q2 24/25
		By March 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to introduce a system for domestic abuse cases that identifies any summary time limit applicable on receipt from the police at pre-charge and ensures that the case is progressed effectively and efficiently within the summary time limit.	Q4 24/25
		By December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to have communicated the need for prosecutors to review the risk assessment in all domestic abuse cases before completing the pre-charge decision (unless there are specific factors in the case such that the decision to charge cannot be delayed) and that where the risk assessment has been omitted in the file provided, or is referenced simply by level (standard, medium or high), the full risk assessment is requested. This approach to be embedded by March 2024.	Q4 24/25

		By December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to embed a process to ensure that in all magistrates' courts domestic abuse cases involving a Newton hearing or trial, all up-to-date relevant information about victims including information relevant to ancillary orders is requested in a timely manner for the sentence hearing. <i>Assessed as 'not achieved' in the domestic abuse follow-up report as only achieved in part. This remains closed but superseded by new recommendation set out in the open recommendations table above.</i>	Q4 25/24
		By December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to develop a consistent approach to trauma training across violence against women and girls (VAWG) casework that reflects engagement with specialist VAWG organisations, and which focuses on how understanding trauma can improve casework and the service to victims of domestic abuse. <i>Assessed as 'not achieved' in the domestic abuse follow-up report as only achieved in part. This remains closed but superseded by new recommendation set out in the open recommendations table above.</i>	Q4 24/25
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) handling of complaints	Aug-23	By December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will have clarified the time limit for complainants to escalate their complaints to stage two of the process. It will ensure this information is provided consistently in all letters in response to stage one complaints.	Q2 24/25
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) actions in the Valdo Calocane case		By October 2024, the Crown Prosecution Service must undertake a review of all guidance relating to victims' engagement to ensure that all staff are aware when use of the terms 'consult' or 'consultation' is appropriate.	Q3 24/25

FOLLOW-UP: Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) handling of custody time limits (CTLs)	Jul-23	By 1 December 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) must embed the consistent use and updating of the custody time limit (CTL) case progression log, including recording the weekly assurance review on the case management system (CMS) in all cases, and by 31 March 2024, develop a system of assurance to evidence improvement and monitor compliance with CTL policies.	Q4 24/25
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Tables of Serious Fraud Office recommendations

Serious Fraud Office open recommendations as at 31 March 2025

Inspection	Report published	
Follow-up to Case Progression	May-23	By March 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should provide all case controllers with enhanced management and leadership skills training to equip them with the tools to effectively communicate strategic and corporate messages, provide staff with the necessary support and confidence to effectively progress cases in accordance with the Operational Handbook with allocated resources, and mentor case teams.
Disclosure	Apr-24	By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should introduce a disclosure review process, equivalent to a peer review, to be conducted on every case post-charge by an individual independent of the case team.
Disclosure	Apr-24	By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should consider ways in which staff may be incentivised to take on the roles of disclosure officer and deputy disclosure officer to increase the pool of able and experienced candidates and improve staff retention in those roles.

Five recommendations closed by Serious Fraud Office in 2024-25

Inspection	Report published		Closed
Follow-up to Case Progression	May-23	By December 2023, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should develop a strategic resourcing model, incorporating its prioritisation policy and consideration of how key personnel are deployed at each stage throughout the life of a case, and ensuring cases retain a minimum number of personnel.	Q3 24/25
		By September 2023, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should bring together all current casework assurance mechanisms, including peer reviews, so that they complement each other whilst avoiding overlap, establishing a standardised casework assurance process that captures pre-investigation, investigation and post-charge stages, and ensure compliance with the process on all SFO cases.	Q3 24/25
Disclosure	Apr-24	By September 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to update the Operational Handbook with guidance in relation to the handling of a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) and its related material on prosecutions of individuals in which a DPA has been entered into with the corporate entity.	Q2 24/25
		By October 2024, the SFO to revisit the guidance provided in the Disclosure Management Document (DMD) template to ensure that it guides the case teams to fully explain the disclosure process employed and safeguard their position should their disclosure handling be challenged.	Q3 24/25

		By October 2024, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) should review the current model for the management of Legal Professional Privilege (LPP) material. Consideration should be given to whether, due to the risks associated with the delivery of the core business by the eDiscovery team, a different system for the management and control of LPP material should be implemented. The SFO should engage with others who have similar requirements to consider how it might manage and control LPP material.	Q3 24/25
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